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# The Palgrave Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers

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With 61 Figures and 14 Tables

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# Foreword to Organizational Change Thinkers Book

I really appreciate the opportunity to write a forword for this most interesting book because it allows me to reminisce a bit about the history of organization development (OD) and its focus on the management of change. I remember well in the mid-1960s my efforts with Warren Bennis and Richard Beckhard to capture the essence of OD, not by writing an integrated text but by accepting the fact that the best we could do is produce a paperback series which allowed various of us to express our own views of what OD was at this point in its youth. The Addison-Wesley Series eventually grew to over 30 volumes and reflected the many strands of thinking and practice that evolved. In many ways, this current volume is another iteration of this enormous diversity in presenting a field that we think has some common assumptions and values yet continues to evolve new directions. What better way to track this evolution than by many of us writing about many others of us.

By presenting the contributions of so many different OD practitioners and theorists, the editors have exposed us to a deeper cultural truth about our approach to knowledge and practice. The rampant individualism and pragmatism that has been the hallmark of US culture shows up very well in the variety of styles of thinking, practicing, and writing about these organizational issues and organizational change. In a way, I lament this diversity because it reflects another issue that derives from individualism, namely, that we are not very concerned about interconnecting or coordinating our various theories and practices.

Rather, even as academics, we seem to play out the marketing dream of putting our ideas out there and seeing who will buy. We have very little taste for acknowledging and critiquing each other, we have very little impulse to construct the grand theory that pulls it all together, and we have no great desire to acknowledge all versions of our own model that may have already been presented in other writings. We built our own edifice with our small team of collaborators and put our energy into improving it rather than seeing how it might connect to others. We let the market decide and compete as best as we can, but have little energy for integrating the many theories and practices that are out there. This willingness to tolerate diversity of thought, even encourage it, is well reflected in reviews of research. It will be an interesting challenge to the readers of this handbook to find the common elements, the integrative strands that have emerged from over 75 years of work in this arena.

There may be another cultural reason for this diversity. I have recently "discovered" that the English language is much more context dependent than most of us have realized or acknowledged. Words like *organization*, *management*, *leadership*, *trust*, *openness*, *relationship*, and *change* are incredibly ambiguous until they are put into concrete examples that give us the context of whether we are talking about a particular organization in a particular industry in a particular culture, at a particular stage in its growth, and so on. This linguistic ambiguity makes it very difficult to compare models, theories, and practices primarily because the authors usually do not provide enough examples to pin down what exactly is the essence of what they are talking about.

When we do talk about each other's theories or practices, it has been my experiences that my concepts such as *process consultation*, *career anchors*, *culture*, and *change* are often not understood by both critics and supporters. I don't fault them for this, nor do I fault myself for being a poor communicator. Instead, I attribute this to the inherent ambiguity in the English language. It may be inherently impossible to construct a tight theory in a high context language, which is, of course, the reason why we invent new terms such as Theory X and Theory Y or create mathematical models.

Having said that, the model that is presented in this book is particularly interesting wherein our ideas are presented by our colleagues rather than by ourselves. That mode of presentation will provide interesting experiences for each of us who are represented in this book and will provide a level of feedback we are ordinarily not privy to. The readers will get the unusual opportunity to compare how they read a particular author and how the biographer writing in this book represents that same author.

The editors are to be commended for having found a way to go beyond presenting several of us in our traditional writing or speaking mode, and to give us a new voice through the many authors writing these chapters. That will provide readers an opportunity to see how their interpretation of what each of us said matches the written presentations in this book, and for those of us who are still present, yet another opportunity to see how our own perception of what we said matches with what our biographers have said.

I look forward to an exciting read and congratulate the editors for providing us with a whole new approach to understanding the many points of view toward organization development and the management of change. The reader will get a great view of the history of this field through reading about almost three generations of thinkers and practitioners in this field.

Edgar H. Schein

# Preface

## Introduction to the Handbook

We, the editors, have had the great pleasure of assembling this volume. It has turned out to be more of a "labor of love" than we expected; both more labor and more love. We have been inspired by the stories of the great thinkers profiled here. We have loved learning more about them than we ever knew, even in the case of some close colleagues. And, we have thoroughly enjoyed making new friends and reconnecting with friends whom we haven't been in touch with for far too long. The "more labor" part was also the painstaking care that the contributing authors took in researching the great thinkers they profiled. It is to these authors and to all the great thinkers who created the field of Organization Development that we owe the existence of this handbook.

For readers who might not be familiar with Organization Development, it is a field pioneered by the social scientists whose stories you can read in this handbook. These individuals were concerned about social justice, organizational effectiveness, improving teamwork, understanding the role of the change agent and the effects of different styles of leadership, and much more. The focus of the field is on change, and especially change that takes place in organizations. Even more to the point, the kind of change that has been at the heart of Organization Development is change that helps organizations fulfill their purpose while at the same time offering opportunities for greater dignity and meaning to the people who live within them or are touched by their existence.

Although the roots of the field took hold even earlier, the real blossoming of thought began following the Second World War. The war was an abomination to everything that was good or worthwhile about society and human kind. It raised questions for many about what was going wrong in the world and what could be done to prevent something like it from happening again.

Early studies by Kurt Lewin, who fled to the United States from Nazi Germany, investigated how attitudes were shaped by group opinion and the effects of democratic versus autocratic leadership. Coch and French explored the power of participation in decision-making related to overcoming resistance to change. Eric Trist and his colleagues at the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations in London worked with the British Coal Board to find ways to make coal production more efficient after the war and in so doing discovered that workers held valuable insights regarding the

work they did that engineers and managers had overlooked. Bion, also at Tavistock, had experimented with group therapy among traumatized soldiers during the war and from those experiences and others began to help us see previously invisible dynamics that affected the work of groups and teams. Lewin and Reginal Revans independently piloted what became known as "action research." This was work intended to bring about change that took place in a real setting as opposed to a laboratory to study what happened as a result of trying out a variety of different approaches. What made action research unique was the collaboration of the "subject" or client in conducting and interpreting the work. It was discovered, as was the case in British coal mines, that the people on the front lines of change have valuable perspectives that even scientists studying an organization would have missed. The resulting tradition of involving those affected by change in planning and executing it has remained a hallmark of OD ever since and continues to differentiate it from "expert change" in which consultants decide for others what is best for them, or "top-down" change in which leaders attempt to use their position power to force others to comply with their directives.

Kurt Lewin's concerns about racial justice also led to the "T-group" or sensitivity training phenomena, later formalized under the egis of the National Training Labs, or NTL as it became known. On the other side of the Atlantic, Bion and his colleagues invented the Group Relations Conference, which helped participants examine their relationship with authority and their interpersonal relations. Together, these powerful movements in human relations led to an age of "personal enlightenment" which became central to the field for a time. Ever since, there has been a debate about whether Organization Development belongs in a serious business environment, since some leaders seem to be of the belief that one should leave his or her emotions and identity at the door before starting work every morning.

It wasn't until the next generation of scholars that the name of the field "Organization Development" was coined, simultaneously by Dick Beckhard and Robert Blake and Jane Mouton in the 1960s. The 1960s also saw the establishment of the first doctoral programs in Organization Development, which was followed by a proliferation of institutions that offered masters degrees to people working full time.

The 1970s and early 1980s saw recessions that added to the excuse for cutting out anything "touchy-feely" and instead focus on downsizing, cost-cutting, total quality, reengineering, and Lean Six-Sigma – anything that focused squarely on the bottom line and was driven by objective data rather than feelings. None of these "advancements" fit the values and methods of organization development and for a time, there were real questions about the field's survival. However, advances in scholarship continued and the need to pay attention to people in organizations didn't simply disappear. In the 1980s and 1990s, in areas like employee engagement and innovation, there were clear needs to call on people to do things that they would only do if committed to the success of their organization. Gaining that commitment required more than a single-minded focus on the bottom line. What's more, work on high performance systems and organizational culture brought about significant gains in organizational performance that were hard to ignore. Accountants could cite the costs of change but investors appreciated the returns.

The 1980s and 1990s also brought exciting new change innovations to the forefront, based on glimmers of earlier thinking. Appreciative inquiry, large group interventions, and future search conferences gave Organization Development a new lease on life and thrust it squarely into the realm of dealing with societal as well as organizational issues. This "second age of enlightenment" has us all believing that anything was possible and that our dream of making the world a better place was finally coming true. Then, another recession and a new villain on the scene interrupted our progress once again. By the early 2000s, investment bankers and deal makers who cared only about short-term shareholder profit started breaking up organizations and selling the pieces to the highest bidder through mergers or acquisitions. Leaders who cared about their people, took a longer-term view, or sought a more socially responsible role for their organizations were swept aside by operators who had no choice but to focus on cutting costs at all costs. The 2007–2008 recession led to another round of budget slashing in many organizations, turning back the clock. Once again the field appeared to be in peril, and yet competition and change remained constants that simply couldn't be eliminated by pretending they weren't happening. By the 2010s, new forms of organizing were investigated – forms that would allow organizations to be efficient and innovative at the same time, local and global, and socially responsible while caring about the bottom line. Technology continued to present new challenges as well, and those who didn't understand its potential for disruption at first were run over by those who did.

The thinkers profiled here didn't just stand by and watch this happen. They took challenges as opportunities to rethink and reposition the field. They offered new methodologies for change, more connected to the strategic directions organizations are trying to move. They didn't forget human beings, but leveraged the growing interest in all things talent related to make change both a responsibility for able leaders and a development opportunity for others. They learned about the future and found ways to help clients see it and want to make it happen. They embraced diversity and globalism, knowing that these forces could be temporarily blunted but never overcome. Although many of the early thinkers are no longer with us, their ideas and ideals continue to live on in the youngest generation of our scholars.

So, for those who are not yet familiar with the field of Organization Development, this handbook will tell the story of its evolution, from its earliest beginnings to the current day. In the profiles here you will read about important ideas, theories, and practices that gained widespread attention as they shaped not just the field itself but our societies and even the world.

Those who are very familiar with the field will find herein much of value and we hope delight. Our experience as editors was that we individually were more familiar with the works of some of the great thinkers than others. To read the profiles of these assembled thinkers and their work was to take a high-speed tour of our shared history, filling in spots in the landscape that we had previously zoomed past, not noticing or interpreting clearly. Beyond that, the people we did know as scholars we got to know as people, through the eyes of their biographers who were often students or close friends. In this fuller and inclusive picture, we could more easily grasp where the great ideas in our field came from, which caused us to reflect on our own

motivations for doing the work we do. This handbook is like a personal journal; it's as if the intellectual giants kept private diaries that they decided to throw into one collective pot with the hope that others would read them and perhaps be inspired to add their own.

We wanted to know more about the influences in these thinker's lives, both educational and collegial. We asked for insights about their mentors or heroes, and what problems they wanted to solve. We sought insights into how the times in which they lived might have directed their thinking and extrapolated this to present times and even into the future. We wanted to know why they did the research they did and how they did it. We were curious about where they applied their ideas and with what effect. We wondered about collaboration with other colleagues and especially about how ideas took hold and led to branches of the field being defined by their committed followers.

As we read on, we saw the evolution of ideas as the progression of science added finer filigree to earlier rough sketches. We also saw continued breakthroughs, intellectual leaps that could not be predicted simply by drawing a straight line between the past and present. Stepping back even further, we saw parts of the canvas that were still blank, waiting to be filled in. Other parts of the canvas were painted over many times, without a satisfactory result (One more time, how can we get those in power to share it willingly and for the benefit of all? Why, with all we know, are we still not more successful in bringing about change? How is it that with all of our research, we still allow inept leaders to rise to power and then follow them to our own destruction?). The field of Organization Development is alive, despite several inquiries into its health by undertakers arriving a little too early on the scene. Gratefully, the handbook will be continuously updated thanks to the miracle of online publishing. If new thinkers emerge or there are new ideas to report, they will be added in the years to come.

With the amazing help of our colleagues who rose to the challenge, this handbook has delivered on our intentions.

1. The handbook presents inspiring and thought provoking profiles of prominent organizational change thinkers, highlighting significant advancements in how organizational change has been conceived, theorized, researched, and practiced.
2. Each profile chapter captures the professional background of a legendary thinker and presents his or her key insights, new thinking, and major legacies to the field of organizational change.
3. The handbook includes, in one manuscript, the concepts, theories, and models of the sages who invented, built, and advanced the research and practice of change in organizations.
4. The structure of this handbook creates "relationships" with the highlighted scholars that are not obtained by simply reading a collection of their work.
5. The theories presented in the handbook are brought to life within the context of the scholar's experiences, which in turn inspires progressive thoughts for the readers of this handbook, furthering organizational change research and practice of today.

While you may choose to read only a few of the profiles, we suspect that you will be drawn in to read additional profiles as were we. The field of Organization Development has always been concerned about people and driven by a sense of what is right and just. Gaining insight into the ways in which the values and purposes of these incredible thinkers shaped their work makes for interesting drama. One might expect a handbook about scholars to be a little on the dry side, hardly something to be read like a novel on a plane or when without a date on a Friday evening. That might be true in a field like Mathematics, but after this experience, we choose to withhold our judgment. There are real people behind the great ideas in our field, and their stories are both compelling and endearing.

## A Guide to the Structure of the Chapters

It won't take you long to notice that the vast majority of the profiles follow a similar structure. The first section briefly describes the influences that motivated the thinker to investigate change in organizations, for example, the theorist's scholarly mentors. The focus is on the professional, intellectual, educational, social, and real-world influences that stimulated the theorist's curiosities about change in organizations and acts as an introduction to the theorist's story.

The second section focuses on the thinker's key contributions. Four or five advancements that were central to the work of the thinker are reviewed in this section. These are theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. This is not an exhaustive coverage, but a presentation and discussion of their most significant contributions to organizational change. Those innovations or ideas that have endured over time are emphasized.

The third section of each profile addresses new insights that the work of the thinker inspired in others. This section will underscore how the work of these scholars has spurred new developments in theory and research that have led us to view change in organizations in new and surprising ways.

The fourth section focuses on legacies and unfinished business. What are the major intellectual legacies of this thinker? Which later thinkers has he or she influenced? Which parts of the thinker's legacy are still being investigated or have yet to be fully investigated? Are there themes that have been criticized by later thinkers that have shed light on the problem that motivated the original thinker? What later thinkers have explored the issues of this thinker and carried them further?

Finally, the profile concludes with suggested further readings. This final section includes a short list of books and journal articles that enable readers to take their interests further.

## How to Use This Book

Actually, we can't wait to see how people use this book. As designed, the expectation is that most people will access the book online, a profile at a time. While print

copies of the book will be available on demand, the projected cost would make buying a hard-bound volume prohibitive for all but libraries and a few especially dedicated individuals. Therefore, it's probably not a candidate as a text for graduate study as an entire volume, but to assign chapters to students to read and discuss is entirely doable. We can't imagine a better use for this handbook than to introduce the next generation of scholars to the people and history that preceded them. We won't tell you how to teach the book; you'll have your own ideas about that. We can envision lots of opportunities ranging from individual research efforts to group projects, covering eras or themes or looking for overarching messages much as we found ourselves doing. When you come up with a great idea that works, please let us know.

For those beyond their educational years, reading selected chapters about friends or mentors can be enlightening. Perhaps, it will encourage you to drop a note to someone you haven't spoken to for a while, saying you read about them and were surprised at something you learned. They probably won't mind and you may gain a renewed friendship in return.

On a more serious note, if you're undertaking research and looking for some original references or trying to come up with an original idea of your own, the handbook could be a good place to start. Most of the profiles are well-referenced and the suggestions for further reading are worth pursuing. The stories of these great thinkers are inspiring and remind us that despite their stature, they were after all just people like us.

## Going Forward

This journey hasn't ended; it's just beginning. That applies to the field of Organization Development and to this handbook as well. You may know of someone not included here who should be. There are several chapters in progress that didn't make it in time for the first print edition. Profiles on people like Rensis Likert, Noel Tichy, and Amy Edmonson haven't been overlooked; they are just taking longer to get done. Still, it's entirely possible that we have missed someone you think needs to be written about; please let us know, and let us know who should write about them – maybe it's you.

Over time, we'll be excited to be introduced to the new great thinkers in Organization Development. They are probably already making presentations at the Academy of Management or other conferences around the world. Let us know if you spot one before we do. We haven't established firm criteria by which we include or exclude people; we tried but found the task impossible. There were some social scientists who write about organizations with a concern about change but not from an Organization Development perspective. There are organizational theorists who help us understand how organizations work, which is something we need to understand, but don't write about change. It's hard to draw hard lines between the ins and the outs.

One criticism we are well aware of is that the volume, in the current version, includes more men than women, more whites than minorities, and more Americans than people from the rest of the world. More women are now attending graduate programs in the field than men; we hope that as a result, the gender picture will become more balanced over time. If you know someone who should be profiled who will help accelerate the shift, let us know. To a lesser extent, the same thing is happening in terms of minorities and people outside the USA. The numbers of nontraditional great thinkers are growing and your editors are on the lookout for them. All that said, we don't think that the online volume should become more like Facebook, where anyone can join. If there is no distinction between great thinkers and noncontributors, the handbook wouldn't serve a purpose.

We trust that you will enjoy reading some of the profiles as much as we have. We also hope that your reading inspires you to make your own contribution to the future of the field. There's room for you to be included in the next volume or to have your existing profile updated. More importantly, with all the great thinking represented here, we haven't seemed to solve all the world's problems. We need to keep up the effort.

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# Acknowledgments

After an intensive period of selecting the many great thinkers of organizational change, contracting with contributing authors to craft their profiles, and working with Michael Hermann and Audrey Wong-Hillmann, our tireless editors at Palgrave Macmillan, this acknowledgment puts the finishing touch on our *Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers*. The experience of creating this handbook, for each of us, was absorbing, enlightening, and truly enjoyable. There are several people to thank.

First, we would like to thank the many contributing authors who took the time out of their busy schedules to write the profile chapters. The handbook represents a diverse group of authors from many parts of the world: United States, Canada, Europe, South America, Asia, and Australia, many of whom are great organizational change thinkers, scholars, and practitioners themselves. Their efforts to conduct research, organize content, and determine and present the backgrounds, contributions, insights, and legacies of their thinkers are much appreciated.

Second, it's important to acknowledge a person who was instrumental in the conceptualization of this handbook. David Schwandt, thank you for the many hours we spent together in the classrooms and hallways of the George Washington University exploring the concept and content of this handbook. Your knowledge of the field of organizational change appears in many indirect ways throughout this handbook. One memorable image is three classroom whiteboard walls filled with timelines, listings of great thinkers, key change movements, and various ways to organize the book, some chronological and others conceptual.

As we developed the handbook, we realized that organizing the thinkers into our original format of early, contemporary, and emerging proved problematic as it was difficult to place many of the thinkers into a specific period. With advice from our editors at Palgrave Macmillan, we decided that an alphabetical organization of the thinkers seemed the best fit for a handbook of this magnitude. We envision many subsequent publications that explore the patterns of thought across the profiles.

Finally, for those great thinkers of organizational change who are still with us, thank you for agreeing to be profiled in this handbook. Many of you spent several

hours interacting with our contributing authors to provide them with what they needed to craft your profile. We express our sincere gratitude.

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## Volume 2

# About the Editors

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David B. Szabla leads the M.A. in Organizational Change Leadership in the Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Technology at Western Michigan University where he teaches courses in group dynamics, large-scale change, and organization design. His research and writing center on resistance to change and the relationships among the content, process, and context of organizational change. David is recognized by executive business leaders for strong diagnostic, intervention design and evaluation skills, as well as keen communication, creative problem-solving, and program management capabilities. He has been published in *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *Emergence: Complexity and Organization*, and *The International Journal of Knowledge, Culture, and Change Management*. He is a member of the Management Consulting and Organization Development and Change Divisions of the Academy of Management, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, and the International Leadership Association.

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# Billie Alban: The Inclusive Organizational Development Practitioner and Scholar

Gary Mangiofico

## Abstract

This work provides an overview of the contributions of Billie Alban, one of the foremost early thinkers and leaders in the field of OD and change. From her early childhood and throughout her life, Billie became the voice of advocacy for stakeholder inclusion. Starting with her young adult life, this chapter explores the influences early OD figures had on her development as a practitioner and then moves on to her own formidable contributions to the field which served to influence the development of generations of OD practitioners. Billie Alban's key works on the use of large scale change methods, her collaborators and her beliefs that we are always in community are discussed, as is the key legacy of her work and presence in the field of OD.

## Keywords

Large group interventions • Alban & Bunker • Organizational development • Inclusion • NTL • Women pioneers • System • Management • Emergent dynamics • Systematizing of large group methods • Moral imperative of giving voice

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## Introduction

Billie's (nee Wetter) remarkable journey began in the early twentieth century. Born in 1925 and raised in New York City, she began a bold and gracious life, becoming one of the key voices and one of the first significant women in the formative years of the field of Organizational Development (OD). Bold in that she embarked on adventures unique and courageous for a woman of her time and gracious in that there is a history and pattern to her life that show great interest in and respect for the voices of others along the way. This pattern of would find its way into her life's work and her well-known writing on *Large Group Interventions* (1997, 2006) with partner Barbara Bunker. An advocate for the inclusion of all stakeholders in the pursuit of possibilities that may affect them, Alban's work has served both as guidance and as a testament for the "rightness" of the collective voice to be heard.

## Influences and Motivations: The Early Years and the Influence of Inclusiveness

Alban was raised at 24 Washington Square North in Greenwich Village with her parents and a brother, Pierce Trowbridge Wetter Jr., who would go on to be one of the founders of Datron Advanced Technologies. According to his obituary, "Pierce worked until he retired from his chief scientist role at the age of 84, and was beloved at his workplace; it was common for the employees to refer to him as 'Uncle Pierce.'" Her mother, Gladys (nee Mock), was both an artist and an activist. Known for her etching, graphic arts, and printmaking, Mock's work has received awards, including the Emily Lowe Memorial Award and Audubon Artists, and has been on exhibition in the Art Institute of Chicago; Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.; Carnegie Institute and International, among other museums. Alban's father, Pierce Trowbridge Wetter, a trained engineer, was very involved in the politics of his day. An activist and preservationist, he served on the Greenwich Village Historical Society and fought against the rerouting of Washington Square. Wetter was a union organizer and one of the original members of the Wobbly Group. The "Wobblies" as they were more commonly known, were members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) founded in 1905. The IWW's primary focus was on the democracy of the workplace and differed from other unions, in that its leadership was chosen from amongst its rank and file. They believed in uniting workers as one class of people in an effort to counteract the influence of the employing class, deriving their strategies from socialism and anarchist movements.

As a Quaker and pacifist, he was opposed to World War I and spent 5 years in jail for his conscientious opposition. Though eventually pardoned in 1933 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Wetter initially refused the pardon based on his belief in his moral stance. Alban recalled her father as being very supportive of her and having a profound influence on her moral development, a trait that would influence her work in OD. This early influence of self-management of the common worker derived from her father and his work with the IWW philosophy is clearly reflected in her belief in the right of others to have a say in that in which they are a stakeholder. About this she stated, "I focused on the participative process of engaging all stakeholders, and then searching for the common ground amongst them (August, 2016)." Alban believed that in an organization, everyone had a right to be heard. Warner Burke (2016) has said, "She [Alban] is a woman loaded with integrity. Her deep convictions are part of what makes her so attractive to others, who quickly feel they can trust and believe in her." A strong and committed moral compass of what is right would influence her life's work.

Coming from such a formidable family, Alban has told her story of being raised on Washington Square as the beginning of wanting to understand others' views. She remembers that when she was a child, her family lived on the north side of the square, which was considered a fairly wealthy and comfortable area, with the southeast side's being known as Little Italy. She was told not to go to the south side because of "the Italians," who would "knock her off her bike and take it from her." But curious, as is her nature, Alban went to the Little Italy neighborhood anyway, and of course nothing bad happened. In fact, she recalled that she once fell off her bike, and an Italian mother came to her aid, helping her up and taking care of her. That's when Alban said she had a moment of insight, realizing – even as a child – that people say negative things about others but that those characteristics aren't necessarily true, and that one should listen to others directly to learn their story firsthand.

Alban said that New York City was a "great place" for her to grow up, providing a rich background in which to break down stereotypes and learn about life from the different kids in the park and the diverse communities around her. Alban grew up an Episcopalian, but went to a Quaker school in NYC; that school still exists today. That early Quaker influence impressed upon her the need to try diplomacy first, although that does not mean that a person must just take a passive position to meet harsh situations; rather, he or she needs to break down pejorative terms to work effectively in such conditions. She would go on to attend a boarding school in Massachusetts at age 12. While there, Alban rallied her peers and challenged the administration because its members did not include or involve the students (their customers) in what was being done or decided for them. She attended Goddard College in Vermont, a university that was considered very progressive. There, she loved that the administration involved the students in discussion. After graduation, she went on to Yale and was one of the first women to receive a Master of Fine Arts Degree in theater. Feeling that she needed to know something about business to get involved in the world, she also obtained a minor in economics.

## Emerging Professional Life and Early Influences

While at Yale, Alban met her husband, Guillermo Alban, an Ecuadorean, and moved with him to Ecuador, where she would live for some 15 years. While there, she began her family, having two daughters, Margarita – now a civic leader – and Patricia Lynn, who is a physician. Becoming fluent in Spanish, Billie Alban also taught in the drama department at the University of Guayaquil while cofounding a local repertory group, which would eventually play a part in her community restoration work that included staging plays to educate local people about poverty, health, and other issues of subsistent living. This work was done in collaboration with the Peace Corps in Ecuador.

Not long after moving to Ecuador, Alban and her husband began a transportation petroleum business, the Transpetroleo Corporation. She started the business of bunkering ships – fueling ships offshore so they can continue their journey. Soon after beginning this work as vice president, she realized that she needed a license as a master's ticket to captain, because in so doing, she could travel go up and down the South American coast to grow the business. So she went forward, qualified, and obtained her license. It was during this time that Alban got her first taste of business organization and found it to her liking; it would eventually be part of what supported her entry into the world of OD.

Alban recalled (2014) that while she was in Ecuador, she worked in a community development project to assist the "surbannos" ("barrios that were outside the city limits and not entitled to any services … nothing available!" [p. 9]). The project began to sponsor workshops that taught various trades as a means of self-sufficiency to the members of the slum barrios. Alban, a lifelong Episcopalian, was also involved in the seeding and building of a new congregation in Guayaquil with a group of other expatriates from both America and Great Britain. This effort would eventually evolve into what is now La Catedral Cristo Rey in the Diocesis Litoral Del Ecuador.

It was during this work that she was referred to National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Bethel, Maine, for further development through a colleague in the Episcopal Church. While exploring NTL and – after taking a community development program that was a T-group – she learned of the Program for Specialists in Organization Development (SPOD). Alban has readily admitted that her first application was denied. Warner Burke, who was on faculty at NTL at the time, said that the reason Alban was turned down was because she came from theater training and seemed inadequately prepared for SPOD. However, upset and resourceful, Alban wrote a letter furthering her case, explaining her business experience with the family transportation petroleum company as well as her concerted community outreach efforts and practice. Upon receiving the letter and being somewhat astonished at Alban's boldness, Richard "Dick" Beckhard and Burke agreed to give Alban a chance. Burke felt that much of her work clearly showed she understood management and leading change but that what she lacked was the formal language and training. Impressed by her management experience in Ecuador, Beckhard and Burke admitted her to the program. According to Burke, that was clearly the right decision. Alban became one of the first women to train in OD and one of the first to practice OD. Of her, Burke (2016) said, "Billie is to OD what Mary Parker Follett was to

management." And while Alban is far too humble to assert such a claim, she has before said (2014), "I may not have been the mother of OD, but I was there almost from the beginning – probably the oldest sister (p. 11)."

In the late 1960s, there was an increasing discontent with the exclusion of women among the NTL faculty. By then, Alban had become faculty and a notable practitioner. Burke and Beckhard began using her in all kinds of capacities, feeling that she was such a natural. Alban brought in Bunker to do work with her; and at the same time, there was Edie Seashore, who was a pioneer in the field of organizational development, heavily focused on the areas of coaching and feedback. She and her husband Charlie were renowned for their work on the "use of self." Alban, Bunker, and Seashore were joined by Elsie Y. Cross, also a pioneer in organizational development (OD) and of diversity for business, as well as the author of "Managing Diversity – The Courage to Lead (2000)." These women were not only pioneers in the field of OD, they were among the first significant women who advocated in the early years for the inclusion of more competent women in NTL, confronting the attitudes of the men at NTL. They were supported by Burke, whom Billie credited with being responsible for making many of the changes that led to greater inclusion of women in the OD field. After approximately 3 years, they had a confrontation with the men, which began changing the all-men's club of NTL and OD.

Beckhard, one of the founding fathers of the field of OD, had significant influence on Alban's development as a practitioner. When Alban first went to NTL and participated in a T-group, she heard Beckhard talk about organizations and the importance of organization structure, purpose, process, strategies, needs, leadership, etc. Impressed by his orientation, she quickly realized how important the work of OD was. As they both were fond of saying, we are all born into organizations – our family being the first and that being the place in which we primarily learn about how to handle leadership, relate to the outside world, deal with conflict, handle competing needs, and make plans to move forward. These ideas were crucial influences that impacted both her view of and how she worked with business, community, and religious institutions.

Alban said that Beckhard put on a workshop to determine how to help students in other programs understand OD. At one point, everyone went to lunch, but she stayed back with a friend, and they began to think about it and developed a design for the workshop. When Beckhard arrived, he reviewed her work and loved it – and they began a very close friendship and collaboration. Beckhard asked her to take over a workshop, being sure to collect data via interviewing people, creating interventions and so forth. Alban ran the workshop, with a very positive outcome. Even more impressed, Beckhard then helped Alban's career by deferring to her when he wasn't available to do the work. That, Alban said, is how she got her real start in OD. Their similar backgrounds – both training in the theatre before turning to OD – gave both of them something in common, while at the same time, providing unique experiences from which to draw in the development of their work together.

Beckhard believed that the purpose of OD was to ask how to improve the organization/system and then finding ways to improve it. This view was foundational to the early work of OD and Alban's induction to the work. Beckhard placed a lot of emphasis on helping organizations look at their strategic plans and intent and

then ask how to improve it. This focus helped organizations to function more effectively and manage change through a more systematized understanding of the organization, its identity and its environment. Beckhard's belief that organizations function better when they involve their employees in looking at all dimensions – such as strategy, department relations, across functions, etc. – weighed heavily in Alban's mind as she progressed as a practitioner. Beckhard understood more of the practice side of OD and postured that the field evolves theory out of practice, thus the importance of actual practice. He heavily promoted the learn-by-doing model. Given his practice orientation, he understood organizations from an applied point of view, arguing that one had to know how to *do* OD, not just talk about it. These views of systematization, engagement of stakeholders, and applied practice are influences that Alban incorporated during the entirety of her work.

Another early and key influence on Alban was Marvin Weisbord, who was significantly influenced by Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) who is credited as the "founding father" of OD. One key insight coming out of Lewin's vast legacy of work was the behavioral formula of $B = f(P,E)$, where a person's behavior is a function of his or her person interacting with the environment. From this notion is the foundation for realization that a person cannot be separated from his or her environment. This would also serve to ground Weisbord's practice theory (1987) that it is crucial to get the entire system in the room to seek "effective change," primarily because Weisbord also felt that if a person cannot understand the whole system, he or she will be challenged to change it. Weisbord's work in creating Future Search with partner Sandra Janoff was partly shaped by the likes of Eric Trist, Fred Emery, Merrelyn Emery, and Ronald Lippitt, as well as the field of systems theory. Notably, we see the influence of Lewinian action research methods impacting both Weisbord and Alban's practices. Alban and Bunker (1997) said, "Weisbord's thinking struck a deep chord with many of us. The notion of getting the whole system in the room was congruent with our experiences p. 22)." Weisbord was considered by many to be great at engaging people in practice – activities that make a difference for the organization.

Future Search's emphasis on giving purpose to meaningful change was a significant movement toward organizations' managing change by looking to the future so that it does not just come upon an individual. This made sense for Alban's practice orientation because it focused organizations on identifying where they would like to be in the best of all worlds and then told them how to plan to get there. This would become a philosophy that she would use in her own life beyond her work in OD.

Alban (2014, 2016) fondly recalled her time collaborating with Weisbord and said that she believes she influenced him as well, encouraging him to add "reward systems" to his now-famous six-box model, which he subsequently did (Weisbord 1976). Whereas both Weisbord and Alban trained in the managerial world of business (both in family business, to be precise) only later to stumble upon the field of OD, they have both become representative of bringing all the voices possible into the room and then facilitating the improvements and changes made possible by listening to those voices. For Alban, this hearkens back to those early influences from her father all the way through her formative years as practitioner influenced by Beckhard, Burke, and Weisbord.

As mentioned earlier, Beckhard served as dean of the early OD program in which Alban received her initial training. But his mentee, Burke, a noted industrial and organizational psychologist, was both teacher and, subsequently, collaborator with Alban. While at NTL, Burke became the director of the program and said that Alban was a natural "She [Alban] was a natural at designing, setting up and conducting experiential trainings," he said. "I felt she was a star!" Subsequently, he began to use Alban in all sorts of capacities. Burke left NTL in 1974 and went to Columbia University, where he developed two programs in OD, one basic and one advanced. He enlisted Alban to work in both, along with Harvey Hornstein. During this time, Burke became more of a mentor to Alban. She said that she learned much from Burke's scholarship but that he primarily provided her with a keen understanding of organization theory and its relationship to change management:

> It was a time where there were two groups: organization psychologists who looked at the individual and performance within organizations and then those in this emerging field of focusing on organization change thinking or early organization development, which was more group oriented. They decided to merge, realizing they were all dealing with the whole system, and the social psychology aspect is what they had in common. Organizational dynamics as well as organization development required you to come to know the system and realize the impact when new issues emerge in the environment. Warner was so good at the theoretical base and academia. (Alban 2016)

They progressively worked together for many years. But Burke was also responsible for encouraging her to write, Alban recalled. "On a flight to a client in the U.K., Warner said something to me that made a difference in the future of my work. Warner told me it was not enough to be creative and experienced. You had to be published (2014, p. 10)." Soon after that, the opportunity to write with Bunker came about.

## Renowned Collaboration with Barbara Bunker: The OD Partners

Alban met Bunker, a social/organizational psychologist, in the mid-1960s at Bethel. Alban remembered that during a Bethel meeting, Bunker was summarizing something very well. Alban was fascinated and knew that she wanted to get to know her. Bunker had previously been a graduate student at Teachers College, Columbia University.

While Alban was at Bethel with Seashore and others, there was a lot of small-group research going on, which was the reason so many people were going to Bethel to attend the small-group lab. Alban learned along with others who were translating the work on group dynamics from this experience to large groups. She was deeply involved in designing experiential activities for training (consultation) that went well beyond the T-groups and small-group dynamics. By 1987, the HRM program at Columbia had been developed by Burke, and Alban and Bunker – along with others – taught this 3-week program in OD every year and would do so for the next 15 years.

During the time, Alban and Bunker worked together in the late 1970s and 1980s, there was a lot of organization redesign going on in this nascent OD field. They began to hear about the Interactive Strategic Planning work Kathie

Dannemiller was doing in companies. She brought in hundreds – even thousands – of people and practiced in large groups to conduct interventions based on her change formula of *Dissatisfaction x Vision x First Concrete Steps > Resistance to Change (DxVxF › R)*. This is Dannemiller's refinement of Gliecher's (1960s original formula for change of C = (ABD)›X, where A is the status quo dissatisfaction, B denotes a desired clear state, D being practical steps to achieve the desired state, and X is the cost of the change (a version of this formula has also been credited to Beckhard and Harris).

This occurred during a time in which the OD field was primarily influenced by individual and small-group dynamics operating with a ratio of 1 (facilitator) to 8 (participants) – work that was then extrapolated and generalized to larger systems. Alban and Bunker reportedly looked at each other and realized that there was an emergent and radical movement of larger group actions taking place. Dannemiller went on to coinvent an approach to working with large groups, known as Whole-Scale Change, which resonated with Alban's deeply held belief that the whole system needed to be present. But one first had to ask who the stakeholders were – meaning, who really has a stake in the system and how it performs? Alban believed that when real stakeholders become engaged, that is when real change becomes sustainable. Their exploration into this emergent large-group facilitation for change phenomenon would find its way into Alban's practice and their partnership. Forming OD Partners, they worked with such companies as British Airways, Cathay Pacific Airways, Corning, ExxonMobil, Intel, ITT, Eastman Kodak, British Airways, and NASA, among many other private and public agencies, including religious congregations that were facing the need to adapt to a rapidly changing world, sometimes working with groups of 800 or more.

Both Bunker and Alban recalled the pair of them working very well together. Alban was a key collaborator and extroverted, while Bunker was more introverted and a more conceptual theoretical partner. Bunker said in an interview that Alban "was an extraordinary practitioner. Ideas would constantly generate from her work. She is also a very reflective practitioner who intuits how to work with her client." Alban would have an intuitive idea and then vet it with Bunker, and they would wrestle with the issue, both knowing that Alban intuitively had her hand on something that needed to be addressed. Alban's critical and intuitive assessment would then be balanced with Bunker's careful conceptual and theoretical knowledge, and together they would come up with the solution to work on the issue. Bunker's knowledge allowed them to frame the solution effectively, but Alban would always be correct about the initial issue. Both agreed that this became a defining characteristic of their mutual admiration and working relationship.

## Key Contributions: The Chronicler of an Emerging Era

While many contributions can be attributed to Alban, there are three for which this groundbreaking OD practitioner's work will most be remembered in the field of OD. First and foremost is her work on large-group interventions, stemming from her

lifelong collaboration with Bunker. Her second and perhaps more epoch-making will be the influence she has had on generations of OD practitioners who learned from her what OD is about and how OD works. And, third, her lifelong passion for giving voice to the voiceless in organizations continues as one of the hallmarks of large scale, if not all OD practice.

Alban and Bunker will always be known as major players of the conceptualization, furthering development, and systematizing of large-group methods. They become the chroniclers of the emerging practices of large-scale interventions evolving in the field of OD. Around the time they were becoming increasingly aware of the growing use of large-scale techniques, Bunker was contacted by then-Editor Clayton Alderfer of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (JABS), inquiring if she would be editor to a special issue on small-group methods. Bunker, in consultation with Alban, counterproposed to do the issue on large-group methods, and the editor agreed, saying if the two could not come up with a sufficient number of publishable articles, they could backfill with articles on small-group methods. Bunker and Alban sent out the solicitations for submissions and ended up receiving more submissions on large-group methods than they could publish. That particular 1992 special edition of JABS sold a record-breaking 5000-plus copies and went into a second printing and an updated special edition on large-group interventions in 2005. This was the affirmation that Alban and Bunker were onto something, and they started their journey together to write two books on large-group interventions.

Publisher Jossey Bass approached them to write something about these large-group methods. So the pair went to the Organization Development Network (ODN) with a proposal on large-group interventions. They realized they would be talking about their colleagues' work during their presentations and invited those people, originators of the techniques being discussed, to be in the room when they presented, to provide feedback, and to augment the dialogues. This led to these originators' talking with each other and engaging each other, which led to further development of their respective techniques. For the next 5 years (1993–1998), they began to work with ODN to organize four conferences in Dallas. These Dallas conferences on large-group interventions were very successful efforts in detailing a description and teaching about each method. They organized by theme, including whole-group decision-making, work design, and redesign, and methods for creating future, which helped people think about how and when to use these various methods. One major benefit of the Dallas conferences was that they made it easier and possible for both scholars and practitioners to use these methods to work with systems and subsequently advance the field. Until then, while the field of OD was oriented to systems theory, OD practitioners actually worked with small groups within organizations to address systems issues. These conferences and new methods changed the nature of how to gather all of the stakeholders in the system and get the work done, reprising Weisbord's influence that if you don't get the whole system in the room, you won't get the system issues addressed.

The work and outcomes of these conferences set the layout for what was to become their first book together, *Large Group Interventions* (1997). This book was the first to provide a systematic overview of large-group techniques and has become

a foundational book for all OD practitioners working at the system level. During the nearly 20 years since it was first printed, it has continued to provide the substance and guidance to use techniques that achieve both organizational ownership and effectiveness whilst getting all of the voices possible in the room. From the early influences of Lewin and Beckhard to more contemporary inspirations, this book has served to capture and demonstrate how change can be led at the systems level with a requisite understanding of the environmental context.

Part of the message in this book goes beyond the moral idea of democratizing large scale change efforts, to offer some very practical insights on the "why" or benefits of applying these techniques. Alban and Bunker (1997) offer that:

> Two major problems with top-down change are the amount of resistance that it creates and the time it takes to put the change in place….Representative groups or steering committees that do not meaningfully engage stakeholders do not produce commitment. Marv Weisbord (1987) is fond of saying that people will support that which they help to create. When everyone is involved in the decision process, carrying it out happens faster and with less resistance. It may seem strange, but getting everyone involved, even if it takes more time to plan and conduct change, is more efficient than trying to implement change "quickly and efficiently" using a small planning group." Furthermore, "Another advantage of using large-scale organizational change methods is access to information. The people closest to the problem or issue being discussed often have critical information that enriches the change strategy….by involving a critical mass of people, also access a critical mass of information that enriches the strategy. And, "A final advantage is that the diversity that comprises the whole system often creates synergy that leads to more innovative change – a more creative solution – than a small group can possibly produce." (pp. xvi–xvii)

The pair's subsequent book, *The Handbook of Large Group Interventions* (2006), further "chronicled" the extensive work using large-group methods that was occurring in the field of OD. A succinct history is provided about the unfolding and adoption of these techniques during the 1990s, along with case studies to further illustrate how to use them. Additionally, the authors provided four "core characteristics" that these methods have in common:

1. The inclusion of stakeholders;…that the people invited to participate include those who have a stake in the issues being discussed, regardless of level or function, whether they are inside or outside of the organization.
2. Engagement of multiple perspectives through interactive activities;….Participants engage in a series of activities that explore organization or community context and help them think more broadly than their own perspective.
3. An opportunity for Influence;….these structures allow people to have voice—to be heard—and to influence the outcomes under discussion at the meeting, and
4. A structure for finding the common ground/ agreement that participants share:…A goal and the process structure of many of these methods focus attention on the areas of agreement—the common ground—that participants share. (Adapted from 2006, pp. 19–20)

Alban's work (along with Bunker) on large-group methods will no doubt long be acknowledged and remembered at a meta-level. I would also propose that there are innumerable micro-level interactions for which Alban has made extraordinary

contributions to the field of OD: namely, the countless people whom she has trained and influenced by her scholarship, practice, and very being. From her early days in the PSOD program at NTL in the late 1960s to her leadership role in the 1970s, Alban was the doorway to OD for so many who came into the field. She has taught for more than five decades in renowned OD programs at Columbia and Pepperdine and has been formative in the lives of people who became OD practitioners. Whole generations of practitioners practice today having been guided by the core characteristics of large-group interventions, not just as techniques, but as a philosophy that the collective impacted deserves the dignity of being involved in that which will affect their lives.

This last statement, leads me to another profound contribution that Alban has made and that is making the moral imperative of giving voice to the voiceless also a valued and good practice for organizations as well as the field of OD to engage in. Perhaps, not the first to voice this, Alban certainly became the champion of this mindset in the practice and execution of leading change.

> In our experience, employees want to be treated like adults. "If there are difficulties the organization is facing, tell us about them", they say. "Help us understand the challenges. Allow us to offer our ideas and contribute to the solution. (2009, p. 22)

Recognizing that those with a "stake" in the process also had valuable insights and ideas that could improve as well as accelerate the change process being considered, Alban also believed that engagement of folks also leads to greater commitment and once offered,

> When I think about commitment, I think mission, enthusiasm, even passion. I see energy, excitement, and spirit, a willingness to put up with frustration and wrestle with obstacles. (1987, p. 151)

Alban and Bunker believe that central to an organization's success is the employees having a "sense of ownership." However, Alban will tell you that she believes this for any organization, albeit a company, or a community, or even the assisted living association she currently resides in. After moving into her assisted living community a few years ago, she realized that there was no bill of rights for the residents, and despite their shared ownership, the management could make changes and render decisions that affected the residents' lives without even asking. She proudly conveys that at 90 years of age, she launched meetings among the residents, organized and lobbied, and through their collective efforts got the Massachusetts State Legislature to pass HB-5358: An Act Establishing a Bill of Rights for Residents of Continuing-Care Retirement Communities. The legislative bill that was passed in March of 2015 ensured condo owners in these settings had a bill of rights for themselves. In her efforts to support the legislation, she testified that existing legislation did not include rights for residents, who may have invested their life savings to live in such arrangements and therefore needed protection, just like there would be in nursing homes and assisted living facilities. Those who have a "stake" in the issue(s) should be brought in and made a part of the process of change and

offered the opportunity to have their voices heard. I can't help but believe, and Alban agrees, that this in part can be tied back to the legacy and teachings of her father. A contribution she has carried forward over a lifetime.

## New Insights: Collectively Creating the Future

Alban's whole-system scholarship and practice has been profound for this author, as it has been for so many others. It has provided a basis for the insight of examining all organizing as community. She has brought this insight in to the field of OD and corporations and extended the whole-system approach to religious institutions as well (2008). The context of dynamic interactions becomes critical to the understanding of whatever "whole system" we are exploring. Moving away from the autonomous actor perspective, this legacy of work and its influences – stemming from its Lewinian origins – help us to see that all meaning is cocreated; thus, the work of the OD practitioner is to assess by not only collecting data but also understanding the interdependent stories of those involved in context, including themselves. Alban (Mead and Alban 2008, p. 133) offers these few reminders for doing so:

- You can't do it alone; you need the energy, wisdom, and commitment of the whole community.
- Build community; help the members of the congregation [*organization*] connect to each other.
- Give the people the opportunity to have meaningful conversations with one another.
- It takes persistence. One meeting does not do it; you have to keep at it.
- After an event, work with others to maintain the culture that existed during the meeting and carry the change forward.

As OD continues to bring clarity to organizations about the effectiveness of dealing with large-scale change, we as practitioners must do so in ways that allow the voiceless to be heard and be members in the dialogue for improvement. Alban herself has never gone anywhere without looking at the possibilities for improvement. She has demonstrated this many times, from her life at boarding school, to her work in the barrios of Ecuador back in the 1950s, to her latest achievement with the continuing care residents' Bill of Rights. Knowing that these living systems are a part of our life forever, she has taught us to both to look for opportunities for improvement and find the how of what can be done to make it better for all involved through processes of inclusiveness.

Alban has shown that social equity and the aims of business are not mutually exclusive but rather intricately support each other. An organization can see broader trends in the external environment but, ultimately, for most effective implementation, must act locally in a way that is meaningful for those involved. Her whole-system work has revealed that meaningful interconnection among people is essential in the forming of the collective future, ergo the organization's future. Alban and her

colleagues, notably Bunker, have demonstrated that the use of large-group interventions doesn't just connect people but actually builds community – community being a place where one has an investment and a sense of ownership, thus commitment to its success.

Alban showed through her work and advocacy that an organization's future is created by those who care – further, that this work can be done in a manner that is affirmative in nature. Her quintessential questions looked for what is possible together and include but are not limited to:

What is going well?

What if it was enhanced would be a significant improvement?

What secrets, that if they were sorted out, would further your [*organization*] life experience?

However, Alban (and Bunker) realized that the fostering of these large-group interventions would require educating leadership of an organization about their merits and benefits. She advises the OD practitioner that educating leadership for buy-in is essential to the use of these more democratic methods of intervention. Consequently, both leadership and the OD practitioner must shift to an understanding that:

> Large group interventions begin as events, but, as you will see, they can become new ways of managing in complex times. They require of management a willingness to democratize the workplace; they are not techniques for getting people to go along. They are genuinely participatory. They hold great promise for dealing with the uncertainties of the world we now face. (Alban and Bunker 1997, p. 10)

However, when used, these approaches assist in finding common ground amongst stakeholders, support mutual influence, and ultimately lead to a greater likelihood of innovative thinking.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: What Are the New Compelling Ideas in OD Practice

Much like the organizations she worked with, Alban et al. (2004) presents the field of OD with questions about the evolution of its [*OD*] future. First, theory must find a way to translate into practice, and practice must derive its legitimacy from sound theoretical premises. Clearly, the systematizing, articulation, and dissemination of both the discoveries in scholarship and practice must find their way to a common dialogue and integration. We can learn from Alban and many others of her time that we must also risk being bold as we do so. The work of OD must continue to evolve and improve or risk becoming staid and potentially irrelevant. New frontiers for understanding lay in the application of this work to new forms of organizing and the complexity in which organizations find themselves today. Much as the insights from Alban's work have supported moving beyond small-group work to systems level, there may be a call today to move beyond the systems theory paradigm to chaordic

phenomenon and the perpetual shifts found in rapidly changing dynamics that are characterizing organizational life for so many. While this is challenging, to say the least, we may realize enormous benefits for organizations from expanding our capacity to adapt and be flexible and responsive to complex processes (Mangiofico 2013).

Alban and Bunker not only chronicled the emergence of large-group methods but the importance of the implications of these methods as well. As organizations become more diversified, virtual, global, complicated, etc., these methods hold promise to continue to assist with performance yet may require transformation to achieve democratization and inclusiveness in these new forms of organizing. To avoid becoming staid, these methods will need to accommodate the dialogue necessary to cocreate meaning in an ever-changing and heterogeneous world. They ask themselves (2004), "Why are there not more new concepts that lead to innovations in practice emerging in the field today? (p. 404)." A question I would argue as relevant 13 years later as it was when it was originally posed.

Their scholarship bridged the divide between practice and theory that paved a new way for OD practitioners to support organizations in realizing greater possibilities. Both practitioners and academics must continue to look for ways to "connect" to further develop innovative ideas for research and theory as well as new methods for practice. What form and shape this collaboration takes is still being debated between the academy and many other OD-related organizations. However, as Alban and Bunker posit, there is always the need for "the exploration of shared or common ground that is often the first goals in bringing groups together (2004, p. 419)." Perhaps, one place to look is on the cutting edge of the field such as the conceptual exploration of the fields of complex and chaotic organizing or the creative practices being employed by the organizations that have inculcated OD in to their composition, as well as inventive practices being used by practitioners in atypical settings. How might research tell us more about these developments? What partnerships, if created, would further our understanding of what's possible? And what resources if brought together would have the synergy to shift the future of OD to new relevance? I imagine, there are innumerable opportunities out there today, just as there was when Alban and her colleagues began to look around and see what was emerging 25–30 years ago. Our challenge, and perhaps a key legacy of Alban and her contemporaries, is to follow the path paved of exploring and collaborating to find emergent common ground that could fundamentally shift the future of OD, just like they did.

A voice for inclusion in the pursuit of what is communally possible, Alban has been a testament for the collective voices to be heard. Her earliest work – before the work was even known as "OD" – was propelled by a deep belief in communities and community groups of people. She reflects the idea that all of us are always in communion in organizations. We are born into a family organization with its unique characteristics, leadership, relationships with its leadership, interdependencies, and the like and go onto our local neighborhoods, school, church, community institutions, work, and so forth throughout our lives. And, in each of these contexts, if invited into the discussion, we will talk about our ideas, feelings, beliefs, and dreams and create our future together.

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# Chris Argyris: The Iconoclast

**2**

Lee Bolman

**Abstract**

In a career that spanned more than 50 years, Chris Argyris played a unique, pioneering role in the development of our understanding of individuals, organizations, learning, and change. As a teacher and consultant, he was provocative, challenging, polarizing, and memorable. Many prominent scholars and practitioners credit Argyris as one of their most influential mentors. His influence stemmed from his writing as well as his personal impact. He provided the first major statement of the argument that conventional management practices create a fundamental conflict between organizations and people that is harmful to both because they treat employees like children. He developed the first comprehensive theory of organizational intervention, emphasizing core values, action research, and the ways that intervention and research can be mutually supportive. He emphasized the importance of clear values to guide efforts at organizational improvement, underscoring the importance of valid information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment. His work with Donald Schön on theories for action documented the pervasiveness of gaps between what people do and what they think they're doing. Those gaps impede organizational learning and effectiveness but prevent individuals and groups from seeing their own causality and result in behavior that deepens the problems individuals wish they could solve. Those ideas also led into work on organizational learning which emphasized that self-awareness and willingness to talk about "hot" issues are necessary but rare in organizational life.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Robert Putnam (1995, p. 37) opens his biography of Chris Argyris with a telling anecdote:

> Picture a meeting of the Harvard University Interfaculty Initiative on Mind, Brain, and Behavior. An eminent professor of neurobiology is giving a talk on the anatomy and physiology of the brain. Chris Argyris speaks up to say, "If I wanted to use this knowledge to help some human being be more competent, it seems to me it ain't going to help."

As Putnam comments, this is "vintage Chris" – and note, not "vintage Argyris" because throughout his career, Argyris was "Chris" to almost everyone who knew him, regardless of relative age or status. It was one expression of his preference for egalitarian relationships. Throwing an unexpected cat among the canaries was a signature Chris Argyris move; he thrived on conflict and controversy as vehicles for dialogue and learning. With a smile and a genial tone of voice, he would pose a question or offer a hypothesis that regularly caught people off guard and moved the conversation onto terrain where he had home field advantage. His interventions often flowed from two core ideas in his world view: (1) most people, including the best and brightest, are blind to their own interpersonal incompetence; and (2) science is good only to the degree that it helps make the world better.

Argyris was notorious as a courageous provocateur who was exquisitely attuned to other people's blindness and internal contradictions, and he zeroed in on opportunities to help others learn about them. He would open classes with students in counseling and education, for example, by telling them that much of their work was "incompetence covered up by love" (Kleiner 2008). Early in his tenure at Harvard, students at the Graduate School of Education criticized him in class for his joint appointment in the business school, and one student was applauded for his statement that "As long as they're businessmen, they're no damn good!" (Kleiner 2008). Chris listened and went on. At the next class, Argyris opened by calling on a black student, "I'd like to ask you about the concept of nigger. What's the meaning of the concept?" There was dead silence. The student asked, "Are you crazy, professor?" Argyris said he really wanted an answer. A spirited discussion ensued, and Argyris summarized it with the observation that the concept of nigger treats an individual as part of a stereotype that means, regardless of who you are, "If you're black, you're no damn good. Is that correct?" Students nodded assent. Then Argyris played audio from the previous class of the student saying businessmen were no damn good. He asked, "Ladies and gentlemen, what's the difference?"

Chris Argyris was both loved and hated, admired and feared by his students and colleagues. Few, however, would deny that he was memorable. Many spent years replaying in their minds his comments or confrontations and their debates with him. He was at his energizing, provocative best in person, and many saw him as an extraordinary teacher. Argyris was also a prolific scholar who produced seminal works throughout a career that spanned six decades.

## Influences and Motivations: An Immigrant Who Loved Combat

Chris Argyris and his twin brother, Tom, were born in New Jersey in 1923, the second and third sons of Greek immigrants (Argyris, 2017, personal communication). Chris and Tom were close throughout their lives, and that partnership helped them both deal with their mother – a dominating, larger-than-life figure whom the boys referred to as "the general." Their mother would sometimes punish a misbehaving child by making him stay outside overnight. On at least one occasion, Chris slept on the floor inside the front door while his brother slept on the other side of the door. Before attending school, Chris and his two brothers spent several years living with their grandparents in Athens. When he returned to the United States and entered school, he was a short skinny kid with limited English who was sometimes the target of ethnic slurs (Argyris 1992; Lundberg 1998). Those early struggles anchored self-examination and self-improvement as central passions in his life.

Chris was also the peacemaker in the family, as demonstrated in one of the great family legends. His brother Tom fell in love and married Bertie Frankenhouser, who came from a family of Orthodox Jewish holocaust survivors. Bertie's parents strongly opposed the marriage, and her father pronounced that his daughter was now dead to him. As fate would have it, on a subsequent trip to Holland,

Mr. Frankenhouser visited a favorite café and was stunned to see Chris sitting at a table. Mistaking Chris for Tom, Mr. Frankenhouser fainted. Chris correctly intuited that this was his new father-in-law and told him when he woke up that this was clearly God's work. Chris subsequently arranged for the two sets of parents to meet, and it turned out that the two immigrant families enjoyed one another very much.

At the outbreak of World War II, Argyris joined the US. Army Signal Corps, eventually rising to become a second lieutenant. He viewed his military experience as formative in many ways. Chris saw a wider world than his immigrant community in New Jersey and learned that he had capacities and talents beyond those that he had previously recognized. He was profoundly influenced by his experiences as both subordinate and leader in a large and complex organization. He also got a powerful lesson in self-awareness.

> I was the officer in charge of several large Signal Corps depots in Chicago. I had formal awards to show that I was a very effective leader in terms of technical performance and efficiency. After I was discharged, I visited the depots as a civilian. I then found out that the employees had serious doubts about my human skills. Consistent with my upbringing, my reaction was that I had better learn more about myself. (Argyris 1992)

After the war, Argyris began his undergraduate studies and majored in psychology at Clark University, which had a strong tradition in that field. Its first president, G. Stanley Hall, was the founder of the American Psychological Association, and Sigmund Freud introduced psychoanalysis to North America in a series of lectures at Clark in 1909. While at Clark, Argyris first met Kurt Lewin, whose dictum that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" became a central theme in all of Argyris' work. He described Lewin's impact as "tremendous" and could have been talking about himself when he summarized his view of Lewin: "Lewin did three things: he was committed to understanding reality as his participants understood it, he used a combination of so-called 'normal' science with a narrative-integrative approach, and he tested his ideas by trying to change the things he was studying" (Woodell 2003).

After Clark, Argyris followed the environmental psychologist Roger Barker, with whom he had worked with at Clark, to the University of Kansas. At Kansas, Argyris earned a master's degree in psychology and economics before heading to Cornell to study for a Ph.D. under the ethnographic sociologist, William Foote Whyte.

Whyte shared Lewin's belief that behavior had to be understood as a function of both person and environment, as well as Lewin's interest in action research. In his classic study of Boston gangs, *Street Corner Society* (Whyte 1993), Whyte became a participant observer who sometimes intervened to help his subjects solve problems that they faced. In describing what he learned from Whyte, Argyris said, "He was part of the Chicago School of Sociology that also focused on observing reality. He would send us out as graduate students and tell us to 'observe something.' He really helped us build a strong commitment to connecting with observational data. But he was also interested in change. In the last 30 years I would say he did more than any other sociologist to promote social change, especially in the area of labor-management relations" (Woodell 2003).

Argyris completed his work at Cornell in 1951, receiving the first Ph.D. in organizational behavior ever awarded and began his career at the Yale Labor and Management Research Center, working with its director, E. Wight Bakke. During his first year, Chris was asked to do an assessment of the state of research on organizations, which gave him an opportunity to interview the leading scholars in the field. He was then invited to talk at a conference of those leading lights:

> I presented my findings in a conference chaired by Douglas McGregor. He began by asking me to say one or two things I wanted to highlight. Without hesitating, I told the group that my biggest learning was how little they knew about each other's work, how insulated they were, and how their behavior did not match their espoused theories about integration and progress. There was deafening silence when I finished. . . . Later, several big names advised me that what I observed was probably correct. They also added that it may have been a poor career strategy to discuss those ideas publicly. Such discussions, they advised, were best done discreetly. Those who know my work know that I have not followed that advice. (Argyris 1992, p. 50)

Argyris stayed at Yale for 20 years, eventually becoming the Beach Professor of Administrative Sciences. He led the creation of Yale's Ph.D. program in organizational behavior and served as chair of the department of administrative sciences, which subsequently evolved into Yale's School of Management.

In 1971, Argyris moved to Harvard University as James Bryant Conant Professor of Education and Organizational Behavior. It was there that he began a collaboration with the M.I.T. philosopher Donald Schön, which led to some of his most significant late career work. Even after moving to emeritus status at Harvard, Argyris remained active as a scholar and consultant. He published his last book, *Organizational Traps: Leadership, Culture and Organizational Design*, in 2010, 3 years before his death at age 90 in 2013. He was survived by his wife of 63 years, Renee, and their two children, Dianne and Phillip.

## Key Contributions: There Is Nothing So Practical as a Good Theory-Based Intervention

The bulk of Argyris' work appears in books rather than journal articles. He once explained that he preferred writing books because he knew he could write what he wanted and get it published. The titles that Argyris chose for some of his most significant books provide signposts to organize a discussion of his major contributions.

### Personality and Organization

*Personality and Organization*, published 6 years after he completed his Ph.D., was the work that first put Argyris on the scholarly map. The publication year, 1957, positions it as one of the earliest efforts to develop a theoretical framework for the emerging field

of organizational behavior. It appeared a year before March and Simon's *Organizations*, 3 years before Douglas McGregor's T*he Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), and 4 years before Rensis Likert's *New Patterns of Management* (1961). In his introduction, Argyris wrote that it was too early to develop a mature theory, but he hoped to produce "a few basic foundations for what may someday develop into a systematic framework for the field of organizational behavior."

The title captured the book's focus: Argyris wanted to work at the intersection of research and theory on personality, on the one hand, and organizations on the other. "Most of this book, therefore, focuses on the question of *why* people behave the way they do in organizations." His central theme was that there was a basic conflict between human personality and prevailing management practice. Argyris argued that people have basic "self-actualization trends" – akin to the efforts of a plant to reach its biological potential. From infancy into adulthood, people advance from dependence to independence, from a narrow to a broader range of skills and interests. They move from a short time perspective (interests quickly developed and forgotten, with little ability to anticipate the future) to a much longer-term horizon. The child's impulsivity and limited self-knowledge are replaced by a more mature level of self-awareness and self-control.

Argyris argued that organizations often treated workers like children rather than adults. This person-structure conflict was built into traditional principles of organizational design and management. The structural concept of task specialization defines jobs as narrowly as possible to improve efficiency. Bosses direct and control subordinates, thus encouraging passivity and dependence. The conflict worsens at lower levels of the hierarchy – narrower, more mechanized jobs, more directives, and tighter controls. As people mature, conflict intensifies. Argyris argued that employees try to stay sane by looking for ways to escape these frustrations. He identified several options:

- They withdraw – through chronic absenteeism or simply by quitting.
- They stay on the job but withdraw psychologically, becoming indifferent, passive, and apathetic.
- They resist by restricting output, deception, featherbedding, or sabotage.
- They try to climb the hierarchy to better jobs. Moving up works for some, but there are rarely enough "better" jobs to go around, and many workers lack the desire or skills to become managers.
- They form alliances (such as labor unions) to redress the power imbalance. Union movements grow out of workers' desire for a more equal footing with management. Argyris cautioned, however, that union "bosses" might run their operations much like factories, because they knew no other way to manage. In the long run, employees' sense of powerlessness would change little.
- They teach their children to believe that work is unrewarding and that hopes for advancement are slim.

Argyris offered no simple fixes for these issues. Research was still too primitive, he said, though he proposed that "reality-centered leadership," which included self-

awareness and an understanding of individual and group dynamics, would help. He devoted a chapter to the "development of effective executive behavior" and articulated a theme that was to figure throughout his career. He described a visit to an executive development center in Europe where he asked the faculty how they felt about helping participants develop greater awareness of themselves and their impact on others. They said it was very important. Then Argyris asked why it wasn't part of their teaching. He noted that in discussions of business cases, the faculty focused on case content but not on "the executives' *own behavior* which is not only before their eyes, but *caused* by their interactions with each other." (Argyris 1957, p. 223)

Argyris reprised his views on the person-organization relationship almost 15 years later in *Integrating the Individual and the Organization* (1964). He updated his argument about conflict between individual and organization before devoting attention to methods for improving alignment. He wrote that better alignment required reducing defensive activities and the energy consumed in maintaining those defenses, while increasing individuals' experience of psychological success and the energy available for work. His recommendations included job redesign, a contingency model of structure (different structures for different kinds of decisions), and more emphasis on values. He acknowledged that his suggestions were speculative and would require further research.

## Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness

Argyris became active in the T-Group movement in the 1950s, and this interest is strongly reflected in *Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness* (Argyris 1962), which chronicles an intervention with the top executive system of a "very large corporation located in the Midwest." (Although not identified by name, we know that company was a major division of IBM in an era when "Big Blue" was perhaps the most admired business in America). In this book, Argyris briefly returns to the theme of conflict between individual and organization but argues that the conflict can be leveraged for growth. He added that how to do this is different at the top and bottom of organizations. Because lower-level workers have little control over their conditions of work, changes in the socio-technical environment are needed. But at executive levels, where individuals have high control over their work environment, it is essential to intervene at the interpersonal level.

The problem among executives that needs to be addressed, according to Argyris, is that traditional organizational values too narrowly emphasize rationality, control, and avoiding emotions. Those values impair interpersonal effectiveness because they lead executives to suppress feelings and ignore interpersonal dynamics. An emphasis on rationality leads to an irrational neglect of human issues that are a major element in executives' work. The effort to suppress emotions causes execs to avoid seeing or discussing sensitive or threatening ideas or issues. As a result, they are less likely to experiment or to be open to new possibilities. In such a system, individuals will also tend to be unaware of their impact on others and ineffective in solving interpersonal problems.

Much of the book describes an intervention that began with a diagnostic phase that included individual interviews with each executive and observations of their meetings. Argyris then organized the data around a series of themes such as the difficulty of getting at the facts, the proper role of the leader, difficulty of being a dissenter, management by crisis, and mistrust. Argyris presented the results in a 6-h, off-site meeting. The central message was that the executives, without knowing it, were creating the very problems they hoped to avoid. By the conclusion of the feedback session, the executives agreed to participate in a laboratory education program – with a T-group as its central feature.

In the book, Argyris develops an extensive conceptual rationale for why T-groups make sense as an intervention. In the classic T-group opening, the leader (Argyris uses the term "educator" in this book) typically opens with a few words encouraging the participants to learn from the experience by focusing on the here and now and then goes quiet. Participants face the question, "Now what?" They soon learn that their usual behavior patterns do not work, and they are forced to invent new ones. In the process, they begin to provide one another feedback, which helps them break free of old norms and develop new patterns. Argyris was always passionate about the importance of "directly observable data" and provides extensive accounts of what the executives actually said to one another during the T-group. An example, focusing on how bosses and subordinates interact with one another, is below:

> #2: They [corporate headquarters] really ask for too much detail. We get frightened, so up goes the paper work to be protected.
> #8: This makes our system an advisory one. We go up to them to argue our case before a judge. And the worst thing we can do is not have all the details.
> #7: Good point. I think we have little confidence and trust in our decision-making process, come to think of it.
> #2: (To division president) It was a lack of trust in, frankly, you. I felt if you had your way, you would have wanted X fired, and I thought it through far enough to be convinced that this was wrong.
> Educator: What would have happened if you could talk about your fears? This could get to the point that he [the President] may not trust you in firing people.
> #2: That's a good point.
> President: Yes, in all honesty, #2, I do feel you're weaker in handling the people problems.
> #2: And I've felt this.
> President: And by the way, I get this from above. Not as much. I think they are trying to leave us alone. Every time some major problem hits, I get put on the spot. "What's going on there?" "Are you a weak manager?" "Do you have incompetent people?" (Argyris 1962, pp. 205–206)

After the laboratory, Argyris spent several weeks studying the executives and interviewing their colleagues and subordinates. He found that the laboratory had led to significant changes in the behavior of the laboratory participants that were visible to those around them – they were more patient and understanding, better listeners, and less controlling. But colleagues and subordinates also reported that the changes started to wear off after a few weeks, and they were not sure how much to trust the

new behaviors. In a 9-month follow-up, Argyris found that the T-group participants still felt it had made a significant difference. One executive, for example, described a situation in which he discovered a computing error that might have cost the division hundreds of thousands of dollars. Before the intervention, he might have tried to hide the bad news for as long as possible, but now he felt free to discuss the problem immediately with the president.

Argyris summarized the outcomes of this intervention by saying that there was much to learn but reason for optimism: "We are suggesting nothing less than that the basic values which emphasize the dignity and importance of the individual can be integrated with the fury and pressure of everyday administrative life to the benefit of the individual and the organization" (Argyris 1962, p. 285).

In the next several years, the bloom came off the rose for the use of T-groups as a vehicle for organizational change. Argyris was involved in a notorious effort to use T-groups as an intervention into the culture of the US State Department. Although the foreign service officers who participated in the laboratories found them encouraging, the bureaucracy fought back, and ultimately the program was canceled. More scholar than diplomat, Argyris wrote a report in which he argued that efforts to reform the State Department would invariably fail unless they found a way to alter a culture that discouraged forthrightness and risk-taking and encouraged those who played it safe and did "not make waves" (Argyris 1967). The state department's defensive, risk-averse response was consistent with his diagnosis, but that meant the intervention made little dent. Argyris and the field of organization development gradually concluded that successful change required more than T-groups.

### Intervention Theory and Method: A Behavioral Science View

Argyris presented a broader view of organizational change in *Intervention Theory and Method,* published in 1970, well after his T-group interventions in organizations like IBM and the US State Department. He argued that it was a mistake to try to separate research and intervention and that the best way to understand something was to try to change it. While acknowledging that there were risks in combining research with intervention, he insisted that traditional approaches to research were based on the same top-down, unilateral values as traditional, dysfunctional models of organization. He argued that research, intervention, and organizations should all be designed around the same three core values: valid information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment to choices. He used case examples to support the argument that those three values could provide guidance in all of the major phases of a behavioral science intervention, including choice of client, diagnosis, intervention strategies, and assessment of outcomes. The book filled a gap in the literature by offering a comprehensive theory of intervention and had a significant impact on the thinking of practitioners in the rapidly growing fields of planned change and organizational development.

## The Applicability of Organizational Sociology

Argyris returned to the question of research and the role of the social scientist in several later books. *The Applicability of Organizational Sociology* (Argyris 1972) was based on a paper Argyris presented at an invitational conference. In it, he vigorously criticized the work of several eminent sociologists who were in the room, including Peter Blau, Charles Perrow, and James D. Thompson. Of Blau, he wrote bluntly that his "work may be more properly viewed as a quality control check on civil service regulations than as a contribution to formal organization theory." (Argyris 1972, p. 18). He wrote of Thompson that his "variable human seems to be minimally variable and minimally human." He criticized all the sociological work for failing to deliver on its promise to study the organization as a whole, for neglecting individual and interpersonal elements in organizations, and for providing no insight into how organizations might be changed and improved. The discussion of his paper at the conference was spirited, to put it mildly, and Chris loved the energy in this kind of debate.

Argyris developed this argument further in *Inner Contradictions of Rigorous Research* (1980). He repeated his argument that because traditional research strategies rest on the same values as traditional approaches to management, they produce internal contradictions, interfere with collection of valid data, and reinforce the status quo rather than foster new and better organizational forms.

## Theory in Practice: Increasing Professional Effectiveness

After he moved to Harvard in 1971, Argyris began a collaboration with Donald Schön that was to last until Schön's death in 1997. Until they began to work together, Argyris' output had been almost entirely single-authored books and articles, but the books he wrote with Schön are among the most influential of his career. The two began working together on an initiative to train school leaders. They brought together Schön's ideas on reflective inquiry and reflection in practice with Argyris' emphasis on interpersonal processes and directly observable data. They developed a novel structure for written personal cases, asking individuals to describe a situation in which they were or had been involved. The description was to include a section in which the individuals indicated what they intended and hoped to accomplish. Then they were asked to provide a brief script for how the conversation might go, structured in two columns, as in this excerpt from a case written by a manager (M) about a conversation with a subordinate (S):

| My underlying thoughts and feelings | What was said |
| --- | --- |
|  | M: S, during the past year, your performance has not been acceptable. You seem to be carrying a chip on your shoulder. I've heard words like lethargy, uncommitted, and disinterested in describing your recent performance. Administrators cannot have those characteristics. Let's discuss your feelings about your performance |

*(continued)*

| My underlying thoughts and feelings | What was said |
|---|---|
| He's aware of his current level of under-achievement. Why does he want to know if everyone noticed? | S: I recognize that I have not been performing up to my capability. Before we discuss that further, I'd like to know how widespread the perception of my lack of motivation is |
| | M: I think everyone in the firm has noticed |
| This old chestnut should be behind us | S: I have not been treated fairly. I worked hard as a leader at Office A, and the record shows it. I have not received recognition for my accomplishments. Instead, I've been kicked in the teeth |
| | M: You know that I'm not familiar with the specifics of the problems at Office A. I don't see any point in reminiscing about something that happened several years ago. Nothing constructive will come of it. I want to talk about you today – matters pertinent to your present and future performance |
| That is a valid point, but what's he doing with all his time? | S: There's not much I can do here with the weak economy |

The right hand column shows what was said between the parties. The left hand column contains unexpressed thoughts, feelings, or reactions that the case writer had in the course of the conversation.

Argyris and Schön collected hundreds of similar cases and discovered a remarkably consistent pattern. The cases almost invariably showed notable gaps between intent and behavior. Those gaps were easily visible to others who read the case but largely invisible to the writer. The cases suggested that almost everyone seemed to be reading from the same generic script, programmed to follow the same basic values and strategies. From these data, Argyris and Schön inferred that human reasoning and behavior are determined by two different versions of a "theory for action." One is the espoused theory, which contains individuals' own account of their behavior. Ask an individual to describe, explain, or predict his or her behavior, and the response constitutes espoused theory. But the case evidence consistently showed gaps between espoused theory and actual behavior. Individuals typically see themselves as more rational, open, concerned for others, and democratic than others see them. Such blindness is persistent because people learn little from their experience. Argyris and Schön attributed this to a generic theory-in-use that could account for much of the behavior they observed across the cases that they collected. They labeled it Model I (see Table 1).

Lurking in Model I is an implicit assumption that social interaction is dangerous, and you have to protect yourself against the ongoing risk of blows to your self-esteem and self-image. Individuals accomplish that through unilateral control, self-protection, and protection of others. Argyris and Schön acknowledged that Model I often worked on accomplishing goals, but they also emphasized the costs to learning. Individuals using Model I test assumptions privately, making self-sealing more likely. Another consequence of Model I is "single-loop learning," which often takes

**Table 1** Model 1 theory-in-use

| Core values (governing variables) | Action strategies | Consequences for behavioral world | Consequences for learning |
|---|---|---|---|
| Define and achieve your goals | Design and manage the environment unilaterally | You will be seen as defensive, inconsistent, fearful, selfish | Self-sealing (so you won't know about negative consequences of your actions) |
| Maximize winning, minimize losing | Own and control whatever is relevant to your interests | You create defensiveness in interpersonal relationships | Single-loop learning (you don't question your core values and assumptions) |
| Minimize generating or expressing negative feelings | Unilaterally protect yourself (from criticism, discomfort, vulnerability, and so on) | You reinforce defensive norms (mistrust, risk avoidance, conformity, rivalry, and so on) | You test your assumptions and beliefs privately, not publicly |
| Be rational | Unilaterally protect others from being upset or hurt (censor bad news, hold private meetings, and so on) | Key issues become undiscussable | Unconscious collusion to protect yourself and others from learning |

the form of "do-better" learning – individuals look for ways to do better at whatever they're already doing. But, Argyris and Schön argued, Model I inhibits double-loop learning, which inquires into the assumptions and values that underlie the behavior. At the organizational level, Model I enables tactical but not strategic learning – organizations may find ways to improve activities within the current business model but will have difficulty seeing or addressing the need for more fundamental change. This phenomenon is illustrated in many cases in which new entrants outmaneuvered established organizations at times of discontinuous change in technology or markets.

Argyris and Schön proposed an alternative theory-in-use, Model II, as an antidote to the blindness, defensiveness, and ineffectiveness generated by Model I. Where Model I was rooted in a large body of evidence, Model II was a rooted in the authors' theory. The governing variables in Model II were the same as the core values that Argyris had proposed a few years earlier in *Intervention Theory and Method* (1970): valid information, free and informed choice, and internal commitment. Model II emphasizes mutual influence, public testing, and combining advocacy with inquiry.

## Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective

In their next book together, *Organizational Learning*, Argyris and Schön built an organizational superstructure atop their theory of action conceptual model. It can be summarized in the following propositions:

1. *Organizational learning involves the detection and correction of error.*

   Argyris and Schön offer case examples throughout the book in which individuals in an organization were aware of significant error, but the organization could not act on this information because it was never communicated to decision-makers in a way that they could hear, understand, and use.

2. *Single-loop learning enables an organization to continue current activities and achieve existing goals, while double-loop learning enables an organization to change its underlying norms, policies, and objectives.*
3. *Most organizations are good at single-loop learning but poor at double-loop learning because they have O-I learning systems.*

   Argyris and Schön's model of O-I learning systems depicts a world in which information that is vague, ambiguous, hard to access, or inconsistent gives rise to error. In an ideal world, a good dialectic would enable the organization to detect and correct error but that is difficult or impossible in a Model I behavioral world where error is threatening and people are programmed to protect themselves and avoid threat. So they cover up. They avoid discussing sensitive issues or sanitize the sensitive content, which makes communication more ambiguous and confusing. This creates a bind because people's covering up violates organizational espoused theories that "we are rational people who do what it takes to solve important problems." No one wants to admit to themselves or others that they covering up. So they camouflage the cover-up and then camouflage the camouflage.

4. *When organizations recognize their inability to detect and correct significant errors, they often call on outside consultants for help. Those consultants may provide excellent diagnoses of the problems, but their interventions often fail because the consultants themselves operate in a Model I behavioral world and thus reinforce the dynamics that produced the problems in the first place.*
5. *Interventions to change limited learning systems can only work if individuals learn to employ Model II theories-in-use and then work to create Model II organizational learning systems.*

   Argyris and Schön illustrate this proposition using a number of cases of chronic organizational dysfunction in the private, educational, or public policy sectors. They note that in all these cases, participants feel caught in a system that they know is ineffective but that they despair of fixing. Caught in double binds, they play organizational games in which they use unilateral action and manipulation to protect their own interests. Their actions reinforce the very dynamics they wish they could change, but they are unaware of their own causality in maintaining ineffectiveness.

   In their conclusion, the authors acknowledge that one of their fundamental propositions is yet untested: can an intervention that focuses on the behavioral dynamics succeed in creating the O-II system that they recommend. They admit that such a goal is very difficult to achieve. Systems are stuck at O-I because members lack the capacity

to engage in double-loop inquiry and learning. Developing that capacity is difficult and time-consuming. Why bother? Argyris and Schön suggest that organizations may not have a choice: their limited capacity to learn stifles adaptation, innovation, and creativity, all increasingly vital to success in the modern world.

## New Insights: Learning Is Fundamental but Hard

Three principles that I learned from Chris Argyris pervade everything I do as a scholar and teacher.

1. Blindness and incongruence are pervasive in human interaction and constitute a fundamental barrier to learning and effectiveness at both the individual and the organizational level.
   I learned this truth at a personal level at the same time that I was trying to grasp it conceptually. As a young doctoral student, I had in Chris Argyris a faculty advisor who was tireless in his willingness to challenge and confront me. No hint of incongruence or wisp of interpersonal blindness escaped his notice. Working with Chris was hard and sometimes painful. But I would not have wanted it any other way. He was offering what I knew I needed – an opportunity to learn about the parts of myself with which I was most blind or least comfortable.
2. The personal learning needed to increase authenticity and self-awareness requires uncommon courage, honesty, and skill.
   Learning about aspects of oneself or one's behavior is inherently uncomfortable, if not painful. Everyone knows this – that is why there is an almost universal unconscious conspiracy to keep each other in the dark. As Argyris puts it, "All over the world, there is a theory-in-use about how to handle people nicely. The theory goes something like this: If you think you have to say something that will be upsetting to another person, do it in such a way that they can't hold you responsible for upsetting them. So, you bypass the threat, you cover up that you're bypassing, and you cover up that you're covering up."
       If you violate this rule of handling people nicely, they may feel hurt or angry and blame you. They may attack, pull back, or break off the relationship. In groups and organizations, you may be viewed as lacking in social grace, disruptive, or unwelcome. Those around you are likely to mobilize to whip you into line and, if that fails, to seek to expel you from the group. Only high levels of courage and skill can overcome this wall of resistance.
3. As a scholar and teacher, my primary task is learning, not comfort.
   As scholars of organizations, our work is to help individuals and larger systems attain the insights, skills, and commitments they need to build relationships and systems that value truth and freedom as well as effectiveness. Sometimes, that work requires willingness to challenge and push boundaries. That does not mean we have license to be uncaring or unpleasant, but avoiding "sensitive" topics or messages that might be upsetting often means that we steer clear of the areas that have the potential to produce the greatest learning.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Integrating Practice and Research

### The Individual and the Organization

When Argyris published his classic book, *Personality and Organization,* he opened the door for research on person-organization fit, though it took more than three decades for scholars to do significant empirical work in the area (in part because there were so few scholars in the field when he first published). In their meta-analysis of research on person-organization fit, Verquer et al. (2003) traced the concepts back to Argyris, but the earliest of the 21 studies they surveyed was published in 1989. Kristoff-Brown and Billsberry (2013) note that person-organization fit is "one of the most widely-used psychological constructs in industrial and work psychology" (p. 1). They acknowledge that there is substantial debate among scholars about how to conceptualize and measure the concept but add that empirical work has found that "fit has been shown to influence employees' motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, tenure and performance" (p. 1). Meta-analyses by Hoffman and Woehr (2006) and Kristof-Brown (2005) confirm that person-organization fit is related to variables such as performance, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover, and job satisfaction.

### Interpersonal Dynamics in Organizations

Social psychologists such as Bales (1970) had studied interpersonal behavior in small groups before Argyris published his 1962 book, *Interpersonal Competence and Organizational Effectiveness*, but their prior work was mostly descriptive and provided little guidance on how to improve interpersonal effectiveness. Consistent with his world view, Argyris offered a normative perspective on how interpersonal dynamics could impair organizational effectiveness and what could be done about it. In this and subsequent work, Argyris insisted on the importance of directly observable data on how organizational participants interacted with one another. His ideas subsequently fed into a number of other research strands, including work on groupthink (e.g., Janis 1972), group performance (e.g., Hackman and Morris 1975), interpersonal trust (e.g., Ferrin and Dirks 2002), and emotional intelligence (e.g., Salovey and Mayer 1990).

### Organizational Change and Intervention

By the time that Argyris published *Intervention Theory and Method* in 1970, there was a growing literature on organizational development (OD) and planned change (e.g., Beckhard 1969; Bennis 1969; Schein 1969) that tackled a range of techniques and challenges. Argyris' work, however, was distinctive in offering a comprehensive and systematic conceptual framework. Argyris extended these ideas in his subsequent work on change, leadership development, and organizational learning, and his ideas have had substantial impact on the field (Cummings and Worley 2014).

## Organizational Learning

Argyris and Schön's 1978 book, *Organizational Learning*, was the most cited and probably the most influential work in his long career. Argyris and Schön conceptualized organizational learning as detection and correction of error. They focused particularly on how managers' interactions with one another obstruct learning because they avoid undiscussable issues and tiptoe around organizational taboos. This often seems to work in the short run because it avoids conflict and discomfort but creates a double bind. Managers can't solve problems without dealing with issues they have tried to hide, but tackling them would expose the cover-up. Argyris and Schön's ideas deeply influenced the thinking of Peter Senge in his highly influential 1990 book, *Organizational Learning*, and are reflected in other perspectives such as Kogut and Zander's (1992) argument that "growth occurs by building on the social relationships that currently exist in a firm."

Argyris and Schön's discussion of organizational learning reflects a particular focus within a broader field. Huber (1991), in his review of the organizational learning literature, sees conceptual divergence and a paucity of cumulative research, in part because scholars conceptualize learning in a variety of ways and publish across many different journals and disciplines, making it harder for scholars to find one another. So, for example, where Argyris and Schön define organizational learning as detection and correction of error, Levitt and March (1988) argue for viewing it as "encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behavior" (p. 319). Crossan et al. (1999) equate it to overall renewal of the enterprise and argue that it encompasses "four processes – intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing – linking the individual, group, and organizational levels."

## Social Science Research and Action Science

Following the lead of Kurt Lewin and his doctoral advisor, William F. Whyte, Argyris was a proponent of action research (or action science) from the beginning of his career. He argued that in practice, most social science was internally inconsistent because its basic methods inhibited the collection of valid data and prevented researchers from being helpful to the groups and organizations they studied. In his view, social science research was typically hostile to the people who were being studied. His argument rested on the proposition that standard social science methods are built around the same values of unilateral control and unilateral protection that dominate standard managerial practice – values which make it difficult to detect or correct error and to deal with threatening or sensitive topics. As a result, social scientists create a behavioral world in their relationships with the subjects of their research in which their findings will reinforce the status quo and offer no help in solving pressing social problems. Argyris' work has had a significant influence on the field of action research (see, e.g., Friedman 2001; Greenwood and Levin 2006; Torbert 2004). His critique of mainstream social science has been ignored or rejected by many scholars but not all. Gergen (2012), for example, cites Argyris as showing

that social science research has led to knowledge that "encourages government manipulation of the public" and is "ultimately inimical to social well-being" (p. 123). Hoshmand. and Polkinghorne (2002) cite Argyris in developing their argument that "the knowledge base of the [psychological] profession should be derived with diverse methods and from multiple sources, including the knowledge of practice" (p. 55), because that would enable researchers to take account of "the contextual instability of [researchers'] theories and the embedded nature of their research findings" (p. 60).

## Conclusion

An iconoclast throughout his career who found much to critique in the world around him. Argyris developed a coherent, distinctive, and provocative set of ideas that continue to challenge educators, practitioners, and scholars. "As Argyris' own theory predicts, his work threatens the scientific and managerial status quo, and he has been criticized by scholars and managers alike" (Lundberg 1998). He challenges educators to deepen their reflection on their values, their practice, and the relationships they create with their students. He models ways of learning from conflict, and he encourages an appreciation for the value of self-reflection and willingness to discuss the undiscussable. He asks practitioners to risk moving out of the safe but stultifying world of conventional ideas about organizations and leadership, to embrace values of valid information and free, informed choice, and to enhance their ability to learn from their experience. He challenges scholars to take responsibility for making the world a better place rather than developing theory and knowledge that reinforce the status quo. Throughout his life, Argyris retained a passion for self-improvement, for learning more about himself, and for making organizations more effective and humane. He wanted to help create a world in which that passion was more widely shared.

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# Achilles Armenakis: A Journey of Discovery – Seeing Change Through New Eyes

**3**

Dennis R. Self

**Abstract**

The Scottish poet, Robert Burns, once wrote that "the best laid schemes o' mice and men, gang aft agley" (as cited in Crawford and MacLachlan 2009, p. 48). The journey Achilles Armenakis has taken perhaps can be best described as a journey to understand why the best laid change schemes of men have "gang aft agley." This chapter describes his personal journey along with those of his colleagues to not only understand the problems that arise when organizational leaders try to implement change initiatives but also to offer a framework by which organizational symptoms impacting organizational performance may be recognized, causes of those symptoms discovered, and solutions to "fix the causes" may be proposed. Understanding the process of diagnosis and evaluation, while identifying diagnostic bias, initially drove much of his research. However, during his voyage of research and discovery, Armenakis focused on change readiness or readiness for change in an organization. Along with his colleagues, and those doctoral students he so much influenced as a teacher, he has sought to answer the critical question of how change impacts organizational members, or change recipients, and what motivates them to not only accept but embrace a change initiative. I was one of those students fortunate enough to have the opportunity of studying under him and

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being along on part of that voyage. A favorite quote of his over the years has been that of Marcel Proust (Proust, *Remembrance of things past*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981 edition): "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes." Somehow, this has always seemed appropriate.

## Contents

## Introduction

There is an old saying that the only constant is change, to which we might add that understanding it is, therefore, critical. Because it is an industry of change consultants has emerged over time to assist managers in understanding and dealing with the particular forms of change impacting their organizations. Correspondingly, theoretical and empirical research has emerged in academia to explain change in its various forms, the impact of those forms and outcomes. A seminal paper by Lewin (1947) shaped much of that work as researchers focused on the phases of implementing change (or unfreezing, moving, and refreezing as Lewin described it). One of those researchers was Achilles Armenakis, who applied the three phases or stages of

change, expanding on and redefining the three stages as readiness, adoption, and institutionalization. Armenakis focused on understanding organizational members' beliefs about change and how best to create readiness for change. As such, diagnosis of the organizational context, the situation itself, and the member's beliefs to enable change leaders to develop effective strategies of change has been a critical part of his research.

## Influences and Motivations: Collegial Mentoring

Achilles Armenakis enrolled in the management doctoral program at Mississippi State University in 1967. An early mentor of his was management professor Dr. Donald (Don) C. Mosley, Sr., an active consultant who became interested in the emerging field of organizational development (OD). In the courses he taught, Mosley exposed Armenakis to numerous research articles on OD, including research by Kurt Lewin (1946, 1947). At the end of Armenakis' coursework, Mosley included Armenakis in an action research project with a US government-funded project in Mississippi. Action research comprises four phases, namely, problem diagnosis, action planning, implementation, and evaluation (Lewin 1946). Using an OD approach, Armenakis assisted in the problem diagnosis phase of action research. Interviews were conducted with numerous employees of the organization, generating much rich qualitative data. At night in the motel rooms, Mosley provided guidance to Armenakis about conducting interviews. Subsequently, during this project Armenakis' role was to design a method for evaluating the changes to the organization. This practical challenge of communicating to the client organization the results of the change project introduced Armenakis to the difficulty in evaluating organizational change. Working with his dissertation director, Mosley, and in conjunction with his other committee members, Armenakis conducted an empirical investigation of the evaluation problems experienced by OD consultants, and then devised procedures from the scholarly research to resolve the empirically identified problems (Armenakis 1973).

The action research project with Mosley provided the foundation for Armenakis' career in organizational change since the project involved all phases of action research. After Armenakis completed his doctoral studies, he was employed at Auburn University, where he established his research program in organizational change. In 1977, Armenakis founded the Auburn (University) Technical Assistance Center (ATAC), partially funded with a grant from the Economic Development Administration. ATAC (which still is operating; see http://www.auburnworks.org) is an applied research and consultation center which was designed to assist businesses in improving organizational effectiveness. Released from all teaching assignments, Armenakis devoted full time to providing management and technical assistance to businesses throughout the southeast USA. Thus, he was able to apply his interest in organizational change. Many of the projects he directed while in ATAC included the action research phases. Thus, his experience in these projects stimulated him to publish articles in the scholarly and

practitioner journals described below. In 1985, he resumed his full-time professorial role as Lowder Professor of Management.

The organizational culture of Auburn University's Department of Management also influenced Armenakis' research interest. The collegial culture of the department and the norm of publishing in academic journals resulted in developing a network of close colleagues. In particular, Arthur G. Bedeian, Hubert S. Feild, Stanley G. Harris, Kevin W. Mossholder, and William H. Holley served as valued colleagues that shared research ideas and solutions to practical issues faced by academics and practitioners. Additionally, the Auburn University PhD program allowed Armenakis to work with many talented graduate students.

## Key Contributions: Action Research

Armenakis' key contributions to organizational change can be grouped into five topics, namely, advancing expertise in evaluation; importance of uniqueness in organizational diagnosis; change readiness; strategies for implementing organizational change: a model; and theory integration research.

## Advancing Expertise in Evaluation

Armenakis' work on evaluation began with his dissertation (Armenakis 1973). In this research, he surveyed practicing organizational development consultants and inquired about the problems they experienced in evaluating their consultation projects. From the problems identified, he developed solutions and guidelines found in the scholarly literature to resolve the problems (cf. Armenakis and Feild 1975; Armenakis et al. 1976; Armenakis and Smith 1978).

After publishing several articles in academic journals on evaluation problems and recommended solutions, as described above, he was influenced by the research on evaluating organizational change by Professor Robert (Bob) T. Golembiewski. In evaluating organizational change, researchers might rely on respondents' articulations of organizational conditions temporally, using a quantitative methodology, e.g., self-report questionnaires. However, embedded in these articulations are what Golembiewski et al. (1976) identified as alpha, beta, and gamma change. *Gamma change* was defined as the condition in which the respondents redefine the concepts. Thus, the domain assessed at time-1 is redefined at time-2. *Beta change* occurs when the continuum (e.g., Likert scales) on which concepts were measured were recalibrated. That is, a "three" at time-1 is recalibrated to be a "two" or "four" at time-2. *Alpha change* is the articulation of organizational conditions when gamma and beta changes are absent. Armenakis quickly realized the value of Golembiewski's change typology and began developing methodological procedures to isolate the three types of change. From his attraction to the change typology, he began a series of research articles to propose methodologies for isolating concept redefinition, i.e., gamma change, and,

scale recalibration, beta change (cf. Armenakis and Zmud 1979). His research and that of other researchers on the change typology was summarized in Armenakis (1988). The research described in that summary fits into two categories. One category, labeled design approaches, included modifications in the research design which incorporated the ideal scale (cf. Armenakis and Zmud 1979) or the retrospective procedure (Terborg et al. 1980) or some combination of both. The second category, labeled statistical approaches, analyzed the respondent articulations using covariance analysis (Schmitt 1982). More recent research by Schmitt and Kuljanin (2008) has reconfirmed the importance of using covariance analysis to evaluate temporal assessments of change recipient responses to quantitative scales in organizational change.

Armenakis and colleagues (Mossholder et al. 1995) experimented with content analysis of qualitative data in assessing emotional reactions of 245 top echelon managers to an organizational transformation in a global appliance manufacturer. Computer-aided textual analysis (CATA) can be considered as a method to ameliorate the change typology issues in evaluating change. Although the change typology issues were not investigated, this article demonstrated the convenience of CATA in reliably and validly content analyzing qualitative data for assessment purposes.

## The Importance of Uniqueness in Organizational Diagnosis

During the diagnostic phase of action research, the objective is to identify the problem symptoms and determine problem causes. When a systematic diagnosis is conducted, the diagnostician ideally focuses on the *uniqueness* of the organization. Thus, the likelihood of solving the wrong problem is minimized. Armenakis typically initiated his change projects, which included a diagnostic program including numerous interviews of a representative random selection of managers and non-managers. One example of how this approach was used in a grey-iron foundry business is explained in Armenakis et al. (1981). Each interview consisted of open-ended questions. After explaining the purpose of the interviews, assuring each interviewee of the confidentiality of the interview information, and the interviewee describing his/her job, the first question asked was for the interviewee to explain the strengths/successes of the organization. This allowed the interviewee to talk freely about the positive aspects of his/her job/organization. Next, the interviewee was asked to explain the weaknesses/struggles the interviewee experienced. With the proper rapport established, the interviewee would typically open up to his/her perceptions. The natural next question is concerned with what the interviewee visualized as what changes he/she felt were necessary. And, finally, what were the interviewee's expectations regarding the purpose of the action research process. Ideally, especially in larger organizations in which interviewing large numbers of employees becomes expensive and time consuming, a quantitative scale is administered. The quantitative scale can be tailored to the organization by developing items from comments made by the interviewees or from combining existing scales readily available from the published literature.

**Fig. 1** The diagnostic funnel (Adapted from Gregory et al. 2007)
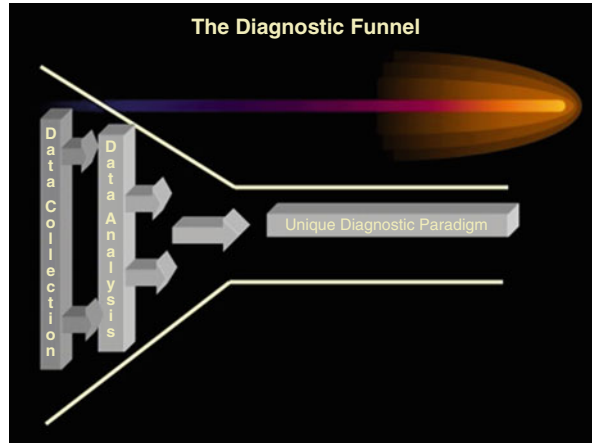
## Minimizing Diagnostic Bias

The accuracy of the diagnosis will affect the success of the organizational change process. As explained in Armenakis et al. (1990), diagnosis is information processing. This work on diagnostic bias was built from the contributions of Kahneman (2011). Bias can result from selecting inappropriate diagnostic models and incorrectly evoking heuristics during the diagnostic process employed by diagnosticians, thus resulting in misdiagnoses. In an article which demonstrated how to reduce the likelihood of bias (Gregory et al. 2007), the diagnostic process was depicted in a funnel shape. The information acquired during the diagnostic phase from open-ended interview questions was typically organized into Likert's (1967) causal, intervening, and outcome variables (CIO) and is depicted as the mouth of the funnel. The spout of the funnel, achieved through analyzing the collected data, is depicted as being much narrower than the mouth and represents the unique diagnostic paradigm for the organization. Thus, this approach maximizes the likelihood that the uniqueness of the organization will be recognized, and any changes conceived will be appropriate to address the problem causes (Fig. 1).

## Using Computer-Aided Text Analysis

With the advent of computer-aided textual analysis (CATA), Helmuth et al. (2015) demonstrated how qualitative data collected during an organizational diagnosis could be quantitatively analyzed to maximize reliability and validity. CATA has never been described as a diagnostic method in organizational diagnosis by change researchers. First, qualitative data collected during the diagnosis of a call center operation were manually analyzed and grouped into Likert's (1967) causal, intervening, and outcome categories. Then, the data in these categories were transformed into Pondy's (1967) multistage organizational conflict model, which represented the unique diagnostic

paradigm. The next step of the diagnosis involved using DICTION (Hart and Carroll 2012) to assess the rhetoric used by call center employees in describing their interactions with call center clients. This analysis was then used to determine how call center clients could better cope with the conflict between clients and call center employees.

## The Value of Action Groups in Diagnosis

Action groups (Moates et al. 2005) have been demonstrated to be useful in verifying a diagnosis, another step in determining that the diagnosis accurately describes the unique issues which inhibit the organization's effectiveness. The composition of action groups should be representative of the management and operative employees in the organization. The groups can be fed back the results of the diagnosis and charged with the responsibility of determining the content representativeness of the diagnosis. The feedback would consist of the major issues identified during the diagnostic phase. Action groups would first have the opportunity to add any new issues they felt were not included and then determine the relative importance of all issues. With time and resources as limited constraints, decisions can be made regarding the order in which issues should be tackled.

## Change Readiness

One of his most significant contributions was emphasizing the importance of change readiness in organizational change. The basic strategy to Armenakis' organizational change efforts involved employee participation. Getting employees involved in the diagnostic phase is significant in building not only ownership but also readiness for the impending changes (Armenakis et al. 1993; Armenakis and Harris 2002). Employee behavior is a function of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions (Fishbein and Azjen 1975). Readiness, Lewin's (1947) unfreezing phase, is created by changing the beliefs central to creating readiness, namely, discrepancy (i.e., believing that change is needed), appropriateness (i.e., believing that a proposed change is appropriate), efficacy (i.e., believing that the change can be implemented), principal support (i.e., believing that there is formal and informal support for a change), and valence (i.e., believing that the change will produce some benefits for the change recipients). When change recipients are asked about strengths/successes and weaknesses/struggles during an organizational diagnosis, they begin articulating organizational issues that are pleasant, as well as unpleasant, to them. It is natural for them to begin exchanging their opinions with colleagues, especially opinion leaders, which builds momentum for the change. This momentum builds principal support which can also translate into a belief that "we can do this" (i.e., efficacy). The belief of valence begins when the change recipients realize they are being queried about changes that will improve their job/organization. But they must also believe that any changes will benefit them personally. The appropriateness belief can be influenced by them expressing what they think should be changed.

These five beliefs can also serve as diagnostic information when attempting to determine why a change intervention was not successful. This is explained below when the importance of monitoring the progress of a change effort is explained.

The readiness program (Armenakis et al. 1993; Armenakis and Harris 2002) is guided by a process model which capitalizes on social learning theory (Bandura 1986) and incorporates the relevant factors important in creating readiness (see Fig. 2). Central to the model is a change message incorporating the five beliefs described above. Three influence strategies, namely, persuasive communication, active participation, and external information, are used to transmit the change message. The information collected during diagnosis can usefully be incorporated in the change message which must be communicated by global and local change agents, including opinion leaders who serve as horizontal change agents. Some of the content of these persuasive communication media (e.g., live oral presentations, informal interpersonal communications, written communications, and recorded presentations) can be taken from the responses of the change recipients during the diagnostic phase. In addition to the persuasive communication strategy, the change message can be transmitted using an active participation strategy, which can be comprised of vicarious learning and enactive mastery tactics. Vicarious learning can be achieved by change recipients observing colleagues being actively involved in the change activities, as well as visiting other sites to observe other personnel executing job activities. Enactive mastery can be achieved by getting change recipients involved in analyzing current job duties for efficiency and effectiveness. In
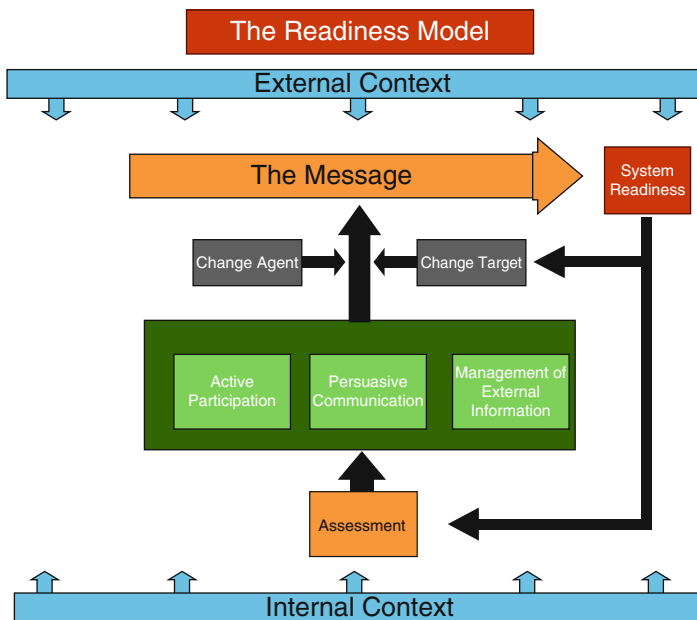


**Fig. 2** Readiness model (Adapted from Armenakis et al. 1993)

combination with the persuasive communication and active participation strategies, external information (e.g., news reports from respected media) can be incorporated in the change message to increase its credibility.

Also included in the model are change agent and change recipient attributes. In order for the change message to be believable, the change agents (i.e., global, local, and horizontal) must be perceived as credible. Moreover, the change agents must walk the talk. Knowing the composition of the change recipients is crucial. Being able to identify opinion leaders (i.e., horizontal change agents) is important in providing useful information about internal contextual conditions, as well as getting buy-in and building momentum for the change.

Monitoring of the readiness program can be helpful. Change agents should be alert to their assessments of each of the beliefs. Ideally, if one (or more) of the beliefs is assessed as being unfavorable, the readiness program should be analyzed, tweaked, and extended. Basically, if the change recipients are not considered *ready*, the change agents have not been effective. The assessment of the beliefs can be made using observation of, and interviews with, change recipients. Information provided by opinion leaders can be helpful in determining the pulse of the change recipients. If desired, quantitative scales (Armenakis et al. 2007; Holt et al. 2007), based on the readiness theory, have been specifically designed to conveniently assess the extent to which the beliefs represent change recipient readiness. For example, do change recipients believe that (a) change is needed; (b) the change is appropriate; (c) they can achieve the goals of the change: (d) the change agents (i.e., the global, local, and horizontal change agents) are walking the talk; and, (e) they will benefit from a change? If any of these beliefs are not widespread throughout the population of change recipients, resistance may be brewing. Actions need to be taken to improve the specific beliefs.

In a case study of monitoring an organizational change, Armenakis et al. (2007) described how they employed a qualitative methodology to assess a major organizational transformation implemented in 2001 in 1500 employees of a global information technology company. This is the same organization described in Armenakis and Harris (2002). In late 2001, the company was not achieving its stated objectives for the transformation, so the CEO requested assistance in determining why. The events of 2001 (i.e., the dot.com bust and the terrorist attacks of 9/11) rapidly changed the external environment. The researchers conducted interviews with the top management team. A content analysis of the interview information revealed the top management team believed the strategy for the transformed organization was no longer appropriate (given the external environmental events). Furthermore, the top management team did not believe they could effectively execute the original strategy. Thus, the two beliefs, i.e., appropriateness and efficacy, were insufficient. In other words, the TMT expressed they could not execute an inappropriate strategy. This was interpreted as a *warning* rather than resistance. After discussing this information, the TMT agreed that the strategy needed tweaking to better fit the changed external environment. Subsequently, the organization's performance improved. This IT transformation case demonstrated the value of the application of the beliefs in temporally assessing the effectiveness of organizational changes.

**Fig. 3** Implementation model (Adapted from Armenakis et al. 1999)

## Strategies for Implementing Organizational Change: A Model

To support his readiness model, Armenakis and his colleagues proposed an integrative model for planning and implementing change interventions. Armenakis et al. (1999) proposed a process model incorporating social learning theory (Bandura 1986) to guide the implementation of change efforts (Lewin's 1947, moving phase). This model is the companion to the readiness model and is intended to provide change agents with the necessary information to develop and execute an implementation program for organizational change (see Fig. 3). The seven implementation strategies (namely, active participation, persuasive communication, management of external and internal information, human resource management practices, rites and ceremonies, diffusion practices, and formalization activities) are explained as mechanisms for transmitting the five components of the change message. Essentially, the model can serve as a "toolkit" for implementing organizational change. The importance of the change agent and change recipient attributes is stressed as crucial in the success of any change effort. As with the readiness model, the change agents (i.e., global and local) must be perceived as credible. Furthermore, the knowledge about the change recipients, including who can be counted on to

serve as horizontal change agents, is critical. One subtle distinction about the implementation strategies is they serve to *reinforce* the five beliefs which comprise the change message. In other words, the organizational change should reinforce (a) the change was needed; (b) the change was appropriate; (c) the change recipients are effectively implementing the change, (d) the change agents are walking the talk; and (e) the change recipients are benefiting from the change. Some of the reinforcement is actually provided constantly by the change recipients performing their new duties. However, the change agents should also take opportunities to feedback the results of the organization's performance (e.g., costs, revenue, profit, etc.).

## Theory Integration Research

Armenakis also made a significant contribution to the field through integrating research on organization change. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) viewed the literature on organizational change during the 1990s. In the article, they selected exemplary research which reflected contemporary thinking for the time period. The research was organized around four major themes, namely, content, context, process, and criterion issues. The purpose of this review was to emphasize the importance of each theme in the design and implementation of transformational change efforts. That is, in order for organizational change efforts to be successful, change agents should be attentive to the impact of each theme on the outcome of a change effort. Further research by Self et al. (2007) and Walker et al. (2007) explained the importance of each theme in organizational change efforts.

Oreg et al. (2011) conducted a 60-year review of the quantitative research which assessed change recipients' reactions to organizational change. The model developed from the review comprised antecedents, explicit reactions, and change consequences. The antecedents were grouped into pre-change antecedents (e.g., change recipient characteristics and internal context) and change antecedents (e.g., change process, perceived benefit/harm, and change content). Explicit reactions consisted of affective reactions (e.g., stress and pleasantness), cognitive reactions (e.g., change beliefs), and behavioral reactions (e.g., change recipient intentions). Change consequences included work-related consequences (e.g., job satisfaction) and personal consequences (e.g., health). From this analysis of the research, numerous theoretical issues and practical implications were discussed with suggestions for future research.

## New Insights: Toward Increasing Success in Change

Despite the best efforts of organizational managers and change management consultants, academic studies of change suggest that change initiatives are as likely to fail as they are to succeed (e.g., Ghosal and Bartlett 2000; Keller and Aiken 2008; Meany and Pung 2008). Armenakis et al. (1999) posited that these failures may occur because of management's failure to "shepherd the change effort through the entire process of change from diagnosis to institutionalization" (p. 98). Likewise,

Isabella (1990) posited that as a change progresses, different assumptions of what is happening may be called for, referring to them as "evolving interpretations" (p. 7). Labianca et al. (2000) stated that any resistance to change by organizational members could be "motivated...by the constraints of well-established, ingrained schemas" (p. 235.). It is therefore important to understand what is transpiring in the minds of organizational members as the change unfolds.

Lewin (1947) first proposed that change goes through three phases. The first is *unfreezing* when organizational members become open to change. The second phase is *moving*, when organizational members begin to adopt new behaviors necessary to implement the proposed change. The final phase is *freezing* (or *refreezing* as it is sometimes labeled) when the new change becomes standard procedure and practice. Thus, for Lewin, the critical first step to effectively and successfully implement a change initiative is that employees must be willing to let go of their current beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. They must be open to the change. In Armenakis et al. (1993), and later in Armenakis et al. (1999), Armenakis and his colleagues took the Lewin model and expanded on it, referring specifically to the creation of *readiness* (for change) as necessary before the organization and its members could move on to the *adoption* of the change initiative which, if successful, would lead to *institutionalization* of the change initiative (making it permanent).

Armenakis and his colleagues drew upon Fishbein and Azjen (1975) to argue that the behavior of employees was a result of their beliefs, attitudes, and intentions. Thus, to create readiness for change in an organization, which Armenakis et al. (1993) defined as "the cognitive precursor to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort" (p. 681), organizational leaders must address those beliefs, attitudes, and intentions in their employees. This specific focus on employee reactions to change made Armenakis and his colleagues' work different from the prescriptive and top-down approaches of other change researchers (e.g., Anderson and Anderson 2001; Kanter et al. 1992; Kotter 1995). Indeed, Armenakis and his colleagues' approach seemed more in line with what Palmer et al. (2009) described as a contingency approach to change (e.g., Dunphy and Stace 1990; Balogun 2006).

The contingency approach recognizes that even in a top management team, different managers will hold different perspectives as to what exactly the ideal goals are to be achieved and what might be the best actions to take. Second, change issues are complex enough that "off-the-shelf" solutions are rarely appropriate. Finally, because of the nature of the change issue, the nature of the solution related to the change, and the overall context of the situation, there is no one best approach, thus different leadership approaches may be called for (Palmer et al. 2009). From this perspective the Armenakis model (1993, 1999) can be viewed as a change leadership model.

If leadership is defined as the ability of one individual to influence other individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse 2012), then the Armenakis model is a leadership model. Faced with a change issue, the change leader must not only assess and understand the change issue, but consider the change issue from the perspective of the organization's members. Thus, a stakeholder analysis (Harrison and Shirom 1999) is a necessary tool in determining who will be impacted by the change, how

they have reacted in the past and, thus, may react to the change, various attributes, and the benefits and costs to them. The change leader, under the Armenakis et al. (1999) model, recognizes that change recipients may hold five beliefs or sentiments about any change: that the particular change may be necessary, that what will be done is an appropriate response, that each change recipient believes that both the individual and the organization are capable of implementing the change because the organization will provide the resources needed, that key people also believe in the change (those whom the individual change recipient relates most closely to, trusts, respects, etc.), and, finally, that the benefits may outweigh the costs to the change recipients. Recognizing this, the change leader can apply various strategies to shape the beliefs of the change recipients toward the change issue and initiative. Armenakis and colleagues (1999) provided for seven different strategies (e.g., active participation, persuasive communication, and formalization activities) available to the change leader.

What makes the Armenakis model contingent in nature is that it recognizes that the five beliefs held by the change recipients are not five, equal in influence weight beliefs. Based on each recipient's personality, experiences, attributes, and attitudes, different recipients may give different weights to the different beliefs. For example, employee A may hold greater confidence in his or her ability to deal with change than employee B. Employee C may have higher trust in the change leader than employee D. Different organizational members are not the same. There may be different attitudes toward change based on past experiences. Cynicism may be low or high. Morale may be low or high. Thus, the change leader must determine which combination of strategies may be best, given the circumstances, and how much weight to give to each. Initially, the change leader may rely heavily on managing internal and external information, combined with persuasive communication techniques to sell the change recipients on the need for change. To build (or rebuild) trust, getting change recipients to become actively involved in designing and implementing the change initiative may be appropriate (e.g., task forces, action teams, etc.). For those perhaps more cynical or skeptical about the change, the use of pilot programs and signaling out "small wins" (e.g., the diffusion practices strategy) may be needed. For long-term institutionalization of the change initiative, changes in policies and practices may be called for (the strategies of formalization activities and human resource management practices).

The strategies are not applied in stand-alone fashion, but in various combinations as deemed appropriate. Thus, through the combination of the strategies of active participation, management of internal information, diffusion practices, human resource management practices, and rites and ceremonies, a pilot program could be implemented, training provided to manage the program, information gained from the program circulated throughout the organization, and wins achieved from the success of the program publicly recognized in various ways. As time passes, different strategies may be employed in different ways and combinations, especially as the beliefs, and subsequently behaviors of the change recipients, are shaped. Thus, it can be seen that the Armenakis et al. model is a contingent leadership model.

Recently, the findings of the Gallup Poll on the state of employee engagement in the workplace was released (Woosley 2006). The findings showed that over half of all employees are disengaged from their workplaces. Over the past several decades, the workplace in many respects has not been friendly to employees. They have been downsized, their jobs outsourced or replaced by automation, salaries frozen, etc. As a result, over the past several decades, it has been made abundantly clear to employees that they are no different than the computer which sits on their desks, or the copy machine in the copy room, or the cubicle walls in which they sit – they are merely another expendable asset to be disposed of when no longer needed. Understandably, there is a lack of engagement, and a lack of trust in management. As Atkinson (2006) noted, trust is the foundation for all transactions and relational obligations. But if the relationships between manager and employee have become purely transactional, and any change perceived by the employee as having more costs than benefits, employees may express little enthusiasm for change (Dym 1999). Employees may be skeptical that management understands or even has the ability to deal with threats to the organization or opportunities that may arise (Gadiesh and Gilbert 2001). However, recognizing the beliefs that employees may hold, not only about specific change issues, but about the organization in general, the change leader can use the different strategies of Armenakis' (and colleagues) model to create an environment, which will lead to employee engagement in making a change initiative successful. The strategies (e.g., permitting opportunities for employees to be actively engaged in dealing with the change issue, sharing critical internal and external information, and recognizing employees who achieve small wins) can make the environment one that is supportive and based on mutual respect (cf. Atwater and Brett 2006; Bakker et al. 2007; Xu and Helena 2011). Thus, the Armenakis and colleagues' model can be viewed as a contingent-based leadership approach to implementing change in organizations, which can be used, regardless of which other prescriptive or process change management model is used, because it is not a change model as such – it is a leadership approach to guiding change.

## Legacies: Two Major Contributions

The contribution of Armenakis to the study of organizational change can be considered as twofold. First, while Pettigrew (1985) originally framed organizational change in terms of content, context, and process, through Armenakis' and his colleagues' research, a taxonomy of factors was developed that must be considered in understanding the nature of organizational change and should shape research on organizational change in terms of content, process, and context (Armenakis and Bedeian 1999; Holt et al. 2007; Self et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2007). This is important because when a change initiative (aimed at targets such as improving productivity or profitability) is introduced into an organization, it may impact employees in a number of ways, placing new burdens on work groups, changing the makeup of work groups, requiring the learning of new skills and relationships, creating new job and career opportunities, and eliminating old ones. At the same

time, the existing milieu impacts the change initiative. Current policies and procedures, organizational structure, and the organizational culture (or subcultures) and climate may impede the successful implementation of the change initiative. Therefore, a simultaneous assessment of variables must take place, due to the impact on organizational members.

However, as various researchers have noted (e.g., Choi and Behling 1997; Keller et al. 2010), a significant number of major change initiatives fail to achieve the desired goals of the change leaders in these organizations. This may be due to the failure of change leaders to comprehend the complexity of introducing a change initiative of significance into an organization, challenging the existing paradigms (Harrison and Shirom 1999). The Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) model provided a means to understanding this complexity.

The content factor addresses the "what" in organizational change. In 1993, both Macy and Izuma (1993) and Robertson et al. (1993) published meta-analyses of change literature as far back as 1961. They found that change content included human resource management issues, technological issues, structural issues, and social issues, among other issues. These issues related to management and organizational performance. Thus, if either management or organizational performance did not meet predetermined standards, then changes in the various content factors should result in improvement in management or organizational performance.

The process factor addresses the "how" in organizational change. That is, how will the particular change initiative be implemented? More specifically, the process factor embodies the specific methods the change leader or organization employs in implementing the change initiative. Depending on the nature of the initiative, seven possible strategies (Armenakis et al. 1999) may be employed: Active participation or getting organizational members involved in the implementation of the change, diffusion practices (using pilot studies, finding small "wins" and finding "champions" to disseminate the message), formalization activities (changing or creating policies that will ease and support implementation of the change initiative), managing internal and external information (information that explains the need for change, measures the status of the change implementation, etc.), persuasive communication (delivering the message of change by the change leader, change champions, and other supportive stakeholders), human resource management practices (selecting the right people, possessing the needed skills, knowledge, etc.) to both assist in the implementation of the change and to fit within the now changed organization; providing the training and development for current and future employees, measuring employee performance, especially as it relates to acceptance of the change, and effectiveness in operating in the changed environment; and finally, the rewards and benefits which would come from successful implementation of the change initiative and continued application of it, and use of the rites and ceremonies of the organization to help shape the desired culture post-change, as well as recognize those employees who embraced the change initiative as it was implemented and continue to do so. Typically, several of these strategies will be used in combination.

Contextual factors are the circumstances or the existing external and internal conditions that have been shown to influence organizational effectiveness. Multiple

facets comprise the overall context, including the external context and internal context. Contextual factors are the "why" part of change – they explain why the change is necessary. External contextual conditions will influence the performance of the organization and will be the driving force to implement content changes (strategic reorientation, organizational restructuring, and so forth) with hopes of improving an organization's performance. Internal contextual conditions are those organizational conditions which influence employees' beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. An organizational change is implemented to achieve *fit* with the context.

Empirical support (e.g., Holt et al. 2007; Self et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2007) has been found for the Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) model. Self et al. (2007), for example, assessed the acceptance of a change initiative in a telecommunications company, as a result of variables related to the content, process, and context factors of the Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) model and found that these factors contributed to employee acceptance of the change initiative. Thus, the model posited by Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) remains a viable and comprehensive approach to developing successful change initiatives and methodologies, especially if a systematic and simultaneous assessment for the three factors is undertaken.

The second contribution of Armenakis to the study of organizational change is his and his colleagues' focus on the change recipient. Schein (1999) wrote that the failure to create readiness for change in organizations was a major contributor to the failure of change initiatives in these organizations. Kotter and Cohen (2002) further suggest that these failures are commonly related to human issues, not technical issues. While many organizational scholars tend to focus more on prescriptive and top-down-driven change (e.g., Anderson and Anderson 2001; Kotter 1995), Armenakis and his colleagues opted to focus on the change recipients within an organization. Thus, rather than a leader-centric approach, they chose to follow a more change recipient-centric approach to the study of change. As Armenakis and Harris (2009) noted, whatever the change may be, be it incremental or radical, ". . . what do change recipients consider when making their decision to embrace and support a change effort or reject and resist it? Since changes must ultimately be implemented by change recipients, understanding their motivations to support or resist organizational changes provides very practical insights into how to best lead change" (p. 128).

Armenakis and Harris (2009) noted that six interrelated themes emerged from their long study of organizational change: (a) the identification of certain *beliefs* that influence change recipients' motivations toward change; (b) the importance of change recipient participation in change initiatives; (c) the importance of proper diagnosis regarding the need to change; (d) proactively focusing on creating readiness for change, rather than reactively addressing resistance for change; (e) identifying those leadership strategies which could shape change recipient beliefs during the change process, and finally; (f) the importance of continuously assessing the reactions of the change recipients toward organizational change.

## Theme 1: The Change Beliefs

Armenakis and his colleagues (1993, 1999) identified five different change beliefs as those held by change recipients when faced with change: (a) discrepancy, or the belief that a change is needed; (b) appropriateness, or the belief that the proposed change initiative is the correct one to apply; (c) efficacy, or the belief that the change recipients and/or the organization have the capability to successfully implement the change (this can also include feelings that the organization will support the change recipients' efforts to make the change); (d) principal support, or the belief that formal, as well as informal leaders within the organization will actively support the change (formal leaders can range from the "C-Suite" leaders down to immediate supervisors, while informal leaders are the opinion leaders); and finally, (e) valence or the belief that there is some positive benefit (either short- or long-term) for the change recipient in the implementation of the change. By proactively seeking to understand the nature of these beliefs in change recipients, the change leader can shape the change message from the beginning, leading to a greater likelihood that readiness for change in the minds of the change recipients will be created.

## Theme 2: Change Recipient Participation

Getting change recipients involved even as early as the identification of the proposed change initiative, but certainly in the planning of the implementation, is an important step for the change leader. As Nutt (1986) demonstrated, involving organizational members in the process of change builds and reinforces ownership in the change initiative by the members. As Armenakis and Harris (2009) noted, getting the change recipients involved early on can help in identifying appropriate actions that must be taken to resolve the gaps between the desired and actual organizational circumstances. In many cases, frontline organizational members will have a deeper understanding of what will work, and what will not, in implementing change initiatives.

## Theme 3: Proper Diagnosis

Proper diagnosis of an organizational situation minimizes the risk of a misdiagnosis of ". . .identifying the wrong problem to solve and then deciding on a solution that is not appropriate" (Armenakis and Harris 2009, p. 131). It can also minimize the risk of management seizing on the latest management *fad* and using it not only to solve the wrong problem, but using it even though it may be the wrong solution. Failing to properly diagnose organizational situations can lead to implementing change initiatives that, rather than solving organizational problems, can lead to organizational failure.

## Theme 4: Creating Readiness for Change

Armenakis and his colleagues defined readiness as the cognitive precursor to the change recipients' behaviors regarding change (Armenakis et al. 1993). It reflects the change recipients' *beliefs* about the need for change in an organization and whether or not they *believe* the organization can change, has the right change initiative been planned, the right people supporting the change, whether or not the change recipients and organization have the capability of making the change, and, finally, if there is benefit in changing (Armenakis et al. 1999). The classic example of creating readiness involved Coch and French's (1948) classic study in a pajama manufacturing facility. A more recent example was provided by Kotter (2002) in which he described a situation wherein a senior manager loaded a conference table with one sample each of all the work gloves in use at each of the company's manufacturing plants. Each sample pair of gloves was labeled with the price a particular factory paid for the glove. It was quickly obvious that with each plant making its own purchases and negotiating its own prices, the procurement system was badly misaligned.

The readiness model provided by Armenakis and his colleagues (1993, 1999) is designed to provide the change leader or change management team with a model which will enable them to proactively create a plan whereby the beliefs of the change recipients can be shaped in the direction of change readiness. Armenakis and Harris (2009) believe that change leaders have the responsibility to "...sell the change recipients on the merits of an organizational change" (p. 132). Empirical support for this belief has been provided by Rafferty and Griffin (2006) through the reduction of change recipient uncertainty.

## Theme 5: Leadership Strategies

Being proactive in creating readiness means the development of a plan for doing so. Thus, the change leader is developing a plan to shape or change the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions held by the change recipients. It requires careful consideration of the nature of those beliefs, because the change leader is attempting to create the *meaning* of the intended change. As Pettigrew (1985) argued, "The Management of meaning refers to a process of symbol construction and value use designed to create legitimacy for one's own ideas, actions and demands, and to delegitimize the demands of one's opponents" (p. 442). In their discussion on *competing narratives,* Dawson and Buchanan (2005) noted that in change situations, there will be a number of different narratives "...each offering its own explanation of events and outcomes..." (p. 861). This is not, however, a past tense narrative. They argue that, "As a vehicle of sensemaking, narratives...of change are concerned with the way it is going to happen, and the way in which it is (or is not) happening, as well as the way it happened" (p. 861). As Weick (1995) noted, when faced with an event that changes what we do, how we do it, where we do it, etc., we strive to make sense of it and give it meaning. In a change situation, it is the responsibility of the change leader

to sensemake for the change recipients that will lead to the right beliefs, attitudes, and intentions yielding the desired organizational behaviors. Thus, the credibility (Kouzes and Posner 1993) of the change leader becomes paramount if the change leader is to succeed in changing those beliefs, attitudes, and intentions of the change recipients. If the change leader lacks credibility, it is unlikely that the change leader will be able to modify the beliefs, attitudes, and intentions of the change recipients.

## Theme 6: Continuous Assessment of the Reactions of the Change Recipients

Assessing the change recipients' readiness for change and tracking the adoption and institutionalization of the change can be grounded in the creation of the change message (Armenakis and Harris 2002). The development of the change message will suggest the strategies to be used to create readiness for the change initiative, leading to the adoption and institutionalization of the change initiative. Armenakis and Harris (2009) argue that the message components can be used to assess the status of the change initiative through quantitative or qualitative methods, or a combination thereof. By constantly analyzing change recipients' beliefs about the five components of the change message, it can be determined why a change implementation may be faltering. Working with a technology company, Armenakis and his colleagues (2007) were able to assess top management team beliefs and attitudes about a specific change as the change was being implemented.

## Unfinished Business: The Journey Continues

It is appropriate to quote Armenakis and Harris (2009) as to the unfinished business that lies ahead for them – and those colleagues who continue to actively seek deeper understanding of organizational change:

> Some of our primary stops along our journey to understand change motivation have been summarized. Yet we have not reached our destination and our journey continues along at least five avenues. Specifically, we are pursuing efforts to: (a) explore the relative significance of the five change beliefs (are some more central to change recipient buy in than others and in what contexts?); (b) examine the relationships between the five key beliefs and emotional reactions; (c) investigate the relationship between change recipient characteristics (regulatory focus) and reactions to organizational transformations; (d) address the relationship between internal contextual variables (relations with local change agents and co-workers) during organizational change; and (e) merge a consideration of ethics with change management (p. 137).

Quinn (2004) estimated that as much as 50% of all change efforts fail, often as a result of poor change leadership. The late philosopher, Eric Hoffer wrote, "Power is always charged with the impulse to eliminate human nature, the human variable" (p. 42). As long as there are people in organizations and organizations change, the

human element will be a factor in determining the success or failure of a particular change initiative. Armenakis and his colleagues recognized this early on, and their focus, just over two decades later, remains on those change recipients and their behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and intentions.

## Conclusion

Because of the complexity of change, Achilles Armenakis and his colleagues recognized that, as Pettigrew noted in 1985, change must be studied in terms of content, context, and process. A failure by many organizational leaders to recognize that change and the efforts to manage it are shaped by the interaction of content, context, and process will lead to failure to gain desired outcomes. It also demonstrates the importance of a proper diagnosis and, thus, much of Armenakis' research supported the development of proper diagnoses of organizational situations as a first step. Additionally, Armenakis emphasized the importance of understanding the change through the eyes of change recipients. By taking their beliefs into account and applying strategies designed to reshape those beliefs, Armenakis and his colleagues' research showed that the likelihood of a successful change implantation should occur. Finally, as Saint Basil said, "A tree is known by its fruit; a man by his deeds." As one reads through the change literature, clearly Achilles Armenakis' life in academia has borne fruit that has shaped how many think about change, and the seeds of that fruit have been widely planted by others. These others are not only his many colleagues but also those doctoral students who studied under him and were guided by him. And these seeds which he planted will bear fruit for a long time to come.

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# Frank J. Barrett: The Social Construction of Organizing

**4**

Michael Lewis

### Abstract

The landscape of the organizational change literature provides a rich and diverse terrain of ideas, theories, and models for both researchers and practitioners. When embarking on this journey, one would benefit from the contributions of the seminal thinkers in the organizational change field. In this chapter, readers are introduced to Frank J. Barrett, professor of management and global policy at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monetary, CA. Barrett's work provides an interesting and somewhat different approach to organizational change, which has been influenced by his early experiences in literature and jazz improvisation. Central to Barrett's contributions is the social construction of organizing and change. Barrett has argued that our understanding of change can be deepened through a social constructionist approach that places discourse and meaning-making as central to the process of change. In making this argument, Barrett challenges the dominant model of change as a rational process. Much of Barrett's contributions are also embedded in the idea that the shift from and industrial society to a postindustrial society has pressured organizations to find new ways to conceptualize and practice change. Barrett has used the metaphor of jazz improvisation as a way to engage in concepts, models, and practice of change. Readers will benefit from Barrett's work, not only for an alternative view of organizational change, but as a way to deepen their understanding and creative capacity for organizing and change.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Sit down sometime for a conversation with Frank Barrett and you will gain a real appreciation for his love of big ideas and big questions. Read his contributions and you will gain an even greater appreciation for how his love of big ideas and big questions has driven him to challenge the dominant tenets of the organizational change field and argue for a social construction of organizing. As an example, in one of Barrett's earliest papers (Barrett and Srivastval, 1991), he took on the structural-functional orientation that has dominated the field by questioning the "giveness" and ahistorical nature of social structure given by proponents of this perspective. He challenges this by calling on scholars to pay more attention to the human and social construction of these structures over time. For Barrett, this meant paying attention to how discourse, language, and social interaction shape meaning and patterns of organizational reality. This argument has served as the basis for many of his contributions.

Many of Barrett's contributions are based in the social constructionist perspective that views organizational life as a socially constructed reality. In his many contributions and even in his doctoral seminars, one can see Barrett "wrestling" with the great Enlightenment philosophers such as Locke and Descartes and their claims for objective truth and universal order. To Barrett, meaning making is not an internal mental activity comprised of objective and distant observation, but rather a social activity comprised of dialogue and interaction. Barrett has taken this social constructionist orientation to study how organizations can achieve transformational change through discourse and social interaction.

Many of Barrett's other contributions in organizational change are situated in his argument that the shift from an industrial to postindustrial society has pressured organization to become more creative and innovative. Where the logic of the industrial society was efficiency through standardization, the logic of the postindustrial society has become innovation through collaboration. To meet this challenge, Barrett has

provided scholars and practitioners with new perspectives, ideas, and metaphors to conceptualize and understand organizational change at a deeper level.

These contributions and more are provided in this chapter in a way that seeks to inspire and motivate both scholars and practitioners of organizational change. Like other scholars, Barrett's career is emphasized through his interaction with his own social world and how he has constructed meaning from his interactions. Barrett's own career exemplifies his central argument that change is socially constructed through our interactions, dialogue, and even friendships.

Frank J. Barrett is a professor of management and global public policy at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monetary, CA, and serves on the doctoral faculty at Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, CA. He has held the Boer & Croon Chair of Change Management at Tilburg University in the Netherlands and has served on faculties of Katholieke University of Leuven, Belgium, Penn State University's Behrend College, Case Western Reserve University, and Benedictine University. Barrett has also led seminars on change, specifically the transformative potential of appreciative inquiry. From 2008 to 2010, Barrett was a visiting scholar at the Harvard Business School and Harvard Program of Negotiations where he envisioned and began to write his latest book, "*Yes to the Mess: Surprising Leadership Lessons from Jazz*." This book uses jazz as a powerful metaphor for leading an organization in the postindustrial, knowledge-based society.

Barrett is not only an accomplished academic, but an accomplished practitioner. He has consulted with various organizations including Harvard University, Boeing, the US Navy, Ford Motor Manufacturing Division, General Electric, British Petroleum, The Cleveland Clinic, and The Medic Inn. His consulting involves working with organizations on vision planning, strategic planning, organizational restructuring, and organizational change. Barrett has been asked on numerous occasions to speak, lead workshops, and consult on his research, particularly in the areas on leadership, innovation, and improvisation. With his consulting, Barrett is an action researcher, writing and contributing to the body of knowledge on change and innovation.

Barrett has a BS and MA from the University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame) and a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from Case Western Reserve University. Barrett has served as an Associate Editor of *Human Relations* since 2006, a Senior Editor of *Organization Studies* since 2005, an Associate Editor of *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* since 2004, and Associate Editor of *Journal of Action Research* since 2002. Barrett serves as an ad hoc reviewer for the *Academy of Management*, *Organizational Development and Change* division and also for several journals such as *Organization Science*, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, and *Academy of Management Review.*

## Influences and Motivations: Discovering the Power of Music and Discourse

Barrett grew up in Cleveland Ohio and very early in life was introduced to music. At age 6, he learned to play piano by mimicking his grandfather's play. Later in high school, Barrett joined a rock-and-roll band that later went on to become a backup

band for Eric Carmen, a well-known 1970s American singer and songwriter (Barrett had already left the band when they played with Eric Carmen). After graduating high school, Barrett enrolled at Notre Dame where he joined the glee club and learned how to read and compose music. Barrett would continue his interest with music beyond college and later became professional jazz pianist touring with the Tommy Dorsey Band. While seemingly unlikely, these experiences in music would significantly influence Barrett's research, particularly in the areas of collaboration, improvisation, creativity, and innovation.

Music was not Barrett's only influence. Narrative, dialogue, and metaphor all played significant roles in his path as a scholar. To provide some order to the details of Barrett's earliest influences, this section will focus on three pivotal periods in his life: (1) his undergraduate studies at Notre Dame, (2) his doctoral studies at Case Western Reserve University (Case Western), and (3) his career as a jazz pianist. We begin with Barrett's undergraduate experience.

## Undergraduate Experiences

As mentioned earlier, Barrett attended Notre Dame for both his undergraduate and graduate studies. He graduated with a BA in Government and International Relations in 1975 and then an MA in English in 1977. Notre Dame is a private catholic liberal arts school where theology and philosophy are a core part of its curriculum. While this might create angst among students, Barrett took to these courses and found a love for philosophy. His readings of the great philosophers, particularly Kierkegaard and Arendt, would later inform his social constructionist orientation, which shaped his research on organizational change. To provide some perspective on how these two philosophers influenced Barrett's contributions, it is important to have some context. Kierkegaard was a nineteenth century Danish philosopher who was considered the "father" of existentialism, an orientation that viewed the world as having no predetermined purpose or order and instead viewed purpose emerging through dialogue and interpretation. Essentially, an existentialist would argue that humans create their own meaning upon which purpose and order are constructed. Barrett wrote in several contributions how an organization's purpose, order, and structure are not predetermined, but instead, emerge through social interaction of organizational members.

Hannah Arendt's contributions, particularly her book "*The Human Condition,*" also had a significant influence on Barrett's contributions. In her book, Arendt argued that action is uniquely human and through human action new ideas are created and put into the world through public discourse. It is through this social interaction that Arendt saw change occurring. Barrett would later write about the power of human relations and action in creating change. Barrett would also demonstrate in his own work as a scholar the importance of public dialogue in shaping ideas. Arendt's work has made such an impact on Barrett that he makes a point to reread "*The Human Condition*" every year.

Continuing with Barrett's experience at Notre Dame, as a sophomore he had the opportunity to organize the college's Literary Festival. As part of his responsibilities, Barrett escorted writers, such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, to the festival, and through his interactions with these writers, Barrett became inspired by narrative and literature. This led him to spend an increasingly amount of time with the English department's faculty, which motivated Barrett to stay at Notre Dame and earn a Master's degree in Literature. Through this experience, Barrett discovered the power of language, narrative, and metaphor and used these in his contributions where he became known for his saying "*words create worlds*."

## Doctoral Studies at Case Western Reserve University

Barrett's early experiences at Notre Dame expanded during his doctoral studies. In August 1983, Barrett joined Case Western as a doctoral student in the organizational behavior department. While he came to Case Western already motivated by the power of narrative, metaphor, and discourse, it was Barrett's interaction with faculty and fellow students that shaped this interest and ability to use these ideas in his scholarly research. During his studies, Barrett's dissertation advisor, Suresh Srivastva, would invite him to come sit and observe meetings that he had with another doctoral student, David Cooperrider. Cooperrider was studying appreciative inquiry, and through these meetings, Barrett saw the power of questions in imagining positive possibilities for the future. Cooperrider's work in appreciative inquiry would greatly influence Barrett's own research. Both became good friends, working together to extend the practice of appreciative inquiry through the use of language and metaphor.

Also during his doctoral studies, Barrett encountered Ken Gergen's book, "*Toward Transformation in Social Knowledge*." In his book, Gergen argued for a generative social theory of knowledge creation. At that time, Barrett was exploring the power of generative metaphor in transformative change and found this book to be perhaps the most influential work he encountered during his doctoral studies. Barrett would later go on to write a paper with Ken Gergen and Sheila McNamee on transformative dialogue (Gergen et al. 2001).

After graduating from Case Western, Barrett went on to teach at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA, as an Assistant Professor of Management (he was later promoted to Associate and then full Professor). Roger Evered was a professor of management at the Naval Postgraduate School, and Barrett's encounter with Evered, particularly through his seminal article written with Gerald Susman on action research (Susman and Evered 1978), influenced Barrett toward a social constructionist approach using action research. Barrett saw immense practicality in action research as a way for organizational members to bring about own positive change in their organizations.

All of these experiences and interaction led Barrett to formulate a central idea of an organization as a social construct. He would apply an appreciative approach as a way to focus on strengths and what "works" in an organization rather than what is

"broken." Through this, one can see ways of developing more collaborative and egalitarian organizations. This became a central path for Barrett's research and practice.

## A Career as a Jazz Musician

While Barrett had a successful career as a jazz pianist, it is his lifelong love for music and jazz that continues to influence and motivate his thinking and contributions in the field of organizational change. This is particularly true as it relates to his contributions in creativity and innovation.

As a scholar, Barrett became intrigued with the connection between jazz and organizational behavior. In his most recent book, *Yes to the mess: Surprising leadership lessons from jazz* (Barrett 2012), Barrett wrote about his first encounter with Karl Weick as a doctoral student. Barrett was introduced to Weick by his dissertation advisor as both a doctoral student and former jazz musician. Weick asked Barrett if he was writing his dissertation about jazz as an innovative organization and while at that time Barrett wondered what the two had in common, over time he made this connection and contributed significantly to jazz improvisation as a metaphor for an organization. In 1995, Barrett and Mary Jo Hatch organized and facilitated a session on jazz improvisation and organizational complexity at the national meeting of the Academy of Management. From this session, a special issue of *Organization Science* was published in 1998. Scholars, including Weick, Hatch, Meyer, Pasmore, and Barrett wrote about the connection between jazz improvisation and organization theory. Barrett's specific contribution was an article on jazz and the innovative organization (Barrett 1998a). This article became the foundation for his many of his other contributions concerning jazz improvisation as a metaphor for an organization. Barrett not only showed how the principles of jazz and jazz improvisation can be used to develop practices that increase collaboration, innovation, and creativity; he used jazz as a metaphor to reconceptualize the organization.

## Key Contributions: Challenging Rational Frameworks Through the Social Construction of Organizing

As indicated earlier, Barrett approached organizational change from a social constructionist orientation. Through his contributions, Barrett challenged the rational model of organizational change that viewed change as a planned process created through a series of sequential steps of identifying change targets, creating and implementing change strategies, and institutionalizing change. Barrett's argument has been that organizational change is not necessarily planned, but emerges through the activities and interaction of people. Ken Gergen once wrote that generative ideas emerge from joint thinking and significant conversation (Gergen 2009). This

resonated with Barrett and argued that the organization not as an objectified reality, but an invention of the human imagination that can change using that same imagination.

Barrett's challenge of the rational model can be traced back to his dissertation, where he conducted a longitudinal study to examine the social interaction of a management group evolving from a bureaucratic mind-set to a more egalitarian mind-set. Barrett used discourse analysis as a way to focus on the group's language and its influence on their cognitive framework. What Barrett observed was that language not only reflected reality; it actually created reality (Barrett 1990). Barrett took this discovery and began to study the social construct of ideas, particularly those perceived to have elements of universal meaning. Early in his career, Barrett conducted research on how masculinity is socially constructed within the US Navy. Using a methodology of life history through interviews with male naval officers, Barrett discovered that rather than some monolithic notion of masculinity, the masculinity was relationally constructed and actually differed across job specialties. Barrett's key insight was that the idea of masculinity emerged as much through organizational patterns and practices as it did through individual personalities and genetic predisposition (Barrett 1996). He concluded that masculinity is embedded within an arrangement of social practices, discourses, and ideologies. The US Navy, Barrett argued, was not only a gendered institution supported and maintained by its structure but also a gendering institution constructing identity through the daily action and discourse of its members (Barrett 1996). Generalizing this, one can argue that role identity within organizations does not necessarily come from formal and predetermined job titles and descriptions, but instead comes from the daily activity and interaction of organizational members. The "informal" role becomes just as important, if not more important, than the "formal" role.

With this idea of individual identity as socially constructed, it made sense for Barrett to extend his insight to organizations and organizational life. Barrett takes inspiration from the idea of an organization as a social construct to argue for human agency as a force for positive change.

While much of Barrett's contributions to organizational change are situated in the social construction of organizing, this section organizes his contributions through the following categories: (a) the use of discourse and language to understand change, (b) metaphor as an intervention for change, (c) the importance of appreciative learning cultures in organizational change, and (e) jazz as a metaphor for the organization.

## Discourse and Language: Using Discourse to Deepen Our Understanding of Change

Through discourse, meaning is given to our world, which in turn creates our reality. Knowledge is not something discovered, but instead created through social interactions. In his paper on knowledge creation as a dialogical accomplishment (Barrett 1999), Barrett challenged the rational view of knowledge creation as an individual

contribution and argued that knowledge creation is inherently social, constructed through human interaction and dialogue. The implication offered by Barrett is that social interaction is an immensely creative activity that shapes our world. While organizations use formal tools and processes to encourage and manage change, Barrett argues that through discourse, humans innovate and create novel possibilities for the future.

In a paper on the role of discourse in large-scale organizational change, Barrett and his colleagues challenged the basic assumption of organizational change as a planned activity done to people through a rational process and instead argued for a dynamic system that involved the construction of meaning through dialogue. Through dialogue, organizational members have the opportunity to construct a common experience and meaning that provides context for change (Barrett et al. 1995).

As an example of a dynamic system of change using discourse, Barrett points to GE's "Work Out" program as an example of change as a dynamic system constructed through dialogue and meaning making. GE's "Work Out" program began in 1988 and, as Barrett argued, essentially challenged the rational model of organizational change. While these "workout" sessions were typically viewed as a process for fast implementation of process improvements, they were also used to create dialogue among organizational members around the CEO's (Jack Welch) vision of the organization. These sessions allowed employees and managers to challenge the assumptions and beliefs embedded in Welch's vision and through discourse develop shared meanings, which led to changes in the organization's structures, activities, and practices. What Barrett suggested through this case is that assumptions and beliefs are formed, changed, and normalized through social interaction that occurs over time. Because of this, Barrett suggested that researchers take a historical and longitudinal perspective using case studies as a way to study how language and discourse within an organization change over time. For managers, Barrett suggested that change challenges the familiar language within an organization and that organizational members need a "safe place" to challenge and try out new language, much like GE employees were able to do through its "Work Out" program. When an organizational member questions change, managers should be careful not to construe this as resistance, but instead view it as a process for making sense of change.

## Metaphor: Understanding the Power of Metaphor in Creating Organizational Change

Metaphor is closely related to discourse, but Barrett's unique contribution in this area is his use of metaphor as the basis for OD interventions. While metaphor can help people organize and describe their world, Barrett saw its generative power to actually help people reshape and change their world.

Metaphor is not new in organizational theory. Morgan (1997) argued for metaphor as a way to better understand organizations and organizational life. He identified several metaphors used in organizational theory such as organizations as

machines and organizations as brains. The former is used to create an image of mechanistic processes through command and control management, while the latter is used to create an image of an organization as a learning system. Using metaphor can help people describe and understand an organization. Barrett's use of metaphor began with exploring how groups develop over time. He then later used metaphor in an OD intervention as a way to create organizational change.

In his study of metaphor in group development, Barrett argued that existing theories of group development have historically focused on predicting and explaining group behavior, but not on understanding how groups develop over time (Srivastva and Barrett 1988). Barrett examined how group developed by studying metaphor creation by a group that met consistently over a 14 week period. During this time, Barrett studied the group's language and discourse in order to identify metaphors created. He later was able to organize and see patterns in these metaphors that represented particular phases of their development. Early in the group's time together, Barrett documented the use of the metaphor identified as "group as a battle" created and used by members to describe their frustration, conflict, and even anger. Over time, Barrett identified the metaphor of "group is moving" and "group as order and peace" to reflect the changing social reality of the group as members became comfortable with each other. Later, Barrett identified the metaphor of "group as a deep container" to describe how members saw deep emotions emerging within the group. He then identified the metaphor "group as layers" used by members to describe the many layers members saw of their communication with each other. What Barrett discovered was that each of these metaphors represented a particular phase in the group's development and learning. By paying attention to group dialogue, Barrett argued, that we can better understand how groups change and develop over time.

Working with Cooperrider, Barrett later explored the use of metaphor in OD interventions as a way to change group cognition. In this case, Barrett worked with a management group of a hotel that he described as being "paralyzed by defensiveness, distrust, and dysfunctional conflict" (Barrett and Cooperrider 1990). Through the use of metaphor, Barrett intervened at the tacit level of awareness, helping the group to first change their cognitive framework and as a result, the perceptions each member held of each other. This cognitive change opened up the group's mind-set to new possibilities, thus allowing Barrett to facilitate transformative change of their organization. Through this work, Barrett argued the need for organizational members to first change their own cognitive frameworks before changing their organization.

For this particular intervention, Barrett chose as a metaphor another hotel that was clearly experiencing dramatically different and positive results. As predicted, group members first thought this hotel had little, if anything, in common with their organization and wondered its value in this intervention. Introducing and utilizing appreciative inquiry, Barrett turned group members into field researchers to discover and appreciate what worked well and what was valued within the hotel used as a metaphor. Over time, group members were able to create new meanings and appreciate what was positive in their own organization. This allowed for the group to see their own world anew and create a new vision and plans for this new positive future.

Barrett and Cooperrider wrote a paper on their experience with this generative metaphor intervention (Barrett and Cooperrider 1990). Their paper won "Best Paper of the Year" in 1988 at the National Academy of Management in the Organizational Development division and provided a model for practitioners to begin transforming their own mind-set toward an appreciative use of dialogue and metaphor as a force for transformational change. This process created a learning environment within the organization that fostered respect, hope, and excitement among organizational members. With this insight, Barrett went on to write about the idea of appreciative learning as a way to cultivate positive organizational change.

## Appreciative Learning: The Importance of Appreciative Learning Cultures in Organizational Change

As mentioned earlier, Barrett was influenced by Cooperrider's work in appreciative inquiry and was motivated to use an appreciative approach in contributing to Senge's conception of a learning organization (Barrett 1995). Barrett described this as an appreciative learning culture that shifted from focusing on solving problem to focusing on innovating the organization. The former teaches one to adapt to what exists; the latter teaches one to create something new.

In making his case for appreciative learning cultures, Barrett borrowed and extended Senge's work in generative learning (Senge 1990). In conceptualizing the learning organization, Senge makes a distinction between adaptive learning and generative learning. Where adaptive learning is focused on coping and adjusting to environmental demands, generative learning seeks to go beyond this to generate new possibilities and new ways of thinking about the world. While Barrett agrees with Senge's assertion that generative learning is central to developing an organization's capacity to grow and innovate, he extended this idea by suggesting that through an appreciative learning culture, managers are able to discover and value those features of the organization that are positive and strong. This then opens up possibilities for discourse that leads to generative learning. Barrett argued that through an appreciative learning culture, organizational members are able to expand from *what is* to *what might be* and to focus not on fixing what exists, but on creating what can exist (Barrett 1995).

In his paper on the appreciative learning culture (Barrett 1995), Barrett identified several competencies needed to support such a culture. The first is the capacity to appreciate positive possibilities by focusing on the strengths, successes, and the potential of organizational members. In nurturing this competency, organizations celebrate its members' achievements and strengths as a source of organizational vitality. The second competency is the capacity to challenge existing habits and conventional practices by experimenting with new practices that can stretch organizational members in new directions. This requires going beyond what is familiar as a way to challenge and redefine existing boundaries. The third competency is the capacity to allow members to see how their efforts make a difference. This is done through feedback, purpose, and progress. Finally, organizations need to develop the capacity to facilitate members' engagement in ongoing dialogue and exchange of

diverse perspectives. What Barrett described was a culture that values experimentation and systemic thinking. He borrowed from Argyis' (1991) concept of double-loop learning as a way to question basic assumptions and to see the world anew. For Barrett, an appreciative learning culture creates the environment for an organization to realize Senge's idea of generative learning.

Barrett's conceptualization of appreciative learning cultures led him to explore at a deeper level how organizational members work together and collaborate to create change. Barrett was able to do this by connecting learning and organizational change with his love for jazz and jazz improvisation.

## Jazz as Metaphor for the Organization: Creativity and Innovation Through Improvisation

In many respects, Barrett's argument for an appreciative learning culture and his challenge to the rational model of organizational change are situated in his observation that society has shifted away from the industrial age toward a postindustrial age. The industrial age, represented by the factory system, mass production, and formal and systematic methods of managing, suggests that organizations can be programmed. If the organization falls short of management's intention, it can be taken apart, diagnosed, fixed, and reprogrammed through a series of sequential steps that leads to organizational change.

This is dramatically different from Barrett's description of the postindustrial age, which embraces the idea of constant change through innovation. To meet the challenge of a fast-changing world fueled by innovation, Barrett identified a new metaphor of the organization as jazz improvisation. The metaphor of jazz improvisation serves as an effective counteract to the rational model suggesting that organizational change is not programmed, but instead emerges through the interaction of its members. By shifting the mind-set to an organization as jazz improvisation, Barrett shows that organizational change comes about through a manager's ability to facilitate creativity and innovation rather than an ability to command and control.

Jazz improvisation is the product of jazz bands, and Barrett argued that jazz bands are actual organizations comprised of diverse specialists designed to create, innovate, and change. The change created by jazz bands is not predetermined or prescribed through any rational plan, but through the spontaneous interaction and collaboration of diverse jazz musicians. Barrett argued that the characteristics of a jazz band can be applied to organizations as a way to understand change at a deeper level and to explore how to increase an organization's creative and innovative capacity (Barrett 2012).

As previously mentioned, when Barrett first encountered Karl Weick, he was asked if he was writing his dissertation on jazz and the innovative organization. While Barrett may have not initially seen the connection, he certainly did later in his career and has since made significant contributions. In describing jazz improvisation as a metaphor, Barrett drew a parallel between today's manager and a jazz player (Barrett 1998a). He described both as needing to make fast, irreversible decisions within a chaotic and turbulent environment. Managers, like jazz players, work

interdependently to interpret vague and often confusing information. To be successful in a fast-changing environment, both jazz players and managers must commit to the idea of innovation and change. Experimenting must be embraced as well as the inevitable mistakes that occur through experimentation. Both managers and jazz players operate and respond to their surroundings with no prescribed plan and with little certainty of outcome. Their path forward usually unfolds in front of them through their action and interaction (Barrett 1998).

Much of Barrett's contributions in this area connect back to the themes and arguments he has made throughout his career. He explained the jazz band as a social group that constructs new musical material through interaction. Jazz musicians, as Barrett tells it, learn the theory and rules that govern musical progress and then seek to create new meaning with other jazz musicians as they combine, recombine, and extend various forms and rules as a way to transform music in unexpected and novel ways (Barrett 1998). This is very much how Barrett saw organizational life in the twenty-first century postindustrial organization.

Barrett's most significant contribution to improvisation is his book, *Yes to the Mess: Surprising Leadership Lessons from Jazz* (Barrett 2012). True to his belief that narrative creates new worlds, Barrett used stories from his time as a jazz musician to develop insights into collaboration and innovation within organizations. Barrett described the improvising organization as an organization that values emergent strategy, creates fluid and minimal structures, provides opportunities for cross-functional conversations and interactions, embraces uncertainty and ambiguity, and develops a focus for appreciative inquiry. A central point made by Barrett was that unlike the rational model of planned change, organizational life is messy and requires creativity, on-the-spot decision-making, agility, and collaboration. Organizations need to learn to embrace uncertainty and imperfection that are inherent in improvisation (Barrett 2012).

*Yes to the Mess* provides an important contribution for practitioners. It not only provides an introduction to the improvising organization, it also provides managers and OD practitioners with ideas for developing the mind-sets, skills, and practices needed for improvisation within the organization. Barrett has used the tenets of his book and presentations in workshops as a way to help leaders focus on creating transformative change through learning, creativity, and innovation.

## Key Insights: Limitations of the Rational Model in the Postindustrial and Postmodern Society

Barrett's contributions are situated in his key insight that the rational model of organizational change can limit our understanding of organizational change at a deeper level. The rational model assumes that organizational members can be persuaded to change through logic and reason. It represents change as being created and managed through distinct and sequential steps that can be viewed as a programmed and planned process. Barrett has argued that the rational model of organizational change can "trap" an organization within the existing boundaries of its own cognitive framework. In making this argument, he goes on to argue that this

does little to inspire the imagination of new possibilities. In effect, Barrett is suggesting that through a rational model of change, managers actually become the keepers of the institutionalized structures and routines of the organization, guarding against any deviance from the status quo and limiting their capability to innovate.

Barrett has inspired researchers to understand and study organizations as a vibrant and ever-changing social entity that never truly reaches stasis. By paying attention to social dialogue, language, and metaphors, Barrett has argued that researchers can understand the social constructed reality of organizational life. Barrett has also inspired practitioners to view organizational change not as a way to solve problems, but as a way to help organizational members imagine new possibilities for its future. Barrett has argued that the organization is a manifestation of human imagination and that it is time to reimagine and construct a new concept of the organization (Cooperrider et al. 1995).

While Barrett has argued the limitation of the rational model of organizational change, he did not discount its contribution to the advancement of society, particularly in technology. But, Barrett has also observed that unprecedented advances in technology have led to a society that is increasingly turbulent and fast-moving. This is why Barrett has given so much emphasis on creativity and innovation.

Barrett has also provided the insight that to achieve transformative change, organizations must first change its existing cognitive framework. In doing this, Barrett used social cognition theory to explain that when faced with evidence that contradicts an individual's existing view of the world, he or she will actually "double down" on their existing behavior, making transformative change difficult (Barrett and Cooperrider 1990). To create transformative change, Barrett has demonstrated the need to replace existing cognitive framework with something new. In doing this, Barrett has contributed to our understanding of second-order cognitive change as described by Bartunek and Moch (1987). Through this insight, Barrett has worked toward moving scholars and practitioners from a focus on changing human behavior to a focus on changing human cognition. This insight forms his basis for helping organizations move beyond its limitations and boundaries of what exists to imagining what is possible.

In his research and practice, Barrett has pointed out the need for OD consultants to begin using narrative, discourse, and metaphor as a way to confront and replace old, outdated cognitive frameworks. He envisions appreciative methods as a focus and the metaphor of jazz improvisation as a way to conceive and unleash the capacity of human imagination to collaborate, innovate, and create. Through Barrett's contributions, scholars and practitioners are better equipped to understand and create positive change that taps into the transformative potential people and their ability to create, innovate, and learn.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: The Social Construction of Organizing and Change

Barrett's ideas of the social construction of organizing and change stand out as central to his legacy. In contributing to this orientation, Barrett challenges the central tenets of the rational model of organizational change. His motivation has led him to

explore organizational change through the lens of discourse, metaphor, appreciative learning, and improvisation.

What is distinctive about Barrett's contributions is his foresight throughout his career. In his early contributions, before terms like disruptive innovation became lexicon in the organization theory literature, Barrett articulated disruption and its challenges. He has also argued that for organizations in the twenty-first century, creating new practices, routines, and even cultures will be the primary focus as a way to meet the challenges of a fast-changing environment. As we can see from his contributions, Barrett saw meaning making through discourse and collaboration as a means to meet this challenge.

Barrett has a distinctive ability to connect seemingly disparate worlds. He has connected jazz, narrative, and metaphor to organizational change and through this has provided scholars and practitioners with ideas and inspiration for research and practice. In his recent writings, Barrett shows how the principles of jazz and jazz improvisation can apply to organizations seeking to better collaborate and create positive change and innovation. As mentioned previously, Barrett is a social constructionist and believes in the power of human relations to act toward positive futures. We see this not only in his contributions but in his career as a scholar. Watch Barrett at any academic conference and you will see someone in constant interaction with colleagues. He views this activity not so much as career networking, but as a way to build on ideas. I was one of Barrett's doctoral students, and I witnessed many times his energy and enthusiasm for engaging with colleagues. Barrett has always encouraged his students to present at conferences, not as a way to build a CV, but as a way to engage the world with your ideas. Perhaps what motivates Barrett most is his core belief that ideas and theories make a difference. By engaging with others in our ideas, Barrett truly believes we can make positive difference in the world.

Even with all of his contributions, Barrett still sees unfinished business in his work. He is extending his work on social interaction and relations by exploring friendship and the power of human connections. His work on improvisation demonstrated that creativity and innovation come not from the lone genius, working alone in some laboratory, but through the positive dynamics of relationships. What still needs to be explored is the kind of relationships that lead to creativity and innovation and then how to keep these relationships alive and vibrant.

Barrett's work in cognitive change has led him to develop the idea he calls provocative competence, which is the ability to positively disrupt habits and routines of people as a way to build new perspectives. Provocative competence is an affirmative approach that seeks to first understand people's strengths and capabilities and then use this positive image to move people toward new situations. While this might lead to a level of vulnerability, it also provides the mechanism for forming new perspectives and thought processes. Barrett has described in detail how this competence is practiced in jazz, but more work is needed to understand how it can be practiced in organizations. What do these small disruptions look like in organizational life? Is it possible to create too much disruption and limit or prevent new patterns from forming? If so, how do we detect this and how can we prevent it? These are important questions and areas of research for both scholars and practitioners.

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# Jean Bartunek and the Power of Working Across Boundaries: Dualities and the Missing Voice

**5**

John R. Austin

**Abstract**

Throughout her career, Jean Bartunek has purposely placed herself on boundaries and excitedly explored the tensions inherent in those boundaries. Theory and practice, insider and outsider, academic and practitioner, qualitative and quantitative – she's mined all these boundaries for insights that go well beyond the boundary in question. These studies challenge researchers, students, and managers to look beyond their own perspectives and embrace a form of dialectical inquiry to find the voices they may be ignoring or unconsciously undervaluing. Jean's work on second-order change, insider/outsider research methods, and academic-practitioner dynamics continues to contribute to our understanding of dialects, especially those that are initially hidden, and the paradoxes that are often attached to them.

Jean lives these boundaries in addition to studying them. In addition to being a full-time academic, she is also a Roman Catholic sister, a member of the Religious of the Sacred Heart. Both of these sides of her life are crucial to her identity and have been throughout her adult life.

A number of current areas of inquiry have benefited from Jean's work. These include context-sensitive sensemaking, missing voices in change theory and design, the lived experience of change, planned change and transformation, process and implementation theories, emotion in change, and idea translation across boundaries.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Boundaries define a context, they define a construct, and they form the basis for identities. Once created, boundaries determine what is "in" and what is "out." Through her research, writing, and professional service, Jean Bartunek mines these boundaries for insight. Her work has often revealed the missing voices in our theories and in our understanding of organizational change. Dualities defined by a single boundary such as theory and practice, academic and practitioner, first- and second-order change, qualitative and qualitative research continue to define our understanding of relevance and credibility. Jean's writing challenges us to question those definitions and consider the implications.

This chapter has particular relevance for me, both personally and professionally. I am proud to have been Jean's first doctoral student and have maintained a friendship with her for many years. In addition, I've set a unique career path in which I've actively worked to "live at the boundary" between the academic and the practitioner, between theory and practice, and between long-term strategies and short-term tactics. Jean's work on dualities and tensions resonates with my experience as a professional "boundary spanner."

## Discovering the Power of OD and Connecting Research and Practice

Given Dr. Bartunek's interest in theory and practice throughout her professional life, it may come as little surprise that it was a combination of exposure to the practice of organization development (OD) as a participant and her training in research and

social psychology that set her on her career course. Jean recounts these early influences in an article included in the further reading section at the end of this chapter (Bartunek 2006).

Two early experiences with OD consultation showed Jean the significant power OD had to influence situations while also illustrating the potential negative consequences when not managed well. The first was a multipart OD intervention designed to improve participation in decision-making at a school where she taught in her first full-time position after becoming a sister. Unfortunately, the approach the consultants used for the OD intervention was inappropriate and led to serious problems. The intervention was cancelled in midyear. The second intervention was an OD workshop run with camp counselors at a camp for inner-city and suburban children in the Cleveland area. The workshop was immensely successful at creating a deep bond among the counselors. Jean notes that it was so successful the counselors occasionally forgot about their job of watching the campers (Bartunek 2006). Both these interventions had powerful and unanticipated effects on the participants. Jean recalls hoping that such approaches could have profound positive impacts if led by consultants that were more skilled.

In graduate school and particularly in her first full-time professorial job, Jean began to discover what forms of research were personally interesting to her. Her training had been in the use of laboratory research design, and it was a revelation that one could do research by engaging people in their normal context through surveys and interviews. In some cases, these projects also involved active OD interventions. She found this work much more interesting than laboratory studies in which researchers created artificial situations, though she still had questions regarding the rigor of the field studies and the lack of underlying theory.

Bartunek's passion for linking theory and practice, which has become a keystone of her career, can be traced back to Argyris and Schon's (1974) book *Theory in Practice*. Jean read this book in 1976, and it triggered a transformation in her thinking. She began to see how research in planned organizational change combined with her experiences of OD interventions could be seen through the combined lens of both theory and practice.

## The Influencers: Finding Her Way Out of the Lab

The story of Jean's development as a researcher would not be complete without mentioning two friends/mentors who played key roles in her work as a researcher and theorist: Chris Keys and Mike Moch. Chris helped establish Jean's early expertise in research and OD, while Mike introduced Jean to the value and techniques of field research.

Chris Keys joined the psychology department faculty of University of Illinois at Chicago in Jean's second year as a graduate student. He directed Jean's dissertation and became a close friend. Chris had been extensively involved in organization development consulting. With Chris, Jean became involved in several large-scale OD projects, and, through these, she was exposed to a range of OD exercises,

techniques, and assessments. He also encouraged Jean to participate in the graduate student development program of the National Training Labs, a series of 2-week and weekend t-group programs over a period of 2 years. Chris was instrumental in Jean's initial training as an OD professional and her launch as an active researcher, and Jean and Chris published several articles together.

Mike Moch joined the group at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign the same time Jean did. He came from the Institute for Social Research at the University Michigan, where he received the contract to serve as an outside evaluator for two of the new quality of work life interventions. The first one was at the Tennessee Valley Authority. While Jean knew about organization development, Mike taught her about constructing scales and questionnaires and conducting interviews and field observation. Over a period of several years, he basically taught Jean how to do field research. Jean and Mike published a number of articles and a book together over the years. Their writing about third-order change (Bartunek and Moch 1987, 1994) and their observations on worker sensemaking around a quality of work life intervention (Moch and Bartunek 1990) have been particularly influential in subsequent transformational change theorizing.

## Key Contributions: Dualities and the Missing Voice

An examination of Dr. Bartunek's publications reveals a set of key contributions to our understanding of change and how we design organization development interventions. When taken as a whole, these contributions reveal a common theme of missing voices and dialectics with those missing voices.

Dualities abound in Jean's writing. Dualities have significant value as a driver of tensions and as a way to surface missing perspectives (Seo et al. 2004). Jean uses dualities to call attention to these alternate frames and to initiate a form of conceptual conversation between the frames (Bartunek 2004). The following are some examples of dualities in Jean's work: first-order/second-order change, insider/outsider, academic/practitioner, emotion/cognition, change planner/change recipient, quantitative/qualitative, and sensemaking/sense-giving. A focus on a duality, as distinguished from a plurality of more than two, draws attention to the unique balance between focus and frame challenging. A duality focuses attention on a single alternate perspective. This singular focus can have the effect of creating a tangible challenge to a dominant frame. By focusing attention in a singular alternate direction, the frame-challenging activity lends itself to a dialectic conversation. As an example, consider Jean's seminal research on second-order change. Rather than presenting the study as an open-ended critique of the various ways organizational change can be constrained by limited sensemaking, she defined an alternative type of change explicitly focused on frame-shifting. Once she defined this duality of first- and second-order change, Jean turned attention on the tensions and interactions between the two change types. The duality enables a sharp focus on the interaction. In a similar manner, Bartunek used the practitioner to sharpen focus on limitations of

academic mental models. Dr. Bartunek has successfully crafted a series of these dialectical conversations throughout her career. By doing so, she has helped us see the missing frames in the dominant logics driving our theorizing and practice.

## Sensemaking and Change: Second-Order Change

Bartunek's research on second-order change (Bartunek 1984, 1993; Bartunek and Moch 1987) has had a profound impact on the field of change. We can see its influence in many current theories of frame-shifting and sensemaking within the context of change. Second-order change refers to change in the underlying rules governing a social structure. This is distinguished from first-order change, which is change within a given social structure. Building from earlier discussions of interpretive schemes (Ranson et al. 1980), Jean examined the process through which interpretive schemes undergo second-order change, how that second-order change is related to restructuring, and how organizational leadership influences the change.

Bartunek sums up the dynamic between second-order change, leadership, and structure in this excerpt from her (1984) *Administrative Science Quarterly* paper:

> The outcome of the analysis is to suggest that second-order change in interpretive schemes occurs through a dialectical process in which old and new interpretive schemes interact, resulting in a synthesis. These changing interpretive schemes are both affected by and modify the organization's structure, but the relationship between interpretive schemes and structure is not direct. Rather, it is mediated by the actions organization members take in response to changing understanding or structure and the emotional reactions they have to these changes. An environmental impetus is probably necessary for change to begin, but the manner in which the environment affects the change depends on the organization's present interpretive schemes and structure. (Bartunek 1984, p. 356)

The study built upon a deep qualitative analysis of 10 years of documented decision-making within Jean's religious order in the USA as it struggled to redefine its mission. The richness and longtime horizon captured within the data offered an opportunity to truly dig deep into the dynamics of the change and not be caught up in short-term disputes. The result is a dialectical process description that has stood the test of time and still resonates with its theoretical clarity and relevance. This paper also highlighted how qualitative data can be used in a rigorous way to build new theory.

The qualitative shift in sensemaking inherent in second-order change has important implications, not just for the outcome of the change but also for the measurement of change. Quantitative measures designed to track the change may be built upon key assumptions that are no longer relevant in instances of second-order change. Understanding second-order shifts may require a more qualitative approach to data collection.

While much of the attention given to the 1984 article was on the connection between cognition and organizational change, it is interesting to observe that Jean

explicitly linked affect and cognition in this article as well. Emotional reactions by organization members play a central role in the model Jean developed. That the cognitive element of the model became this study's most enduring mark on the field may say more about the intellectual interests of management academics in the 1980s than it does about the study itself. The connection between emotion and cognition is an active area of inquiry at the moment and continues to be an area of interest for Dr. Bartunek (Seo et al. 2004). Sensemaking occurs as a combination of emotional and cognitive processing (Kahneman 2011), and organizational change cognitions and outcomes are often intimately linked with participant's emotional experiences with the initiative (Bartunek et al. 2006).

## Using Qualitative Research in Studies of Change

Unlike the other contributions described in this section, the use of qualitative research is not a distinct area of inquiry. Rather, this theme weaves throughout Jean's work. Occasionally qualitative research is the focus of a given article (Bartunek and Seo 2002; Bartunek 2012), but more often qualitative research is a supporting theme in a chapter or article.

   Jean's interest in qualitative methods can be traced back to her questions regarding the methodologies being used in social psychology experiments early in her career. As she readily admits, she found the work boring and repetitive. Increased focus on the context was just inherently more interesting to her. This interest in context naturally lent itself to more qualitative methods. Her 1984 article "Changing Interpretive Schemes and Organizational Restructuring" is often cited as a rare example of qualitative research published in a top-level management journal during that era.

   An interest in mixing rigor and relevance of change research design led to a wide range of collaborations throughout her career. Jean notes that this interest led her on many different adventures with various topics and has given her a sense of the breadth of the world of change research. This exploration is seen in the large number of papers in which she is second or third author alongside other collaborators.

## Insider/Outsider Research

Inquiry into dialectics and reconceptualizing roles is front and center in Jean's writing on insider/outsider research. Louis and Bartunek (1992) presented the benefits of insider/outsider collaboration on research teams and examined this topic even further in a monograph written as part of the Qualitative Research Methods Series (Bartunek and Louis 1996). Evered and Louis (1981) framed differences in how organizational insiders and outside researchers understood situations. Bartunek and Louis took this insight and began considering how the different

perspectives could simultaneously contribute to higher-quality research and better change outcomes. The insiders are not simply subjects of the research. They become cocreators who have a stake in the design of the project and have the opportunity to contribute their insights to the analysis. Organization members become partners, and the resultant outcomes will ideally have value not just for the broader research community but also for the organization itself.

The insider/outsider work has contributed to a wide array of research studies of organizational change since the mid-1990s. Illustrations are found in Bartunek et al. (1996), (1999), (2000), (2007), and Giorgi et al. (2014), among other places. Jean's insider/outsider work was also a precursor to her work with Sara Rynes on the academic-practitioner divide in the management field. One particularly interesting observation about Jean's examination of the insider/outsider dynamic is how she has redefined where the academic is situated in her writing. In early insider/outsider writing, the academic is the outsider who can offer new perspectives and rigorous techniques to help the organizational insider better manage the complexity of organizational change. In more recent writing, Jean presents the academic as the insider whose perspectives are constrained and would benefit from paying more attention to the outsider perspectives of the practicing managers.

## Practitioner/Academic Dynamics

The relationship between management academics and practicing managers emerges as a strong theme in Jean's work since 2001 when she coedited a special research forum in the Academy of Management Journal on knowledge transfer between academics and practitioners with Sara Rynes and Richard Daft (Rynes et al. 2001). Subsequent work has explored academic and practitioner research collaboration (Bartunek 2007), "implications for practice" sections in academic articles (Bartunek and Rynes 2010), knowledge sharing (Bartunek et al. 2003), idea translation (Austin and Bartunek 2003), and the paradoxes embedded in the practitioner/academic dynamic (Bartunek and Rynes 2014).

The success of this work, at least as measured by citation rates, can actually be seen as an intriguing example of using academic conventions to challenge prevailing mind-sets about the academic-practitioner divide. These articles all use the language and communication channels of conventional academic communication (journal articles, creating legitimacy through citation, empirical evidence, theory, etc.) to challenge management academics to rethink their understanding of, and relationship with, practicing managers. The articles themselves successfully create dialectic dynamics because they conform to norms of legitimacy for one side of the dualism (the target audience: management academics).

Jean views this work as having implications beyond just academic-practitioner interactions. The gap itself can be studied to gain insight into other professional divides categorized by similar tensions:

> Imagine, instead, an approach to this gap that does not try to resolve or bridge it, but treats it as fundamentally important in itself for scholarly research and theorizing. Such an approach does not take a side in conversations about whether effective academic-practitioner relationships are possible. Rather, it treats academic-practitioner tensions as significant phenomena whose exploration can suggest important knowledge that is pertinent not only to academics and practitioners, but also to other relationships that include tensions of some sort. (Bartunek and Rynes 2014, p. 1182)

## New Insights: Finding the Edge and Pushing

A number of current active areas of inquiry owe much to Jean's work. Context-sensitive sensemaking and inclusion of missing voices in theory building and change design are perhaps two that have been most powerfully influenced by Jean's work. Others include work on the lived experience of change, the relationship between planned change and transformation, implementation theory, role of emotion in organizational change, and idea translation across professional boundaries.

## Context-Sensitive Sensemaking

Second-order change research helped build recognition of the need to fuse cognitive approaches to change with qualitative research methods. Many second-order changes can only be understood, measured, and critically challenged via qualitative evaluation. We may take this observation for granted now, but it was a direct challenge to the prevailing interest in measurements of change in the 1970s and 1980s (cf., Bartunek and Franzak 1988). Bartunek's studies highlighted the assumption of some level of stasis built into many quantitative measures of change. Once a change grew beyond that level of stasis, quantitative measures of the change need to be critically examined. Qualitative and refined quantitative measures have great value in understanding a change, but standard approaches risked missing fundamental shifts characteristic within a second-order change.

## Missing Voices in Change Theory and Design

A central question that connects much of Dr. Bartunek's work is "Whose expertise is being ignored and why?" We see this in her work on insider/outsider research, in her work on the academic/practitioner divide, in her work on empowerment, and in her work on how recipients of change feel about the change. Each of these streams of research reflects an underlying dialogic questioning of who gets to tell the story and decide what knowledge is valid. We see a search for the underlying tension and potential paradox. The tension is the focal point. If there is no tension, nothing is

occurring. A good example of this can be seen in Bartunek and Ryne's work on the academic/practitioner divide (2014). They examine the use of the word "relevance" and the ongoing fights over what it means in academic discussions to raise the important point that the academic always tells the story. Relevance is important for the practicing manager as well, but academics rarely hear relevance discussed from the practitioner's perspective.

## The Lived Experience of Change

Jean's work on insider/outsider research as well as her active efforts to reach beyond the traditional academic perspective have contributed to efforts at legitimating the lived experience of change. Change participants are not viewed as merely data points or people to be influenced. They are potentially partners in the change. At a minimum, their perspectives are legitimate outcomes to consider when examining planned change (Balogun et al. 2015; Bartunek et al. 2006). While not always an explicit focus of her work, empathy for change participants is implicit in much of her work.

## Planned Change and Transformation

To what extent can planned change actually be transformative and, if it is, can it be controlled? This question is a challenge to the notion of planned change and how we measure it. The measurement challenge is true for both researchers and practitioners. Metrics is big business, and practitioners and academics alike often get seduced into focusing on what they can measure without looking for evidence of second-order change. Likewise, a review of current change management models could lead one to conclude that transformative change can be fully controlled with the right design. Schematic change, change that redefines fundamental cognitive frames, reminds us that the synthesis required for a new shared schema is messy and extremely difficult to predict beforehand.

## Process and Implementation Theories

In Austin and Bartunek (2003, 2012) review chapters, we considered how change process and change implementation theories differ and are connected. We examined current theory building and practice in the area of organizational change. We argued that previous reviews of change theory focused primarily on change process theory (how change happens) and often ignored change implementation theory (how one actively creates change). Academic change researchers often built process theories. Change practitioners often built implementation theories. Our review found four

dominant implementation motors in use both in 2003 and 2012. These implementation motors were participation, reflection, action research, and narrative. Contemporary OD interventions relied on one or more of these motors to drive successful implementation of change. A majority of implementation theories included some element of participation in combination with at least one of the other motors. We observed that the evolution of OD implementation has proceeded along a path characterized by increasing integration of the four implementation motors (Bartunek et al. 2008). Current practice is influenced by prior generations of OD practice, and newer implementation frameworks increasingly combine the four motors. For example, appreciative inquiry includes elements of participation, reflection, action research, and narrative motors. This work provides a valuable basis for future theorizing about change process and implementation, particularly as the field of planned change continues to struggle with connecting academic theorizing and practitioner application.

## The Role of Emotion in Organizational Change

Jean explored questions about conflict and emotion in change in her early research projects, and they have remained central elements throughout her career (Bartunek et al. 2006; Balogun et al. 2015; Giorgi et al. 2014). An attention to emotion is a natural offshoot of her focus on missing perspectives and the lived experience of change. Jean's recent work focuses on the perspective of the change recipient as well as the change leader. Change outcomes are not just driven by cognitive sensemaking. Emotional experiences anchor behaviors and color participant sensemaking. Emotions can also guide and explain resistance strategies, not just resistance toward a change initiative but resistance as a seed for emergent change initiatives.

## Idea Translation Across Professional Boundaries

As Jean reflected in a 2006 article, her career has always involved actively working across professional boundaries. Jean's many professional identities made idea translation a personal necessity. Her writing has helped others manage similar professional challenges. My personal efforts to work at the boundary of academic research and managerial practice are directly attributable to Jean's work and my collaboration with her. During the process of writing a review chapter with Jean in 2002, I came to recognize the importance of individuals who take on idea translation roles with the aim of bringing new ideas into different fields. Since that experience, I've chosen to craft a career as an idea translator rather than fully embrace an identity as an academic or practitioner. The questions Jean and I asked in our 2003 Handbook of Psychology chapter regarding how to overcome barriers between academic and change practitioners have continued to interest me. These questions prompted me to look for key idea translation moments facing change practitioners (Austin 2013) and work to train managers to see idea translation as a core component of their work as change leaders (Austin 2015a, b). Thanks to some of the questions raised by

Jean's work, this unique career choice could become one that is more common in the future. In my biased opinion, this would be a positive development for both practicing managers and academic researchers.

## Unfinished Business: Where Next?

Jean's current work digs deeper into questions of academic-practitioner dynamics that go beyond a binary understanding of professional identity or OD. For example, she is currently editing a book with Jane McKenzie (Professor of Management Knowledge and Learning at Henley Business School) that explores multiple modes of contemporary academic-practitioner partnerships around the world. It is tempting to focus on partnerships that fit into traditional roles and outcomes: academic as the outsider, practitioner as the industry expert, and articles/new management patterns as outcomes. However, modes of partnerships can evolve in a wide variety of directions. These partnerships are not just a means toward innovations. They can be innovations in themselves.

Her curiosity continues to be aimed at finding those things that may not be obvious or visible at first and which may be masked by the obvious, such as more in-depth exploration of the impacts recipients of change may have on change processes. Unearthing tensions and systematically exploring the paradoxes revealed by the tensions give her inquiry focus. One avenue for this inquiry regards considerations of relevance. Relevance, as a term, is used by academics and practitioners, and, interestingly, it is often used as justification for delegitimating the other's perspective or contribution; however, exploring relevant activities and practices (cf. Bartunek and Anthony 2016) can provide new possibilities for understanding the construct in more accessible ways.

The question that started Jean on her professional journey still resonates with her as well. How can we do OD or, more broadly, planned organizational change better? And how can OD contribute to academic scholarship? OD is still a powerful tool for positive change in organizations. It still can benefit from enhanced understandings of links between theory and practice, not to mention so many other dualities that reveal themselves to attentive observers. Jean continues to push the OD field to consider its progress and continue to improve. One way of doing this is through a deeper understanding of temporal dimensions of change, and Jean is now exploring that topic (Albert and Bartunek 2017; Bartunek and Woodman 2015).

Jean continues to find the tensions she engages and the possibilities of surfacing what is hidden to be consistent sources of renewal for her work. Confronting, naming, measuring, and debating theoretical implication of boundaries frame her work today as much as it did at the start of her career. Her efforts to push OD to contribute to academic scholarship has kept her collaborating with a wide array of academics and practitioners. This large and growing list of collaborators illustrate another of Dr. Bartunek's key contributions. She creates connections. As president of the Academy of Management she pressed the academy to strengthen ties between academics and practitioners. Her focus on rigor in research design and theory has

helped to break down boundaries between qualitative research and quantitative researchers. Her focus on insider/outsider research has helped trigger continuing conversations across academic-practitioner boundaries. In each case, Jean's writing exposed a tension and transformed that tension into an opportunity for constructive dialog across a boundary.

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# Richard Beckhard: The Formulator of Organizational Change

**6**

Ronald Fry

**Abstract**

Richard Beckhard is recognized as one of the founders of the field of organization development and as a pioneer in the study and teaching of a systemic approach to planned change in complex organizations. As an educator, Beckhard was an adjunct professor at MIT's Sloan School of Management where he teamed with Douglas McGregor, Warren Bennis, and Edgar Schein in the early development of MIT's Department of Organization Studies. A practitioner at heart, he applied behavioral sciences to translate his international consulting experiences into many useful change management models and tools that still influence practice of change leadership today including the Formula for Change, Open Systems Planning, Responsibility Charting, Confrontation Meeting, and Task-Oriented Team Development. As an institution builder, he helped found the Organization Development Network, the International Organization Development Association, and the Family Firm Institute.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Richard "Dick" Beckhard is widely known as one of the founders of the field of organization development (OD) and as a pioneer in the study and teaching of a systemic approach to planned change in complex organizations. He was an internationally sought out consultant to executives and organizations on topics ranging from leader succession to team and inter-group dynamics to planned, system-wide change. As a scholarly practitioner he translated this experience into many useful change management models and tools still in use today. As an institution builder, he helped found the Organization Development Network under the auspices of the National Training Laboratory, the International Organization Development Association, and the Family Firm Institute (and subsequently the *Family Business Review*). As an educator, Dick developed and taught system-wide organization change courses to masters and doctoral students, and Sloan Fellows, at MIT's Sloan School of Management where he also teamed with Douglas McGregor, Warren Bennis and Edgar Schein in the early development of MIT's Department of Organization Studies.

## Influences and Motivations: From Event Manager to International Change Facilitator

Beckhard was born in New York in 1918. His early professional passions were in the theatre. At Pomona College he supported himself through college by working as a stage manager. Eventually his talents took him to Broadway where he stage managed and radio-acted. Unable to be drafted for physical reasons, he helped found the Stagedoor Canteen for GIs in New York in 1943 and through an assignment with the Red Cross in New Guinea he helped direct entertainment shows for GIs in the South Pacific (Hampton 1997). It was at the Red Cross that a life-long pattern of doing and learning started as he took on new roles and positions including teaching drama and music, supervising the building of thatched huts in New Guinea, providing social

work services to GIs, and directing a field operation with a six million dollar budget. In his own words,

> My life pattern has consistently been one of doing something because it was there to be done and then trying to learn from the doing. For me, the only way of learning is by doing. . . .I never did anything because I was prepared for it. (Beckhard 1997, xii)

After World War II, Dick applied his extensive stage management and direction experience to become a "meeting management" consultant. He was approached by Ford in 1947 to help produce entertainment for a radical new car launch. That success led to others and his reputation as an expert in staging industrial shows led to several engagements including the Girl Scouts of America to stage general sessions at their triennial conference and a railroad "World's Fair" on the Chicago waterfront. In 1950, he was approached by Ron Lippitt and Lee Bradford, two of the founders of the National Training Laboratories (NTL), to apply his theatrical staging expertise and experience with role-playing to the staging of NTL's plenary "theory" sessions to make them more engaging. While doing this he participated in NTL's core program, the T-Group. That experience stimulated his seminal thinking on the relationships between group functioning and problems faced by managers in corporations (MIT Tech Talk 2000). Again in his words,

> Although I didn't' completely realize it at the time, I had undergone a profound experience. Those three weeks changed my life. The most profound effect of my first experience with NTL laboratory training was a dramatic increase in self-awareness. . . (Beckhard 1997, 19)

Later in his writings, a key assumption underlying Beckhard's thinking on organization change was that organizations functioned as systems of groups and understanding group dynamics was the key to facilitating improvement or change.

> As I thought about the presentations on theories about the effective group functioning [at NTL] and about the ways meetings were actually conducted, I realized there was little connection between the two. The knowledge and understandings that were being discovered were not being translated or applied to managers or leaders in organizations. A light flashed. Perhaps what was needed was "bridge" between the two worlds. . . (Beckhard 1997, 22)

This early experience at NTL also spawned a 35 year relationship wherein Dick became a staff member and served on the board.

In the late 1950s, Dick began collaborating with MIT Professor Douglas McGregor who founded the Organization Studies Department at MIT's Sloan School of Management. Here they initiated a project at General Mills designed to facilitate a system-wide process that included top team goal setting, leadership training for all management levels, performance improvement meetings between supervisors and workers, and work team identification and team building. In writing up the project as a case study, Doug and Dick needed a program title. Instead of Human Relations Training, Leadership Training, Management Development, or Organization Improvement, they chose "Organizational Development" to describe

the scope and focus of their work (Beckhard 1997). The experiences and ideas emerging from this work lead to one of the first training programs on "planned change" at NTL; "Program for Specialists in Organization Development (PSOD)." Participants would meet initially for a weeklong seminar with the instructors to learn the tools for planned or managed change. Each would then set off to apply their learnings on a change project. The cohort would reconvene quarterly to share experience, frame their lessons learned and plan for next steps. The components of this design, experiential learning along with peer feedback and meaning making, have become and remain staples of effective executive training today (Hampton 1997). The PSOD experience stimulated Dick to urge the founding of the Organization Development Network (ODN) in 1967 with its national publication, *The OD Practitioner*. By 2000, the ODN had grown to over 3,500 members and multiple international branches. The early success of PSOD also influenced some of the teaching staff to pioneer the first masters degree programs in organization development in 1975 at Case Western Reserve University and at Pepperdine University. By 2000 there would be over 45 graduate degree programs in OD throughout the world.

Douglas McGregor invited Beckhard to become one of the early faculty members of the new department of organizational studies at the Sloan School where he served as Senior Lecturer and then Adjunct Professor of Organization Behavior and Management from 1963 to 1984. In 1969 Dick, along with Edgar Schein and Warren Bennis, edited and launched the Addison-Wesley OD series. In their effort to understand the state of the practice of "organization development" at the time, Beckhard, Bennis and Schein chose to explore the definition of OD by having leading practitioners describe what they were doing. The original six books by Dick Beckhard, Edgar Schein, Warren Bennis, Robert Blake and Jane Mouton, Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch, and Richard Walton became and remain the foundational literature of the field of Organization Development (OD).

Dick's definition of OD, constructed from his observations of his and others' current practice, was provocative. He defined OD as, "an effort (1) planned, (2) organization-wide, and (3) managed from the top to (4) increase organizational effectiveness and health through (5) planned interventions in the organization's "processes" using behavioural science knowledge." (Beckhard 1969, 9). He distinguished OD from human relations training and management development efforts where the outcome were increased skills rather than organization change. He saw OD as interventions in the form of change programs whose goals were to create a new culture, new ways of working, changed management style, a reward system congruent with cultural values, and new allocation of tasks and roles to produce optimum use of human resources (Beckhard 1997).

From the 1960s through the 1980s Dick taught and developed OD Practitioners, change agents, institution builders, and future practical scholars (doctoral students) at MIT, Columbia Teachers College, Pepperdine University, Case Western Reserve University and the London Graduate School of Business. At the same time, he developed a global consulting practice with clients including Ansul Chemical

Company, Hotel Corporation of America, Raymond Company, Donut Corporation of America, J. Lyons, Ltd., Imperial Chemical Industries, and Proctor & Gamble.

> A common denominator in all of these contracts was having a [multi-year] relationship with the CEO. This allowed me to have input and influence at the [organization] center when needed. From my very first consulting assignment with Robert Hood at Ansul, I found myself working with both the leadership and with the organization as a whole. I learned on the job. Every client that hired me was concerned with changing something: the top team, the ways of work, external relations, communication patterns. My task was to help clients with their issues. In doing that, I quickly learned to use my learnings about process to "guide" the interaction. (Beckhard 1997, 64–65)

In his work in the field, Dick realized that his expertise went well beyond meetings improvement or staging large group events. He was being retained to work with, support, advise, challenge, provide theory, and to link to other experiences. It was his understanding of the management of process through relating interpersonally that was of value. He was primarily facilitating planned change in management style, relationships to the outside environment, operating policies and mechanisms, and the organization's culture (how people were treated, how teams functioned, how meetings were run, how decisions were made, what values should be driving the work, etc.). Consistent with his doing-learning modality, his reflections on his role and actions as a change agent and linking to behavioural science theory and concepts led to the creation of numerous models for interventions to facilitate planned, system-wide change which will be discussed in the next section.

Dick's first major client was Robert Hood at Ansul Chemical Company. Robert, like several to follow (e.g. George Raymond at Raymond Company and Roger Sonnabend, president of HCA) were second-generation heads of family businesses. As his interest in and experience with family dynamics and their impact on the business grew he also discovered that very little family business literature existed. He developed an innovative plan to partner with family business clients who, in return for his time, would provide their organizations as research sites. This led to the creation of the Family Firm Institute (with Elaine Hollander) in 1984, a nationwide organization to promote learning among practitioners from a variety of disciplines who work for and serve family companies. The Institute's activities include annual conferences and issuing of the *Family Business Review (FBR),* the only peer-reviewed journal that is focused entirely on family business theory and practice. (Hampton 1997). Dick served on the Institute's board and the FBR editorial board until his passing.

Dick retired from MIT and most of his formal teaching roles in 1984. He was honored with an unprecedented "MIT Richard Beckhard Day," built around a symposium with invited speakers who represented academic colleagues, clients and students. That evening at a dinner hosted by the Sloan School, Dean Abraham Siegel announced the formation of the Richard Beckhard Annual Prize for the best article in the OD or change management field to be published in the *Sloan Management Review.*

The final phase of Dick's career saw him based in his New York City apartment and spending full summers at his beloved family cabin on Lake Kesar in Maine. He continued editing the FBR and served on the advisory board of the Peter Drucker Foundation for Non-Profit Management where he co-edited its Future Series on Leadership. He found a new calling in coaching to change agents and consultants, and conducted annual master classes in OD for senior health managers in the UK's National Health Service under the auspices of the Public Management Foundation. He published his memoirs in 1997 under the title, "Agent of Change; My Life, My Practice." It was his ninth book to accompany 10 book chapters, and 26 periodical articles. Richard Beckhard passed away in December, 1999 at the age of 81.

## Key Contributions and Insights: Birthing the Field of Organization Development (OD)

Beckhard's pioneering work in 1969, *Organization Development: Strategies and Models,* helped to define and bound a nascent field of inquiry and practice. Based on his own stories of helping organizations to bring about planned change he developed role descriptions and skill sets for would be OD practitioners, a collection of issues or challenges that OD could address, and an initial typology of the skills and knowledge necessary for the development of OD practitioners. For the next 20 years, Dick collaborated with colleagues to author four more books and numerous articles and papers to convey the models and tools he derived from his work in helping large, complex systems to bring about effective change. The following represent some of the most used and cited of those contributions.

### A Systems Model for Managing Change in Organizations

His next volume for the newly established Addison-Wesley OD Series he co-edited was *Organizational Transitions*: *Managing Complex Change* with Rueben T Harris in 1977. In this work he laid out a new concept for understanding organization change; the transition state. He envisioned any large system change as moving from a *current state* through a *transition state* toward a *desired state*. It was this attention to the state-of-changing, or transition, that began to shape what we know today as the discipline of change management, leading change, or OD. Thus changing in a large, complex system involves:

> Setting goals and defining the future state, or organization conditions desired after the change.
>> Diagnosing the present condition in relation to those goals
>> Defining the *transition state*: activities and commitments required to reach the future state
>> Developing strategies and action plans for managing this transition
>> (Beckhard and Harris 1987, 30)

Underlying this deceptively simple list of managerial actions was what Dick had learned about systems thinking from his NTL experiences. He looked at organizations, groups and individuals as interconnected systems and applied *open systems theory* (introduced to him by James Clark, Charles Krone and Will McWhinney at UCLA) as a diagnostic tool for strategic planning and shaping future goals. He found it useful to managers at the beginning stages of defining goals and desired change state to:

1. Identify the present demand system; those domains that were making demands on the management (competitors, unions, media, employees, family, self?)
2. List current response pattern(s).
3. Look ahead 2 years to a future without change by you. If you didn't do things very differently, what would the demand system look like then?
4. Project your ideal or desired condition for the same time frame
5. Determine what behaviors would have to occur for you to reach the desired future condition
6. Perform a cost-benefit analysis of these activities and feed this into your strategic planning process (Beckhard 1997, 50).

To lead and coordinate the processes involved in the transition state, a *critical mass* was needed. Referred to today's literature as a "champion group" or "steering group" this is a sufficient number of key stakeholders that must be committed to the change goal and necessary transition steps. To this end, Dick introduced *Commitment Charting*. This tool identifies key players in the change context and initially identifies their commitment to the desired state by labelling them as "No Commitment," "Let it Happen," "Help it Happen," or "Make it Happen." For each person, you first identify the minimum commitment level you need from them and mark that cell with an O. Now assess their current level of commitment and put an X in that cell. If the O and x are in the same cell, you are all set! Where the O and x are not in the same cell for a given person, draw an arrow from the X to the O and that gives you and agenda to work on with that individual (Beckhard and Harris 1987). This tool has also been adapted to assess readiness for change as a precursor to action in the transition state.

Another widely used tool to help in managing the transition state is *Responsibility Charting*. Since people will be required to act in new ways during the transition, customary roles and responsibilities will be altered as well. Temporary work groups or teams with form and disband. This technique clarifies behaviour that is required to implement important change tasks, actions or decisions. The chart lists key actions, decisions or activities that will require collective input (e.g. developing a budget, allocating resources, deciding on use of capital or funds). Each stakeholder, team member, or key person is then allocated an "A" (approval or right to veto), an "S" (support or put resources toward), an "I" (inform – to be consulted before action), or an "X" (irrelevant to this action item). Then only one of the listed persons is given and R (responsible for seeing that it gets done). (Beckhard and Harris 1987) this helps reduce ambiguity, wasted energy and adverse emotional reactions between

individuals or groups whose interrelationships are bound to be affected by the changing, transitional state. Having adapted this numerous times in working with teams, I also see the benefit is foreshadowing to the team what kinds of decisions it will have to make, and when. If more than one person has an A for a particular action, then there will have to be consensus building. People wanting involvement become clearer as to the extent of that in a given action; both S and I provide ways to be involved, but not actually making the decision. Again when two or more receive A, it is critical to be clear about who has the additional R so there is not duplication, confusion or the ball gets dropped.

## Managing Resistance: A Formula for Change

Perhaps the most cited contribution of Dick Beckhard is referred to as the "formula for change." The common reporting of this idea is that Change happens when Dissatis-faction with the status quo, Shared Vision of a desired state and clarity of First steps combine to be greater that inherent Resistance to change: $D \times V \times F > R$.

Dick actually learned this concept from an Arthur D. Little consultant, David Gleicher, whom he met while engaged at Proctor & Gamble. The idea was more oriented to helping product development team leaders to keep a positive change momentum going in their teams. The original formulation was that in order for change momentum to be moving forward, the combined effect of degree of felt need to change, degree of shared future image, and clarity around very next steps had to be greater that the force of resistance in the situation: $C = (A \times B \times D) > R$.

C = Change
A = Level of dissatisfaction with the current state
B = Desirability of the proposed change or future state
D = Clarity of the next steps required to implement the change

Factors A, B and D must outweigh (as if a mathematical product, if any were to approach zero or be small, then the total product approaches zero) the perceived "costs" of changing for change to occur. Beckhard and Harris cite this as a resistance management tool in their book rather than a basic formula for change as it has been widely adapted. Nevertheless, this idea signifies Beckhard's support of Lewin's noted change process of unfreezing-adapting-refreezing. Dick viewed learning and change, or "inquiry" and change as he later phrased it as inseparable (Beckhard and Pritchard 1992).

## Factors That Affect Team Performance

Another lasting area of contribution from Beckhard's work and writing has to do with the dynamics that help teams to be effective in learning and performing.

In trying to bridge the gap he perceived between the knowledge and theory he was receiving from his NTL experiences and colleagues, and his observations of groups at work he derived what is commonly referred to as the *GRPI* model. This maintains that for any interdependent group to do its work, it must continuously manage: (1) clarity and agreement on its Goals, purpose or objectives; (2) clarity and agreement on the Roles members are to play; (3) clarity and agreement on the key Procedures the group will use to communicate and make decisions; and (4) how they will Interpersonally relate to one another during their work (Beckhard 1972). If group members are not clear or disagree with group goals, their roles in the group, the way key decisions are made, or with the relational norms that exist, then their energy and attention to their work is diverted to coping mechanisms or unconstructive emotional expressions. This notion of an agenda to manage in groups aligned with Dick's early observations that OD work was in service of changing how work is done for organization health and effectiveness, not for developing new knowledge or skills in individuals. Further he was challenging the tendency he observed in many OD practitioners to focus their attention on interpersonal dynamics, communication styles and norms *without* concern for the task to be accomplished.

This GRPI model has been since delineated into a hierarchal intervention model with an additional Systems factor based on extensive, multi-year OD project that Dick coordinated with primary healthcare teams through a grant from the then Office of Economic Opportunity (and now Robert Wood Johnson Foundation). The revised *SGRPI* model (Fry et al. 1977) has been published as a task-oriented team development manual (Rubin et al. 1978) and used widely in North America and Europe. The extension of Dick's core concept, based on interventions with multi-disciplinary health care teams was that lack of clarity or agreement at one level in the SGRPI hierarchy is most likely a symptom of, or will most likely be resolved by, working for clarity and agreement at the level above. Thus an apparent role conflict between two team members that seemingly cannot be resolved through some kind of role clarification or negotiation actually needs to be addressed at the level of team goals; do the two parties still agree on the overall reason for the team's existence? If that cannot be resolved, then it is a systems issue; someone outside the team who chartered it or designed it to do important work has to be brought in to help clarify the team goals. Again, the biggest implication of this model lies in the implication that apparent interpersonal conflicts (what we often refer to as personality clashes) are most likely to be symptoms of basic disagreement or lack of clarity about team goals, roles or procedures.

**It's All About the Work**
On several occasions, I co-facilitated with Dick an NTL Training Program on Large Systems Change. In this program (as well as other executive training settings) he would often conduct a short exercise where he would build a list

with the participants of "things that all organizations have." A typical list would look like this:

Structure
Communication
Reward system
Work
Decision-making Process
Strategy/Strategic Plan
Power and Authority
Supervision

Dick would then ask, "Which on the list is the most critical for what the organization does?"

Seldom, if ever, did anyone choose "work" which Dick felt was the correct answer. He was adamant! "This is the problem with us as consultants or change agents. Everyone in the organization understands that work is what matters most. You must make a critical choice. If you don't see work as the key, perhaps you should change your career and not be a change agent." (Field notes by Bob Toft from NTL program, Facilitating and Managing Complex systems Change, August 12–18, 1979).

## The Confrontation Meeting

Dick understood organizations as groups of groups and as his reputation spread as an expert in convening large or multiple group events, he began to experiment with rapid, whole system interventions that he deemed necessary particularly during the transition stage of a large change effort. In conditions of uncertainty, formation of new (often temporary) groups, and experimentation that characterize the transition phase of his change model, Dick saw that managers at the top tended to spend less and less time with their subordinates, communication decreased between top and middle levels and more employees were likely to express that they felt left out, less influential, even ignored. The organization potentially suffers from undue stress during the most important period of the overall change effort. Dick designed and perfected *The Confrontation Meeting* to provide a way for a large system to convene to take stock of their cohesion, alignment, and to deal with real conflicts that are getting the way of collaboration, all in 4–5 h.

A typical confrontation meeting agenda would be:

(A) Stage setting by top management: goals for the meeting, norms for participation, concern for real, honest communications including tough topics and conversations

(B) Information collecting: Small cross functional and multi-level groups of 7–8 form to discuss what are the current obstacles, demotivators, poor procedures or policies, unclear goals, that are getting in the way of doing good work? What different conditions would make life in the organization better?

(C) Information sharing: Group summaries are posted around the meeting space and duplicated for individual handouts after a break or lunch.

(D) Priority setting and Action planning: total group reconvenes to go through raw data on duplicated sheets and code each item with a category suggested by leadership. New, homogeneous groups form into their natural work units or functions with their functions or unit managers. Then they discuss problems or items that affect their area, decide on priorities and early action steps they are committed to taking, list issues or problems they want top management to give their priority attention to, and decide how to communicate the results of their session to the whole group.

(E) Organization Action planning: total group reconvenes and each functional unit reports its commitment and plans, and shares with top management group the items they believe the leadership should attend to. Top management reacts to this lest and makes new commitments for action where required. Each unit shares its plans for communicating the results of the confrontation meeting to all subordinates or co-workers not attending.

(F) and (G) Immediate follow-up by leadership group directly after the confrontation meeting ends to plan first follow-up actions and commit to progress review session within 4–6 weeks.

The outcomes from a confrontation meeting include an accurate reading of the organization's health, the opportunity for work units to set priorities for improvement, the opportunity for top management to make appropriate action decision based on valid information from the organization, an increased involvement in the organization's goals, a real commitment to action on the part of subgroups, and a basis for determining other mechanisms for communication between levels and groups, appropriate location of decisions, problem-solving within units as well as mechanisms for upward influence (Beckhard 1997).

If one were to look at the agenda topics for a *kaizen* session or General Electric's *Work Out* sessions, or any number of large group interventions in practice today, it is clear how Dick's insights and practice with the confrontation meeting foreshadowed these more current ways to facilitate rapid, large system problem solving session.

## New Insights: Ways of Doing and Being That Dick Has Modeled for Us

I was privileged to be both a student, colleague and friend of Dick's while earning my masters and doctorate at MIT's Sloan School of Management. As a student I marvelled at his ability to make me feel listened to, cared for, and yet quickly help

me simplify or prioritize my question, problem or dilemma for which I was seeking his counsel. He always scheduled student appointments for only 30 min each and yet I always left those encounters feeling like my mind had been expanded, I had seen something differently, and that I had been genuinely helped and valued by him. I have vivid memories of vying with my peers to get the opportunity to drive Dick on Friday afternoons to Logan Airport so he could get the shuttle back to New York. Those drives seemed like precious opportunities to get "backstage" with him to glean more insights and impressions about the nascent field of organization development and change.

In the field, Dick had a remarkable ability to listen to confused, overwhelmed, or simply frustrated leaders and managers who were stuck in inaction and help them reframe their situation in a way that opened space for them to act. For example, I witnessed an initial contracting, scouting and entry meeting he had with a potential client, Dr. Harold Wise, who was the director of an experimental primary health care center in the South Bronx, in New York. A satellite of a major community hospital the center supported eight multidisciplinary teams to deliver care to a defined neighbourhood in the most blighted and underserved area around the main hospital. Having been socially introduced by a mutual friend, Dr. Wise and Dick were meeting in person for the first time. Dr. Wise took about a half hour to describe a litany of issues, problems, or festering frustrations he was experiencing: senior management team not operating as a team, lost or damaged medical records, poor communications with the main hospital, safety of his employees in the local neighbourhood, lack of coordinated care coming out of the primary care teams, who was going to succeed him as director, a sense of failure in pioneering an experiment with amazing potential, etc. Dick listened intently and when Dr. Wise finally paused, Dick remarked, "I admire your passion for this place and what it can become. It sounds as if you have 5 or 6 issues on your plate that if dealt with effectively, could really improve your outlook on the future and help the Center achieve its mission. You have the top team which could be more cohesive and effective, you have succession planning to do once you are confident and trusting in your team, you have the interface with the main hospital to improve, you have operations issues that support the care teams and you have the care teams themselves that need attention. If I've got those right, then I'd suggest you pick any two to begin with – any two that you think would make the most positive difference if dealt with. You can't juggle all these at once." Dr. Wise acknowledged that Dick had heard him quite well and then paused. After a small silence he said that if the care teams were really functioning as he imagined they could and his top team was also more of a real team then his energy would be much more directed on constructive actions. That interaction became the launch of a multi-year action-research project and a 30 year relationship as Dr. Wise eventually became Dick's private physician and partner in consultant coaching to increase effective use of energy and decrease stress. Dick intervened with the top team through a series of retreats and eventually guided them through a successful succession plan while a team of faculty colleagues and doctoral students intervened with the eight primary care teams through experiential educational sessions and team tasks to address their goals, roles. Procedures and interpersonal norms. This ability to

listen from a systems perspective and them help the client frame their experience in a way that leads to proactivity rather than dysfunction, wasted energy or increased stress, was Dick's real gift in practice.

Dick was always opinionated and direct in his communicating. He had a confident, concise, and definitive style. Near the end of my time at MIT, a question arose in me about dealing with the extent to which an effective OD practitioner can "advise" or "come across as the expert" versus remain client-centered and focused on helping the client system learn and explore what is best for them. My growing observation was that in many instances, Dick was perceived as giving answers or direction; being and seen as the expert. As an initiate in OD and action-research this was confusing to me because he espoused so much alignment with his colleagues Douglas McGregor's Theory Y assumptions, Edgar Schein's educative (vs. diagnostic or expert) approach to facilitating change, and Chris Argyris's intervention criteria of free choice and internal commitment. Dick's response to my query was predictably confident and to the point; "I have my 51–49 rule. As long as you are at least 51% focused on the other's needs and agenda, you'll do fine."

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Personal and Professional Development Are Inseparable and Never-ending

Dick Beckhard deserves to be regarded as a pioneer, if not co-creator, of the field of organizational development. In the formal sense, various institutions he helped create or sustain exist and continu to add value today. These would include the Family Firm Institute, Family Business Review, the OD Network, the OD Practitioner, the International OD Network, and NTL's PSOD training program, to name a few. Yet Dick was clearly a product of his era and the organizational contexts he encountered. He invented models and tools to facilitate large-scale *planned* and *top-down* driven change. His writings are flooded with attention to "the top" and his experience highly shaped by long standing personal and professional relationship with the organization leader. Are his contributions simply dated and now out of context? Not when you consider his fundamental messages: The work to be done defines how we organize to do it; All organizations are on a trajectory toward forms of team management; Decisions will have to be made at all levels where the information comes together; Organizations are beholden to multiple internal and external stakeholders, not just shareholders or family owners; Managing conflict, diversity and complexity will be even more central in the future (Beckhard 1997). From this complex perspective, Beckhard's tools and models can still serve us well in dealing with complexity, diversity of interests, multiple interfacing groups and personal thriving at work.

When asked near the end of his career what he thought about the future of OD, his response was usually something to the effect that "OD, as we know it, is dead." He did see evidence of the field re-inventing itself through what is now referred to a Dialogic OD (Bushe and Marshak 2015) or through intervention theory and method like appreciative inquiry. Dick was a panellist with Edgar Schein, Robert Golembieusky, David Cooperrider and others at an Academy of Management symposium on the

Future of OD where he decided to cut his speaking time in half to provide more for David to expound on the promise of strength-based change methods:

> Appreciative Inquiry is, in my view, an exciting breakthrough, one that signals a change in the way we think about change. I'm intrigued by how rapidly it is emerging; but it is something substantive, conceptually strong, not like the quick fads. In my view we are looking at something important – Al will be of enduring consequence and energizing innovation for the field. That's my prediction. And that is why we are going to give it more attention in this session. Richard Beckhard (Cooperrider 2001)

This openness to engage with "what is" and then learn from what results in order to model or guide a preferred future action, knowing that that future action will create a new learning opportunity, signifies the inquiring stance that underlies all of Dick's work and contributions. Thus they remain, for the most part, adaptable to changing circumstances, and continually useful in making complexity understandable, if not manageable.

In the beginning of his memoirs, Dick tells how he was asked once in the mid-1980s, "If you could have achieved totally what you want to be and do professionally, what would you have done?" His response that came with self-reported ease was, "I want to influence organizations to function in a more humane as well as high-performing mode." (Beckhard 1997, xii). To summarize the pioneering life and contributions of Dick Beckhard with this heartfelt intent to better organizations and organization life, however, would be only partly warranted. At the end of his memoirs, presumably reflecting upon his own recollections and contributions, he ends with the following (Beckhard 1997, 166):

> I hope to stimulate people's thinking about their professional work and its intersection with their personal life. My professional and personal lives have meshed in a way that continues to be full and stimulating; may yours be as well.

Dick's legacy is beyond all the models and tools he contributed from his "doing-learning" practice. He modelled bringing his "whole self" to the table, be it with a graduate student, a client, a room with hundreds of organization members, or to a dinner party for NTL staff in his Maine cabin. He masterfully brought his curious self, his helping self, his task-oriented self, his playful self, his provocative self and his love-for-life self – all the time. His energy was contagious. In today's parlance, he wished to build flourishing organizations full of thriving people. It was a precious gift to have him in my life.

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# Michael Beer: It's Not the Seed, It's the Soil

Tobias Fredberg and Johanna Pregmark

**Abstract**

Michael Beer of the Harvard Business School is mainly known for his work on organizational change, strategic human resource management, and for the development of approaches/methods for strategic renewal. After a first career as an organizational researcher at Corning Glass works, he has remained a scholar-practitioner, with a burning interest in doing research which is both useful for theory and practice. Beer is interested in how organizational systems learn and change and ultimately in understanding what over time creates organizational system effectiveness. A major problem, he and his colleagues argue, is that management usually does not address changes in a systemic way. The result is a much lower success rate of organizational change initiatives. The employees of the organization often know how it can be improved, but because "truth cannot speak to power", management only rarely gets to know what the organization thinks. They are therefore restricted from making a systemic analysis and do not get to know how they can address change in a systemic manner. A substantial part of Beer's research has been focused on how to make such situations better. Together with a set of colleagues from aspirational CEOs of major corporations Beer and colleagues formed both an international consultancy firm – TruePoint, as well as a network of research centers – the Center for Higher Ambition Leadership.

**Keywords**

Organizational change • Systemic change • Strategic human resource management, action research, intervention research

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## Introduction

From the first challenge when receiving a call to help Corning's Medfield Plant become a more human organization, Michael Beer's career has been characterized by a quest to understand how organizations can be made more sustainably effective: how they work better as systems, how they work better with their people, and how they can change in a better way. It is based in a conviction that the road to high performance involves trusting employees and engaging them in meaningful work toward a higher purpose that leads to value for multiple stakeholders. What sets Beer and his colleagues apart is also that they immerse themselves in the organizational reality in all its complexity and fuzziness, with the ambition to create usable knowledge and usable research processes that are of value also for the organization. This has led him to be an innovator, not only in research but in practice, and has earned him a place both as a great organizational thinker and as a scholar-practitioner.

## Influences and Motivations: Being in the Melting Pot of Practical Problems and Theoretical Solutions

"Mike, we have read Douglas McGregor's *The Human Side of the Enterprise*, and we would very much like to become a Theory Y kind of company. Can you help us?"

Michael Beer received the call from the manager of Corning's plant in Medfield, Massachusetts, in 1965, a few months into his first job as an organizational researcher at Corning Glass Works. His recently finished PhD thesis in Organizational Psychology and Business Administration from Ohio State University (Beer 1964) focused on McGregor's (1960) thinking. McGregor argued that leaders' assumptions about the nature of people govern their behavior. Theory X managers believe that people are not motivated, that they do not want to learn, and that leaders

therefore need to focus on controlling people to achieve efficiency, productivity, and profits. Theory Y managers, on the other hand, believe in the capacity of people to engage and learn. Their approach to organizational effectiveness is to involve people in how to become productive and profitable. Theoretically, Beer was well suited for the task. Making it happen was a very different thing.

The Medfield Plant became an early model of the high-commitment manufacturing plants being developed in the USA at that time (Beer 1980; Beer and Huse 1972). It did not take long for others at Corning to understand that Beer's small team could help them develop more effective organizations. Some time after that first assignment with the Medfield plant, the vice president and general manager of Corning's Electronic Products Division (EPD) called for help with a business unit experiencing severe inter-functional conflict that had brought new product development to a halt. Beer and his team were thrown into a major challenge again, this time with even higher stakes. Beer came to the conclusion that the problems were not only behavioral. They were rooted in a top down functional structure that did not align, or fit, with the changes in EPD's business context. Beer's team introduced new cross functional product development teams and behavioral interventions to support their work. About the same time, Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch published a seminal article on differentiation and integration in complex organizations (1967a) problems were not only behavioral - they  up to this point, the field of OD was focused on values, developing open dialogue and participation, not on structure and business processes. Beer contacted Paul Lawrence at the Harvard Business School (HBS) to discuss his findings. This began a relationship that later led to an invitation to join the faculty in 1975.

As Beer´s research unit at Corning grew, it gained more resources, which allowed its members to make a difference in Corning's effectiveness. Core to their pursuit was the necessity to create system-wide change, to create organizations that are more effective and more human at the same time by changing multiple facets of the organization in an integrated and properly sequenced manner. But this is not enough, Beer argued. To be effective, system change needs to have a clear connection to an organizational direction, a strategy that allows people to focus their energy and efforts better, aided by a consultant with system's thinking and change process knowledge and skills.

Beer's unit worked out ways for how organization development (OD) could play a strategic change role within a company. Many visited to learn from the unit's experiences. The work that the unit's consultants played in Corning's many business units in the early 1970s was an early model of the HR strategic partner role being adopted by many companies later. Based on this experience at Corning, Beer argued that strategic OD role must be split from the administrative function to be effective (see Beer 1997, for a longer discussion), an argument later echoed by Ram Charan, a management author and advisor to CEOs (Charan 2014).

Beer stayed with Corning for 11 years, until 1975. During those years, his OD unit found itself confronted with a flow of different organizational problems that needed solving. His years at the company coincided with major theoretical developments in organizational behavior, organizational development, and organization

design by giants such as Rensis Likert, Fred Herzberg, Chris Argyris, Jay Galbraith, Edgar Schein, Richard Beckhard, Paul Lawrence, and Jay Lorsch. Beer gained important knowledge and ideas from all of them and put these insights into practice. Being in the midst of practical work and theoretical development gave him opportunities for action research that, according to Beer, were seminal to his thinking and provided the foundation for his later contributions to theory and practice. Insights gained at Corning resulted in Beer's first book, *Organization Change and Development: A Systems View* (Beer 1980).

A series of organizational restructuring initiatives at Corning in 1975 changed the conditions for Beer's research unit. So when Beer received a call from Jay Lorsch inviting him to join the HBS faculty, he decided to leave Corning to embark on an academic career. The case-based teaching and problem-focused research at HBS suited the practice-oriented Beer well. The case studies as a vehicle for learning were very logical to him, as was the intellectual environment where work at the interface between theory and practice was valued.

The HBS environment became the scene of an important debate between two camps of researchers with very different ideas of the means and ends of business organizations. One camp, based in agency theory's ideas about effective markets and agency costs, argued that the single objective of companies is the maximization of economic value for their owners, that people act on self-interest and therefore cannot be trusted to put the owners' interests first, and that the compensation of managers therefore needs to be structured to be in line with the value maximization objective (Jensen 1994, 2000).

Another camp of researchers, had a very different view. Many of them (including Beer) were involved in developing a new human resource management course (see below), They argued that the purpose of companies goes beyond making money for shareholders. Top management can develop commitment for developing an organization that is systematically geared toward a greater good, and which recognizes that the fundamental driving force of people is not only money but learning, engagement, and participation. Beer's HBS colleagues Nitin Nohria and Paul Lawrence would later discuss how fundamental driving forces shape us and what this means for management in two important books – *Driven* and *Driven to Lead* (Lawrence 2010a; Lawrence and Nohria 2002).

In other words, Beer found himself in the middle of a debate similar to the discussion on McGregor's Theory Y and Theory X managers. The debate on the purpose of business organizations and human driving forces led him to a lifelong interest in the effects of incentives. His research showed that individual- and group-based monetary incentives can have numerous unintended consequences that undermine organizational effectiveness and performance (Beer et al. 2004; Beer and Katz 2003). His conclusion is that financial incentives could do more harm than good. To develop an effective organization, Beer argues, leaders have to change the system of organizing, managing, and leading, a much more difficult and longer-term task.

## Key Contributions: The Dual Nature of a Scholar-Practitioner

Closeness to practice has stayed central in Beer's research. His research contributions have continuously been focused on issues of or opportunities for organization change and development. In that pursuit, he has been problem focused, rather than literature focused (Astley 1985). He has not only tried to understand the phenomena and write about them but has developed interventions to improve the organizations he has worked with. This sets him apart from many other researchers who in their work mainly depart from theoretical gaps and/or stop at a distanced analysis of empirical data.

The dual goal of solving organizational problems and contributing to knowledge has been central to his work. Instead of separating academic research and practice, he continuously used his academic findings to improve his practice even further, constantly supporting clients to develop more effective organizations. Beer has also turned his experiences as a consultant into research that has provided empirical bases for theory development. In this regard, Beer joins academics such as Schein (1987), Schön (1991), Van de Ven (2007), and (Argyris 1993; Argyris et al. 1985; Argyris and Schön 1974) in not only talking about the need to "bridge the relevance gap" (Starkey and Madan 2001; Starkey and Tempest 2003) but building that bridge and describing how that is done. Among his contributions in this area are the co-authored *Making it Happen: Designing Research with Implementation in Mind* (Hakel et al. 1982), his chapter "Making a Difference and Contributing Useful Knowledge: Principles Derived from Life as a Scholar-Practitioner" (Beer 2011b), and his articles "Why Management Research Findings are Un-implementable: An Action Science Perspective" (Beer 2001b) and "Strategic-Change Research: An Urgent Need for Usable rather than Useful Knowledge" (Beer 1992).

Beer's action science and field-based approach to knowledge development inevitably led him to develop a systems perspective as it became obvious that change in one facet of the system required change in others. That perspective was established at Corning (Beer 1980) and has guided his subsequent practice and theory development. The basic argument is simple – the different parts of an organizational system (such as people, strategy, structure, rewards, technology, etc.) are interconnected, which means that they will be ineffective, both individually and collectively, if they are not aligned with one another. The efforts to change the Medfield Plant and the Electronic Products Division at Corning provided grounded examples of how important it is that organizational change incorporates all facets of the system. That in turn raised questions addressed in Beer's later work about how to sequence interventions aimed at different facets of the system and about the process of change needed to develop systemic change.

That organizations are socio-technical systems and that these systems need to adapt to the outside world were established concepts in management thinking and would continue to be important for the analysis of effective organizations

(e.g., Ackoff 1974; Ackoff and Emery 1972; Pasmore 1988). Beer and other important scholars focused on the connection between systems thinking and the practical problem of changing organizations. The central issue for Beer has been less on how the leader can achieve rapid change, nor on economic rationalization, but on the planned organization development required to build high-commitment and high-performance organizations (Beer 1980; Beer and Huse 1972). In addition, Beer and his colleagues have also managed to take his research into a more practical level by developing workable models and processes that support system-wide change. Theory and practice go hand in hand.

Beer's theoretical and practice contributions discussed in the remainder of this chapter derive from his urge to help managers develop more effective high-commitment organizations and learn from that process through action research. Here, we depict those contributions.

## Strategic Human Resource Management

Soon after joining the HBS faculty, Beer was asked by the Dean to lead a team of senior faculty to develop a new required course in Human Resource Management (HRM). It would become the first such required MBA course in business schools. The empirical teaching cases that were developed by Beer and his colleagues led to the book *Managing Human Assets* (1984), with Spector, Lawrence, Mills, and Walton. Because the mission of HBS was, and is, the development of general managers, the course and the book framed the HRM challenge as strategic problem for general managers. The argument is that human resource management is the responsibility of CEOs or business unit leaders, not of the HR specialist traditionally in charge of developing personnel practices such as compensation and selection. *Managing Human Assets* argued that business organizations should measure the HRM system's quality by considering three long-term outcomes: (1) organizational effectiveness, (2) employee well-being, and (3) societal well-being. The difference to the view that business organization solely exists for the financial interest of owners is striking.

*Managing Human Assets* argues that HRM needs to align human capabilities with organizational purpose, goals, and strategy. It zooms in on four HRM policy choices that shape the HRM system: employee influence, HR workflows, reward systems, and work systems. The book discusses how these policies can be put into practice. What is also striking in the book is that it emphasizes that HRM policies must be integrated with one another and be aligned with strategy and situational constraints such as national culture, unions, and national legal framework. In the mid-1980s, this was an important step to elevate the strategic value of HRM as something that could not be purely delegated to the HR function. The book has later credited as being one of two founding books of the strategic human resource management field (Kaufman 2015).

## Managing Corporate Transformations

The business environment in the 1980s brought important challenges to American corporations. Japanese companies showed how goods could be produced faster and with higher quality. This motivated a tidal wave of change programs in large American companies, many exposed by the business press as failures. In later publications, Beer and Nohria (2000a, b) argued that more than half of all change projects are failures, something corroborated by later reports (e.g., Jacquemont et al. 2015). To understand what led to successful corporate transformations, Beer, Russell Eisenstat, and Bert Spector undertook a field study of six corporate transformation efforts to understand better what led to success versus failure in their revitalization efforts. Arguably, this was the first longitudinal empirical study of corporate transformations focused on the process of change and development. It ultimately resulted in the book *The Critical Path to Corporate Renewal* (Beer et al. 1990), a finalist for the Academy of Management's 1990 Terry Book Award and winner of the Johnson, Smith, and Kinsley award for the best book in executive leadership in 1990.

Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector found that transformation programs – changes in formal structure or education and training – fail when they are driven top-down. This finding confirmed Beer's earlier ideas about the importance of thinking about change in holistic systems terms. The most successful company in the Critical Path study did not employ top-down programs; instead, it employed a process of unit-by-unit change. The transformation began with the development of a few model-manufacturing plants, and top management then spread change to other plants through transfer of managers and other means such as conferences and learning visits. The change within each unit was a process of aligning the organization with its strategic task – producing a quality product that resulted in new roles and responsibilities within the unit. Process consultation, coaching, and training, the authors argued, are best introduced to help individuals and groups learn how to enact their new roles. It is only after these steps have been taken that changes in structure, incentive systems, and formal processes should ideally be introduced. This view on organizational transformation stands contrary to the "programmatic" approach practiced by most organizations and management consultancy firms. The difference between the "critical path" approach and the programmatic approach is addressed in one of Beer's best known publications – "Why Change Programs Don't Produce Change" (1990b, with Eisenstat and Spector). The results of this research and theory have important implications for the practice of leading corporate transformations.

Beer's quest to understand in organizational change led to a 1998 conference of leading academics and practitioners in the field of organizational change at the Harvard Business School organized by him and Nitin Nohria. The participants debated why change efforts fail and what could be done about it. The debate led Beer and Nohria to formulate two very different strategies/theories of change. Theory E focuses on the creation of (short-term) economic gains and Theory O on the development of (long-term) organizational capabilities. The theories are

described in an important book and article (Beer and Nohria 2000a, b). They echo Theory X and Y but unlike McGregor whose work implies that the "theories" represent fundamental, incompatible, views about managing people, Theory E and Theory O are approaches that companies must combine to sustain high performance in the long term, though a few do so effectively. Instead of going through pendulum swings between E and O strategies, Beer and Nohria (2000b) discuss how practices – leadership, planning of change, motivating people, and use of consultants – must be shaped to integrate E and O.

## Practice of Organization Change and Development

A call from the global medical technology company Becton Dickinson in 1988 led to one of Beer's most important contribution to the practice of strategic organizational realignment and change. The company's CEO and the senior vice president of Strategy and Human Resources felt the company had good strategies (most senior executives has been consultants in leading strategy consulting firms), but they were not being executed effectively or rapidly enough due to resistance. They had read *Managing Human Assets* and were struck by the systemic way of thinking about organizations that the book presented.

Together with Russell Eisenstat, Beer developed the Strategic Fitness Process (SFP) while working with Becton Dickinson. The SFP built on Beer's and Eisenstat's earlier work, but used also Chris Argyris' (1993) findings that conversations in organizations do not disclose the truth about barriers to change. The development of the SFP is an important marker in Beer's career. Building on the SFP and other developed practices, he founded the international consulting firm TruePoint together with Russell Eisenstat and Nathaniel Foote.

SFP is a leadership platform by which senior teams can enable honest, collective, and public conversations about organizational strengths and barriers to strategy execution, including their own leadership. Ideas on how such interventions need to be built up can be found in a series of papers (e.g., Beer 2011a; Beer and Walton 1987, 1990). Consistent with Beer's dual roles as an academic AND practitioner, the SFP is also well described and published in a series of articles and books (Beer 2001a, 2009, 2013, 2017; Beer and Eisenstat 1996, 2004; Beer et al. 2005).

The SFP begins with the assumption that it is hard for a management team to make a systemic analysis of obstacles that stand in the way of successful organizational transformation because "truth cannot speak to power". Moreover, information about the system is not brought together to enable a senior team can conduct a systemic diagnosis and develop a corresponding systemic action plan. Without systemic analysis, it is difficult to fashion an effective change strategy. The rather straightforward Strategic Fitness Process begins with the senior team coming to agreement about their strategy and values. They then commission a task force to conduct interviews with employees (anonymous to management) about organizational strengths and barriers to executing the strategy. Consultants, or researchers,

help the task force to synthesize findings that its members then present to management with their findings. To enable the delivery of the truth, the process employs a "fish bowl" format. Sitting in a circle with senior management in an outer circle and with strict ground rules to prevent defensiveness, a safe environment for open and honest conversations is created. Management often gets served some rather tough truths and is helped to make a better diagnosis of how the organization works and what needs to change. The process does more, however. It starts a process of restructuring the relationship between senior management to a partnership characterized by trust and commitment. Much as in the case of the Medfield Plant (Beer and Huse 1972), employees become involved in taking responsibility for where the organization is heading.

A common phrase in Beer's presentations has been a quote from Louis Pasteur – "It's the not the seed, it's the soil" (allegedly spoken by the legendary microbiologist at his deathbed). Analogically, context matters for the effectiveness of any change effort. As a result, the whole organizational system needs to be addressed, which the SFP is aimed to do. An analysis of the effectiveness of SFP in a dozen organizations showed that context – such as a perceived performance gap, the leader's readiness to learn, and the existing corporate culture – also is critical for the success of the SFP.

## Theory of Organizational Effectiveness

The task forces in the SFP collect a large amount of data on reactions and suggestions from the organization. A content analysis of the feedback task forces that gave senior management across many different organizations during the SFP process led Beer and Eisenstat to develop a theory of organizational effectiveness (Beer 2017; Beer and Eisenstat 2000). A summary of the work can be found in "Developing an Effective Organization: Intervention Method, Empirical Evidence, and Theory" (Beer 2011a).

Task forces almost always reported six potentially threatening barriers that many felt existed but had never been publicly acknowledged or discussed within the senior team or with a wider circle of key people in charge of executing the organization's strategy. Borrowing a concept from medicine used to denote diseases that individuals are unaware they have, such as high blood pressure or cholesterol, but can cause heart attacks; Beer and Eisenstat (2000) called them "silent killers." They are:

1. Unclear strategy, values, and priorities
2. A poorly functioning management team
3. Ineffective leader
4. Poor communication and coordination between key parts of the organization whose collaboration is needed to execute strategy
5. Inadequate leadership development and consequently inadequate supply of down the line leadership
6. Poor or closed vertical communication, particularly the inability of truth to speak to power

These barriers, Beer and Eisenstat found, were almost always reported together and constitute a self-sealing syndrome that prevents leadership teams from rapidly realigning their organization with new competitive realities. While these barriers had been identified by much other research, Beer and Eisenstat's distinctive contribution is to give us an understanding of how the silent killers collectively sustain a pattern of poor strategy implementation and organizational adaptation. Addressing them therefore requires honest, collective, and public conversations and that enables the systemic change Beer has been studying ever since he encountered the need in his work at Corning. The tendency in most organizations is to address them one by one, which does not give the desired effect.

## High-Commitment, High-Performance Organizations

During the 2000s, especially after he became an emeritus professor at HBS, Beer increasingly engaged in writing and in the building of TruePoint. The book *High Commitment, High Performance: How to Build A Resilient Organization for Sustained Advantage* (Beer 2009) is intended to contribute an integrated and systemic operating theory of the development of highly effective firms. Beer argues that sustained firm success requires simultaneous achievement of three organizational outcomes. It is of crucial importance to (1) align the organization and its people with its strategy, what Beer calls performance alignment; (2) to engage people, employees, and other stakeholders such as customers, on an emotional level, so trust and commitment are developed, what Beer calls psychological alignment; and (3) to challenge the status quo, learn, and innovate through honest collective and public conversation about hidden barriers to required realignment with new realities. To achieve this, CEOs have to develop a set of organizational levers – leadership, a learning and governance processes, strategic performance management system, organizational design, and a human resource system – that shape the overall organizational system.

The theme of building a firm able to sustain performance and commitment across generations is further elaborated in the book and articles *Higher Ambition: How Great Leaders Create Economic and Social Value* (Beer et al. 2011; Eisenstat et al. 2008) where the idea of engaging of employees in something larger beyond the short-term financial gains is developed further as the means for a profitable company that also contributes to the creation of a better world. In a way, this is a return to the idea that firms must be concerned of the interests of multiple stakeholders as discussed in *Managing Human Assets* (1984).

The discussion that followed after the release of *Higher Ambition* led to the formation of the nonprofit Center for Higher Ambition Leadership in 2012 (www. higherambition.org). The foundation of the center was driven by a set of CEOs with aspirations to build organizations that create value for all stakeholders. A sister center was formed in Europe in 2015. The centers embody much of Beer's passions and ambitions – driving useful research in collaboration between scholars and practitioners to create more effective organizations that both are more financially

successful and improve the lives of people inside and outside of the firm. Executives and researchers collaborate to share and develop knowledge on how organizations can be led to become more innovative, engaging, and effective and thereby create higher levels of both financial and social value.

## Organizations Must Manage Paradox

Interdependent systems create complexity, especially as they change. Organizations and their leaders need to be able to handle this complexity, which in organizations develops into paradoxes – "contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time" (Smith and Lewis 2011, p. 382). The integration of these paradoxical elements is key to organizational effectiveness and has loomed over management thinking since the middle of the twentieth century. As McGregor (1960) writes about Theory X and Theory Y, he sees the latter as the possibility for people in the organization to integrate the organization's goals into their own work. For Burns and Stalker (1961), it is the combination of a mechanistic and an organic way of organizing; for Lawrence and Lorsch (1967b), it is the combination of differentiation and integration in organizational structures; for Bartlett and Ghoshal (1990), the integration of different aspects of a global matrix; and for ambidexterity theorists, the paradoxical tension between exploration and exploitation in innovation (Duncan 1976; March 1991; Tushman and O'Reilly 1996b).

The integration of seemingly contradictory outcomes is core to Beer's thinking. For example, as he states that an effective organization needs to produce performance alignment, psychological alignment, and learning and change (Beer 2009). These three things are often found to be contradictory in management practice. It may be hard for any individual to reconcile them. Instead, the integration needs to happen on the organizational level. A major contribution by Beer is to focus on the levers that management can pull to create this reconciliation. Another is the acknowledgment that systems that are out of sync will reduce the effectiveness of the organization, as they produce more and more tension. Because of the costs (human, strategic, and financial) that are involved, it is urgent that organizations continuously reconcile the paradoxes (a "simultaneous solve" Beer 2009; Beer et al. 2011). As Beer has developed his thinking, the central tensions have tended to be different, as have their solutions. For example, in the work with "Breaking the Code of Change" (Beer and Nohria 2000a, b), the attention is put on the combination of Theory E and Theory O strategies, where the first is focused on the creation of economic gains and the latter on the development of organizational capabilities. Organizational life will demand that both are deployed over time, but they demand very different approaches. In the work with "Higher Ambition" (Beer et al. 2011; Eisenstat et al. 2008; Fredberg et al. 2008), the paradoxical tension is between economic value and social value. The book argues that as leaders and organizations aim to solve for both outcomes simultaneously, new managerial practices are needed to reconcile these paradoxes.

## People are Core Assets Rather Than Hired Hands

Beer's first effort at Corning to develop the Medfield Plant into a Theory Y (McGregor 1960), participative high-commitment manufacturing plant, can be framed by an old question about the "liberation of man" in the face of cultural and organizational constraints. Many of his contributions can be seen as parts of a quest to understand how organizations can make people's lives better, rather than worse, and how companies can become more effective in that process. The *Managing Human Assets* book starts by arguing that American industry values human resources less than European and Japanese competitors. High-commitment/self-managed work teams are core assets of the organization (as opposed to basic resources). For example, in his paper with Edgar Huse (Beer and Huse 1972), the shop floor workers and their managers both provide examples of how regular employees take responsibility for their work and how that changes the art of work, the relationship between managers and subordinates, and ultimately the "climate" in the plant.

The approach to change in the "Critical Path to Corporate Renewal" (Beer et al. 1990a) is similar. The process by which organizational systems are successfully transformed requires the task alignment in the corporation's many units. And that alignment begins with the engagement of people and not with overarching organizational design parameters such as incentive systems or organizational structure. The companies and leaders featured in "Higher Ambition" (Beer et al. 2011) aspire to shape, in the words of bank CEO Peter Sands, an "organization simultaneously to be very effective in terms of performance, a great place to work, and something that is actually a force for good" (ibid. p. 29).

Emphasis on the role of people as the core assets in organizations naturally leads to the question of how commitment is created and developed. Beer contributes to the how question in several different ways through his multiple publications about the kind of change processes required to do this and at the same time enhance performance. Factors such as an egalitarian culture, an approach to managing risk, compensation, and employee voice become central.

Similarly, how "human assets" can continue to be developed in a process of individual and organizational learning is a natural extension of this thinking. Beer and colleagues point to the necessity of disciplined, collective, iterative learning cycles in the organization to continuously find out where it is going, changes that need to be made, and initiatives that can be taken (e.g., Beer 2009).

## New Insights: Strategy, Transformation, Organizational Effectiveness, and Human Resources

When the world of science primarily engages in taking things apart and studying increasingly smaller building blocks from a distance, Beer goes in the opposite direction. His work and his contributions build on the ability to step into the heat of the action in all its complexity, asymmetry, and imperfection. He emphasizes that

organizational challenges cannot be resolved by researching them out of their contexts.

Because of his dual role as scholar-practitioner, there is a groundedness in his work that stands out. He works at the interface of theory and practice. It follows that many insights from his work provide deeper and sometimes unexpected insights. Such is, for example, the contribution by Beer, Eisenstat, and Spector (1990) in the *Critical Path to Corporate Renewal*, that the transformations of large organizational systems are not best achieved by starting at the top, but through a process of unit-by-unit transformation that starts with task alignment. This insight has vast implications for how change management should be performed. Similarly, the identification of the silent killers (2000), also with Eisenstat, and the discussion in *High Commitment, High Performance* (2009) on what simultaneously creates performance alignment, psychological alignment, and learning/change go beyond most other academic contributions by clearly pointing to both policy and practice implications. The work on organizations that create both economic and social value – such as in *Higher Ambition* (2011) – also follows along these lines. The possibility for Beer to gain insights of this character has to do with the nature of his basic working method – being deeply immersed with organizations to develop practical knowledge/usable solutions AND create academically valuable insights. Furthermore, the methods for collecting data need to create organizational value, both the content and the process matter. Apart from multiple other prizes, many of them related to his work in human resource management, Beer's work was acknowledged by the Academy of Management when he received the prestigious Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner Award in 2006.

As scholar-practitioners, ourselves, we rely on Beer and his colleagues for key theoretical arguments, methodological approaches, hope, and hands on advice. In the last decades, there has been constant complaints in the management research community about the lack of relevance. At the same time, promotion systems and evaluation systems have favored a publication frenzy leading to the lack of relevance that people complain about.

What Beer stands for is in itself a both-and solution. As has been highlighted throughout this chapter, his contributions are in the theoretical fields as well as in the methodological. We apply approaches advocated by him when we choose to become deeply immersed in organizations and use action research methods to understand not only internal dynamics of organizations but also to propose and test alternative approaches to get to a deeper level of understanding.

Theoretically, we depart from the Beer's ideas about the creation of effective organizational systems and the problem that he leaves us with – how strategic alignment, psychological alignment, AND learning and change can coexist (Beer 2009).

The hypothesis is of course that this is at all possible. This is seemingly at odds with the proponents of the idea that exploration and exploitation (March 1991) need to be separated for the organization to be ambidextrous – two handed (O'Reilly and Tushman 2011; Smith et al. 2010; Tushman and O'Reilly 1996a). The proponents of such *structural ambidexterity* see change happening as punctuated equilibria

(Gersick 1991), whereas others such as Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) argue that organizations indeed change continuously and therefore propose different approaches for the organization of renewal. The implication of this latter view is that organizational effectiveness over time lies in the constant move between alignment and misalignment that in the end accounts for total organizational effectiveness.

Beer is not specifically interested in this issue. He argues that his question is one level up. The solution that the organization chooses can be different depending on environmental circumstances. We study how established organizations more effectively can renew themselves by inventing new configurations fit for a new future. This is of course a hot topic in a world of faster change where forces like digitalization are putting pressure on business models in various industries. Our take on the issue is trying to find out how an organizational system where entrepreneurial initiatives flourish and influence the core of the organization can be created. Such an approach demands the organization to become even clearer about common values/visions and ways to have initiatives planted, nourished, weeded out, and harvested.

As is also clear from Beer's research, the ability to create value for multiple stakeholders is central to the long-term success for the organization (something corroborated by multiple studies, e.g., Kotter and Heskett 1992; Sisodia et al. 2007). A question arising is naturally what the nature of this value is (Lackéus 2016; Lawrence 2010b; Lawrence and Nohria 2002) and subsequently how it can be created.

In the same line of work, we are exploring how we can find systemized ways of utilizing the creativity, knowledge, and innovativeness of members of the organization to create and develop the new purpose and vision of an organization. The value dimension is naturally very important here too. This work is very much influenced by the ideas from Beer and Eisenstat (2004) about the need for vertical honest conversation about what is important. Beer and Eisenstat initially designed the process for enabling honest conversations (SFP) to be an opportunity for management to get continuous feedback on their ideas. We are trying to use the same logic, but in a context where management is unsure of where to go next and need the innovative power of their organization to shape the future.

Having the honor of writing this chapter, we find hope in Beer's – Mike's – approach to scholarly work. We also find hope in the warmth, energy, and curiosity with which he approaches both people and problems and his genuine will to always contribute with his vast knowledge and experience – his first instinct is to help. There is a need for more academics that, like Mike, follow the scholar-practitioner model. Alas, his working method, which he shares with several of his generation of researchers, is becoming rarer due to the recruitment and promotion practices of universities.

Beer would likely argue that the Strategic Fitness Process that he and Eisenstat developed for Becton Dickinson is the best example of the value of the scholar-practitioner model. What is distinctive about the process is the ability to very quickly help management get clarity about strategic issues in the organization, realign the

organization through engaging employees in the strategic work, and at the same time remake the relationship between senior management and lower levels from a top-down to a partnership. Because the process is a rigorous research process that allows for the gathering of qualitative data, it is a very important tool of value to scholar-practitioners.

The SFP in many ways joins together ambitions that Beer has had – it engages people in the organization in its strategy, it addresses the organization as a system, it helps create alignment around the important issues, and it facilitates a joint understanding of what the organization needs to do.

We are excited and honored by being able to work with Mike through research and through our joint engagement in the Center for Higher Ambition Leadership. We have the opportunity to collaborate with Beer, Eisenstat, and the CHL community to build a movement – one CEO at the time – aspiring to create better organizations and a better world.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: New Contexts, New Transformations

In *Breaking the Code of Change*, Beer and Nohria conclude that the code of change still has not been broken (2000b, p. 473). With new times come new changes, and with those changes, organizations need to increase the level of their game. The fast transformation of industries created by digitalization will probably mean both a higher emphasis on understanding and employing organizational purpose, as well as an even higher emphasis of caring for and valuing the organization's human assets.

Beer argues that one big issue that we have to gain more insight into is how system-wide change is created. "We have seen organizations as systems and used that as a background notion," he says. "It is time we put system change in the forefront." Along with this notion comes a necessity to do theoretical and empirical work on what allows and facilitates system-wide change. It is important, he argues, to research this not only on a workplace level but on a broader management level. A theoretical and empirical problem that we still have to solve is how organizational systems change over time. What are the different forms? What is the sequence? What contextual variables play in? In the work with the Critical Path book, his colleagues and he developed a sequence in which they saw productive system change occurring. "But what if you would start in another end? What would happen then?" Beer asks.

Fundamentally, his rhetorical questions relate to the theory of organizational system effectiveness that he continuously works on – how effective organizations reach and sustain their goals. We need to see systems as learning entities, he argues. In the work in the Center for Higher Ambition Leadership, this is an ongoing issue. "What enables an organization to become a higher ambition company? We know it is not only about leadership, although that is important. How does it evolve over time? Are there different eras involved in this journey? What derails it from its path?"

As Beer would argue, the organizational systems and the process for changing the many facets of the systems need to be managed even better to keep abreast with the

rapid industry transformation. Moreover, the development of organizations where information flows much more freely (e.g., as an effect of the use of social media) will likely demand of organizations more frequent and more effective "honest conversations" about the crucial issues. At the same time, as digitalization disrupts industries, the demands on economic, social, and environmental sustainability have increased substantially. In such a world, the wealth of ideas in Beer's work will have a bright future.

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# Warren G. Bennis: Generous Company

<span style="font-size:2em">8</span>

Thomas G. Cummings

**Abstract**

Warren G. Bennis was an intellectual pioneer in group dynamics, planned change and organization development, and leadership. He was both a scholar and university administrator with diverse interests in how the applied social sciences can serve the betterment of people, organizations, and society. Warren's research and writing laid the foundation for how we think about team development and the role of democratic forms of organizing in adapting to turbulent environments. His work on planned change and organization development helped to define these applied fields and point the way for their growth and progress. Warren's research on leadership transformed how we define leaders versus managers and how we understand what leaders do to develop people and organizations. It showed that the core of leadership is creating trustworthy relationships with self and others. Warren G. Bennis is required reading for any of us interested in organizational change.

**Keywords**

Group dynamics • Democracy • Planned change • Organization development • Leadership

## Contents

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Warren G. Bennis was an intellectual trailblazer in planned change and organization development and a creative force in the contemporary field of leadership. In a life spanning almost nine decades, he excelled as a military officer, social scientist, teacher/mentor, university administrator, executive consultant/confidant, and public intellectual. Underlying all of this, Warren was open and warm, an active listener with a sharp wit, keen sense of humor, and a bit of playfulness about him. People liked being around him; he made them feel better about themselves.

Before recounting the experiences and people who shaped Warren's life and guided his enduring contributions to our knowledge and practice, I think it prudent to make transparent that I had a professional and personal relationship with Warren for the past 35 years. Starting around 1980 when Warren came to the University of Southern California, we were colleagues in the organizational behavior area of the Department of Management and Organization at the Marshall School of Business. Warren contributed heavily to my thinking and writing and participated actively in my leadership roles and activities in professional associations. In 1996, I was appointed chair of our department and formally became what Warren humorously referred to as "his boss" for the next 20 years or so, though I never felt like it. Over the last decade of his life, we developed a more personal relationship, sort of like a nephew with a favorite uncle. We met informally, just the two of us, talking about our lives, what was happening, what problems we were facing, what we hoped and dreamed about, and what paths and roads we intended to trail. I will always remember and cherish these special moments with Warren.

## Influences and Motivations: From Scholar to Administrator and Back

By Warren's own account, he lived a rather Dickensian childhood, growing up during the depression era in a working class Jewish family in a predominately gentile New Jersey community. With twin brothers 10 years older than him, a hardworking but meager earning father, and a mother who helped the family eke out an existence, Warren received little emotional or intellectual support, had no close friends, and was indifferent to school, not the best foundation for a future social scientist. Coming of age during WWII, Warren served in the armed forces, an experience that transcended his austere upbringing and afforded a richer, more challenging, and emotionally engaging life. Through sheer persistence, ingenuity, and a bit of luck, 19-year-old Warren was commissioned an officer in the United States Army and sent immediately overseas to fight. He received the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star while being the youngest infantry officer in the European theater

of operations. This military experience had a profound and lasting impact on Warren's thinking and behavior. It forced him to look beyond himself and to see up close and in depth the significant consequences of good and bad leadership and group behavior, social phenomena he would spend a lifetime trying to understand and improve.

## On Becoming a Scholar

The military also set the stage for Warren's initial foray into higher education. Based on glowing reports from a fellow soldier, he entered the 1947 freshman class at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Founded in 1850 under American educational reformer Horace Mann's able leadership, Antioch was renowned for a progressive and intellectually freeing liberal arts education combined with a co-op job system. Here, Warren blossomed as a budding intellectual. Free from the constraints of the military and far from his impoverished roots, he learned to openly voice his opinion on a diversity of topics, question dogmatic thinking, and personally confront the often conflicting goals of self-achievement and civic responsibility. Heady stuff to say the least. At Antioch, Warren met the person who would become his long-time mentor and shape his life, Douglas McGregor, the College's recently hired president from MIT, where among other things he had recruited Kurt Lewin to the faculty, created an industrial psychology department, and laid the groundwork for today's field of positive organizational behavior. McGregor was a Harvard-trained social psychologist with a strong practical bent; an innovative change agent who created an educational culture at Antioch steeped in democratic ideals and aimed at educating the whole person not just the mind. Warren was drawn to McGregor, the person, the scholar, the College president, and McGregor reciprocated with sage advice, friendship, and, more practically, a three-page recommendation that helped Warren get into MIT's doctoral program in economics.

Warren's graduate studies and subsequent academic career were shaped by the *zeitgeist* of the social sciences during the post-WWII era. Social scientists had made significant contributions to the government and military during the war, creating selection tests for various war-related jobs, working on influence and persuasion techniques, studying the cultures of Germany and Japan, designing opinion surveys, and developing game-theoretic models for decision-making, to name a few. This energy, commitment, and innovation carried forward into the postwar decades as did the memories of totalitarian regimes with evil leaders controlling the masses to do or condone unspeakable human atrocities. All of this fueled a profound belief among social scientists that they could, and should, play a key role in making society better – enhancing human freedom, dignity, and democratic values while stemming conflict, aggression, and prejudice. Consequently, this period saw path-breaking research on group dynamics, perception and attribution, styles of leadership and decision-making, interpersonal and intergroup conflict, and persuasion and conformity, from such prominent social scientists as Solomon Asch, Jerome Bruner, Leon Festinger, Rensis Likert, Muzafer Sherif, Robert Zajonc, and many more. And, it

was in this remarkable intellectual milieu that Warren developed and prospered as a scholar.

MIT was far removed from Antioch College in more than just distance and geography. The Economics Department was populated with faculty and doctoral students with a strong quantitative bent. It included courses in mathematics, statistics, all variety of economic theory, and a smattering of social science. Among the department's distinguished faculty were future Nobel laureates Paul Samuelson, Bob Solow, and Franco Modigliani along with the likes of Alex Bavelas, Herb Shepard, George Shultz, and Walt Rostow. Warren struggled with the quantitative and economics courses but excelled in the social science curriculum, half of which included courses in sociology and psychology at Harvard. He spent the second year of the doctoral program at the London School of Economics on a Hicks Fellowship. In London, Warren visited A.T.M. Wilson and Wilford Bion at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations and learned firsthand about their work integrating psychoanalytic theory with group dynamics. He also underwent psychoanalysis to deal with an unexpected bout of anxiety. The Warren who returned to MIT to do a dissertation was a far more introspective and self-aware person than the one who had left a year earlier. He was also more keenly attuned to the psychodynamics underlying group life.

Warren completed a dissertation on how the creativity of scientific teams was affected by the length of time of their NSF funding. He subsequently published an article based on it in the *American Journal of Sociology*, "The Effect on Academic Goods of Their Market" (Bennis 1956), a title worthy of MIT's Economics Department. Warren then spent a year teaching at MIT while finishing research on group behavior with his former teacher Herb Shepard. They published two notable articles in consecutive editions of *Human Relations*, "Theory of Training by Group Methods" (Shepard and Bennis 1956) and "A theory of Group Development" (Bennis and Shepard 1956). The year of their publication in 1956 saw Warren begin his first academic job at Boston University. Here, he worked closely with Ken Benne and Bob Chin in the Human Relations Center and Nathan Maccoby, head of the Psychology Department. Warren had known Ken from their days leading T-groups at the National Training Laboratories' (NTL) summer home in Bethel, Maine. At Boston University, Warren, Ken, and Bob co-taught a graduate seminar on organizational change and began to edit what was to become a highly influential book on the subject, *The Planning of Change* (Bennis et al. 1961), which popularized the term *change agent* and continued publication for four editions. Warren also connected with colleagues from Harvard's renowned Social Relations Department, where he taught a course with Freed Bales, Ted Mills, and Phil Slater and did research on groups with Will Schutz and Timothy Leary. Warren's time at Boston University turned out to be short lived, however. Doug McGregor, who had returned from Antioch to MIT in 1954 to help start the Sloan School of Management, invited his former protégé to join the faculty in 1959. The offer was too seductive for Warren to resist.

Warren's years at the Sloan School were highly productive yet hectic, as usual. He continued to research and publish at a remarkable pace. Warren wrote his first article

on leadership (Bennis 1959), an almost 50-page missive published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*; penned a controversial but prophetic essay with Phil Slater on the inevitability of democracy for the *Harvard Business Review* (Slater and Bennis 1964); edited a book on interpersonal relations with Sloane colleagues Edgar Schein, Dave Berlew, and Fritz Steele, *Interpersonal Dynamics: Essays and Reading on Human Interaction* (Bennis et al. 1964); edited another book with Schein on using group methods to achieve change, *Personal and Organizational Change Through Group Methods* (Schein and Bennis 1965); and completed preliminary work with Schein and Richard Beckhard on the Addison Wesley Series on Organization Development, a succession of books that laid the foundation for this emerging field and began publication with Warren's introductory volume, *Organization Development: Its Nature, Origins, and Prospects* (Bennis 1969). Warren continued to cultivate intellectual relationships with fellow scholars including Harvard's Chris Argyris and David Riesman, NTL's Lee Bradford and Ron Lippitt, Brandeis' Abe Maslow, and colleagues he met as a visiting scholar at the Institute for Management Development (IMEDE) in Switzerland. He even drew on his own leadership expertise, doing a stint as head of Sloan's organizational studies area and, during a leave from MIT, serving as codirector of the newly created Indian Institute of Management in Calcutta. These hands-on positions rekindled Warren's abiding, yet repressed, need to experience leadership firsthand, not just through the eyes and instruments of a researcher. Like his time in the military, he wanted to test his leadership skills on the firing line, not simply in the classroom or behind a writing desk. To the surprise and disdain of many at MIT, Warren resigned his tenured position in 1967 to become provost of social sciences at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

## On Becoming a University Leader

Warren arrived on the Buffalo campus eager to begin what Martin Meyerson, its visionary president, had vividly described as the transformation of this middling university into "the Berkeley of the East." This bold objective included plans for hiring a large number of outstanding faculty and researchers, decentralizing authority to several new colleges that would function as "intellectual neighborhoods" for faculty and students, creating cross-disciplinary research centers to address complex societal issues, and building a new campus. As provost of social sciences, Warren played a central role in trying to make all of this happen. It challenged his expertise in organization change while forcing him to face, for the first time since the Army, the limits of positional power and the vagaries of an unpredictable and often hostile environment. Among the many problems that thwarted his change efforts were a decline in state funding caused by a weakening economy, growing campus unrest over the war in Vietnam and excessive police intervention, and a university president whose dynamic vision and leadership gradually waned. Worst of all, according to Warren, was the failure of university leaders like himself to actively involve existing faculty and staff in the change process, appreciate the university's traditions and

sources of stability, and build on rather than disregard them. Ironically, Warren had long advocated to students and readers about the need for participation and continuity in organizational change; he learned close up that this was easier said than done. As the change process faltered and Meyerson moved on to become president of the University of Pennsylvania, Warren began to search for his next leadership challenge. In 1971, he left Buffalo to become president of the University of Cincinnati.

Warren approached his presidency with a keen desire to create an educational institution that embodied the values and behaviors that social science had found essential to group and organization effectiveness and human enrichment. This noble vision quickly ran into the hard realities of leading a large complex university, with faculty and staff spread across a diversity of academic and professional schools, students engaged in a multitude of educational and extracurricular activities, a large alumni base, a vigilant university board of trustees, a demanding local community, and a host of government regulations. Warren soon got bogged down in the details of trying to manage much of this himself. He eventually created a decentralized structure to handle the day-to-day activities while he focused on the bigger issues. And one big issue consumed a significant part of his presidency. The university, which the City of Cincinnati owned yet meagerly funded, received only partial financial support from the state while relying heavily on tuition dollars. Past attempts to affiliate fully with the state had met dogged resistance from city powerholders, loyal alumni, and other state universities that did not want to share the state's largess. With costs rising, tuition increases reaching their limits, and a budget deficit looming, Warren entered the fray to make the university a fully state institution. This would test his political acumen, persuasive skills, and fortitude. Over the next two years, Warren made biweekly visits to the state capital to meet with legislators and government officials; he mounted a well-organized lobbying effort to persuade divergent stakeholders to support the move to the state educational system; he organized a massive get-out-the-vote campaign that resulted in a city vote favoring the move to state. All of this resulted in the university becoming a state institution putting it on sound financial footing going forward. It cost Warren a good deal of goodwill and political support, however, especially from the university's trustees that now included state-appointed members. It also added to his growing realization that he "did not love being president of the University of Cincinnati" and, moreover, would likely never be fulfilled with the positional power that only a formal organization can offer. Warren finally came to terms with the simple fact that what he really wanted was the personal power and influence that only voice can deliver. In 1977, he resigned his presidency to take some much needed time to reflect, refresh, and plan his future.

## On Returning to Scholarship

Like much of Warren's life, this personal sabbatical was filled with surprise and adventure, ending with a call to serve. Warren's surprise came from having a fairly severe heart attack while attending a conference and enjoying theater life in London.

It put him in the hospital for a couple of weeks and required an extended period of convalescence during which he learned to write poetry and enjoy John Cleese comedy on British TV. Warren's adventure involved living on a houseboat for a year in Sausalito, California, a well-healed, counterculture enclave on San Francisco Bay just north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Here, he relaxed and enjoyed a laid-back lifestyle. Warren attended Alan Watts' weekly sessions on Zen Buddhism, became friends with Stewart Brand creator of the *Whole Earth Catalogue*, consulted for Werner Erhard the developer of Erhard Studies Training (est), and, visited Esalen several times, the rustic personal growth center and communal hot baths on the Big Sur coast in Northern California. This quixotic adventure came to a natural end, spurred by an enticing call to serve at the Marshall School of Business (MSB) at the University of Southern California (USC). Jack Steele, MSB's dynamic dean, was transforming the school from a regional powerhouse into a nationally ranked institution mainly by hiring prominent scholars like Warren. Steele made it clear that MSB truly wanted and needed Warren. He extolled Southern California's vibrant community and sunny climate along with USC's supportive intellectual environment where Warren could reinvigorate his scholarship and teaching. Warren was familiar with some of USC's faculty and respected their research; he liked Southern California's weather, diversity, and growing cultural activities. Although not totally convinced of the move down south, Warren mused that perhaps USC is the place where he would truly find his voice.

Warren's 34-year tenure at USC would be the longest affiliation with an organization of his life, from 1980 to 2014. This time saw both MSB and USC become elite educational institutions, moving into the upper echelons of scholarly reputation. It witnessed Warren's voice come fully to force, having profound influence on the campus and in the classroom and widespread impact on the scores of readers of his written words. His pioneering research and writing on leadership transformed how scholars thought about and studied leadership and how executives understood and learned how to be effective leaders. Starting with the seminal books *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge* (Bennis and Nanus 1985) and *On Becoming a Leader* (Bennis 1989), Warren's in-depth interviews with a diverse array of leaders and insightful analyses of what they said revealed that the prevailing view of leadership as something embodied in a "great person" with charismatic qualities was severely limited. Warren's research showed clearly that the foundation of leadership lies in the relationships between the leader and the group, the organization, and the self. Effectiveness comes from establishing trusting relationships with all of them. Warren continued to shape our knowledge of leadership, authoring or coauthoring several more articles and books on various aspects of the topic. He also researched and wrote about important social issues such as organizing exceptional teams, *Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration* (Bennis and Biederman 1997), and dealing with the often harmful effects of the mass media, particularly television, on how we make sense of the world, *The Unreality Industry: The Deliberate Manufacturing of Falsehood and What It Is Doing to Our Lives* (Mitroff and Bennis 1993).

In addition to research and writing, Warren shared his wisdom in the classroom at USC, teaching both undergraduate and graduate students. He helped to create and teach with then USC president Steven Sample an undergraduate leadership course

that was one of the university's most impactful electives. Each year, over 300 students went through rigorous interviews to get one of the class' 42 seats, and then learning included a mixture of discussions and debates, visits from distinguished leaders, and hands-on leadership projects. Warren also created a leadership learning experience for graduate students from across the university. Called the Steven B. Sample Fellows Program, a select group of graduate students spent a year doing social projects in the local community. They met periodically with Warren and others to reflect on their learning and to plan next steps. Warren was an extremely hardworking and engaged teacher. He spent endless hours preparing for class, meeting individually with students, and reading their papers and offering valuable suggestions for improvement. He readily accepted a multitude of invitations to guest lecture in courses and to give talks at alumni and university events throughout the world. And, Warren did not shirk university service. He was always on some important university committee and never turned down a request to do something for his department or the Marshall School. Unquestionably, Warren's greatest service to USC was chairing the committee that hired Steve Sample as its president. In 19 years, Steve took the university into the elite levels of higher education, as described in the book that Warren cajoled him to write and then wrote its forward, *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership* (Sample 2003).

## Key Contributions: Foundations for Developing Groups, Organizations, and Leaders

The synopsis above provides a broad background and basic appreciation of the experiences and people that motivated and shaped Warren's thinking and research. His contributions to our field are immense. They cover four board areas: group dynamics, planned change and organization development, democracy, and leadership.

## Group Dynamics

Warren's interest in group dynamics came from observing and experiencing the powerful effects that groups have on the performance and satisfaction of their members. His research and writing in this area, in collaboration with MIT colleagues Herb Shepard, Edgar Schein, and others, involved the use of groups as an educational medium for personal learning and organizational change, exemplified in NTL's laboratory training methods pioneered by Kurt Lewin, Leland Bradford, Ronald Lippitt, and many others. Warren helped to clarify what laboratory training or T-group entailed, its effects on participants, and how this method of learning could be applied to individual and organizational change. His research was integral to transforming laboratory training from a limited personal growth experience that occurred each summer in Bethel, Maine to a powerful educational method for developing people and organizations. It showed how this experience-based learning, based on values of inquiry and experimentation, helped people gain the personal and

social skills needed to improve themselves and their organizations and to address problems they faced in modern society. Warren's work played a vital role in disseminating laboratory training methods into business, government, and education. Laboratory training, for example, laid the groundwork for the field of organization development, especially its values and early interventions such as team building and conflict resolution. It foreshadowed today's growing interest in "learning by doing" and widespread use of experiential learning methods in corporate training and college classrooms.

Warren also added significantly to our understanding of how groups develop. His work is particularly noteworthy on at least two counts. First, it placed the prevailing static view of group behavior into a temporal or developmental perspective. Warren identified personal and interaction problems that group members face at different periods of time. He argued that unless members resolve those issues when they occur, the group's development falters, and its capability to perform tasks and satisfy members' needs stagnates or diminishes. Second, Warren's theory added an important psychodynamic dimension to traditional social psychology approaches to group behavior. It described two key aspects of members' personality, dependence on leaders or structure and interpersonal intimacy, and explained how they can either facilitate or thwart how members deal with the group's problems over time. In drawing attention to both the temporal and depth dimensions of groups, Warren's theory spurred considerable research on group development and its underlying social and psychological dynamics, such as Bruce Tuckman's (Tuckman 1965) stages of group development.

## Planned Change and Organization Development

Warren's research and writing on planned change and organization development (OD) have been instrumental in creating a conceptual and practical foundation for them. Planned change is broader, more inclusive than OD, which is a particular type of planned change. Warren's work on planned change brought much needed clarity to the meaning of this term. It laid the groundwork for today's widely used practice of change management. Warren defined planned change in the context of the deliberate application of social science knowledge to help solve problems facing individuals, groups, organizations, and societies. He addressed both the knowledge required to solve practical problems and the social process needed to use it. Based on the often tenuous relation between science and practice, Warren argued that social science needs to manage the tension inherent in that connection if it is to create knowledge relevant to solving practical problems. Interestingly, this attention to knowledge relevance continues unabated today in the management field, typically in calls for more actionable knowledge amid growing concerns about the widening gap between research and practice. Warren explained the social process required to utilize relevant knowledge as dependent on the nature of the relationship between the change agent seeking to enact change and the client for whom change is intended. He proposed that the more collaborative or cooperative this relationship,

the more likely knowledge will be used for change. This simple yet insightful premise kindled a stream of applied research on participative management and its effects on overcoming resistance to change. Findings across a diversity of settings generally support the idea that planned change is more successful when change agents and clients manage the change process collaboratively.

Warren's contributions to organization development relate closely to his research and writing on planned change. He helped to define and provide the conceptual underpinnings for OD at a time when the field was just emerging and hardly known or understood. Warren described OD as a form of planned change, with its own values, relevant knowledge, and change processes. It is intended to help organizations address felt problems, which, at the time, were caused mainly by overused bureaucratic practices and rapid unexpected changes. Warren's work was particularly insightful in clarifying the developmental nature of OD, which is embedded in humanistic values of openness, trust, collaboration, and human potential. These values are the core of OD. They serve to differentiate it from other forms of planned change such as management consulting and process engineering. They guide OD's collaborative change process and normative goals for helping organizations become more humanly enriching and better able to adapt to change and improve themselves. Warren's contributions provided a strong base for OD to grow, from interpersonal and group interventions to changes in organizations' work designs, structures, decision processes, and human resource practices. They have helped to anchor these changes to OD's core values, sustaining the field's identity and primary calling.

## Democracy

Warren held a deep and abiding belief in democracy. This personal conviction underlies his research and writing. Warren made the bold and controversial statement that democracy is the most effective and efficient form of social organization for adapting to change, whether in societies, organizations, or groups. He argued that the values underlying democracy – free and open communication, conflict resolved by consensus, and influence based on knowledge and competence – promote the kind of flexibility, information sharing, and swiftness of action that organizations need to adapt to rapid and uncertain change. Research on participative forms of leadership and decision-making in groups and organizations buttressed these claims. Moreover, Warren predicted that the technological, economic, and societal changes that were occurring at the time would accelerate in the future, suggesting that the need for democratic approaches to leading and structuring organizations would continue to grow. Commenting in 1990 about this earlier work on democracy, Warren was both surprised and affirmed by all that had occurred in organizations and their environment over the past 26 years (Bennis 1990). Information technologies, global economies, and political conditions had changed much faster than he had originally imagined. To adapt to those changes, organizations had become far more flexible and decentralized with enriched forms of work, self-managed teams, and participative styles of leadership. In 2012, in light of emerging changes in the globalization of

business, Middle East relations, and European Union solidarity, Warren previewed what his next writing on democracy would cover: "I plan to make an even stronger case for democratic governance, but with an understanding of how we must protect and guard against the flaws and exigencies that inhere in an un-watchful democratic enterprise" (Ashgar 2012). Clearly, Warren's contributions to our understanding of democracy and its role in modern societies and organization are timeless and as relevant today as they are likely to be tomorrow.

## Leadership

Warren's pioneering research and writing on leadership have tremendously influenced how scholars think about and study it and how practitioners understand and enact it. His work reframed traditional approaches to leadership and placed them in the context of what is needed to lead modern organizations facing rapidly changing and demanding environments. Warren made the important distinction between management and leadership. Management is about "doing things right"; it has a short-range focus on maintaining and controlling the workforce and existing systems to maximize established goals. Leadership is about "doing the right thing"; it has a long-term perspective aimed at developing the organization and its members, visioning what they can become, and creating the supporting conditions for this to happen. Warren's attention to leadership distinguishes his work from most traditional leadership research, which tends to focus on management and the relationship between managers and followers, identifying styles and characteristics of managers and studying under what conditions they positively affect performance and employee satisfaction. Warren's research also diverges from traditional popular conceptions of leadership, which tend to attribute leadership to a person and identify the personal characteristics that make this "great person" successful. His work emphasizes the *relationship* between leaders and followers and how effective leaders create a trusting relationship with willing followers and work collaboratively with them to accomplish great things.

Warren's research involved in-depth interviews with a wide range of leaders from the private and public sectors. He sampled effective leaders with proven track records to discover what abilities and behaviors make them successful. Careful analysis of the interviews revealed that successful leaders draw others to them because they have a compelling vision, clearly and vividly communicate their vision, establish trusting relationship because they are reliable and constant in what they say and do, and manage themselves by knowing their skills and strengths and using them effectively. Warren showed that when leaders have the abilities to behave these ways, people in their organizations feel significant and part of a community; they learn that competence and mastery matter and work becomes challenging and fulfilling. What makes these results especially compelling to today's executives is their relevance to organizations' pressing need to change and transform themselves in the face of complex and shifting environments. In these situations, effective leadership is essential for organizations to innovate and develop

themselves. Additionally, because Warren's work casts leadership in terms of abilities and behaviors that can be learned and developed, it offers leaders, and those who aspire to leadership positions, a positive path to becoming an effective leader.

## New Insights: Rethinking Organization Development and Change

Warren made tremendous contributions to social science. Countless scholars and practitioners have used his work to develop new insights about groups, planned change and OD, democracy, and leadership, and some of those developments have been described above. A recounting of all the theory and practice that have evolved from Warren's scholarship would take several volumes. Rather, I will focus on how his contributions influenced my own thinking and practice in organization development and change. This offers a personal account of how Warren's ideas sparked new insights, albeit a very limited and biased story.

Warren's work on extending the application of T-groups or experience-based learning from personal growth to interpersonal relations and team building in organizations was instrumental in my research on organization design and change, with Sue Mohrman, Ed Lawler, and Gerry Ledford at USC's Center for Effective Organizations. In the 1980s, our action research with organizations trying to become more decentralized, flexible, and responsive to rapid and uncertain change revealed that traditional approaches to organization design and change were ineffective for these large-scale transformations. Traditional methods viewed change as a periodic event with a beginning and end, driven by senior management and staff experts, and rolled out throughout the organization. These approaches were too slow to keep pace with rapidly changing conditions, too hierarchically driven to get widespread commitment for implementation, and, worse of all, did not build change capability into the organization to address future changes. Warren's research on experienced-based learning provided clues to create more effective methods for organization design and change. It suggests that when learning by doing is driven by values promoting inquiry and experimentation, it can facilitate the kind of organizational learning needed to implement organization designs. It can actively engage members in learning new behaviors, skills, and knowledge to enact the new design; moreover, it can develop their capability to learn how to change, so they can continually change the organization to keep pace with a rapidly changing environment. Based on Warren's basic research on experience-based learning, we worked with organizations to develop a new and more effective approach to organization design and change called "self-designing organizations" (Mohrman and Cummings 1989). It involves multiple stakeholders in the design and change process, identifies values to guide design, provides members with skills and knowledge to design the organization, and helps them create an action learning process for implementing the design and continuing to change and improve it over time.

Warren's writing on the developmental nature of OD grounded my work, with Chailin Cummings, clarifying the distinction between change management (CM) and OD (Cummings and Cummings 2014). CM is a form of planned changed

aimed at helping organizations implement change. Its values and practices are highly pragmatic and aimed at making change processes more effective and efficient. CM can be applied to all types of changes, such as new organizational technologies, work processes, and structures. Its popularity has grown enormously as organizations increasingly seek to adapt to turbulent environments. Although CM's underlying values differ from OD's developmental values, the two methods of planned change share some common features such as attention to creating readiness for change, overcoming resistance, and sustaining momentum. Consequently, the two change approaches are often intermingled and treated as if they are the same thing. This has resulted in increasing pressures for OD to be more effective and efficient, to focus more on the bottom line. It has even led some organizations to change OD's name to "organization effectiveness." We were concerned that this ambiguity between CM and OD, if left unchecked, will draw attention away from OD's core values and erode its basic developmental nature and identity. Drawing on Warren's work defining the OD field and its underlying humanistic values, we proposed the following to clarify the distinction between these two forms of planned change. CM helps organizations implement change effectively and efficiently. OD helps organizations change and develop themselves, so they function more effectively and more in line with humanistic values. When CM is conceived and practiced developmentally, it is synonymous with OD and should be identified accordingly.

Warren's work on participation and democratic practices recently changed how I think about them and places them in a broader adaptive capability context. I first encountered Warren's work on OD and change while in graduate school during the 1960s. I focused on the participative aspects and the need to involve people to gain commitment to change. At the time, there were widespread concerns about resistance to change occurring both in organizations facing workforce discord over boring and alienating work and in societal institutions beset by cultural conflicts. Warren's writing on participation offered a positive path forward. It fueled my work first in socio-technical systems and self-managed teams (Cummings and Srivastva 1977; Cummings 1978) and later in organization design and self-designing organizations (Mohrman and Cummings 1989). Looking back on this now, I realize that my attention to what Warren wrote about participation was narrowly focused on its role in overcoming resistance to change and motivating people through enriched forms of work. What I had overlooked or simply forgotten was the essential part that participation plays in enabling democratic forms of organization to adapt to changing conditions. Participation provides the active engagement that people need to freely share information and reach consensus on how to resolve challenging problems. It is the medium through which people's skills and knowledge are brought to bear in responding to change. When seen through Warren's broader lens of democracy, participation is more than simply a management technique for overcoming resistance to change or a feature of work design for motivating employees. Participation is a vital part of social organizations' adaptive capability, which, in the world of change we live in today, provides a distinct evolutionary advantage to those who can behave it.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Actionable Knowledge for a Better World

The previous pages have described the intellectual gifts that Warren has given our field. These legacies are profound and likely to endure well into the future. Rather than repeat them, I will recount some things that continued to fascinate and sometimes perplex Warren and then conclude with a statement of how he wanted to be remembered in his own words.

Warren was an avid reader and keen observer of our times. He was up to date on current economic, political, and cultural happenings around him and across the globe and typically had something interesting and insightful to say about them. Warren was enthralled with the burgeoning digital world and its pervasive effects on modern organizations and societies. He observed, for example, that innovations like crowd sourcing, virtual communities, and cloud platforms extend his ideas about collaboration and knowledge sharing well beyond the organization. They raise important questions about the size, location, and boundaries of the firm, the external role of leaders, the permanence of the workforce, and the power relations among internal and external stakeholders. Research is in the early stages of studying these issues, and Warren undoubtedly would have been in the mix of things.

Warren was deeply concerned with the innumerable threats facing society and the world: terrorism, global warming, the shrinking middle class, poverty, and poor health care for large segments of the world's population, to name a few. He harbored hopes that the social sciences could provide the kind of actionable knowledge needed to help solve these large-scale, complex problems, much like they had done during WWII. In returning to his roots in economics, Warren singled out behavioral economics interventions as a promising example of what might be accomplished. This applied science informed public policies to promote financial savings and better eating habits and to reduce the threat of spreading diseases such as AIDS in developing countries. Warren mused whether OD might be applied similarly to societal threats and problems, sort of like a Manhattan Project where a diverse group of social scientists and policy makers are brought together to address how to solve specific problems. OD knowledge and practice could help to facilitate this collaborative problem-solving and to inform how solutions can be implemented effectively. If such a monumental project had ever materialized, Warren would certainly have been its Robert Oppenheimer.

In interviewing Warren for a chapter in the *Handbook of Organization Development* in 2007, I asked him how he wanted to be remembered. He mentioned that he had been asked that question several times and his answer changes with age. Now on the day after his 82nd birthday, he felt that his answer is clearer than ever before:

> "I want to be remembered as *generous company*. I want to be remembered as someone who is engaging and fun to be with. I want to be remembered as someone who never stopped questioning and who was wandering through life in a state of wonder." (Cummings 2007, p. 675)

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# Wilfred Bion's Organization Change Legacy: "Without Memory or Desire"

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### Abstract

Wilfred Bion was a change leader who served in and lived through two World Wars and was deeply affected by his experiences on the battlefield and later in treating veterans with shell shock as an army psychiatrist. From his earliest experiences of group life (including bullying) at a British boarding school, to his frustration of enduring the politics and sometimes corrupt aspects of military life, to his satisfaction in developing new, respectful and successful treatment modalities for veterans, to his innovative efforts at transforming the army's hiring practices, and finally to being a founding member of group relations and experiential learning in industry – Bion's contributions to organization change are monumental and long lasting. His theory of basic assumptions in group life, his development of the therapeutic community, and his ground-breaking leaderless group technique are all innovations that are used today in organization change efforts. More than half a century after Bion formulated his ideas, his contributions continue to reverberate with significant impact. This chapter traces Bion's life and legacy as a seminal leader in organization change.

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## Introduction

Wilfred Bion was a major contributor to the study of group dynamics, and his work on groups has been a significant and long lasting contribution to the field of organization change. Although he devoted the majority of his career to practicing individual psychoanalysis and his writing on that subject is far more extensive than his work on groups, his ideas on group dynamics and group life are seminal. His 1961 book, *Experiences in Groups*, continues to inform management practices in teams and organizations more than half a century after it was published. His technique of using experiential groups to examine and assess how individuals behave in groups regardless of the task (the leaderless group) is a method that is widely used today across a range of settings and with varied populations (Highhouse 2002). Bion's understanding that groups and teams can be working hard at their task (or think they are) while also engaging in behavior that is obstructionist and antitask is one of the most important ideas in the field of group dynamics. That is, Bion was one of the first to put forth the idea that groups and teams can engage in overt process (working on goals, producing deliverables, fulfilling action items), while also engaging in covert process (sabotaging a colleague, deauthorizing the group leader, working against the group's greater good). In fact, Bion argued that groups always engage in overt and covert processes simultaneously (Bion 1961). Team leaders, organization development consultants, group facilitators, and group process consultants all would likely agree that understanding the covert processes in groups and organizations is essential to helping teams and systems engage in the most effective overt processes toward reaching their shared goals. This idea started with Bion's work and has been essential in organization change efforts since Bion's first formulation.

## Influences and Motivations: A Reflective Soldier

Wilfred Ruprecht Bion was born on September 8, 1897, in Muttra in the Punjab, India, a province that became a British colony in 1847 as part of the colonial expansion. Bion's father was a civil engineer and a part-time secretary to the

Indian Congress and his mother was a homemaker. Bion had one younger sibling, a sister with whom he was close but competitive. The Bion family was not rich, but his father earned a good living as an engineer, and their position in the colonial class gave them some advantages and status within Anglo-Indian society. Bion was married twice (his first wife died shortly after childbirth) and he had three children. His eldest daughter, Parthenope, became a noted psychoanalyst in Italy (Bléandonu 1994).

When he was 8 years old, Bion was sent to British boarding school, as was the custom for middle and upper class families in the civil service at that time. He was lonely and homesick much of his first few years there. Bion's time at boarding school seems to be one of his first experiences with what can be the ugly reality of group life. He was bullied and he also witnessed children's cruelty toward each other across various status designations of ethnicity, wealth, religion, intellectual and sports ability, and attractiveness. As Bion matured and grew at school he excelled in various sports, taking leadership positions on teams. His athletic prowess and achievements would prove to be a helpful entry to other leadership positions as a young man later in his life (Bléandonu 1994).

Bion was an officer in the First World War, and working as a tank commander he saw a lot of action and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and the Victorian Cross for bravery in battle. Bion was deeply affected by his war service, and scholars suggest that his war experiences had a profound effect on his psycho-analytic theories (Soffer-Dudek 2015). He encountered the hellish conditions of war as a constant backdrop to disturbing social structures including stark class distinctions (officers versus infantry) and corrupt authority.

Bléandonu (1994) noted:

> Throughout the war Bion had encountered lies. The propaganda of governments trying to shield the population from the actual situation; half-truths, euphemisms or distortions from commanders seeking to avoid losing face or status; pious lies, too, addressed to the families of those killed. So much unbearable truth to be avoided. (p. 32)

Bion also observed some of his superiors who seemed more interested in receiving accolades than in protecting their soldiers. Additionally, Bion's close friend in the service, a man with whom he attended religious services, Quainton, went on leave and never returned. Bion learned later that Quainton was hospitalized for shell shock (the psychological shock or trauma from being exposed to warfare, especially bombardment or the repeated explosions of shells or missiles), what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Bion was deeply distressed by the news of his friend's fate as he, himself, feared losing his mind in battle (Bléandonu 1994).

After World War I Bion studied History at Queen's College, Oxford, and later studied medicine at University College London with the goal of becoming a psychoanalyst. He feared not being admitted as his grades from Oxford were mediocre, but his military and sporting track record were impressive and helped him gain admittance. After earning his medical degree and qualifying as a doctor he studied psychoanalytic psychotherapy for 7 years at the Tavistock Clinic where one

of his patients was Samuel Beckett (Bléandonu 1994). In 1938 he engaged in a training analysis with John Rickman, someone who became a mentor to him in his later work. The analysis ended at the outbreak of World War II. Bion again served during the war, this time, providing psychotherapy to soldiers suffering from shell shock. Bion's wartime experiences were hugely influential to the formulation of his ideas about groups and to his innovations in group work in both a mental health capacity and, later, in organizational settings.

## Key Contributions: An Observant Practitioner

## A Theory of Groups

Bion was a significant contributor to the understanding of group and organizational life in the decades immediately after World War II. His innovations in group work were momentous, ground-breaking, and had a long reach both in applicability across settings and also across time. Indeed, his fingerprints are on several core frameworks and methods that he originated in the 1940s. Bion was one of the forefathers of the idea that groups engage in both explicit and implicit (overt and covert; conscious and unconscious) processes and that understanding both kinds of processes is essential to understanding group dynamics and to driving organization change (Geller 2005).

During Word War II Bion worked as an army psychiatrist both at Craigmile Bottom Hospital and also later as a psychiatrist attached to the Western Command and the David Hulme Military Hospital in Chester. He treated soldiers for shell shock in groups, a model he later took to the Tavistock Clinic after the war. It was due to his extensive group work in the army and later at the Tavistock where Bion formulated his famous theory of groups. Bion's model of the dual aspects of group life – the work group and basic assumption group mentalities – is his most noted and cohesive contribution to our current understanding of group and organizational life.

In Bion's model all groups engage in two aspects or mentalities: work group activity and basic assumption activity. In his model, work group activity and basic assumption activity are always operating simultaneously. The prevalence of one mentality over the other depends on the particular state of the group, its current pressures, and the context. That is, a group might well engage in mostly work group activity until it loses resources (staff, budget), is tasked with a high-profile, high-stakes deliverable and is given a tight timeline to deliver results. These stressors could make the group members exceedingly anxious such that their group behavior deteriorates into predominantly basic assumption mentality activity while the work group activity recedes to the background. According to Bion, basic assumption activity is triggered by anxiety and is more likely to manifest when a group is under significant stress (1961).

Work group activity includes the rational, task-oriented, goal-directed aspects of group life. When group members are engaged in working together to create a product, devise a growth strategy, generate ideas for new markets, or implement action steps in a project management plan they are exhibiting work group activity.

They are working together to achieve goals, produce results, and demonstrate effective performance.

Rioch (1975) stated:

> The work group constantly tests its conclusions in a scientific spirit. It seeks for knowledge, learns from experience, and constantly questions how it may best achieve its goal. It is clearly conscious of the passage of time and of the processes of learning and development. (p. 23)

Basic assumption activity, in contrast, is antitask. That is, it is group behavior that hinders, ignores, or avoids the task, often with great energy and persistence. Group members engaging in basic assumption activity are often passionate in their discussions, may look to be working intensely, and can be quite strenuous in their efforts in the group, but these efforts are never about actually doing the group's real work, rather they are in service of ignoring, skirting, or denying the work task. Basic assumption activity occurs when group members are interacting as though as particular basic assumption was true. Bion detailed three primary basic assumptions: basic assumption dependency, basic assumption flight/flight, and basic assumption pairing.

Basic assumption dependency is when the group acts as though their sole purpose is to receive guidance, sustenance, and comfort from the group's leader. The group members act as if they are not particularly competent but that the leader has all the wisdom and solutions. Further, the leader is not to demand much from the members in the form of active engagement on the task but rather is there to do the group's work and make the members feel good even when they are actively ignoring the real work of the group. University students in a class who expect the professor to be the sole expert in the room, to entertain them with scintillating lectures and to assign only exciting readings, and who demand to be spoon-fed in preparation for any assessments might be in the throes of basic assumption dependency activity.

Basic assumption fight/flight is when the group acts as though the group is under threat of attack, and therefore it must be defended or it must flee. The group members may see the attack originating outside itself (e.g., budget cuts and layoffs by the CEO) or from within (an incompetent or authoritarian leader). Yet, rather than mobilizing to develop a strategy and concomitant action steps to address possible budget cuts and/or an unskilled leader, the group spends its time protesting angrily or worrying fitfully. Agitation may be plentiful in the group, but goal-directed action is nonexistent.

Basic assumption pairing is when all action is deferred to the future. Hope for the future is essential, while action in the present is absent. Two group members may be paired or a group member or leader may be linked to some external person in the belief that this pair will bring about the group's salvation.

Stokes (1994) noted:

> The group is focused entirely on the future, but as a defence against the difficulties of the present. The group is in fact not interested in working practically towards this future, but only in sustaining a vague sense of hope as a way out of its current difficulties. (p. 22)

Bion wrote about the characteristic difficulty in group life, all group life. He stated that people are essentially "group animals" (Geller 2005, p. 91) who struggle to cooperate in order to achieve shared goals, yet who need each other to get things

done they cannot do alone. Bion wrote about the inherent tension and anxiety of all groups, in particular, the essential dichotomous tension group members experience between engulfment versus estrangement. That is, group members want to be both embraced and appreciated in groups, but also do not want to lose their sense of individuality. Humans in groups want to be seen for their own unique contributions, but do not want to be so individualized in group life that they are estranged or extruded from the group. Bion purported that managing this paradox of group life creates part of the central, essential anxiety of group life for all of us. Further, he argued that it is this inescapable tension and anxiety that creates the conditions for members to employ basic assumption activity, that is, to act badly in groups.

Rioch (1975) stated:

> Basic assumption life is not oriented outward toward reality, but inward toward fantasy, which is then impulsively and uncritically acted out. There is little pausing to consider or to test consequences, little patience with an inquiring attitude, and great insistence upon feeling. Basic assumption members…do not really learn and adapt through experience but actually resist change. So it seems that the basic assumptions represent an interference with the work task, just as naughty, primitive impulses may interfere with the sensible work of a mature person. (p. 28)

Finally, Bion included one positive aspect to basic assumption activity that he called "sophisticated" use of basic assumption mentalities (Bion 1961, p. 96). This is when the work task aligns with the basic assumption task. In the case of a surgical operating room, basic assumption dependency activity might be appropriate as all staff are focused on the surgeon guiding the operation. The military mobilizes basic assumption fight activity in order to keep on alert. Basic assumption pairing activity aligns with the breeding goals of a royal family; that is, a couple must produce the future heirs of the family with particular bloodlines. To be clear, Bion developed his model with the idea that basic assumption activity is almost always antitask, that is, it ignores, suppresses, or avoids the group's real work tasks; however, in some instances, he posited that the basic assumption activity and the work group activity are aligned and therefore both mentalities are on task.

Bion detailed his theory of groups extensively in his work, *Experiences in Groups* (1961), a volume that is a collection of separate papers published previously in *The Lancet, Human Relations,* and *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis.* His group model has been one of the most significant contributions to the psychodynamic study of groups and is used today to inform practices in group therapy, group training, organizational development and consulting, and organizational change management. Schruijer and Curseu (2014) provide a thoughtful overview of how Bion's work is incorporated in organizational development research and practice currently. For example, Bion's theory of groups has been used to inform change management (Carr and Gabriel 2010), large group dynamics (Seel 2001), the role of gender in leadership and change (Rippin 2005; Miller 2005), the relationships between management and employees (Lapp and Carr 2006), and managerial narratives (Simpson 2010). These examples demonstrate the breadth of applications

Bion's work has to organization change and how his innovations continue to be central to organization change efforts today, half a century after he first developed them.

## The Leaderless Group

Bion's theory of groups, thus, has not been limited in its applicability to small systems (small groups or teams), but rather has been used to understand larger organizational issues more broadly as noted above. Bion was one of the first to suggest that groups and organizations be thought of as dynamic systems that were more than the sum of their individual parts. That is, Bion argued that what occurred in groups and systems was not solely a summation of each individual's contribution, but rather that the individuals' collective contributions to the group made up a particular dynamic that was related to but different from each individual (Stokes 1994). He was one of the first to suggest that therapists and later organizational consultants attend to dynamics at the group level of analysis rather than to see group work as attending to each individual's dynamics with other people in the room. Bion also encouraged the idea of experiential learning – learning in the here and now from one's own experience (Geller 2005). This, coupled with the notion that one could gather data about individuals from observing their experience in the here and now formed the basis of his "leaderless group" selection technique employed in the British military during World War II to assess potential officers. This was an innovative method of both understanding human behavior in groups and of using that understanding to achieve a goal – e.g., to assess potential officer talent expediently and effectively.

During World War I officers were selected from among those soldiers who distinguished themselves in combat. In World War II that method was no longer viable as the vast majority of British soldiers were repatriated relatively quickly (Bléandonu 1994). At that time psychological testing of soldiers for officer selection was a widely used and accepted practice across Europe (e.g., see Bass 1950; Ansbacher 1951). Britain also used psychological assessments, but they were lengthy to administer and to interpret. Physical tests administered by medics gave a partial picture of the soldier's fitness but the psychological component, seen as essential, was absent. Further, although the British army needed a steady supply of skilled and stable officers, it did not employ enough army psychiatrists and psychologists to assess and select the officers. The army needed an efficient and valid means of assessing psychological health and skill among huge numbers of soldiers. In 1941, Bion was invited to join the first experimental commission known as the No. 1 War Office Selection Board (WOSB) to do just that (Bléandonu 1994). The commission was comprised of six members, three of whom would assess military qualities and three of whom (one psychologist and two psychiatrists) would give specialist advice regarding soldiers' psychological fitness.

As part of the WOSB Bion proposed "The Leaderless Group Project" (Bion 1946, p. 77). Bion's leaderless group was a model to assess soldiers' ability to engage in

skillful interpersonal relations and other critical leadership capabilities on the battlefield. He assembled a small group of soldiers and gave them a task (e.g., to build a bridge). The assessors were instructed to ignore the soldiers' bridge building skills (or lack thereof), but rather to observe and note their interpersonal abilities, including how they managed the tensions of working together, being observed, and their desires for personal and group success and any concerns over individual or group failure.

Bion (1946) described it this way:

> The . . . technique . . .was to provide a framework in which selection officers, including a psychiatrist, could observe a man's capacity for maintaining personal relationships in a situation of strain that tempted him to disregard the interests of his fellows for the sake of his own. The situation had to be a real life situation. The situation of strain, and the temptation to give full rein to his personal ambitions was already there; the candidate arrived prepared to do his best and get himself a commission and, naturally, he feared the possibility of failure. Furthermore, this was a real life situation. The problem was to make capital of this existing emotional field in order to test the quality of the man's relationships with his fellows. (p. 77)

Bion described his leaderless group method as revolutionary, in part, as it rested on democratic principles, in stark contrast to the rigid hierarchy of the army. That is, those participating in leaderless groups were demonstrating their skills in managing interpersonal relations on an equal footing, a dynamic that was typical of what officers needed to do in wartime conditions. In describing the necessity of assessing this relational dynamic Bion quipped, "If a man cannot be the friend of his friends, he cannot be the enemy of his enemies" (1948, p. 88, cited in Bléandonu 1994). Bion employed the leaderless group model of officer assessment and selection for the next 2 years at which time he was passed over for a promotion as head of the selection committee. During this time there was growing suspicion of psychiatry and psychoanalysis both in the military and in British society more broadly. The War Office removed the psychologists and psychiatrists from all the selection committees and yet for decades retained the essence of Bion's innovative assessment and selection method of the leaderless group (Highhouse 2002).

The leaderless group was indeed an innovative and effective method to assess and select army officers during the middle of the twentieth century, but its impact reverberates today, more than 60 years later. This method has been applied frequently across varied settings, populations and tasks, demonstrating Bion's far-reaching and long-lasting contribution to studying and understanding our behavior in groups and systems and to effecting organization change. Variations of the leaderless group are used regularly in corporate life in assessment centers, in educational settings, in formal peer groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, and in hospitals, especially psychiatric units. Indeed, Bion's innovations in the army selection process transformed organizations' hiring and training processes and gave birth to new organizations structured explicitly around his methods. His importance as a change leader in this regard cannot be overstated.

## The Therapeutic Community

Bion himself used a variation of his leaderless group when he worked as a psychiatrist at Northfield Hospital in England during World War II (Bion 1946). Bion observed that the task of the military psychiatric hospital was to rehabilitate soldiers so as to prepare them to return to active duty. Yet, he noted that in observing the practices of the hospital he saw the staff infantilizing the patients and treating them more like invalids (or kindergarteners) than like soldiers who needed to (re)prepare for battle. He pointed out that the patients were heavily medicated and that they engaged in activities such as dance classes and other activities that corresponded not at all to what they were expected to do upon discharge. For a 6-week span Bion worked with the psychiatrically hospitalized soldiers to help them reflect on their own group community and to relate to each other as the soldiers they were rather than as incapacitated patients (Bion 1946). He invited the soldiers to examine, discuss, and improve their own group and intergroup life within the hospital as a means of rebuilding their skills in interpersonal relations and leadership. Bion changed the occupational therapy employed in the hospital from dance classes to the study of the relations and tensions within the hospital community itself. Bion (1946) wrote, "The therapeutic occupation had to be hard thinking...within a month of the start of this métier these patients began to bear at least a recognizable resemblance to soldiers" (p. 80).

Bion was transferred from Northfield Hospital after working there only 6 weeks. When he left, the therapeutic community model he developed was disbanded. It was soon reinstituted and expanded, however, by Bion's colleagues including Foulkes, Main, and Bridger (Harrison and Clarke 1992). Bion's model of the therapeutic community is widely practiced today in rehabilitation centers for those with substance abuse disorders as well as in mental health clinics and psychiatric hospitals with individuals suffering from mental illness. This modality is another example of how Bion was a change leader. His contribution to our understanding of how to utilize group and system dynamics toward individual, group, and organization change for the greater good is monumental and long lasting.

## New Insights: A Change Leader's Change Leader

Bion's ideas are used routinely today in organization development efforts. Bion was a change leader whose work is used directly by change leaders today. Bion was one of the first to understand that to drive organization change one must address both the overt and covert aspects of organizational life. In his theory of group life, where he detailed two aspects of groups: the work group mentality and the basic assumption group mentality, Bion instructed us on how to understand the connections between what is rational and explicit in a group or system with what is irrational and implicit. Present day change leaders understand that we cannot solely attend to what is said, what is conscious, what is communicated widely in an organization change

initiative, but we must also be vigilant to what is unsaid, what is out of our clients' awareness, and what is hidden or obscured (for extensive examples see Burke and Noumair 2015; Marshak 2006; and Schein 1988). Linking the overt and covert aspects of group and organizational life is a critical piece to understanding resistance to a particular change effort as well as to leveraging accelerators to its success. More specifically, Bion's basic assumption mentalities are sometimes exactly the covert process inhibiting change in a given organization. Understanding how and why they are operating can be the antidote to resistance to change.

Relatedly, while the leaderless group technique was radical when Bion first introduced it as a novel hiring practice in the British military, today it is used routinely to train and hire employees as part of assessment centers. Further, adaptations of the leaderless group technique are also used as core components of any group dynamics curriculum. Those of us who teach group dynamics, leadership skills, interpersonal skills, social processes, and similar topics regularly employ some variation of the leaderless group technique in order to do so. That is, we put students in a group with one another, give them a task to complete together, and observe their group process while they do so. The desired outcome is not the task's completion per se but rather from the learning that occurs in debriefing *how* the task was completed.

I was recently invited to facilitate exactly this type of experiential learning at a private university in Israel where 50 students from around the world were beginning an MBA program. Their first course was a 3-day experiential "leadership retreat" which they spent in groups of eight to ten members engaging in tasks such as putting together a puzzle while blindfolded, agreeing who among a list of possible patients would get a life-saving kidney transplant, and negotiating a simulated contract among various parties to decrease tariffs on meat imports. Each of us on the teaching staff was assigned a small group. My job over the 3-day retreat was to observe my small group as they engaged in these various tasks and to discuss with them their own group dynamics. In these debrief discussions, the students learned about their own leadership style, their strengths and weaknesses in interpersonal interactions, their roles in groups, influence and negotiation skills, and much more. The entire design of this course, a core component of a global, rigorous, prestigious university MBA program, was based on Bion's model of the leaderless group. Bion's work was being used to train a group of 50 future change leaders. These change leaders will then take Bion's ideas into their own organizations to use as guiding frameworks as they drive change themselves. And, Bion's legacy continues.

## Institutional Legacy: An Essential Founder

Finally, Bion was working at a moment in history when psychoanalytic theory and psychoanalysis was increasing in popularity as Freud and other key figures emigrated to the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, two prominent and

influential institutes were founded at this time, the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations in London, England, and the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, ME, in the United States. Both institutes concerned themselves with the study of social systems and improving organizational life and social conditions. The institutes also used experiential learning (learning in the here and now) as their primary teaching modality. The development of the therapeutic community was a critical innovation in understanding groups and systems during this time. After leaving military service Bion returned to work at the Tavistock Clinic where he would continue to actively study group and organizational dynamics "in the here and now," that is, as those dynamics unfolded in real time. But now, instead of inviting hospitalized soldiers to examine their own community's interpersonal and group dynamics he was doing so with groups of managers from industry. In 1946 the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) was established with the goal of applying psychoanalytic and open systems concepts to improve the functioning and well-being of groups and organizational systems (e.g., corporations). The Institute spun off from the Tavistock Clinic, the mental health clinic where Bion and others had been providing treatment to patients and families affected by the World Wars. The TIHR was charged with addressing wider societal issues than solely mental health including, "the study of human relations in conditions of well-being, conflict and change, in the community, the work group, and the larger organization, and the promotion of the effectiveness of individuals and organizations" (Neumann 2005, p. 120).

During this same period one of the most influential contributors to the study of group dynamics, Kurt Lewin, had fled Nazi Germany and settled at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he started the Research Center for Group Dynamics (RCGD) in 1945. Lewin was also responsible for the first T-group (training group), which led to creation of the National Training Laboratory in Group Development (NTL), an organization which continues to offer workshops and training to improve interpersonal and group skills. As scholars and practitioners were producing seminal work on group dynamics at the RCGD and NTL, Lewin's theories and research were also strongly influencing the group scholar practitioners at the TIHR. Social scientists at the institute developed an approach to understanding and improving organizational processes; they stressed the interconnectedness of psychological, technical, economic, and other needs for work, role, and task flow in organizational systems, which they named sociotechnical systems. A fundamental part of their studies was an experiential, living laboratory, called a group relations conference, where participants examined in real time their lived experience of small, large, intergroup, and organizational dynamics with the goal of learning about social systems as these dynamics unfolded (Rice 1965).

The psychodynamic contribution of group relations centers on the work of Bion (1961) who wrote about the presence of both conscious and unconscious processes in group life in his pioneering book. The first issue of the Tavistock Institute's journal, *Human Relations,* was published in 1947, the journal where Bion would later publish his papers that became the volume *Experiences in Groups*. Bion's work

on human unconscious processes in group interactions has influenced a broad swath of organizational research and practice including social-technical systems theory, critical management studies, and psycho-social studies and has been essential to the study of group and team dynamics from a systems perspective, also called group-centered, group relations, systems psychodynamics, socio-analysis, and the Tavistock tradition (French and Simpson 2010). In short, Bion was an integral part of creating the field of group relations. His work was an essential contribution to using group relations to effect organization change. Indeed, he was in a group of the first scholar-practitioners to employ group relations techniques with managers from industry as a means to help them transform themselves and their organizations. He was an early leader in using experiential learning to drive organization change, a practice that is considered standard in organization development today. His legacy continues.

## Conclusion

Bion's influence extends to research and practice in groups, group psychotherapy, mental health treatment including the treatment of addiction, executive coaching, team building, management and leadership development, and organization development and consulting. Interestingly, Bion spent the latter half of his career developing his psychoanalytic ideas regarding individual therapy rather than expanding his group theories or models. Yet, he is considered the key contributor of the psychodynamic view on group life and remains a revolutionary figure in the history of the study of group dynamics and by extension organization change (Geller 2005; French and Simpson 2010). Indeed, as noted above, Bion's model of group life of the work group and basic assumption mentalities has been used in varied settings with numerous populations in industry to facilitate organization change. Bion's emphasis on the importance of understanding and explicating covert processes in group and organizational life has been repeatedly utilized over the past 60+ years since he published *Experiences in Groups*. Variations of Bion's "leaderless group" are used widely today (Highhouse 2002). The method of observing, explicating, and understanding group dynamics as they unfold in real time (as is done in a therapeutic community) continues to be employed today in group relations work, but also in organizational development work more broadly including in the work of such scholar-practitioners as Kets de Vries and Schein among others. In *Notes On Memory and Desire* Bion (1967) writes about the sacred act of listening in the here and now, that is, listening "without memory or desire." Bion wrote these words referring to the relationship between a patient and therapist. But 60 years later, his words extend beyond that context, as a warning or, perhaps, an invitation. Bion invites us to listen without memory or

desire as the way to be truly present to the person, group, organization, to the experience of the moment we are in – as that is the moment from which we can learn the most.

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# Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton: Concern for People and Production

# 10

W. Warner Burke

**Abstract**

Although Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton taught and applied social psychology comprehensively and across boundaries, they were best known for creating and teaching the Managerial Grid. Based on the two fundamental functions of leadership – task structure and human relations – they took the position that there was one best way to lead and mange. This normative stance emanated from the combination of a manger's concern for production (task) and concern for people (relationship). Blake and Mouton's 5-day Grid Seminar in the 1960s became popular worldwide. Competition soon emerged in the form of contingency theories and situational leadership models best represented by Hersey and Blanchard's model. They among others argued that the Grid did not take into account the situation which varied according to subordinates' levels of job knowledge and experience. Thus a manger's approach should range from telling, selling, participating, or delegating depending on the situation as defined by subordinates' levels of maturity regarding their job knowledge.

Using a 9-point scale, Blake and Mouton argued further that the degree of the two concerns for production and people established a "style" of management and that a 9,9 combination of the two concerns (maximum degree of 9) determined the style that was a participative approach to leadership and management – the best way to manage and lead. A 9,1 combination, an authority-obedience style; a 1,9 was "country club" management; a 1,1 was an "impoverished" style (all poor choices); and in the middle of the Grid 5,5 was a second-best, compromising style.

Blake and Mouton got their ideas from social psychology, field research especially at Humble Oil in the Houston area and from their consulting work. As a result of their professional activities over the years they coauthored 30 books.

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Even though Blake and Mouton were grounded in considerable research, sound theory, and years of practice as consultants, they eventually lost the popularity war. With its simplicity and quick application appeal Hersey and Blanchard's model in particular was too attractive in the marketplace. The superior scholarship behind the Grid did not seem to matter that much. Some conclusions regarding this outcome are discussed in the conclusion section of the chapter.

## Contents

Shortly before he died in 2004 at the age of 86, Robert (known as Bob among his friends) Blake was honored by Peter Sorenson, other faculty, and students at Benedictine University. (Jane Mouton had preceded Bob with her death in 1987. She was only 57 but cancer at that time was simply too much for her.) That evening at Benedictine was festive with the highlight being a flip-chart, spontaneous presentation by Bob of his beloved Managerial Grid. The audience of about a hundred people was rapt, enjoying every minute of Bob's rapid-fire coverage of the five styles of management. Some 43 years earlier during my years as a graduate student at the University of Texas, Austin, I had heard Bob and Jane deliver that identical presentation many times. In fact in my final year at UT, I took *the course* which amounted to serving as a guinea pig for the development of Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Seminar of 5 days. After all, we do not come into this world as 9,9 leaders and mangers. We must learn how to become 9,9 with emphasis on such skills as leading a team in decision making via consensus, resolving conflict, receiving feedback on our styles of management, goal setting in a participative manner, and the like. I not only graduated from UT with a PhD in social psychology but also as a highly trained facilitator of the Managerial Grid Seminar.

My first exposure to Bob was during my initial year of graduate studies when I took his proseminar course on social psychology. I loved the course. One had to pay close attention because Bob was a fast-talker. We joked that his initials, R.R., stood for "Rapid Robert." In fact, one of Jane's most significant contributions was to explain at a slower pace and with great clarity what Bob was telling us. Jane was also an excellent writer, thus her role as Bob's partner was to communicate and interpret. They made a formidable team and were quite prolific. For example, the two of them over the years coauthored 30 books.

To launch and manage the Managerial Grid Seminar, Bob and Jane cofounded Scientific Methods, Inc. in 1961 and 3 years later published their original book, The Managerial Grid (Blake and Mouton 1964). With their Seminar designed and launched and their book to undergird the content, business began to boom. By the mid-sixties, the Grid Seminar was being conducted worldwide and with great acclaim. The money made was not bad either.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let us go back and address the beginnings of Bob and Jane's work, especially Bob's early days, so that we can trace more explicitly the emergence of Grid thinking and practice.

## Underpinning of the Managerial Grid and Organization Development

Both Bob and Jane received their PhD degree in social psychology from the University of Texas, Austin. Bob, being older, preceded Jane and actually was her mentor and primary professor for her graduate training. Bob had a strong drive to learn, particularly to immerse himself in new educational and practice ventures such as spending time in the UK working on special assignments for the Tavistock Institute in London as a Fulbright Scholar, and becoming involved with the National Training Laboratories (NTL) in Bethel, Maine in the early 1950s. These exposures focused his attention on the theories of Wilfred Bion and Kurt Lewin as well as the special brands of group dynamics that each one had spawned – The "Tavi Lab" and the T-Group, respectively. This was a time of rich creativity in the world of applied social psychology and Bob took full advantage of the learning. He passed these learnings on to Jane and they began to work together more and more.

Even though originally educated as social psychologist, Bob and Jane were also involved in industrial-organizational psychology both later achieving Diplomat status in I/O psychology, American Board of Professional Psychology. By integrating social psychology with I/O at the time (1950s), Bob and Jane could easily be considered as organizational psychologists today. To clarify my point, the Grid emerged from Bob and Jane's consulting work with industry especially with their years of working with the Humble Oil and Refining Company (as it was known then) not from lab studies with college sophomores. In fact Harry Kolb in the Employee Relations Department at Humble wrote the Preface for their first edition of The Managerial Grid (Blake and Mouton 1964). Bob and Jane were scholar-practitioners from the beginning of their work independently and together.

Although organization development (OD) had not been coined at the time, two streams of theory and practice were evolving. The theoretical father of this evolvement was the same – Kurt Lewin – yet the application of Lewin's ideas took slightly different routes. The route that is more widely known and written about is from humanistic psychology (Maslow, for example) which influenced Douglas McGregor and Alfred Marrow in particular. A simple but powerful study in terms of its influence was the one by Lewin et al. (1939) showing that democratic or participative

leadership was superior to autocratic and laissez-faire versions of leading young boys working on team tasks. Marrow, in particular, took Lewin's ideas and directly applied them in his company, the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation, taking the form of participative management. A little later McGregor and Richard Beckhard applied the same kind of principles to supervisors in General Mills and at the time called it "bottom-up management." For a more expansive report of this work by McGregor and Beckhard, see Beckhard (1997) and for Marrow's work see particularly his biography of Lewin (Marrow 1969) and the book by Marrow et al. (1967).

At the time, this applied work in industry was beginning to have some influence, that is, late 1940s to early to mid-1950s, when the T Group was born (1946) which also happened to be a Kurt Lewin invention. Sensitivity training, as it was subsequently called, was conducted in the early days almost exclusively during the summer time at Bethel, Maine, the "mecca" of the T-Group. While not overnight, the impact of the T Group gradually became powerful and many behavioral scientists in the 1950s and 1960s got on board with what became a social movement in the USA. These behavioral scientists were taken by the learning that occurred in the T Group – increasing one's self awareness and enhancing what we today refer to as emotional intelligence – and were keen on applying these learnings more broadly particularly in the business – industry sector which was more amenable to such applications than were other sectors such as government organizations. By around 1959, these applications were the beginnings of organization development (OD) with the T Group being the center piece.

But another form, albeit slightly more structured one, was emerging. The centerpiece of this second route was the Managerial Grid (Fig. 1) and what eventually also became known as organization development (see the two chapters on OD in their original book, Blake and Mouton (1964); and the book by Blake et al. (1964)). There has always been some controversy regarding who "invented" OD – Blake, Mouton, and Shepard based in particular on their work in the oil industry or McGregor and Beckhard based on their work with General Mills? With their development of ideas regarding the Grid, Bob and Jane were nevertheless clearly aligned with the thinking and practice of kindred spirits who were influenced by the power of Lewin's ideas and in particular sensitivity training – McGregor's Theory Y, Argyris's Model II, and Likert's System 4 (Blake and Mouton 1982). Yet, if I may be somewhat interpretive, Bob especially valued his independence of thinking and in a sense, he foresaw the difficulty of applying the learning form sensitivity training to the workplace, the so-called real world. Thus, Grid OD (Blake and Mouton 1968) became a six-phased process that was quite structured particularly when compared to the evolvement of OD as represented by the Addison-Wesley Series of books coordinated and edited by Schein, Bennis, and Beckhard. Although Bob and Jane's book was not mainstream OD, Schein and his colleagues included it as one of the original six boxed-set of books (Blake and Mouton 1969).

In summary, the nascent days of OD could be characterized by two somewhat different paths: Grid OD with the Grid model as the centerpiece and the less-structured approach with the T Group as the centerpiece. What both approaches had in common was the value of participative management and leadership and having business-industry
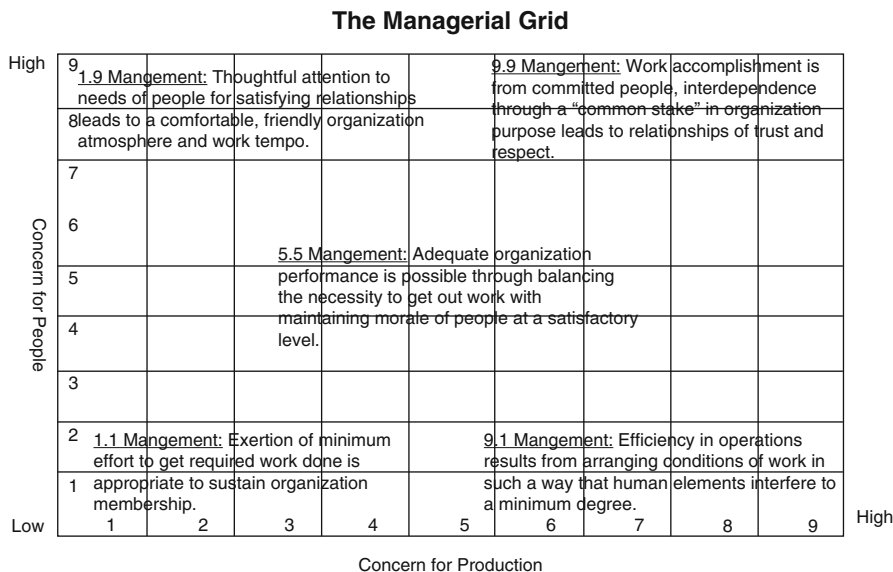
## The Managerial Grid



**Fig. 1**  The Managerial Grid

as the laboratory with Blake and Mouton as well as Herb Shepard at Humble and Marrow et al. at Harwood and McGregor and Beckhard at General Mills. All parties had been to Mecca, i.e., Bethel, Maine, and held the rite of passage through sensitivity training and immersion into the theory of Lewin. Although the latter group were indeed industry-based, especially Marrow, they emphasized group dynamics whereas Bob and Jane while also concentrating on the team were more organizational, that is, addressing the three universals of purpose, people, and hierarchy. Bob and Jane also collected more data at the organizational and overall management level showing, for example, that managers considered the lack of sufficient planning and poor communications as perhaps the primary problems that they faced day in and day out. Bob and Jane (Blake and Mouton 1964, 1968) claimed that these problems were merely symptoms of deeper issues in organizations with the underlying cause being an ineffective management style – 1,1; 9,1; or 1,9.

The Managerial Grid became popular all over the world even in countries where language could be a problem like in Japan. Moreover, Bob and Jane extended application of the grid to organizational culture and emphasized the importance of trying to change culture to make Grid OD ultimately to pay off. By the mid-1960s, then, the Managerial Grid was dominant as a novel approach to improving management in all kinds of organizations. Also Bob and Jane pointed out that while an organization's culture is critical to take into account when planning and managing change, at the societal level the Grid was culture free. Thus their model could easily travel from one country to another.

But this riding high by the Managerial Grid was not to last. Challenges and competitors were percolating and it was just a matter of time.

## Warfare: Grid Versus Situationalism

The Managerial Grid is a normative model, that is, there is one best way to manage and lead and that best way is 9,9 management. But what about the situation? Don't different situations require different managerial approaches? Context matters. In the decade of the 1960s challenges to the Grid emerged. Interestingly these challenges were simply variations on the two functions of leadership that the researchers at Ohio State University had identified earlier in the 1950s. Led by Ralph Stogdill at OSU, these scholars such as John Hemphill and Edwin Fleishman had concluded that initiation of structure and consideration were the two primary variables of leadership. Fred Fiedler with his contingency theory labeled them as task-oriented leadership and relationship-oriented leadership (Fiedler 1967). Hersey and Blanchard (1977) with their situational leadership model simply called the two functions task and relationships. And House's (1971) path-goal theory was also in this situational contingency camp, that is, in attempting to remove blocks from subordinates' path to the goals set forth for them; the leaders would need to vary their approach with more emphasis on the task rather than on supportive or vice versa, depending on the situation at hand.

All three of these models/theories challenged the normative Managerial Grid. There were other challenges but these three were predominant. Bob and Jane did not take these criticisms lying down. Their counter-attack was best represented by their article in *Organizational Dynamics* (Blake and Mouton 1982). In this article Bob and Jane began with arithmetic and chemistry. The situationalists, as they called the enemy, based their models on the two functions of leadership – initiation of structure and consideration labeling them task and relationships, for example, as did Bob and Jane, production and people. For the situationalists the two functions are independent of one another and therefore combine additively (9+9 or 9+1, etc.). For Bob and Jane the two functions are interdependent and come together more like a compound in nature. Thus, their depiction was 9,9; it is a comma that represents the combination not a plus sign. This position taken by Bob and Jane was not unlike Lewin's formula for explaining behavior, that is, b= f (p, e) not p + e or p x e. The two components of behavior, personality and environment, are interdependent and interact in some way to form the compound of behavior. In fact, as noted earlier, Bob and Jane aligned themselves very strongly with other scholars and their work who were influenced by Lewin's theories such as McGregor (1960) and his Theory Y, Argyris and his Model II (Argyris 1976), and Likert with his System 4 (Likert 1967).

More particular to Bob and Jane's thinking, their system for rating oneself and others' ratings of the target person was the degree (one to nine) of "concern for" production and people. How these two concerns were linked together defined how a manager used especially one of the three universals – hierarchy (the other two being purpose and people). These interactive concerns defined how a manager used hierarchy, e.g., top-down or participatively, which in turn resulted in what they

labeled a *style* of management. Style was not personality but, rather, a form of behavior. What determined style was a set of assumptions, and if the style were 9,9, that set of assumptions was steeped in McGregor's Theory Y. Bob and Jane noted at the time that most managers were probably not all that aware of their underlying assumptions about human behavior and particularly motivation. Bob and Jane also purported that each manager would have a dominant style followed by the concept of a back-up style whereas the dominant style was not working well. Their ideal order of styles, making the Grid a *normative* model, was 9,9 being the number-one choice followed by 5,5, then 9,1, 1,9, and last and least, 1,1.

Believing at the time that the 9,1 style was the most dominant style among managers, Bob and Jane devoted 38 pages of their initial book to an in-depth analysis of that style and how inappropriate its use was for getting the best from the people who served them as subordinates. They linked, for example, Theory X assumptions as underlying this particular style. Although 9,1 was the second longest chapter (9,9 being the longest), the fundamental assumption contributing to all chapters was the belief (again, not a conscious one necessarily) that production and people are contradictory. They do not interact; rather they are additive. For every degree of concern for production there is a commensurate decrease in concern for people, or vice versa. Managers with a 1,9 style "lead by following," for example, determining the acceptable rate of production by asking the people themselves. Both 9,1 and 1,9 are active styles whereas 1,1 is comparatively inactive, ignoring the contradictions and leaving the work to follow the day-to-day routines. The 5,5 is a compromise emphasizing selling and using the carrot-and-stick as the primary incentive mechanism.

Now to the 9,9 style. When a high concern for task and simultaneously a high concern for relationships are combined in the situational leadership model (Hersey and Blanchard 1977), the result is nevertheless an independence of the two and an "arithmetic" total. This combination entails a 9 of control regarding the task and a 9 of complimenting and rewarding the subordinates for accomplishing the task as instructed. The result is paternalism/maternalism according to Bob and Jane (Blake and Mouton 1982). It is a matter of the boss rewarding compliant behavior "The soundest basis for combining variables is by compounding (,) rather than by adding (+) them" (Blake and Mouton 1982, p. 33.) To continue with Bob and Jane's argument in their own words:

> Although both 9s signify the same magnitude of concern, qualitative differences in thought, feeling, and behavior are evidenced in the compounds resulting from interaction of the 9s. The 9,9 and comparable orientations – that is, Theory Y, Model II, and System 4 – in the relationship between a boss and subordinate(s) are congruent with emerging behavioral science principles of behavior. The effort to achieve production with and through others is premised upon participation to gain involvement, earned commitment, mutual goal setting, creativity, two-way communication, candor, mutual trust and respect, and the resolution of differences through confrontation at *all* maturity levels. This is the most effective style of exercising leadership; what changes with the situation is the tactics of its application (p. 26).

## Summary and Some Conclusions

In summary, Bob and Jane may have lost some battles along the way, but in the end they won the war by what they called "management by principles." By principles they meant managing people and situations according to what we have learned from sound behavioral science research and theory, for example, that involvement leads to commitment, and that respecting others engenders respect in return, etc. Moreover, what Bob and Jane dubbed management by principles, later in the 1990s, James O'Toole (1995) in taking a stance opposing contingency theories of leadership made his case under the label of "values-based leadership." It is clear today in looking back that the weight of behavioral science evidence is on the side of Blake and Mouton, and O'Toole. Even though no credible research has emerged in support of Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership model, it remains popular, while the Managerial Grid has waned in recent years. What accounts for this difference between the Grid, which is evidence-based, and the situational leadership model, which is not? I can think of three overlapping possibilities that may help to explain the difference – (1) degree of complexity, (2) anti-intellectualism, and (3) the two distinct worlds of academia and the practical, so-called real world.

*Complexity*: By the time most people are exposed to the Managerial Grid and other nonsimplistic models from the behavioral sciences such as Vroom's leadership/decision-making diagram or House's path-goal theory, they are adults with a BA degree plus perhaps an MBA degree. They have work experience and believe that they know a thing or two. Therefore to try to incorporate an approach to their idea of leadership that is complicated and cumbersome to apply is not exactly appealing. To practice 9,9 behavior effectively, Bob and Jane urged people to think in complex ways, to understand metaphorically about production and people, that their concern for production and their concern for people come together not unlike a compound in chemistry. A chemical compound is formed when two (or more but let us stick just with two as in production and people) formerly independent ingredients or components merge to form a new chemical. This means that one's concern for production and concern for people are no longer independent. As a leader one does not express a concern for production and at another time express a concern for people, or vice versa. Both concerns are expressed at the same time, for example, involving subordinates in determining their production goals. As a rule behaving in this manner does not happen automatically. For most people in leadership positions they have to learn how to implement a 9,9 style. This learning can be challenging and the process takes time.

A situationalist model is much easier. If your subordinates are neophytes just tell them what to do; if they are more sophisticated and know what to do, just leave them alone and occasionally reward them for being productive with, say, some extra time off. With this additive model of the two concerns being independent of one another means, according to Bob and Jane, that situational leader gets compliance but not commitment. Thus, 9,9 thinking and behaving is complex and requires too much. Situational approaches are easy to understand and do. "Life in general and my work life in particular are too short for me to take the required time and effort to try to be a 9,9" one might say.

*Anti-intellectualism*: From at least the time of Alexander Hamilton when America was struggling to form as a nation there has been a suspicion of intellectualism. Hamilton in his time provided the basis for our system of central government and capitalism today. He was considered by many as brilliant and by many others as manipulative, to be held in suspect, and motivated by power and personal gain (Chernow 2004). We Americans have not changed that much since 1800. We continue to be skeptical regarding intellectuals and scholars. Whether it is climate change or participative leadership, one must question if not reject these strange ideas entirely – for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon see the recent article, "Motivated rejection of science" by Lewandowsky and Oberauer (2016). Whether the science is chemistry or psychology, the application thereof is problematical.

The Managerial Grid has now faded from its initial glow of optimism and importance with situationalism and all of its unproven admonitions and simplicity remaining in the limelight. This outcome is based, at least in part, on the fact that the Grid is grounded in sound research and theory and therefore simultaneously to be questioned not to mention being overly complicated.

*Two Different Worlds*: As scholars who work to apply our knowledge, this skepticism of science is a significant barrier to acceptance. Adding to the problem is the fact that we and the rest of humanity live in two different worlds, one of research and theory and the other of practicality, i.e., the so-called real world. We speak a separate language, the practicals using plain, straightforward, and easy-to-understand words and us academes speaking in a tongue of arcane, multi-syllable, and unpronounceable words. We have separate value systems – practical versus theoretical – and separate reward systems – money versus prestige. And the list could go on but the point is made. Thus, we have a communication problem and a values-respect problem. If desired in the first place (let's assume so for the moment) change must come from us academes. We must reach out. As behavioral scientists, it behooves us to study behavior that is timely and not difficult to understand such as trust, leadership, agility, etc. At a recent academic national meeting, I suggested to the audience that we spend some time simply talking with a few of the practicals in the real world and asking them about the problems they were facing at work. The problems they talk about could be a source for research that would speak to them rather than coming across as boring and irrelevant.

As noted above, these three reasons for trying to explain the ebbing of the Grid overlap. Moreover, there are no doubt a number of additional reasons. In any case following the trail of evidence the Managerial Grid is superior to situationalism – yet illustrates the great divide. We must find better ways to communicate with the practical people of our larger world and understand that change is more up to us academes than up to them.

## Epilogue

The day following the fete for Bob Blake at Benedictine University, I was responsible for a presentation on organization change and development of about three hours. It was held in a tiered classroom which was fully attended. To my surprise

Bob was sitting in the second row. I realized that I had an important opportunity. After the introduction, I went straight to where Bob was seated and stated that I wanted everyone to know that "you, Bob, were the best teacher I ever had." He was a bit taken aback but seemed pleased. I knew that this would probably be the last opportunity I would have. And it was. Every now and then, saying to someone you really care about and admire what you have always wanted to say is significant. Some closure in life can be very rewarding.

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# David M. Boje: A Storyteller for the Post-Newtonian Era

**11**

Tonya L. Henderson

**Abstract**

Boje, David M. holds a Wells Fargo Professorship and is a distinguished professor and Bill Daniels Ethics Fellow in the management department at New Mexico State University. He also holds an honorary doctorate from Aalborg University. His specialty is organizational storytelling using qualitative methods ranging from traditional narrative to living story emergence, to new work utilizing Shifts-Patterns-Uniqueness-Discrepancies-Self-Assumptions in doing the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association field note methods. He is best known for his groundbreaking work in storytelling, including antenarrative and quantum storytelling theory, as well as his key role in the creation of multiple organizations fostering postmodern, critical, and spiritually informed approaches to scholarly dialogue. Each phase of Boje's four-decade career (so far) has served to more firmly situate him, and the field of organization development as a whole, on the path toward more inclusive and ontologically sound ways of knowing, Being, and influencing the world.

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## Contents

## Introduction

To know Boje, whether personally or through the lens of his numerous writings and lectures, is to become a part of the living story web that links all who think deeply about organization development (OD), ethics, and, of course, storytelling. Boje has published 22 books, 140 articles, and 83 book chapters as of this writing, not counting his works in progress (Boje 2016). He is a super-collaborator who helps others discover their voices, and he finds inspiration in even the unlikeliest of places. To be a student of Boje's is to be a student of life; to play a part in the unfolding of a living story web shared by intellectuals across the globe, not to mention veterans, artists, blacksmiths, consultants, and even horses. This is uninhibited, cocreative exploration at its finest: a learning that seeks understanding regardless of accepted norms, daring to swim against the current of institutionally approved methods and perspectives. Boje is the consummate lifelong learner whose kindness and humble spirit inspire and empower those who are open to embracing change – something he himself has never avoided. For Boje, embracing change means questioning the status quo, seeing old problems in new and creative ways, and unleashing the potential in others.

Unafraid of critique, Boje has consistently given a voice to stories that might otherwise be suppressed, whether because of unpleasantness, political correctness, or a preference for empiricism in the field – always with the aim of expanding the collective understanding of organizational storytelling and change. Where ethics and human rights are concerned, he has used his scholarship to shine a light on the practices of big corporations, including Monsanto, Nike, Enron, Disney, and McDonald's (see, e.g., Boje 2000, 2008, 2010a; Boje et al. 2005a, b; Boje and Baskin 2010a). He has frequently added his voice to public and scholarly debates when controversial topics were at stake, always supporting constructive discourse (e.g., Boje 2000, 2010b; Fitzgerald et al. 2010). While some may find fault with this tendency to engage in controversy, it has led to many rich and fruitful lines of inquiry that benefit the field and encourage growth.

Throughout his career, Boje has forced us to look at things we would rather not see and to create an irresistible, if uncomfortable, call to action. As a critical postmodernist, he constantly refines his ideas about storytelling in organizations, nudging himself (and us) toward the kind of ethical answerability best garnered through lived experience and authentic storytelling (Bakhtin 1993). He does this through the use of a variety of tools, including theater (Boje et al. 2005a) and deep theoretical explanations (Boje 2008), as well as by giving a voice to those whose stories the general public might not really want to hear (www.veteranstheater.com, 2015). A tireless inventor, he sees human value and potential that others might miss or discard – a gift that has brought him many productive mentees and coauthors. This experience of pushing past superficial judgments to encourage fruitful dialogue characterizes his lifelong quest to move away from the dominant narratives we often accept as "truth," to illuminate the more inclusive, authentic stories that live within organizations of all kinds.

Whether one is a student, colleague, friend, or all of these, we all know Boje as a bold thinker and an unfailingly generous soul. In this chapter, we examine a few of the experiences and influences that have shaped his quest for a deeper, ontological understanding of organizational life. Next, we offer a few highlights from his extensive writings – spanning multiple theoretical streams – and consider how they shape modern OD. We then enjoy a brief taste of the work that is currently in progress as of this writing and suggest a few key references to engage the curious scholar.

## Influences and Motivations: A Cocreative Blend of Scholarship and Practice

Boje is an avid reader whose writings are influenced by many sources. What makes his scholarship unique and, in many ways timeless, is his consistent knack for blending concepts drawn from centuries-old, seminal works with the most innovative ideas of the modern age. A conversation with Boje invariably involves a full range of references from Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) to Zizek (2012) and beyond, touching on many salient points in the time and space between. An intellectual *flaneur* of sorts, he can be seen strolling among the intellectual wares and living stores of the world, fully open to suggestion as he selects the very finest (often piquant) ingredients, in order to concoct surprising new interpretations and generative thought patterns (Boje 2011a). Here we explore some early influences in Boje's work as a segue into discussing his major contributions to the field.

Boje's creative spirit may have found early inspiration in his father's inventions. These included a trash compactor, a widescreen television concept, and even a coffeemaker (Boje 2011a, 2014a). Boje laughingly told the story of a day in his youth when he gathered the neighborhood trash so his father could demonstrate the trash compactor for investors. He chuckled as he described the absurdly frantic preparation and how it all came together just as the investors' limousine rolled up for

the big demonstration. This spirit of innovation, complete with the method of gathering whatever materials are on hand in preparation for something spectacular, has found its voice throughout Boje's writing and his life.

One of the most influential thinkers in Boje's path was physicist and organizational studies pioneer Lou Pondy (Pondy and Boje 2005). It was in Pondy's systems theory class that Boje's storytelling work was first encouraged. Affectionately known as "Leapin' Lou" due to his animated teaching style, Pondy eventually left his organizational systems post and moved to the anthropology department, a change that influenced Boje's work toward a more qualitative approach, despite the widespread empiricism dominating the field at the time. Thus began Boje's own nexus of systems theory and storytelling.

His early exposure to OD was a thorough and regorous one. He was influenced by Ken Rowland, who taught change management consulting at a time when the topic had yet to gain popularity. Boje was also impressed by the ideas coming out of the Tavistock Institute and National Training Labs (NTL) and from pioneers like Chris Argyris and Richard Walton. Mark Sandberg taught him OD methods such as small groups, survey feedback, and facilitation, including many approaches that remain in common use today.

This training in OD fueled Boje's resolve to maintain his qualitative focus even after he left for the University of Illinois, where the PhD program was empirically driven and consulting clients were less plentiful. Boje's dissertation modeled social networks at a time when these concepts were foreign to most. Working with David Whetten, Boje completed an extensive study of 16 cities and 316 organizations. Whetten had high expectations of his students, perhaps owing to his own distinguished colleagues; the volume of readings that he assigned was extensive, but it resulted in a very high level of expertise among his mentees.

Boje's dissertation modeled social networks at a time when those concepts were Foreign to most. Boje found himself "left with creating a story to account for all the significant variables." This begged a more qualitative exploration. David reminisced:

> I was out there getting the pre-data for the dissertation, you know. Doing some informal interviews, I would say, with some people in the field and I was flying around the state in a Cessna – in the rain and storm, by the way. Uh, it's kind of a bumpy ride. But, you know, we had the money and I would fly to different cities. I remember walking down the hall with somebody in St. Louis. The guy was telling me that he ran into the owner of the building where they had their offices for social services. And he noticed that the owner of the building was also a guy he recognized that was on welfare, picking up welfare checks, you know. Then I decided that that story was probably more important than the whole dissertation that I had put together. Quantitative only goes so far. That turned me.

Although David is well trained in quantitative methods, qualitative research is his true passion; it is something he has promoted over the years by developing and teaching methods that get at the deeper, ontological aspects of organizational life (e.g., Boje 2001a; Boje and Rosile 2011; Henderson and Boje 2015).

Boje spent his early years as a scholar at UCLA, where it proved difficult to focus on the qualitative work that has since become typical of him. Yet these years proved to be formative for him because the time spent steeped in empirical methods deepened his appreciation of qualitative research and its significance in the context of his own work. This was a powerful mode of inquiry that was destined to be a staple of his future work.

When Boje left UCLA, he started a personnel agency with colleagues, bringing a practitioner flavor to his works when he later returned to academia. Afterward he wrote about his business' early struggles. At first, he and his partners had little success as they attempted to sell printing chemicals. Then, the effort to market the product led them to stumble upon a more profitable business model: skilled personnel placement for the printing industry. They were successful until one partner's financial mismanagement brought about the company's demise. This shift facilitated a return to academia. Boje had always felt pulled in this direction, even when the business was doing well. He published some 30 practitioner magazine articles during that time and was, as he put it, "trying to intellectualize the selling activity." Trade-focused writing gave him access to a broader audience, with more freedom and license in his writing. This experience served him well when he and his business partners dissolved the partnership, permitting him to follow his heart back to the classroom and his research (Boje 2011a).

His passion led him to Loyola Marymount, a teaching university where he found his voice as a qualitative scholar. He first taught three sections of basic management principles for a teacher on sabbatical and soon found his home. During this time, Boje also met his wife, Dr Grace Ann Rosile, who soon became an indispensable part of the work. An accomplished storytelling scholar in her own right, Rosile is Boje's equal, his colleague, and his muse, all wrapped into one. Their shared love of postmodernism, ethics, horses, and storytelling has led to extensive work with native American thought, materiality, and horse sense (Rosile 2002; Boje and Rosile 2011; Boje and Henderson 2014).

Boje listed several European philosophers among his favorite and most influential authors. Exposure to Edmond Husserl's work as a Ph.D. student set him on the path toward phenomenology. William Fredrick Hegel's work inspired an emergent dialectical model of consulting. Early exposure to these thinkers in particular laid the foundation for an insightful approach to postmodernism, always tied back to ethics; contemporary students of Boje's are all familiar with the likes of Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Mikhail Bakhtin, John Dewey, and more recent thinkers like Bruno Latour and Henri Savall – diverse scholars whose perspectives are honored pieces of a much larger puzzle. This rich well of influences, combined with Boje's ability to collaborate simultaneously on multiple projects, allowed him to pragmatically blend the most useful elements of a variety of works to construct approaches that are at once innovative and inspired. This is not the stuff of invention for its own sake, but rather a graceful dance of old and new concepts to suit the music of modern story as the manifestation of human organizing.

Building on these ideas, today Boje is working out the synergy between the Hegelian dialectic and the socioeconomic approach to management (SEAM) that is commonly used in Europe (Savall et al. 2008). For Boje, Hegel's work is "not about thesis, antithesis synthesis, but actually a dialogic process toward an improved state."

> It fits the word "change," because it's a process... the main narrative of a company and then negating that with the anti-thesis so you have a counter narrative or a counter story . . .this is dialectical process. It doesn't resolve in some sort of, "Oh, they're wrong and you're right." It results in endless spiral of negations of negations of negations. [Hegel] equates spirit with reason. . . (as) the coming together of a system and science so that your consciousness is not just responding to intuition, but you start to explore the scientific aspects of it and you bring about. . .a system of observation and experiment and experience. I want to treat spirit as something enlightened in the world, not just science for science's sake.

For Boje, it is the consideration of spirituality where scientifically minded scholars ranging from Karl Marx to Karen Barad (2007, 2011) fall short. As an accomplished critical scholar, he has always asked the hard questions and started conversations that questioned conventional wisdom to elicit deep thought from those open to change.

In this quest for engagement and constructive dialogue, Boje has found numerous sparring partners among his students and colleagues. While he has mentored many PhD students in traditional programs, he has a soft spot for nontraditional students in applied programs, addressing large groups and mentoring several at a time. He has a knack for attracting (and keeping) a variety of students from all walks of life and openly praises their willingness to consider their professional experiences in new ways. He enjoys the nontraditional students' abilities to embrace qualitative methods without a strong prior attachment to traditional empiricism. Boje has drawn his inspiration and collaboration from many different sources, gathering the most useful perspectives from each and adding them to the unfolding body of knowledge.

## Key Contributions: Breaking New Ground

It is tempting to rattle off a list of theoretical streams in addressing Boje's major contributions, but to do so sells him short. Is he a feminist? A critical scholar? A storyteller? A postmodernist? Complexity theorist? Quantum storyteller? New materialist? Something else? The answer is invariably, "To some extent." He has spent nearly 40 years examining human organizations through a variety of lenses, and his work has evolved over time, changing course often and spilling over its banks as each new tributary adds to the deluge. Boje is not dogmatic in his approach. He does not ascribe to a single way of seeing and investigating the world, but pragmatically tests out each new perspective encountered, as a craftsman might consider new tools. He has thoroughly tested those deemed worthy of use in concert with his favorites, drawing together concepts, authors, students, and colleagues to cocreate new perspectives and methods. While his personal contributions to the field are many, in terms

of lasting impact, Boje's key contributions may very well be his innovative spirit and the tenacity with which he helps others to make their collective voices heard.

Boje is best known for creating new avenues for nontraditional approaches to OD, changing the way we see organizational storytelling, inventing the concept of antenarrative, and ultimately developing the sociomaterial approaches collectively referred to as quantum storytelling. The latter is a culmination of decades of work influenced by feminism, postmodernism, complexity, quantum physics, and more. It has ushered in a new way of considering OD that is dynamic, inclusive, and inspired – a model for what many have called the post-Newtonian world (Prigogine and Stengers 1984; Prigogine 1996). While Boje's writings alone could fill many volumes of analysis with rich material, we first turn our attention to his role as a leader of scholars, for he is a pied piper of sorts, playing a tune of his own invention that bids deep-thinking people to follow along and "dance to the music of story" (Boje and Baskin 2010a). Having noted some of the doors he has opened for others, we will then consider a few key concepts for which he is well known.

## Creating Forums for New and Controversial Thought

A true postmodernist, Boje has brought many voices to the chorus of understanding, inviting the inevitable discord in the name of constructive tension, which Bakhtin termed heteroglossia (Pondy and Boje 2005). This inspiration is apparent in the establishment of three distinct avenues for open, scholarly debate: the Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry (SC'MOI), the *Tamara Journal*, and the Quantum Storytelling Conference. All three have been catalysts for dialogue and the unfettered exploration of ideas.

SC'MOI lasted 25 years. In 1999, Boje and Robert Dennehy collaborated to create an organizational theory track at the International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD). They first emphasized postmodernism and storytelling, later adding critical theory, postcolonial theory, and critical pedagogy. In 2004, the group separated from IABD, precipitated by Boje's colorful critique of the Iraq War just as he was stepping into the IABD president's role. Dressed as a clown, he performed the critical play *McDonald's Goes to Iraq* at a formal banquet. Some members took offense and Boje's resignation followed soon after. SC'MOI continued through 2016 and consistently offered an open, inviting place for scholars to bring critical work and explore topics that more conservative organizations would be hesitant to discuss (Boje n.d., 2001a).

SC'MOI was not the only instance in which Boje acted to create a home for critical and controversial scholarship. In 2001, inspired by John Krizanc's play *Tamara*, he founded an academic journal by the same name. In Krizanc's play, audience members followed the cast from room to room, capturing multiple perspectives of an unfolding drama, but never actually seeing the entire stage. They then regrouped during intermission to engage in collective sensemaking. As such, each audience member's experience was unique, and those who saw the play more than once had a new experience every time. The metaphor was an apt one for organizational storytelling from the postmodern perspective, wherein scholars and workers

alike strive to realize the "truth" by listening to the snippets of stories from management, marketing literature, and the rank and file workers, but never really getting the whole story. The *Tamara Journal* "draws on critical management studies, postmodern organization theory, and social systems theory" (Tamarajournal.com n.d.) to support collective sensemaking in organizational contexts.

In 2011, Boje and his colleagues created the Quantum Storytelling Conference. It started as an opportunity for doctoral students from Colorado Technical University to meet face to face with their dissertation mentor. The decision was made for them to come to New Mexico and meet on Boje's birthday, an event that organically grew into a conference. This small group of scholars continues to meet annually to cocreatively explore concepts tying together various aspects of storytelling, native American scholarship, European philosophy, complexity, and quantum physics in new ways (Boje 2011c; Boje and Henderson 2014). The conference temporarily moved to Los Angeles in 2015, but returned to its scholarly roots in the New Mexico desert the following year, where it remains an intimate gathering of open-minded scholars and students.

These conferences and the *Tamara Journal* demonstrated Boje's ability to truly embrace the postmodern. He understands and cultivates the very nature of the work as a polyvocal living story web, something that lives and breathes in ways that we can't control (Boje 2014b). His willingness to create a respectful venue for multiple stories – not just for those who agree with him or present their work in a particular way – is a demonstration of postmodern sensemaking in situ. Boje strategically set the stage for organizational theory development as an emergent phenomenon. He has invited in a collective of actors (in the post-humanist sense), making way for a rich, multifaceted experience to emerge, inspire, and then dissipate when the time is right (Latour 1999).

## Key Theoretical Contributions: Bojean Storytelling and Antenarrative, Paving the Way for Quantum Storytelling Theory

Apart from his role as a leader of scholars and deep thinkers of all kinds, Boje may be best known for his overall approach to storytelling, the concept of antenarrative and the nascent body of work known as quantum storytelling theory (QST). In each case, we see Boje's ability to, as Isaac Newton first suggested, "stand on the shoulders of giants" to see further than his contemporaries, always honoring the dynamic, unbounded nature of organizational life without imposing a singular interpretation on the scene.

## Bojean Storytelling

For Boje, storytelling is where the complexity of human organizations emerges. This is where the unfolding process of aggregate sensemaking comes out in all of its

messy, unedited truth. Boje and his colleagues explore OD in ways that emphasize sociomateriality and organic change, boldly questioning how we bound the systems we study and whose voices are heard and honored (Boje and Baskin 2010a). Beginning where general systems theory and living systems theory left off, Boje and his colleagues tend to employ storytelling as a medium for illuminating complex adaptive systems (CAS) behaviors in human organizations and social networks (Pondy and Boje 2005; von Bertalanffy 1969; Boje and Baskin 2010a; Wakefield 2012). For Boje, organizations are best understood through the stories told by their members – all of their members, not just those residing in the C-suite. Such an approach denotes a decidedly postmodern view. Yet the most interesting aspect of Bojean storytelling is not its polyvocalism, but rather its multifaceted fluidity. Here we not only take multiple perspectives into account but begin to explore the ways that those perspectives shift over time as the product of cocreative sociomaterial enactments.

Here is the notion of the living story web, where stories emerge and dissipate at will in the context of a greater organizational perspective that is decidedly fluid (Boje 2001b, 2008, 2011c, 2014c; Boje and Baskin 2010a, 2011; Boje and Wakefield 2011; Letiche and Boje 2001). Boje entreats modern scholars to see an organization's collective story as constantly changing, driven by myriad influences in ways that are reminiscent of Lewin's (1951) famous force field diagrams. Working with this kind of understanding can be difficult for many leaders, as the informal power structure gains importance and we are forced to accept that one can never completely control or contain what goes on in any organization. Organizational storytelling is a multifaceted, living, breathing thing that accepts the artful influence of responsible, aware leaders but aggressively rebels against those who would insist upon ownership and control.

Boje has called this way of seeing organizations "systemicity," wherein not only the stories, but the very fabric of the organizations themselves, are viewed as constantly changing, expanding, and contracting to redefine institutional boundaries (which are contrived, anyway). This continual dance of emergence and dissipation occurs in a sometimes unpredictable, multifaceted response to (and influence of) environmental factors and the development of internal living story webs (Ashby 1958; Boje 2008; Boje and Wakefield 2011; Wakefield 2012). He highlighted the difference between a dominant narrative (often a top-down idea of the organizational story) and organic, grassroots manifestations of organizational life (Boje and Baskin 2011), suggesting an analytical approach that does not presume absolute knowledge of the system itself or even the ability to map it with any accuracy. Storytelling inquiries such as this entreat one to "start where you are," perhaps at the middle or even off to one side, and work outward from the starting point in order to increase understanding. This type of approach is decidedly at odds with reductionist thinking, making it a hard pill for many to swallow. Such an approach requires one to accept that the analysis is never complete; the system changes faster than one can make sense of it, creating an experience akin to cleaning a house with small children

following behind the broom to drop new crumbs. Despite the unsettling sense of never being complete, which vexes many scholars and terrifies most practitioners, such approaches are ideally suited for the development of an ethics of care in the context of today's uber-connected organizations – Boje's ultimate aim.

## Antenarrative

A thorough understanding of systemicity and its analytical approaches is heavily reliant on the concept of "antenarrative," a term Boje coined in 2001. Antenarrative is "storytelling 'before' the narrative takes the form of BME (beginning-middle-end) storytelling, to include 'bets on the future'" that occur in real time as sensemaking unfolds (Boje 2014b, p. xxi). The term itself begs the question, "What is happening outside of the accepted version of 'truth' that is explicitly or implicitly approved by designated leaders?" Just as one often passes through an anteroom before entering a meeting space, the antenarrative is the entrée to a lived experience of what Ken Baskin (2008) refers to as "storied spaces."

Antenarrative as a concept legitimizes the speculative nature of storytelling beyond the privileged voices of those considered "in the know," to capture a more egalitarian perspective – one that remains fluid and defies any attempt to solidify it. For when we record antenarrative, we transform it into narrative, confining it to the printed page and preventing its further unfolding. The act of writing, even writing that is done with great respect for polyvocalism and the interplay of multifaceted sensemaking, privileges and legitimizes one perspective. Once this is done, the written account is no longer a reflection of antenarrative. It ceases to grow and becomes a limited narrative itself, albeit a generative one. Each frozen account that attempts to corner the market on "truth" is ultimately subsumed and ends up becoming a part of the greater antenarrative of the organization. Antenarrative likes to be acknowledged but it will not be tamed.

Boje's development of antenarrative as a concept extends beyond its discovery to include an extensive body of related work. Of particular use to those who would employ the concept in practice is the development of a taxonomy of antenarratives (Boje 2011d, e). Boje (2011e) describes four types of antenarratives: *linear*, *cyclic*, *spiral, and rhizomatic*. Linear narrative is described as having an arc, a beginning middle and end, often following a set, predictable path. Cyclic antenarrative is the stuff of seasonal repetition, akin to the rise and fall of dynasties in the Chinese view of history. Building on cyclical antenarrative, spiral antenarrative is more fractal, with self-similar patterns repeating as part of a larger arrangement of directional growth that might be considered progression toward a Hegelian absolute were it not for the way the spirals emerge and dissipate at will to create updrafts and downdrafts in organizational life. Finally, rhizomatic antenarrative spreads like strawberry plants or sumac, with widespread influence owing to unseen root structures that support what might appear to the casual observer as unrelated occurrences of a particular

type of story. This bold conceptualization of story as something more than an accepted tale of organizational Being (capitalized after Heidegger's use of the term) has had profound effects on the consulting industry, forcing a deeper reckoning of the subtle undercurrents in organizational life.

The idea of a living, breathing organizational story that legitimately exists at all levels flies in the face of control mechanisms and corporate storytelling that consistently emphasize an idealized "brand," instead demanding a more open, ethical accounting (see, e.g., Jørgensen and Boje 2009, 2010). To analyze antenarrative is to get at the unspoken truths of organizational experience as it unfolds, creating a snapshot of the tide as it comes in, but never adequately capturing the salt taste and unruly nature of the deluge as it knocks you down and floats you back up to the surface.

## New Insights: Quantum Storytelling Theory

Boje is decidedly critical of the notion that living systems theory and complexity are mere metaphors for the unfolding of human organizations, which he perceives as sociomaterial fractals in and of themselves (Boje 2011d; Henderson and Boje 2015). To that end, he has spent decades cultivating an awareness of organizational life as an unfolding process of time, space, materiality, and a deeper spiritual drive.

Boje's nascent work on quantum storytelling theory (QST) represented his boldest and most comprehensive move yet. Building on decades of work to capture antenarrative from a postmodern, human perspective, it takes the work in a decidedly posthumanist direction. Quantum storytelling theory offers a more comprehensive answer to the limitations of prior theories, including living systems theory (LST) and general systems theory (GST), as well as complexity (Boje 2011c). It is consistent with sociotechnical systems theory (STS), the French socioeconomic approach to management (SEAM), and agential realism, all of which constitute important steps toward blending social and material factors (Trist 1981; Savall et al. 2008; Barad 2007). Building on these perspectives, Boje shares Bennet's (2010) understanding of what she calls "thing power" and contextualizes it in a cocreative space of emergent and dissipative story that is at once tangible and unseen, spoken and tersely told, and always as dynamic as antenarrative itself. Here assemblages of people and things, akin to what Latour (1999) calls collectives, interact dynamically to constitute a sociomaterially constituted ontology of the dynamic becoming, Being, and dissipation of the modern organization.

Boje's early works gave us a springboard for understanding organizational storytelling, turning from the mechanical models of the past and embracing LST and complexity-inspired notions. They taught us to view storytelling as "the currency of the realm," the medium of exchange that makes the complexity of human organizing visible to the casual observer (Boje 2008). Building on these concepts,

Boje has continued to add to the body of knowledge in ways that help scholars and practitioners embrace change by accepting the fluid nature of organizing processes. This new understanding is best examined by further exploring QST. A succinct description of quantum storytelling theory is perhaps premature, as at the time of this writing, many scholars are working to flesh out its meaning, drawing from various streams. Yet its promise merits a partial explanation herein.

QST is a line of inquiry that addresses the ways storytelling in organizations has changed since the widespread acceptance of quantum physics and the philosophical shift that entails. The post-Newtonian world suggested by Prigogine and Stengers (1984) was only the beginning, as the world of human activity has become increasingly dynamic and interconnected. As the millennials come into their own, the prevailing thought patterns will be those of digital natives for whom quantum computing is a given and space travel is a "bucket list item," no more unrealistic than their parents' dreams of visiting Tahiti. This world necessitates new ways of understanding organizations, ones that address virtual and hybrid teams and are attuned to ways of Being that are at once material, social, and spiritual. (Note: Being is capitalized after Heidegger (1962) to indicate something closer to the German term *Dasein*, in lieu of mere presence or existence.)

For Boje, the major global paradigm shift that is underway has necessitated an ontologically grounded, ethical approach that is at once rich in its depth and pragmatic in its applications (Boje 2014b).

> We need methodology – empirical methodology that tracks non-linear processes – so when we're forgetting that we have a linear understanding of reality and we apply all these linear methodologies, we're really doing a disservice to the nature of Being.

Boje and his colleagues suggested that quantum-inspired views of time, space, and matter, and even the metaphysical implications of modern science have a place in our understanding of modern organizational theory and practice (Boje and Henderson 2014). Taking a cue from Barad (2007), Strand (2012), and others, Boje stressed "intra-penetration of storytelling, a particular domain of discourse, and materiality (Boje 2011b, p. 1)." The flexibility offered by sociomaterial perspectives that address dynamic *timespacemattering* and go so far as to legitimize the role of spirituality in organizational life made for fertile ground in Boje and his colleagues' efforts to understand the realities of modern organizational storytelling (Boje and Henderson 2014).

This emphasis of the interplay between time, space, materiality, and spiritual elements shifts our understanding from one born of positivistic scientific inquiry – which can be limiting in terms of an ethics of care – toward an understanding grounded in lived experience and meaning-making as an unfolding, nonlinear process.

> We just try to escape into the millennial generation of cellphones and iPhones and iPads and iBooks and whatever "i" you want to do; then we can get detached and, in a Hegelian sense, alienated from Being, and alienated in two directions: one in our own inner consciousness,

and secondly in our encounters with spirit of the earth...that agential cut as Barad (2007) calls
it. There [are] other ways of cutting those relationships or non-dualizing them.

This polyvocal perspective moves beyond dualistic thinking (us vs. them),
towards something Boje has said he feels is better suited to the modern world.
Given that even our most contrived human behaviors are fractal in many cases,
quantum storytelling opens the way to understanding a multidimensional, multi-
fractal way of seeing organizing processes (Henderson and Boje 2015; Henderson
2015). This is terra incognita, fertile ground for the creative and inspired thinking
that has characterized Boje and his ilk.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business

When asked about the future of OD, Boje's suggestions pointed toward a more
truthful, inclusive representation of organizational narratives. He continues to
expand QST and to examine organizing processes as sociomaterial fractals (Boje
2015; Henderson and Boje 2015), expanding these ideas with insights from the
European SEAM approach (Savall et al. 2008) and a host of other sources. Ever the
prolific scholar, he is typically working on at least five writing projects with a variety
of collaborators at any given time. Contributors in this area include Coppedge,
DePorres, Gladstone, Henderson, Hockenberry, Littlebear, McCaleb, McCulloh,
Rosile, Saylors, Strand, Tisby-Cousar, Turunen, and many others. His call is to
embrace deeper understanding through ontological ways of knowing, something that
has fundamentally influenced scholars and practitioners at multiple universities.
These activities highlight Boje's long-term effort to address socially accepted dom-
inant narratives that may be less than truthful if further investigated. (For example,
Boje et al. (2005b) offers a detailed analysis of Enron's use of theatrics to deceive
shareholders.)

A powerful advocate inside and outside of academia, Boje has shown no sign of
resting on his laurels. In addition to his full-time position at New Mexico State
University (NMSU), he is actively engaged in the material storytelling lab at
Denmark's Aalborg University and its New Mexico affiliate, the Embodied
Restorying Processes (ERP) Laboratory. He is actively involved in (and, at the
same time, critical of) the movement toward greening business and universities,
concerned that the "triple bottom line" (people, planet, and profit) may lend itself
toward what is commonly known as *greenwashing*. When *greenwashing*, organiza-
tions seek out positive press but don't always commit to "walking the talk" behind
closed doors, something Boje finds disturbing. At NMSU, he chairs the sustainabil-
ity committee and is heavily involved in greening the curriculum to include work on
creating a school of sustainability with living laboratories in the city of Las Cruces,
NM. He also advocates for increased institutional support for qualitative research to
include more thorough training and emphasis on the more difficult seminal texts that
are often neglected in the process of educating scholars. Boje remains actively

engaged in the community, and a host of topics speak to his sense of justice and openness.

This sense of justice is further seen in his work with disenfranchised war veterans. Boje is a certified provider of Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) methods, works extensively with post-traumatic stress disorder sufferers, and has formed a self-sustaining veterans' theater project. Having served in the Vietnam Conflict himself, Boje is able to connect with those who return from combat and find themselves homeless, unable to get needed medical care and struggling against addiction.

> Half the veterans in this state – we don't even know who and what they are – they just disappear after military service. Then the other half try to register and most of them have their claims rejected; then they give up. Eventually, they join veterans' organizations and they start working for social justice. But it's a long route.

The work includes not only therapeutic measures but helping those who have served in the military and find themselves disenfranchised to earn their own money and deal with the material realities of their situation.

In support of these projects, Boje has further expanded his audience beyond academia through blogging, film, and extensive workshops. Issues highlighted on his website, www.veteranstheater.com, include widespread addiction to "spice," synthetic marijuana, in the homeless camps, using sand play to assist veterans' efforts to overcome past traumas for more positive outcomes, and ongoing efforts to create a tiny house community. EAGALA methods and more are being expanded through the Legacy Ranch project, as well (Boje 2015). These efforts offer a small taste of Boje's dedication to making theory practical in a very real, concrete sense.

Ultimately, Boje's legacy will likely be a blend of the organizations and opportunities he has created for others, mixed with his theoretical works (completed publications and those yet to come). These contributions will continue to be expanded for years to come by the very long list of scholars, practitioners, and friends whose lives he has touched. The application of storytelling to bigger social contexts for greater impact gives Boje a sense of satisfaction going forward.

He has accomplished much in the four decades of work to date, but by all indications, Boje is really just getting started. To spend time with Boje is to become a true student of the world, a postmodern listener whose ears are ready to receive ancient and scholarly wisdom blended with the raw, lived experience of those who exist both inside and outside of the system. He forces us to consider perspectives that push us beyond our comfort zones but ultimately make for a more just world.

## Conclusion

To give full consideration to the works of David Boje is to explore vast oceans of content ranging from the ancient Greeks to modern thinkers. While he has contributed many works in the categories of storytelling, complexity, feminism, post

modernism, and post humanism, what makes Boje impactful as a scholar is his uncanny ability to pragmatically draw from a plethora of sources to engage in collaborative sense-making that is consistently groundbreaking if not controversial. Always ahead of his time, ever open to new ways of seeing the age-old problems that characterize our field, Boje is and will always be an inspiration and a friend of those who would seek to expand their minds and understand Being from a deep, authentic place. David Boje is truly a Storyteller for the Post-Newtonian era and a catalyst for change on many fronts.

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## Further Reading

To suggest that a student "read Boje," is to offer up a lifetime of possibilities, for his books, articles, chapters, films and speeches are extensive, and he tends to create new material faster than the most avid reader can digest it. To that end, here we recommend an article considered to be a major turning point in his career, the author's all-time favorite, and two of Boje's personal favorite "Boje books" as an entrée to understanding some key elements of the work.

Boje's 1991 Administrative Science Quarterly article about storytelling at an office supply company was groundbreaking. It ushered in a line of inquiry that replaced dominant organizational narrative as put forth by management, with a clearer picture of what is going on—one tied to the voices heard around the water cooler and elsewhere (Boje, 1991).

His 2008 book *Storytelling Organizations* is a noteworthy addition, as it expands the learning to explore archetypal organizational narratives complete with examples from the likes of McDonald's and Nike (Boje, 2008). Here, Boje's explorations of organizational attempts to harness and shape public perceptions are highly critical of the manipulation of story for marketing purposes (Also see: Boje et al., 2005a).

Boje has named *Being Quantum*: *Ontological Storytelling in the Age of Antenarrative* and *Storytelling Organizational Practices*: *Managing in the Quantum Age* as some of his personal favorites (Boje and Henderson, 2015; Boje 2015). The first is an edited collection of essays contributed to by participants in the annual Quantum Storytelling Conference. It explored OD through a lens of *timespacemattering*, a term which denotes the inseparability of time, space, and matter in the dynamic unfolding of organizational reality, and spirituality, building on the works of Barad (2007) and others. The second of these books, which appeals to Boje most as an author, addressed the practical aspects of storytelling in organizations. This is where he found his most complete expression, shining a light on sustainability through storytelling, spirit and simplicity. Boje's current understanding is deeply spiritual; here, he openly shared the experience of bringing his authentic self to the writing to help make sense of the day-to-day storytelling of our organizations. These two works captured the essence of an emergent stream of theory and reflected the generosity with which Boje shared the spotlight with his students and colleagues to contribute to the unfolding body of knowledge as a living story web in its own right.

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# Barbara Benedict Bunker's Pioneering Work in the Field of Organizational Change

# 12

Dick Axelrod

**Abstract**

Barbara Benedict Bunker's pioneering work has influenced organizational practitioners for more than 50 years. One of the first women in the field, she paved the way for others. Her legacy is documented in the nine books she coauthored; the 36 articles and 27 book chapters she authored or coauthored; and the more than 85 presentations she has made throughout her career. Her legacy is also alive in the thousands of people to whom she has taught, mentored, and consulted. She is not only a great thinker, she is a wonderful teacher and an excellent practitioner. What is remarkable about Bunker's contributions is that they are not limited to one topic or one aspect of the field. Her contributions include work on gender issues, trust, conflict management, practitioner development, and large group interventions. Her university teaching grounds students in theory and her work in the field has improved organizations and institutions. In this chapter, I will trace early influences on Bunker's career and how her curiosity, use of self, and desire to contribute to the field has made a difference for the people with whom she has interacted around the world.

**Keywords**

Bunker • Conflict management • Gender issues Practitioner development • Group development • Large group interventions • NTL

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## Contents

Some people are great thinkers, others are great practitioners, and others are great teachers. Rarely do these qualities all appear in one person. Barbara Benedict Bunker represents all three and exemplifies what is best in the organizational change field. She has brought intense curiosity, humility, academic rigor, and deep caring to her work. Bunker has modeled what it means to be an outstanding organizational change practitioner. For more than 50 years, she has provided lessons from which we can all learn. Organizational change would take a giant leap forward if the field were to follow half of those lessons.[1]

## Influences and Motivations: A Career Begins

### Independence and Gender

Bunker completed her undergraduate studies at Ohio Wesleyan University. While she was there, the University of Chicago's (U of C) dean of students visited Ohio Wesleyan, offering scholarships to students who were asking serious religious questions. The question on Bunker's mind was, "What is the nature of the world

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[1]For this chapter, the author had spoken with many colleagues of Barbara Benedict Bunker, including Billie Alban, Susan Coleman, Mort Deutsch, Harvey Horenstein, and Judith Katz, for their thoughts and information.

and the nature of God?" No small question, but it was the one that earned her a scholarship to the U of C.

So Bunker attended the U of C to study religion. She is fond of telling a story about her father, a Methodist minister. When she left home for graduate school, he said, "Well, I guess you won't be living with us anymore, but we will always love and welcome your visits" (Bunker 2014). Bunker had a wonderful relationship with her father and was shocked by this dose of tough love. Her father's words made her realize that, although she was completely independent, to be considered complete in the 1950s, women needed a "better half" – a husband – and she was not ready for that.

Bunker attended the U of C at a time in the school's history when every course was open to all students, no matter what degrees they were pursuing. She found it exhilarating to follow her curiosity. At the Oriental Institute, she met and studied with students from all over the world who practiced a myriad of religions, an experience she found inclusive and stimulating. Bunker graduated with a DB Degree, which she described as being between a master's degree and doctorate of divinity degree.

After graduation, her first job was as the director of religious life at the Women's College of Duke University. Having grown up in New England and attended school in the Midwest, she found the racially segregated South to be culturally shocking. "It felt like I was living in another country," Bunker recalled. While at Duke, she experienced and participated in the sit-ins of the 1960s.

As she experienced the wider culture of the South, Bunker was also learning about academia. She soon realized that if she wanted to become a "first-class citizen" in the academic world, she would need a PhD, because her job in the student life part of the university left her undervalued and underpaid.

## But What to Study?

Bunker's field of study became clear to her when she attended her first training group (T-group) run by National Training Laboratories (NTL) in Bethel, Maine. She became and has remained fascinated with small group dynamics. At Bethel, she found her life's calling. Here, she could apply the latest small group research as she facilitated the T-groups that were the staple of NTL's programs.

While Bunker was getting practical experience running T-groups at NTL, she decided to pursue a PhD at Columbia University. There, under the tutelage of Morton Deutsch, she studied conflict resolution. Her dissertation explored the role of trust in the prisoner's dilemma game. Deutsch described his impressions of her during that time: "She was an interesting, bright young woman who was devoted to her work and worked well with others." He went on to portray her as a very giving person who aspired to improve the world (M. Deutsch, personal communication, April 25, 2016).

While at Columbia, Bunker also worked with Matt Miles, who completed some of the first system-wide interventions in public schools based on a data collection/

feedback approach. Bunker's role as a graduate student was to document that process, not only with the clients but among the researchers who were conducting the consultation. This gave her a deep understanding of systemic change.

At Columbia, Bunker experienced firsthand the tension between applied research and pure research. In pure research, an individual was expected to ask the tough questions, while in applied research, he or she dealt with real-world problems. Later in life, Bunker would resolve that tension by becoming a tenured professor and an organization development (OD) consultant.

Following graduation, she went to work at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she eventually organized and ran the OD training program in the psychology department and became the chair of the Council on International Studies and Programs. Here, she discovered her love of teaching. She also loved working with clients in work settings, where she was able to test ideas against real-world experience. Out of these two loves, Bunker became a scholar/practitioner deeply devoted to the world of ideas and working with those concepts in the real world.

## Making a Difference at National Training Labs

While learning to facilitate T-groups at NTL as a fully certified trainer, Bunker began to experience the consequences of being a woman there. At the time, only three women were considered acceptable to the dozens of white male trainers: Billie Alban, Edie Seashore, and Bunker. The process of becoming a trainer required serving an apprenticeship before becoming a trainer. Women could not become fully certified trainers unless they were sponsored by a white male staff member, and then only begrudgingly. Women were considered second-class citizens.

Even as full-fledged trainers, women found it difficult for their voices to be heard in this environment. When Bunker and Seashore realized that their opinions did not count in staff meetings (B. B. Bunker, personal communication, May 12, 2016), they devised a strategy to make their voices heard. Whenever one of them spoke up during a meeting, the other would say, "I think that is a very interesting idea," whether or not she actually thought the idea was interesting. By supporting each other, the women eventually achieved a positive valence, and the other group members became interested in what they had to say.

By 1975, National Training Labs was several hundred thousand dollars in debt and in serious financial trouble, so Vlad Dupres, the president of the organization, invited Bunker, Seashore, Peter Vail, and Hal Kellner to do an organizational assessment and make recommendations.

Bunker and her fellow conspirators devised a way to get NTL out of debt. The plan involved three strategies:

1. In exchange for assuming the organization's debt, the group would take over the National Training Labs Board.
2. The new board would restructure the organization by inviting 75 current NTL members to join a new National Training Labs; in exchange, those participants

would donate 2 weeks per year to the new organization. Having members working without a salary would allow the organization to save enough money to retire the debt.
3. They restructured the board and the organization so there was an equal balance of men and women, as well as people of color and white people.

The previously identified three steps saved National Training Labs as an institution.

## If You Want to Learn About a Culture, You Have to Immerse Yourself in That Culture

As the chairperson of the National Training Labs Board, Bunker worked in a very diverse system. She realized how little she knew about working in multiracial, multigender cultures and desired to do something about her cultural ignorance. So she decided to immerse herself in a foreign culture. She applied for a Fulbright Scholarship and ended up being a Fulbright lecturer at Keio University School of Business in Tokyo, Japan, in 1984, and at Kobe University School of Business in Kobe, Japan, in 1990.

While in Japan, she researched the role of women in business. At that time, women executives were found in mostly small businesses. Through her research, she learned how women negotiated their way through the male-oriented Japanese culture. For example, a woman might get her brother to apply for a loan at a bank, or put him up as president of a company. When the financed venture or the company was successful, she would assume the executive role. Another interesting finding was that role eventually trumped culture, so if a woman was president, people respected her position, even if they did not believe that a woman should be filling that role.

While in Japan, Bunker learned enough Japanese to get by and learned that "language carries the culture." She meant that if a person wants to understand a culture, he or she must learn the culture's language.

## Applying What You Know to Your Marriage

At one point in her career, Bunker's husband Doug went on sabbatical, which meant that the couple would be separated for long periods of time. Bunker realized that whenever she and Doug got together during his sabbatical, they always ended up fighting on the day they reunited. She puzzled about this pattern and then remembered some research about people who worked on oil platforms and about the impact the job had on their marriages. The researchers found that when one spouse left, he or she created a "role hole," a series of tasks he or she normally did that the other partner had to eventually assume. When the absent partners returned, they expected to pick up where they left off and assume their normal roles, only to find out that their spouses had now taken on the extra tasks. This pattern often resulted in conflict, both when people left and also when they returned. Bunker was curious about whether her

experience with comings and goings was widely shared. So she interviewed a number of commuting couples and discovered that it was.

Making the connection that the tensions she and Doug were experiencing were resulting from role holes, Bunker invented an intervention to break up the pattern. Instead of going straight home when they reunited, Doug and Bunker went to a restaurant first, to ease the transition. Bunker's rule of thumb for reentry was to let her partner tell his story first. During the period of separation, each spouse had been living a separate story. By hearing her partner's story first, she was saying, in effect, "What has been happening to you is more important than what has been happening with me." I learned this lesson firsthand when, early in my career, I would be off on a business trip and would come home eager to tell my wife Emily about the interesting work I had done, the great restaurants at which I had eaten, and the wonderful people I had met. Not a good strategy with a young mother who had been dealing with two small children on her own. A better strategy would have been to say, "What's been going on? What would you like me to do?"

## Themes Begin to Emerge

Some themes begin to emerge from these early insights. The first theme was intense curiosity. Beginning with "the nature of the world and the nature of God," Bunker has used her interest to further her own and others' learning.

The second theme was using her own experiences to guide her development and transform systems. Bunker did not just complain about the sexism she experienced at National Training Labs. She used her knowledge about how organizations work to transform that organization. Recognizing that she needed to learn more about working in different cultures, she traveled to Japan and immersed herself in a totally foreign culture. Having trouble with reentry while her husband was on sabbatical, she applied what she knew about role holes to create a new reentry pattern.

The third theme was taking action. Bunker has done more than study things. She has used her knowledge, both academic and personal, to improve the systems in which she has found herself, be they organizations like National Training Labs or her own marriage.

The fourth theme was developing others. Bunker has been a fabulous mentor, whether it be in formal settings like the university or informal conversations with fellow practitioners. Before coaching became its own profession, Bunker was coaching and helping others to develop.

## Key Contributions: Making a Difference

Bunker's career contributions have striking depth and breadth. Today, she is recognized mostly for her work on large group interventions. What is often overlooked is her work on gender issues in organizations, her research on trust, and her contributions to practitioner development.

## Gender Issues in Organizations

Bunker was among the first to realize that there is a systems component to sexism and racism. While it is true that many individual behaviors contribute to sexism and racism, and that training is useful in helping people understand their blind spots, she recognized that training alone would not change organizations. Structural systemic interventions were required. She understood early on that the system must function effectively to produce results, and that lasting change requires structural interventions. She applied this thought when she contributed to restructuring the National Training Labs Board to make it gender- and race-balanced.

At the time of Bunker's intervention at National Training Labs, that organization was the place to go to learn about small group dynamics. It was also where organization leaders and change professionals went to study groups and teams. Had NTL failed, we would have lost a major training institution. Bunker's work there not only saved the organization, it kept alive a developmental resource for organizational change professionals and organizational leaders.

## Trust

The way you make a name for yourself in academia is to come up with an idea first. Bunker has the distinction of completing pioneering work on trust *and* large group interventions. Along with Ray Lewicki, she wrote two papers on developing and maintaining trust in working relationships. Bunker described these as seminal papers on trust that stimulated further study among academicians and practitioners. The articles she coauthored with Lewicki are the most cited of all her work (Lewicki and Bunker 1995; Lewicki 1995).

While she was writing these papers, Bunker was beginning her work on large groups and recognized that she could not devote her time to both. She chose to focus on large groups, leaving the trust research to Lewicki and his graduate students at Ohio State University. Her need to make the decision can be called an embarrassment of riches, because not many people are simultaneously completing groundbreaking work in two different fields of study.

## Developing Competent Practitioners

Bunker has had a major influence on practitioner development through her work with the Organization Development Human Resources Management (ODHRM) program and the Principles and Practices of Organization Development (PPOD) program at Columbia University, through mentoring and through training OD professionals in major corporations throughout the world.

Harvey Horenstein, the director of ODHRM, described Bunker as someone who brought issues of gender balance to these programs, not as political slogans, but as systemic issues that needed to be addressed (H. Horenstein, personal

communication, April 19, 2016). Bunker also helped students build the bridge between T-groups and systemic organizational work. As a scholar/practitioner, she helped her students think about issues from theoretical and practical perspectives. They learned from Bunker the importance of identifying underlying principles in doing work that was both authentic and consistent with who they were. She helped them to understand how to use what they were experiencing in a system to identify systemic issues and make structural interventions.

I have worked with Bunker as a PPOD co-instructor and have conducted consulting skills workshops with her at major corporations throughout the world. Bunker has provided participants with a historical link to the founders of OD. She has been a bridge, if you will, between the past and the present, because of her commitment to living in the present. She has been a "use of self" role model, helping students understand how they can use what they are experiencing in a system to help a system improve itself. Bunker has brought her curiosity to bear on each person in the workshop and the organization they work for, using that curiosity to customize the offering to them. If you are or have been a student in a class with Bunker, you have known that she cared about you and your work.

## And Along Came Large Group Interventions

Bunker is best known for her work with Billie Alban on large group processes. Bunker first met Alban at National Training Labs, and they became friends while Bunker was studying at Columbia University. Bunker's work on large group interventions is an example of the "bubble up" theory in action. Simply put, the bubble up theory posits that, at different points in time, people are working in different places on developing an idea and eventually these ideas bubble up to the surface. What was operating below the surface becomes known to all, and concept emerges.

In the early 1990s, Alban and Bunker thought that something was developing with large groups. They had heard about people like Kathy Dannemiller and Marvin Weisbord experimenting with interventions that involved 60-plus people in the room at one time and were conducted with just a few facilitators. At the time, conventional wisdom dictated one facilitator per 12 people. Another unique feature of these interventions was that they involved people at multiple levels within an organization and important external stakeholders – something else that was unheard of at the time. Being curious, they wondered who else was doing this kind of work and what might be bubbling up.

At the same time, Bunker and Alban were invited to edit an issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (JABS) on large groups. So they put out a call for papers, not knowing if they could fill the issue. They learned that indeed things were bubbling up. In fact, they were surprised to discover that there was more going on than they knew. This led to their publishing a planned special edition of JABS (Bunker and Alban 1992), an edition that officially launched the field of large group interventions and holds the record for sales of the journal. Weisbord said, "I am not

sure if you two [Alban and Bunker] are documenting what is going on, or making it happen" (Bunker 2016).

The JABS article led to two books: *Large Group Interventions: Engaging the Whole System for Rapid Change* (Bunker and Alban 1997) and *The Handbook of Large Group Interventions: Creating Systemic Change in Organizations and Communities* (Bunker and Alban 2006).

In *Large Group Interventions*, Alban and Bunker provided a large group intervention typology so people could understand how they might be used (future planning, organizational redesign, discussion, and decision-making), how they are structured, and what is involved in running a large group intervention. In *The Handbook of Large Group Interventions*, they demonstrated through a series of cases how large group methods could be used to address issues in organizations and communities.

Not satisfied with just documenting what was going on, Bunker and Alban produced the "Dallas Conferences," bringing the leading creators of large group interventions together into one place. This was important because, at the time, there was intense competition among the practitioners, each thinking that he or she had unlocked the secret to high-participation/high-involvement change. It would have been easy for the practitioners to remain isolated from each other or devolve into camps. Instead, the Dallas Conferences fostered a spirit of cooperation among the participants. In my own case, it led to coauthoring *You Don't Have to Do It Alone: How to Involve People to Get Things Done* (Axelrod et al. 2004) with Emily Axelrod, Julie Beedon, and Jake Jacobs, who were presenting at the conference and working with Sandra Janoff, Kathy Dannemiller, Paul Tolchinsky, and Robert Rheem on several consulting projects where we blended methodologies.

Because Bunker and Alban had not created any of the large group interventions highlighted at the Dallas Conferences, they took on the role of neutral observers. They were able to dispassionately look at the interventions, identify their positive and negative attributes, and identify a set of characteristics applicable to all. These characteristics generated the following principles:

- Inclusion of stakeholders
- Engagement of multiple perspectives through interactive activities
- Opportunity to influence
- Search for common ground

Alban described their work in this way: "Our goal was to influence people to use these ideas [large group interventions] and spread the word. The most important thing was to get these ideas into circulation. People then took these ideas and ran with them" (B. T. Alban, personal communication, June 28, 2016).

Bunker described her work as follows: "Our books, public workshops, the special issue of JABS [and] the Dallas Conferences all made practitioners very aware of what others were doing. We organized the knowledge, we made it easily available and I think we also encouraged collaboration and inquiry rather than competition as

people developed their own skills. That two women chose to proceed in this way, I believe, was much influenced by our gender" (B. B. Bunker, personal communication, May 18, 2016).

## Can't We Just Get Along?

More recently, Bunker has worked with Susan Coleman, a partner at C Global Consulting, to explore how large groups handle conflict and how large group interventions are being used to manage intractable conflicts around the world (S. Coleman, personal communication, May 16, 2016). This is an interesting combination of Bunker's early work on conflict resolution and her more recent efforts on large group interventions.

There is an emerging trend of using large group interventions such as Open Space Technology, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and Future Search to address these difficult issues of our time.

One example of using large group interventions in diplomacy is Coleman's work in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Conventional diplomatic wisdom supports the use of United Nations peacekeeping forces, which is very expensive and often ineffective. Coleman described work in Iraqi Kurdistan, which brought together people whose tribes had literally killed each other. By the end of an open space session, they were dancing together and hugging each other. By documenting the various uses of large groups, Bunker and Alban made this information available to all, which spurred consultants like Coleman to use large groups in fields outside of organizational change, like peacemaking.

Coleman has described Bunker as someone who is a big thinker and is very comfortable pushing the next idea. Bunker is someone who has always pushed the next frontier by asking, "What next?" (Coleman 2016).

## Key Insights:  Lessons Learned from Bunker

### What Does Extraordinary Teaching Look Like?

I have worked with Bunker as a consultant and instructor, presenting consulting skills programs at Columbia University and at major corporations throughout the world. Bunker has been a wonderful partner and coconspirator as we sought to impart fundamental consulting skills to new organization development practitioners. She has welcomed others' input and is not held prisoner by her ideas. Bunker has been totally congruent when it comes to practicing what she advocates in the classroom. She has modeled for others what it means to be an effective consultant.

Bunker has been a role model for me when it comes to teaching in the university. She has demonstrated repeatedly how to blend academic rigor with experiential activities in the classroom, whether by having students analyze current movies to identify concepts being taught or by teaching them how to examine a text to identify the wisdom present in the writing.

She taught me that being a professional does not mean I have to hide who I am, and that I do not have to lose my humanity in the process. At a time when I was struggling about whether or not to let my students know that I was a grandfather, Bunker talked about her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in a way that facilitated student learning.

This lesson hit home for me on a day when Zach, my oldest grandson, was found unconscious outside in the snow in below-zero weather, having suffered a concussion. Thankfully he was OK, but that evening I was scheduled to teach a course in crisis leadership. I started the class that night by telling the students I might be a little off because of what had happened to Zach. Previously, I would have done the supposedly professional thing: not told anybody about the morning's incident, and soldiered on. Because I shared what had happened, I got enormous support from the students, and we were able to have a very productive evening. In fact, it turned out that a couple of students were paramedics, and they offered some very useful advice during the class breaks. After I shared my story, one of the takeaways from our class discussion was the importance of training and how being calm during a crisis calms others and allows them to function, instead of giving way to panic. We probably would not have had that discussion or realized those learnings had I just soldiered on.

## Free to Choose

Bunker reinforced in me the importance of making choices, owning them and not looking back. When reflecting about not pursuing the trust work with Lewicki, she said that she has no regret and recognizes that she only has so much energy. Thus, she demonstrated the concepts of freedom, choice, and accountability.

## Think Big and Share What You Know

Bunker has taught me to think big, to think further than the concept, and to look beyond what I'm working on at the time. In looking at our conference model, she identified the walk-through process as an important contribution to the field, something we thought was useful but not as significant as the overall conference model process. Walk-throughs are a process for involving people who cannot attend a conference, by sharing results and asking for feedback. Bunker recognized the walk-throughs as accommodating an important issue in large groups: How do we involve the larger system in the process?

I attended the first Dallas Conference thinking that my wife Emily and I had created something special, only to learn that there were other people doing other very special things. Bunker brought to the Dallas Conferences her desire to share knowledge rather than hold it closely, which is very difficult to do as a practitioner in today's world where products, copyrights, and trademarks often take precedence over collaboration and sharing.

## Be Curious

Bunker's curiosity has always been focused on defining the big idea and figuring out how to apply it. During the course of our work, when I became interested in concepts like design thinking or neuroscience, Bunker welcomed these ideas and at the same time pushed me to articulate the big idea present in these concepts and explain how students might apply it in their practice.

Think big, think critically, and think practically. Articulate what you know and can prove; what you know and can't prove; and the things you don't know, but need to learn. Be true to who you are and use your own insights to help others. These are important lessons I have gleaned from Bunker – lessons that always led to new insights.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Building on Barbara's Work

Bunker's legacy can be found in four main areas: gender, trust, large group interventions, and use of self. Her legacy is documented in the nine books she coauthored; 36 articles and 27 book chapters she authored or coauthored; and the more than 85 presentations she made throughout her career. And it is alive in the thousands of people to whom she has taught, mentored, and consulted.

Throughout her career, Bunker has focused on gender issues in our field, as well as in the organizations where she taught and consulted. As in all her work, she has used her self-awareness to identify and determine if her experiences were common to others. She would then work with the organization to create systemic interventions to improve the situation.

Although she chose not continue her study of trust, her work on trust with Lewicki was foundational and set the stage for further study.

Bunker's work with Alban uncovered a field of practice and disseminated it to the world through the Dallas Conferences and the workshops on large groups. Bunker and Alban brought the leading practitioners of large groups at the Dallas Conference together to spread new findings in a way that spurred cooperation instead of competition between practitioners. When the two began offering public workshops, they were unsure if people would come, since the workshops were led by two women. To their delight and to our benefit, they learned that content trumped gender.

The books she has coauthored on large group interventions are classic texts in the field and have spurred other authors to write about large groups (Holman et al. 2007). She inspired Steve Cady, director of the Master of Organization Development Program and director of the Institute for Organizational Effectiveness at Bowling Green University, and others to lead further exploration about the use of large groups to effect organizational change.

In 2005, Bunker was awarded the Organization Development Network's Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her contributions to the field of OD. This award is testimony to the people she has influenced and continues to influence through her work. These clients and students learned more than theory. They learned how to be congruent practitioners.

## What Remains Undone

Work on addressing the impact of gender, race, and all forms of "isms" in the world obviously remains undone. We are reminded of that fact on a daily basis. With respect to trust, we need only look around and see how a lack of trust is impacting our institutions. We must continue to build on the early large group pioneers and invent new ways of bringing whole systems together to address systemic problems and use these methods to not just better organizations but to better the world.

In closing, I'm reminded of the quote attributed to Rabbi Tarfon:

> It is not your responsibility to finish the work [of perfecting the world], but you are not free to desist from it either. (*M. Pirkei Avot* 2:16).

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# W. Warner Burke: Learner, Leader, Scholar-Practitioner

# 13

Debra A. Noumair

**Abstract**

W. Warner Burke is a consummate psychologist and vital contributor to the field of organization development and change. For over 50 years he has been a thought leader and a dedicated steward of the profession. He was often the "first" in key organizational roles forging new professional territory as an architect of institutions and programs. Leadership, self-awareness, organization change, and learning agility are at the center of his academic work. Consulting to complex systems – both tightly coupled and loosely coupled, and designing learning opportunities for individuals, groups, and organizations, are at the center of his professional practice. A leader in the field, he has been recognized throughout his career with numerous honors and awards for his scholarship and practice in organization development and change. This chapter substantiates the enduring values and relationships, institutions and thoughts, enduring work, legacies, and unfinished business, of W. Warner Burke – learner, leader, and scholar-practitioner.

**Keywords**

Organization development • Organization change • Leadership • Self-awareness • Multirater feedback • Learning agility • Burke-Litwin model • Organizational psychology • National Training Laboratories (NTL)

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Author's Note: Throughout the chapter, W. Warner Burke is referred to as Professor Burke, Dr. Burke, Warner Burke, Warner, and Burke, with distinctions made based on role.

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## Introduction

W. Warner Burke is the Edward Lee Thorndike Professor of Psychology and Education in the Program in Social-Organizational Psychology, Department of Organization and Leadership, at Teachers College, Columbia University. The Edward Lee Thorndike Chair is most apt for Professor Burke as Professor Thorndike focused his life's work on learning, as has Professor Burke. Learning is the driving force in Professor Burke's life, not solely in his professional life though it has always fueled his research, scholarship, and practice as well as his teaching and service. Learning also provides energy for daily crossword puzzles, playing golf, reading nonfiction, watching mysteries, and rooting for sports teams to whom he is loyal. His thirst for learning gives him hope about what is possible.

Not surprisingly, his learning approach score on the Hogan Personality Inventory is off the chart, indicating that he enjoys learning, achieving, and staying current. These indicators capture the essence of W. Warner Burke and the focus of his life's work as a scholar-practitioner in organization development and change (OD&C) as evidenced by his leadership in the field as well as by a wide array of awards and honors bestowed upon him across his career. While he has enjoyed widespread acknowledgement of his work, by way of introduction to the "enduring thoughts of this thinker of organizational change," the awards that have been most important to Burke are the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA) Public Service Award, the Academy of Management's (AoM) Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner Award, and the Society for Industrial Organizational Psychology's (SIOP) Distinguished Professional Contributions Award. As will become evident from learning more about his *Influences and Motivations*, *Key Contributions*, *New Insights*, and *Legacies and Unfinished Business*, the public recognition that he has received has been duly earned. And although I have highlighted the three most important, to provide a sense of the number of awards he has received, every inch of wall space in his office is covered. As stated in TC Today, the Teachers College alumni magazine, Professor Burke's office "quietly shouts organizational guru" (Levine 2015).

## Influences and Motivations: Enduring Values and Relationships

In Choice points, "The making of a scholar-practitioner" (Burke 2015), Dr. Burke recounts the influence of his childhood and adolescence on his values and subsequent life choices. In particular, his identity as a scholar-practitioner is the result of a vigilance to be both scholarly and practical. Being practical came from his father, who was in small business and wanted his eldest son to emulate him. He did not necessarily need Warner to go into small business; the corporate world would be acceptable and probably preferable. It is easy to imagine then that Warner's father was somewhat bewildered to learn that his son had fallen in love with psychology in college, not realizing that he had something to do with his son's choice of major. Having always said that Warner was good with people and therefore would make a successful salesman, when pushed to choose a major, Warner chose psychology because psychology was about people. While his father eventually understood the choice of psychology, the realization that his son wanted to become a college professor made less sense to him. Warner explained that he was "selling" ideas rather than products. Further, Warner viewed this choice as striking a compromise between what he wanted for himself and what his father wanted for him. Selling ideas would have to be practical; otherwise he would not have been able to live with himself.

To foreshadow another influence on his career, Dr. Burke was able to achieve this balance between being practical and being scholarly when he entered the world of National Training Laboratories (NTL) in 1965. There he saw how psychology could be practical as NTL created opportunities for participants to learn in a laboratory setting followed by application in their home organizations. NTL also provided a forum for Dr. Burke to honor his religious upbringing, albeit in a different way. Dr. Burke was raised in Alabama, where religion was deeply embedded in the culture. As he matured, he left the Southern Baptist church and replaced it with secular religion, that of the teachings of Lewin and NTL. More will be discussed about how he "preached" the gospel of interpersonal competence at NTL.

Dr. Burke's adolescence and young adulthood brought into clearer focus his desire to define his career by focusing on learning, leadership, and change, with attention to both scholarship and practice. Initially his interest in leadership and change emerged from learning from experience. During high school, college, and the Army, Dr. Burke held leadership positions in sports, choral groups, church, boy scouts, camp, a college fraternity, ROTC, and the Army Reserve. As noted in his reflections (Burke 2015), he learned that he was often elected and selected for leadership positions and that he enjoyed being in charge, as long as each leadership position was accompanied by authorization. This idea shows up later in his scholarship and practice on leadership.

Similarly, Dr. Burke's commitment to learning can be traced back to his college years. As stated in his own words, "the significance of and love for learning even to the point of enjoying learning for the sake of learning" was a significant consequence

of this phase of his life (Burke 2015, p. 10). This love of learning was coupled with a love of the field of psychology, resulting in a decision early on to become a psychologist.

Dr. Burke's identity as a psychologist grew more differentiated in graduate school where he studied with Fillmore Sanford in the Social Psychology Program at University of Texas. Fillmore Sanford is the first of three mentors, all of whom had a significant impact on Dr. Burke. Sanford influenced Burke in a number of ways; most broadly, Sanford taught Burke what was important in academia. First and foremost, Sanford emphasized the importance of writing, and by example, as the author of a best-selling textbook, *Psychology: A Scientific Study of Man*, he modeled the importance of writing and of making psychology accessible. Burke later used Sanford's text when he taught *Introduction to Psychology*. He also emulated Sanford by becoming an author himself and by making psychology accessible. Dr. Burke is known for writing as he speaks; it is often said that reading one of Dr. Burke's books or articles is like having a conversation with him. Given his introversion, conversations with Dr. Burke are highly sought after; therefore, capturing such experiences in writing is a gift to his constituencies.

Sanford, a generalist psychologist and a leadership scholar, also influenced the content of Burke's work. Dr. Burke is a leadership scholar, and he traces his interest in leadership back to his experience in the Army and the wide range of leadership positions he held early in life as well as to the work he did with Sanford. His dissertation was on leadership: *"Leadership as a function of the leader, the follower, and the situation"* (Burke 1965). As a social psychologist, Burke reminds us that the significance of any study lies in the interaction among variables. This is even clearer later in his career when he becomes a devotee of Kurt Lewin, the father of Social Psychology, and the enduring formula, $B = f(P, E)$, that behavior is a function of the interaction between a person and her/his environment. Lewin's influence is evident in Burke's research, scholarship, and practice as well as in his teaching and mentorship of his students.

Last, Sanford influenced Burke not only on the "what" of academia but also on the "how" of academia. Sanford was Chair of the Department of Psychology at University of Texas, and his leadership role in the academy left an indelible impression on Burke. Professor Burke has served on the faculty of three academic institutions: University of Richmond; Clark University; and Teachers College, Columbia University. He served as department chair at two of the three. He was Chair of the Department of Management at Clark University, and to the displeasure of Clark, he declined an offer to serve as the inaugural Dean of the School of Management. Instead, he joined the faculty of Teachers College, Columbia University and served as Department Chair multiple times, one as cochair of the Department of Psychology, and in two very long terms as Chair of the Department of Organization & Leadership. In the almost 40 years that he has been on the faculty at Teachers College, he has spent more time as department chair than not.

Another significant role model in graduate school was Robert Blake. Blake is heralded as the best teacher Burke ever had. This honor was earned due to the fact

that Blake covered an incredible amount of territory in a short period of time. Such accomplishments in the classroom account for the exhaustion that accompanied Professor Blake's courses as Warner tried to capture everything that was said in each lecture. Professor Burke's students will be comforted by the idea that their professor has empathy for them as they often describe (complain about) the same phenomenon in his courses.

Professor Blake lived up to the title of best teacher also by linking psychology to the real world. It is not surprising that this was appealing to Burke as it harkens back to one of his early choices to pursue his love of psychology while also adhering to the value of making psychology practical. Moreover, it helps to explain Burke's pride in the identity of scholar-practitioner. For more on Burke's view of Blake, see the chapter in this publication on Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (Burke 2017). It must also be noted here that if you want to know more about Burke as a change leader, notice that his chapter on the "enduring thoughts" of Blake and Mouton does not follow the outline as provided in the guidelines for authors. As is usually the case with such endeavors, writing about the "enduring thoughts of a thinker of organizational change" is revealing about both the thinker and the author. As indicated earlier, Burke believes that leadership must include authorization, and he takes "authorization" very seriously whenever he "authors" any piece of work.

Continuing with mentors and role models who influenced Burke: his commitment to making psychology practical was also nurtured by his second mentor, Lee Bradford, the then President of NTL. Bradford captured Burke's attention during a colloquium he gave at the University of Texas when Burke was in graduate school. As a result, Warner attended the Applied Behavioral Science Intern Program in Bethel, Maine, an 8-week Program offered in the summer. Dr. Burke's participation in the program marks a significant phase of his career as it began his noteworthy involvement in NTL. Dr. Burke joined NTL full-time after working as an Assistant Professor at the University of Richmond for 3 years. "With the exception of my graduate school years, I learned and developed more from the 8 years I was part of NTL than at any other time of my life" (Burke 2015, p. 19).

While Dr. Burke's engagement with NTL has several components, Bradford's mentorship was central to his experience there. Bradford ran three flagship programs at NTL, each one targeting individuals at different organizational levels: one for managers, one for senior executives (those who reported to chief executive officers), and the President's Program for chief executive officers. After Dr. Burke had gained experience, Bradford eventually invited him to run all three programs. At first, Dr. Burke staffed the manager program and the senior executive program but not the President's Program. Eventually he became the dean of the programs, and his role as dean is linked to a culminating moment in Bradford's mentorship of Burke. Sitting on the beach one day, Lee said to Warner, "I want you to take over the President's Programs." When he handed him the President's Program, Warner knew that it was a big deal as it was Lee's baby. This succession meant that Dr. Burke had mastered the laboratory method, as well as the importance of the laboratory method.

Dr. Burke met his third mentor, Dick Beckhard, also at NTL, as Beckhard was one of the staff members for the 8-week Applied Behavioral Science Intern Program

that Warner first attended. Burke captured Beckhard's attention as well as that of other senior leaders at NTL. Beckhard loved his work, and having developed the Program for Specialists in OD (PSOD), he hired Burke as faculty for the program. While Dick admired Warner's knowledge as a social psychologist and his T-group skills, he also shared with him a perception that had a powerful impact on Warner. He said that Warner was a sharp young guy – a social psychologist who didn't know anything about organizations. Although a bit difficult to hear the feedback, Warner knew he was right and made it his business to learn about organizations. Learning, yet again, underlies Warner's response.

While Dick's feedback is memorable to Warner, their relationship encompassed far more than that of mentor and protégé, it included teaching together in programs, coauthorship, and working as colleagues at NTL. Beckhard, along with Bradford, influenced Warner to join NTL as full-time staff, which he did from 1966 to 1974. Similar to what occurred between Bradford and Burke, Dick's trust of Warner led to Warner inheriting the PSOD program from him, another significant achievement as PSOD was as important to Dick as the President's Program was to Lee.

Dick and Warner continued their relationship until Dick's death in 1999. Rolling the clock forward momentarily, a perspective on their relationship that I can add is that the year before Dick passed, Warner and I co-taught a course, Fieldwork in Organizational Change & Consultation. Dick joined us to offer consultation to the students in the course. Watching him and Warner collaborate in service of developing another generation of OD&C practitioners was to see the art and science of consultation beautifully orchestrated and delivered. Witnessing the two of them – Dick, as a founder of the field of OD, collaborating with Warner, a key player and leader of the next generation – it was clear how the field was developed and nurtured.

It is also the case that the field of OD&C did not evolve solely from influential mentoring relationships. Although Warner's research, scholarship, and practice can be traced back to his academic and professional lineage, lateral relationships among those of Warner's generation were also responsible for the development of OD&C as a profession. Given that NTL is focused on training individuals to become interpersonally competent and that T-groups are the primary methodology, Warner's peers were pivotal to his experience at NTL. Along with Warner, Norman Berkowitz, Gene Dalton, Len Goodstein, Harvey Hornstein, and Fritz Steele participated in T-groups in the Applied Behavioral Science Intern Program. If you have ever been in a T-group, surviving the experience is dependent on intense bonding among members of the group and usually results in lifelong relationships and, in some cases, rich and enduring collaborations as was the case with Warner and his peers. Relationships with both Len Goodstein and Harvey Hornstein have continued since that 8-week program in the summer of 1965, although Len passed in 2016.

Jerry Harvey, already at NTL when Warner appeared on the scene, was a colleague of Warner's in graduate school, and like Warner, Blake and Mouton had influenced Jerry as well. This was important, as it was Blake and Mouton's teaching about structured exercises that led to Warner being differentiated from his peers at NTL. When Warner describes his initial summer at NTL, he makes a point of saying that others knew much more about T-groups than he did. However, this component of his

graduate school training made a difference and one that was easily recognizable by Jerry as well as others at NTL. As head of management, Jerry often handed off work for programs in corporate America to Warner; these corporate experiences would come to be an important credential when Warner became an independent consultant during a brief hiatus between NTL and his academic position at Clark University.

The influence of NTL on Dr. Burke is narrated through his relationships with two mentors and several peers, and by the numerous programs he designed, staffed, and led. The relationships and programs serve as containers for a tremendous amount of knowledge, skills and expertise. Taken as a whole, his NTL learning can be sorted into four domains: group dynamics, organization development and change, project management, and design skills (Burke 2015), all of which are evident throughout his life's work. His parting with NTL, however, constitutes a different kind of learning and influence.

Having listened to Dr. Burke share the "whistleblowing story" that led to his leaving NTL, with many cohorts of graduate students, I cannot begin to do it justice. It is a story that one needs to hear in his voice. Luckily, it is the introductory story in "*Choice points: The making of a scholar-practitioner*" (Burke 2015). The reason it is included as the ending to *influences and motivations: enduring values and relationships* is because Dr. Burke blew the whistle at NTL, and although it resulted in him being fired from an organization he holds dear to this day, he believes he did the right thing, albeit painful. Later in his work on phases of organization change and the leader's role, he would state that the change leader must be able to "take the heat" (Burke 2014c). He also touts the importance of change leaders being self-aware and "walking the talk." If you listen to and/or read his whistleblowing story, these competencies – taking the heat, self-awareness, and walking the talk – are evident. Moreover, by retelling the story in the context of becoming a scholar-practitioner, Dr. Burke demonstrates the balance he has struck between scholarship and practice. Rather than simply share the story, he accompanies the story with research and scholarship on whistleblowing as a concept to be understood within the domain of organization change. As previewed at the outset, his life's work is most broadly focused on learning; every story, therefore, includes lessons learned.

## Key Contributions: Enduring Institutions and Thoughts

Dr. Burke has had a significant influence on the field of OD&C by leading change and serving as a pioneer, often being the "first" to take on key organizational roles. He is known for founding and building new programs, many of which were the "first" of a kind that have endured over time. Thus, his work on organization change is partially informed by his lived experience of forging new professional territory and leading change through creating opportunities for scholarship and practice and, more broadly, for designing learning opportunities for individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and social systems writ large.

Regarding professional organizations, Burke became involved in the OD Network while working at NTL. At the behest of Jerry Harvey and others, he went from

being the secretary to being the organization's "first" executive director. One of his successes was the tremendous growth of the network early on. In the first decade of its existence, the organization expanded its membership from 40 to 2000. As an acknowledgement of his contributions to the field, Dr. Burke received the OD Network Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003, and gave a keynote at the 50th Anniversary of the organization in 2014.

Dr. Burke was the "first" editor of the Academy of Management *Executive*, renamed Academy of Management *Perspectives* in 2006 and before that was named the editor (following the passing of the inaugural editor) of *Organizational Dynamics*. Both of these journals emphasize the importance of closing the research-practice gap and provide an important outlet for both academics and industry partners to publish applied work. The missions of these journals reflect Dr. Burke's early career commitment to making research and scholarship practical. Moreover, his role as editor of these journals meant that he served as a gatekeeper and standard-bearer for applied work in the field of OD&C.

His influence on the field as an editor continues until the present, as he is the current editor of *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (JABS), having served for many years both as an associate editor, and on the editorial board of JABS. Comprised of scholars and professionals, the mission of JABS is to provide "scholars the best in research, theory, and methodology, while also informing professionals and their clients of issues in group and organizational dynamics" (https://us.sagepub.com). The focus of JABS, to publish work on how individuals and institutions change, is aligned with Dr. Burke's mission to make psychology, and particularly Organizational Psychology, accessible, and also with his professional identity as a scholar-practitioner. At the same time, serving in this role in this phase of his career is a labor of love for the journal and for its sponsoring organization, NTL, which is not surprising given what we know about Dr. Burke's motivations and influences.

Professor Burke also led change in the domain of program development by creating new programs and by changing existing ones. At the invitation of Professor Harvey Hornstein, a fellow "survivor" of the NTL Applied Behavioral Science Intern Program, Professor Burke joined the faculty of Teachers College, Columbia University. The "ask" was to bring Organizational Psychology to the Applied Social Psychology Ph.D. Program. This was a significant invitation, especially given the earlier feedback from Dick Beckhard regarding his organizational acumen. The doctoral program's dual emphases on Social Psychology and Organizational Psychology and on research and practice, again, reflects Professor Burke's commitment to making psychology accessible and to holding both scholarship *and* practice as equally important rather than privileging one above the other. The Ph.D. Program in Social-Organizational is "designed for students who desire fundamental education and skill development in the science and application of Psychology to organizations" (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/organization-and-leadership/social-organizational-psychology/academics/phd-program/). The program continues to grow and develop holding dual disciplines of Social *and* Organizational Psychology and maintaining its commitment to scholarship *and* practice.

The Ph.D. program was not the only focus of Professor Burke's leadership initiatives. He also transformed the M.A. program from Personnel Psychology to Organizational Psychology. "The M.A. Program is a scientist-practitioner program that educates students to be experts in the field of organization change, conflict resolution, team building, and more, with a subprogram designed for members of the U.S. Military" (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/organization-and-leadership/social-organizational-psychology/). Again, expanding the mission from "personnel" (individuals) to "organizational" (systems) reflects Professor Burke's belief in the importance of considering all levels of organizational life, enabling a systemic rather than individual perspective.

This broader view is also evident in the "subprogram designed for the military" as Professor Burke's program development did not stop with the Ph.D. and M.A. programs. The subprogram designed for officers of the US Army is the result of a partnership he forged with the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the US Military Academy at West Point to create the Eisenhower Leader Development Program (ELDP). The ELDP Program, a modified version of the M.A. program in Organizational Psychology, is designed for officers, whom after completion of the program, will serve as "Tactical Officers for the U.S. Corps of Cadets (TAC) at the USMA, West Point. Those not assigned to be a TAC will return to other responsibilities or deployments within the Army. Those who are assigned as a TAC will be acting as the legal Company Commander of a Cadet Company, comprised of about 130 individuals (undergraduate cadets), and will be the primary developer of military performance for these cadets at the USMA, West Point" (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/organization-and-leadership/social-organizational-psychology/academics/ma-program/eisenhower-leader-development-program-eldp/). As stated by a colonel in the Army, "ELDP is changing the U.S. Military, one leader at a time." The focus on both the military as a whole and the individuals within it, again, reflects the importance of holding a systemic perspective.

Professor Burke's leadership of change via program development did not stop with degree-granting programs; he also created several executive education programs. In the military, his efforts expanded beyond educating Army captains; he went on to create an Army Fellows Program, sponsored by the War College. This program "involves one or two colonels spending a year studying and being mentored by Professor Burke, to study the Army itself as an institution" (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/organization-and-leadership/social-organizational-psychology/) and is another example of his commitment to making psychology, and specifically Organizational Psychology, applicable and accessible beyond the academy. The Benavidez Leadership Development Program (BLDP) for noncommissioned officers (NCOs), a certificate program that complements and supports the Eisenhower Leaders Development Program (ELDP), is another such initiative. While the importance of Professor Burke's work is acknowledged annually with swords and plaques from the Army, 2016 brought Professor Burke a distinct honor. He was awarded the Outstanding Civilian Service Medal Award from the Department of the Army for his work with the US Military Academy at West Point.

Influencing the military is not only an important value of Professor Burke, dating back to his service in the Army; influencing this critical leadership institution also serves the world. Clearly, this has not been lost on the Army.

Two other executive education programs created by Professor Burke also represent his contribution to leading change in the field, namely, the Advanced Organization and Human Resource Management Program (ODHRM) and Principles and Practices of Organization Development Program (PPOD). Warner, Noel Tichy, and David Nadler founded the 3-week Advanced ODHRM program in the mid-1970s to provide education and training to experienced internal human resources and OD practitioners. Initially cosponsored by Teachers College, Columbia University and the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (later it was sponsored solely by Teachers College), the program was designed for individuals who were well trained in personal development and group process at National Training Laboratories or through the Tavistock Institute but lacking in content knowledge related to OD. Thus, the program focused heavily on providing opportunities for learning to experienced professionals who came to the program to develop their skills in conducting evidence-based OD interventions in their companies. The curriculum included but was not limited to frameworks and models for organizational diagnosis and change, interventions, and integrating personal and professional identities. The faculty included Burke's peers, leading thought leaders in OD, who collectively offered a premiere OD program in the United States and abroad. The program continued for 30 years, enjoyed maximum enrollments, and extended waiting lists.

Principles and Practices of OD, a program similar to the PSOD Program that Professor Burke directed at NTL, is a 2-week, highly participative learning experience that provides individuals with the core concepts and skills necessary for consulting to organizations and teams. The curriculum focuses on opportunities to learn about group dynamics and organization change and provides opportunities for developing skills through practice. PPOD, also having earned the reputation of a leading program in OD, both in the United States and abroad, continues to be offered annually. Professor Burke is a visiting faculty member in the program and serves as an advisor to the program faculty.

Apparently providing opportunities to learn about organization change to graduate students in Organizational Psychology, military officers, and executives in human resources and OD&C via executive education was not enough as Professor Burke extended his influence to include executives at Columbia Business School. Invited to serve as dean of a program for line and staff executives, Professor Burke designed "Leading and Managing People." The curriculum for this 1-week program includes a focus on organization change, leadership development, and self-awareness. The program continues to this day, and although the name has changed to "High Impact Leadership," the design, curriculum, and pedagogy have held since its inception.

In addition to the "open enrollment" executive education programs, Professor Burke designed and served as dean for custom programs similar to "Leading and Managing People" for organizations in the private and public sectors. While

individuals enrolled in these custom programs, the educational programs were systemic organizational interventions intended to enable senior executives to lead change and establish alignment between the organization's mission and strategy and its culture. Programs were jointly developed by senior leaders of the organizations and Professor Burke with the aim of executing against large-scale strategic objectives such as mergers (e.g., SmithKline Beecham, Dime-Anchor Bank, etc.), culture change (e.g., British Airways), leadership development for engineers and scientists (e.g., NASA), accountants and auditors (e.g., Arthur Anderson), and health-care professionals (e.g., Merck, Novartis, Pfizer, etc.). One of the many organizations that recognized Professor Burke's contribution to leading organization change was NASA, as he was honored with the NASA Public Service Award.

Professor Burke also led change in other domains across the public sector. For example, he was selected to serve on a Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel of health care and innovation leaders that reviewed analyses and assessments performed as part of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. He served on three National Research Councils for the Academy of Science. Often as the only psychologist amongst nuclear physicists and engineers, Professor Burke brought his expertise in organization change and leadership to his work on each of these councils. Understanding organization change was essential to accomplishing the task, and each time, his capacity to make Organizational Psychology practical and accessible made a difference. Learned experts in other fields, "unusual suspects," read his book, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice 4th Edition* (Burke 2014c), and consulted him on projects that were in service of the country as a whole.

Given that Dr. Burke's key contributions include that he was often "first" in a role or "first" to create a program, it seems fitting to acknowledge another "first." In 2004, Dr. Burke was the first recipient of the Academy of Management Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner Award. This honor was in recognition of his enduring commitment to scholarship and practice. Evidence for his pioneering efforts at leading change through scholarship and practice are the enduring institutions that he founded, designed, contributed to, and nurtured across his career.

Enduring thoughts are another component of Professor Burke's key contributions. His research and scholarship fall into three interrelated areas: leadership and self-awareness, learning agility, and organization change. Leadership, the topic of his dissertation, is what he claims, "precedes everything. Leadership is the common denominator." Leadership ignited his passion at the beginning of his career, and leadership is what led to his interest in developing a learning agility instrument, which he claims is his ultimate contribution to the field.

Professor Burke's primary research objective was to verify that self-awareness is positively correlated with performance such that greater self-awareness would be related to better performance. This idea was stimulated by his participation in T-groups at NTL early in his career where he witnessed firsthand the impact of those with, and without, self-awareness. He encouraged Allan Church to pursue this idea in his dissertation, and in fact, Church found that high performing managers had greater self-awareness than average performing managers, with

self-awareness defined as congruence between self-ratings and direct reports' ratings on a multi-rater assessment (Church 1997). Church's dissertation emerged from his work with Professor Burke in the doctoral program and as one of his staff members at Burke Associates, a consulting firm that Burke founded. Burke Associates had a dual purpose: providing consulting services and leadership development programs to organizations and training doctoral students in multi-rater feedback, personality assessments, and designing leadership development executive education programs.

Not only was Professor Burke pleased with the results of Church's study but also the relationship between self-awareness and leadership performance is what later catalyzed his interest in learning agility. From his consulting work with executives, he could see that those who were the best leaders were also the ones that could continuously learn; it was similar to the relationship between self-awareness and leadership performance. The correlation between learning agility and leadership effectiveness made sense to him based on his prior research and his consulting experience, but he needed an adequate measure to test this idea. As a result of a 5-year quest, he, along with his doctoral students, created a learning agility assessment, the Burke Learning Agility Instrument (BLAI), now managed by EASI Consulting, and in the process of being validated.

His work on organization change is best captured in his highly regarded text, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice*; (Burke 2017). While each chapter in the book reflects a key contribution to organization change, the focus here is on the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change (Burke and Litwin 1992) as one of Burke's enduring thoughts.

Burke's commitment to scholarship and practice is evident in how the Burke-Litwin Model was developed. In Burke's own words: "The model as conceived of today actually emerged from practice, that is as a consequence of trying to understand more about how to bring about change at BA (British Airways, parentheses added). The organization change at BA was at the time initiated by a decree from the prime minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher . . . BA, in order to survive, had to change. Every nook and cranny of the organization was affected, especially at the outset, BA's mission, business strategy, leadership and organization culture" (Burke 2014c, p. 224).

As can be seen in Fig. 1, the factors mentioned by Burke in his work with BA, External Environment, Leadership, Mission and Strategy, Organization Culture comprise the transformational factors in the Burke-Litwin Model, the variables directly linked to revolutionary change. Management Practices, Structure, Systems, Work Unit Climate, Motivation, Task Requirements and Individual Skills and Abilities, Individual Needs and Values, and Individual and Organizational Performance comprise the transactional factors, more likely to bring about evolutionary change. While the factors are categorized into Transformational and Transactional clusters, the model is informed by open systems theory (Katz and Kahn 1978; Von Bertalanffy 1967) with the external environment considered input, individual and organizational performance considered output, and all other factors considered throughput.
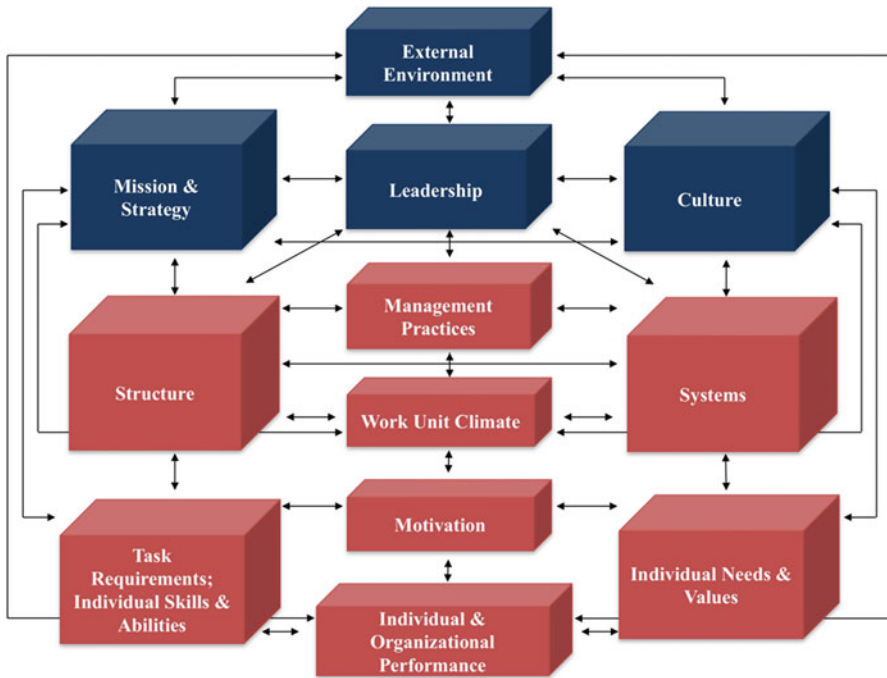
**Fig. 1** The Burke-Litwin model. *External environment, mission and strategy, leadership, and culture comprise transformational factors; structure, management practices, systems, work unit climate, motivation, task requirements; individual skills and abilities, and individual needs and values comprise transactional factors

The Burke-Litwin Model for Organizational Performance and Change has been used extensively across industries, sectors, and geographies for consulting, research, and curriculum development in academic and executive education programs. Its distinguishing feature, including the external environment inside the framework, contributes to the model's relevance to organizational clients and allows for changes in contemporary organizational life to be incorporated into the stories told through the model. While the New Insights section of this chapter includes an expansion of the Burke-Litwin Model, in its original conception, the model remains an enduring thought of W. Warner Burke (and his collaborator, George Litwin). For more on the model and the extensive research, theory, and practice that support it, see Burke (2017, Chap. 10).

## New Insights: Enduring Institutions and Thoughts, Evolve

Professor Burke's work has led to a plethora of new insights. In addition to the 150 articles he has authored and the 20 books he has authored or edited, there are almost four decades of doctoral students whose dissertations he has chaired; many post-docs and Army Fellows and executive students, whose work he has supervised.

As a faculty member in Organizational Psychology at Teachers College, I can attest to how my work has been influenced by Professor Burke and has led to new insights. My "new insights" include integrating systems psychodynamics and organization development; creating a tool, "*Beneath the Surface of the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change*," (Noumair et al. 2017) and founding the Executive Master's Program in Change Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University. New insights emerged for Professor Burke as well. The case of failure that we worked on together led to his recent work on leading change and consulting to change leaders in loosely coupled systems; the work on the new tool, "*Beneath the Surface of the Burke-Litwin Model of Organizational Performance and Change*" led to an expansion of his model; and the Executive Master's Program in Change Leadership has provided opportunities for him to influence another demographic group – executive students across geographies, industries, roles, and functions.

The "failure" that led to new insights is discussed in the case of transforming the A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems (Noumair, Winderman & Burke, 2010). The failure to attend to what was occurring unconsciously and irrationally contributed to halting and undoing an organization change initiative. As discussed in the paper, learning emerges from cases of both successes and failures in organization change. This failure led to integrating systems psychodynamics a framework for understanding organizational life by attending to covert dynamics that occur beneath the surface, and organization development.

Burke, having linked the failure in the A. K. Rice case to treating the organization as if it were a tightly coupled system, could not rest until he developed a deeper understanding of loosely coupled systems (Burke, 2014a; 2014b). His work in this area is relevant to contemporary organizational structures such as networks, which require us to adapt our skills, tools, and mindsets. With this aim in mind, Burke integrated organization change foundations with Weick's work on educational institutions (Weick 1976) and learning that has emerged from organizational network analysis (Battilana and Casciaro 2012; Cross et al. 2013) to create a new path forward for consulting to loosely coupled systems.

Building on the learning from the A. K. Rice Institute case, I consulted to an organization culture change initiative that successfully integrated systems psychodynamics and organization development (Noumair 2013). Employing the Burke-Litwin Model in combination with psychodynamically oriented consulting guided the client organization through a change process that resulted in culture change as well as successful leadership succession.

Now having both a failure and a success to learn from, I extended the integration of these perspectives by adding to the Burke-Litwin Model a framework for conceptualizing covert aspects (Burke and Noumair 2015). This framework, beneath the surface of the Burke-Litwin Model, provides a multidimensional view of organizations, linking covert dynamics of organizational life to the more rational aspects represented in the Burke-Litwin Model (Burke and Noumair 2015). Further development of this framework led to the tool, "*Beneath the surface of the Burke-Litwin*

*Model*," (Noumair et al, 2017). By theoretically linking covert dynamics specifically to overt factors by organizational level, the tool provides OD&C practitioners with a systemic perspective and facilitates the development of a comprehensive organizational diagnosis.

New insights in the area of program design, development, and delivery have also emerged from Professor Burke's enduring institutions. Having joined the core faculty of the Advanced ODHRM Program, the leading and Managing People Program, and numerous executive education leadership development programs, created and directed by Professor Burke, I was well equipped to create the Executive Master's Program in Change Leadership (XMA) (http://www.tc.columbia.edu/leadchange), a transformation of the Advanced ODHRM Program, discussed earlier. The new insights are not solely apparent in the design, curriculum, and pedagogy of XMA but also in the inception of the program. If we were going to close the Advanced ODHRM Program, a program founded by Burke and colleagues that had been in existence for 30 years with a stellar reputation (but participants were clamoring for a degree program), the plan had to be data based, and the transformation needed to be informed and executed according to the principles of organization change. Thus, having followed the phases of organization change and applied research, the Executive Master's Program in Change Leadership was launched. We are currently working with our seventh cohort. Warner Burke, Bill Pasmore (also featured in this book), and I are the core faulty. XMA is an innovative program, an institution that emerged from one of, Professor Burke's key contributions.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Enduring Work of a Learner, Leader, Scholar-Practitioner

### Learner

In the introduction to this chapter, Warner's high score on the Learning Approach dimension of the Hogan Personality Inventory was mentioned as evidence of his being a lifelong learner in and out of the classroom and that learning fueled his research and scholarship in OD&C. One legacy that captures his lifelong love of learning is his development of the Burke Learning Agility Inventory (BLAI), a culminating research project that is both a legacy and an ongoing piece of work that, for now, can be placed in the category of "unfinished business." While the BLAI is being used for leadership development across industries, ongoing validation studies are underway with a wide range of populations. It is noteworthy that Professor Burke has set conditions for the use of the BLAI such that he is bequeathing to the Social-Organizational Psychology Program at Teachers College all profits from sales of the inventory. This act of generosity ensures that learning from the learning agility instrument contributes to generations of learners and learning.

## Leader

As a leader, one component of Dr. Burke's legacy is the impact he has had on the growth and development of the profession of organization development and change. Not only has he contributed in significant ways as described throughout this chapter – at NTL, in the OD Network, in three academic institutions, through multiple editorships, consulting to organizations in the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors – he has also served as a historian and commentator on the field and, in so doing, has co-created the identity of the field of Organization Development and Change. His professional identity and the identity of the field are intertwined.

The role of "leader" also includes educator as Dr. Burke's leadership of the field extended to his role at Teachers College as the leader of the Social-Organizational Psychology Program writ large for over 35 years. Thus, his legacy is carried by the wide range of students and alumni from the Social-Organizational Psychology program, the organizations and institutions to which they belong, and by the participants in the numerous OD and executive education leadership development programs across sectors and geographies.

Two stories capture how former students are carriers of his legacy. First, in 2007, Teachers College hosted a celebration in honor of Professor Burke for receiving the SIOP Distinguished Professional Contributions Award. The event was filled with alumni, current students, faculty, and administrators – past and current, colleagues in the field, clients, etc. Someone commented on the far-reaching impact of Professor Burke as he had not only influenced the individuals in the room but also through the individuals in the room, influenced their colleagues, students, and organizations. To quote Vera Vitels, a former student of Warner's and Senior Vice President of Talent and Development, Thomson Reuters, when she looked at the guest list, she said: "it's a multi-generational family reunion in which Warner is the link to everyone!"

More recently, the responsibility for carrying the legacy has been made explicit to students. Each year on the first evening of the Executive Master's Program in Change Leadership, Professor Burke gives a fireside chat on the history of the field and the history of the Socio-Organizational Psychology Program at Teachers College. The session has a dual purpose: to provide context for the work in the program by sharing a timeline of significant events in the field and to invite students to join the timeline by seeing themselves as carriers of the program's legacy. Students are humbled and honored to add themselves to the timeline. They willingly accept the responsibility to carry on the values and the learning offered to them by Professor Burke.

## Scholar-Practitioner

A painting hanging in Professor Burke's office, commissioned by a retired colleague, Professor Lee Knefelkamp, is entitled, "The Diagonal Man," as she viewed him as bridging theory and practice, neither vertical or horizontal" (Levine 2015). The painting followed a semester in which Professors Burke and Knefelkamp

co-taught a double-seminar, "Organization Change: Theory and Practice and Teaching to Cognitive Complexity" in order to address the theory-practice gap they perceived amongst students.

"The Diagonal Man" aligns with how Professor Burke views his identity, that of holding "a duality of scholar-practitioner and social scientist-applied psychologist" (Burke 2015, p. 35). The image captures an important dimension of his legacy, that of boundary spanner, holding multiple dualities seamlessly. Professor Burke is known for integrating research, theory, and practice; literature from wide-ranging disciplines, many of which are not usually integrated; leadership, self-awareness organization change, and learning agility; and, teaching and learning; all in service of creating enduring scholarship and practice to ultimately increase the success rate of organization change. As quoted by Burke in his Organization Change textbook (Burke 2014c, p. 375)): "Nothing endures but change" (Hercalitus (540–480 BC). I would add that W. Warner Burke's life's work as learner, leader, scholar-practitioner also endures.

## Conclusion: His Story Continues

W. Warner Burke, learner, leader, scholar-practitioner. . . although he has said that he "does not need to lead anything else anymore" (Burke 2015, p. 32), his behavior belies this statement, and for that, the field of Organization Change and Development as well as the individuals and organizations in *his* world, and *the* world, are grateful. As W. Warner Burke continues to learn, lead, and engage in scholarly practice and practical scholarship, his thoughts and his story endure.

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# Bernard Burnes: Choices, Contexts, and Changes

Bill Cooke

**Abstract**

This chapter sets out the contribution of Bernard Burnes, currently of Stirling University Scotland, as a "great" in the theory of change management. The connection between his personal career, his life experience, and his approach to change management is set out – particularly his commitment to democratic and humanist values in the management of change and the belief that there is no "one best way" when it comes to change management and particularly that top-down change can cause more problems than it solves. Burnes' particular contributions are discussed. He is "primus inter pares" in Kurt Lewin studies, discovering, reassessing, and integrating Lewin's work and attempting to complete the Lewinian project. He is the sole author of a leading textbook on change management, over a number of editions, which have seen his text incorporate and expand the major change issues of the day. And his work which draws together and theorizes the relation between leadership and change is set out. Burnes' influence is considered quantitatively, in terms of citations and downloads – but also intellectually. In key areas of change management, Burnes has been a pathfinder. His ongoing commitments to addressing the major problems of the world, particularly in relation to the environment and sustainability and the approaches to social changes that are required draw the chapter to its conclusion.

**Keywords**

Managing change • Leadership • Kurt Lewin • History of change management

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## Contents

## Introduction

In the spirit of disclosure, and also of the reflexivity which has informed my own change management practice, I begin by explaining my acquaintance – and friendship – with Bernard Burnes. I first met Bernard in 1997–20 years ago, I realize – when we moved to the Manchester School of Management at University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST), where he had been since 1985. Initially he was simply that wise contributor to faculty meetings, the person to whom many deferred irrespective of status, and the man with a dry sense of humor. Only after a couple of years did I realize that this guy in the org psych group (I was in org studies) was the "Burnes, B" whose work overlapped with mine and which I respected deeply. It took a while, even then for us to work together, which we have done successfully (e.g., in Burnes and Cooke 2013, 2015), while each maintaining our own separate research and publication interests.

We also have a more personal connection. My sister's son, my nephew George Cooke, is severely autistic as is Bernard's son, Stuart. The two families lived near each other and got to know each other through their sons. Stuart received his diagnosis when he was two, in 1993. This was just after Bernard's other son, Duncan, had a heart transplant. As he and his wife Sue are wont to say, 1993 was not the best of years. This family situation explains why Burnes rarely appears at conferences and also why he moved from Manchester to Stirling in 2013. Burnes' main priority is always his family.

What follows is based on the close readings I have given his work over the years, the discussions about it that we have had, and more recent interviews with Burnes designed to generate data for this chapter.

## Influences and Motivations: Mapping the Field

Given Burnes' own commitment to understanding the history of change management and its relevance today, it is appropriate to situate his work alongside his personal background. Burnes was born in 8 into a working class family in Sheffield, England, then famously a thriving industrial center built on steel production and surrounded by a hinterland of coal mines. In 1968, as children of his background did, he left school aged 15 and went to work as an engineering apprentice. Completing this 5-year apprenticeship, he became a draughtsman

and then a design engineer. In the UK, as elsewhere in Europe, the 1970s were years of high inflation, high unemployment, and the collapse of the traditional industries. Sheffield's steel, engineering, and coal industries were particularly badly hit. Not only did this give rise to industrial conflict, the collapsing economy saw extensive cuts in public services and consequently campaigns of social action to reverse them. The 1970s also saw the rise of extreme right-wing political parties in the UK, seeking to turn working class disaffection to ugly ends. Burnes played an active role fighting the rise of extremism, the loss of jobs, and cuts to public services, through trade union and community campaigning. These years shaped his personal and political views, which fed into his work as a change management "great" in the form of three questions, which he still often poses:

1. How come when organizations are in trouble and need to change that it's the people at the bottom who are seen to have caused the problem and are judged to be the obstacle to its the solution?
2. How come when governments cut spending, it is always the poor, the unemployed, the disadvantaged, and the immigrants who bear the brunt of the cuts and who are blamed for the need to make the cuts?
3. How come we haven't found a better way of managing our public and private organizations and our communities so as to avoid conflict rather than seeming to promote it?

Anyone who is familiar with Burnes' work will recognize these are questions that run through it and which have, if anything, become more strident over time. In 1979 Burnes decided the time was right to go to university, and he enrolled at Sheffield University to study economic and social history. He did not have the formal qualifications that were required for admission, but did not see that as a problem. To their credit, neither did the authorities at Sheffield University, notwithstanding its prestigious standing in the UK. It was to his, and our, subsequent advantage that Burnes' degree was in social and economic history, helping him understand empirically and methodologically how the world around him came into being, and why it behaves as it does. Burnes still believes his was a wise choice, speaking fondly of what he learned and the people who taught him. They did not seek to spoon-feed students or give them easy answers. Instead, using pedagogy with which those of us in change management will identify, they saw their role as to make students think and to motivate them to learn for themselves. Burnes gives the example of one course that was taught on alternating weeks by a liberal historian and a Marxist historian. Both knew their subject well, both were excellent orators, and both views seemed equally valid and equally convincing. From this, Burnes took the key lesson that still lives with him: you cannot understand a situation merely from looking at it from one perspective. Regardless of your personal views or beliefs, you have to look at an issue or problem from all sides, studying it through multiple lenses. After all, as he says, reversing the familiar axiom associated with Ed Schein, "If you can't understand a situation, how can you change it?"

A particular intellectual influence from this time was the work of the noted historian Eric Hobsbawm. In three books – *The Age of Revolution* (1962), *The Age of Industry* (1975), and *The Age of Empire* (1987) – Hobsbawm covers almost 200 years of economic, industrial, and social history in breadth but with simultaneous detail. Hobsbawm used detailed primary and secondary sources to build up a picture of major trends and movements that have shaped how we live and think today; and one can see the historiographical (i.e., the writing of history) influence of Hobsbawm in much of Burnes work on the history of change management.

Completing his degree in 1982, he was unable to find a funded history PhD program. At the advice of a tutor, he embarked on a PhD in organizational psychology at the prestigious Medical Research Council/Social Science Research Council Social and Applied Psychology Unit (SAPU) at the University of Sheffield. The title of his thesis, which he completed in 1985, was *The Impact of New Technology on Job Design and Work Organisation* (see Burnes 1988). In essence, it was a study of change: why it happens, how it happens, and what its consequences are for those involved. This a was strange time to be studying change sandwiched as it was between the publication of two highly influential books: Peters and Waterman's (1982) *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies* and Pettigrew's (1985) *The Awakening Giant: Continuity and Change at ICI*. Though they offered radically different perspectives on organizational change, both derided extant approaches to its management, particularly organization development (OD). Despite the founding presence of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (Burnes and Cooke 2015), OD had had little extensive support or understanding in the UK, which is not to say it was without its advocates and exemplars.

The 3 years that Burnes was researching his PhD, therefore, was a period where there was no dominant theory of change, no single change management orthodoxy. It was also a period, therefore, where almost everyone working in the field around Burnes – students, academic researchers, and consultants – appeared to possess and advocate their own singular, "one best way" of change management. Burnes response to this reflected his training as a historian and was to review and reassess those theories associated with organizational psychology which tried, in part, or in full, to explain how organizations develop, are managed, and change. Central to these were classical, human relations, and contingency schools of thought.

The ideas and insights derived from this work still influence his work today. They include:

1. From their inception in the Industrial Revolution, conflict in modern organizations between "management" and "employees" has been endemic (Pollard 1965).
2. Organizations are social systems in which authority flows from the bottom up, and not the top down – managers have authority conceded to them by their subordinates; they do not impose it (Barnard 1938).
3. Organizations can design good and bad jobs, but the choice between the two relates more to managers' desires for control than to improve quality or productivity (Davis and Taylor 1972).

4. It is possible to identify factors that *should* be taken into account when deciding on a structure for a particular organizations, but the choices made may have more to do with the interests of managers than with the goals of the organization (Burns and Stalker 1961; Hendry 1979, 1980).
5. Whether managers choose to use directive (Theory X) or participative (Theory Y) style of leadership usually has less to do with the managerial challenges they face and more to do with their own psychology (McGregor 1960).

These five intellectual principles are reflected in much of Burnes work. This is evident in the final paragraph that has remained in successive editions of his book *Managing Change*, but articulated best in his article *No such thing as . . . a "one best way" to manage organizational change* (Burnes 1996a, p. 17):

> [Change] is about the exercise of choice: choice in terms of what to change, choice in terms of the circumstances under which the change takes place and choice of the approach adopted. It follows that the presence or absence of choice is no mere idle academic speculation; instead it lies at the heart of all major decisions in organizations. To ignore the presence of choice or not even to recognize its existence means taking decisions by default, and thus possibly missing major opportunities for increasing an organization's competitiveness. In its most extreme form, it is a failure of management which can even lead to the demise of an organization.

After he finished his PhD, he took up a post at UMIST, the UK's pre-eminent Org. Psych. School, where he stayed for some 28 years, before emigrating to the University of Stirling in Scotland in 2013. There Burnes continued his study of change. He worked for many years as an adviser to the UK Government's National Economic Development Office, (NEDO) which sought to bring together representatives of government, employers, and trade unions to shape economic and industrial policy. Having spent a large part of his working life as an employee and student, looking at organizations from the bottom up, he now found himself working with senior managers to bring about change. This access gave him a rich understanding how senior managers thought and worked, presented in (e.g.,) Burnes and Weekes (1989).

Equally important was the period when he began to study seriously the work of Kurt Lewin and the development of OD. Lewin died in 1947, and the common view in the 1980s was that his work was outmoded and inapplicable to a world that was changing in a rapid unpredictable manner. Like most of us, he first encountered Lewin through secondary sources, most of which were uncomplimentary. However, he also came across other texts (notable French and Bell 1984; Huse 1980) which took a distinctly different and far more favorable view of Lewin's work. The historian in him knew he would have to go to original primary sources in order to resolve this difference of opinion over Lewin. So, Burnes began to read Lewin's work for himself and through his own intellectual lenses, rather than relying on other people's opinions. In the intervening 30 years, Burnes has become one of the foremost experts on Lewin and has done much to re-establish him as a leading and still relevant figure in the development and practice of organizational change. In

particular, Burnes argues that Lewin's commitment to resolving social and organizational conflict through an ethical and participative approach to change are as relevant today as they were in the 1940s (see Burnes 2017).

Before moving one to consider more of Burnes work in depth, we should not that Burnes often says that the factor that motivates him the most is an awareness of the depth of his own ignorance (these are, I would stress, words Burnes frequently uses of himself); this is the Socratic proposition that we cannot learn until we recognize how deep our ignorance is. For Burnes, the field of change is so vast that the more one learns about it the more one realizes how ignorant of it one is. In essence, he says of himself, the more I learn, the more my ignorance grows. For some, this would be demotivating. For others, it would justify focusing on one part of the field to the exclusion of all others. For Burnes, it drives him on in his attempt to understand and map out the entire field, even knowing that this is an impossible take. That he makes progress in this endeavor can be seen across the seven editions of his book, *Managing Change*, the first of which appeared in 1992.

In sum, the keys to Burnes work are a strong belief that scholars should work to improve the world and not just study it; that societies, communities, and organizations become dysfunctional when they have too little democratic participation, rather than too much, and that the field of change is broad, multidisciplinary and has to be based on rigor in breadth and depth, on and relevance.

## What Makes Burnes a Greaat: Lewin, Managing Change, and Leadership

In a career spanning more than 30 years, Burnes has written 30 books, more than 60 journal articles and some 50 book chapters. These primarily cover and map out the field of organizational change. In order to do so, his work embraces not only the main change theories and practices but also the history of organizations and organizations thought, postmodernism, critical realism, complexity theories, strategy, leadership, and more. Thematically, there are three particularly important sets of contributions particularly important: his work on Lewin and the history of OD; his ongoing attempts to map out the field of change, especially in his book *Managing Change*, and finally his contribution to the debate on leadership.

**Kurt Lewin (1890–1947)** Writing as someone who has published extensively on Lewin and his circle myself (e.g., Cooke 2006, 2007), Burnes' contribution to Lewin scholarship cannot be overstated; indeed Burnes has, in my view, been responsible more than any other individual for peer-reviewed work which rehabilitates Lewin's reputation and which brings his actual work (rather than secondary and partial accounts thereof) to a new generation of students, scholars, and practitioners. As noted, when Burnes first started to seriously examine Lewin's contribution to change, the view of many writers was that his work was no longer relevant. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, herself a change management great, declared that she did not know why Lewin's work had ever been taken seriously (Kanter et al. 1992).

In contrast, even in the first edition of *Managing Change*, Burnes (1992) drew attention to Lewin's role in laying the foundations of change management theory and his importance for contemporary practice. Unlike French and Bell (1984), which also emphasized Lewin, Burnes' book was for a more general managerial audience, with an interest in change management in a broad sense, rather than the specialist particularly interested in OD.

As he continued to study Lewin's original work, Burns recognized that it was more complex, insightful, and relevant to the needs of contemporary organizations than most commentators at that time gave him credit for. Burnes faced three main obstacles in coming to this conclusion. First, in the pre-Internet age, identifying and obtaining material that was written in the 1930s and 1940s were very difficult. Apart from two out of print collections of Lewin's articles (Cartwright 1952; Lewin 1948b), Lewin's work was scattered across a great many publications, some quite obscure. In addition, Lewin's correspondence and unpublished papers, insofar as they were available, were in archives in the USA and so difficult to get at for a UK-based academic. Second, Lewin's writing and thinking are not easy to follow, as even his friend, patron, and biographer Alfred Marrow (1969) acknowledged. This may account for why so few commentators, including his critics, appear not to have read it. Thirdly, though Lewin's work on field theory and group dynamics is relatively prominent in his writings, other concepts such as action research are less well explained and reference to his three-step model of change is especially difficult to find. Burnes says, for example, that it was only in the last few years, when he began reading Lewin's work on child psychology, that he came to understand where the three-step model had come from and the substance underpinning it.

Burnes often says to his students, "early death is always a mistake for a scholar." In Lewin's case, alongside the personal tragedy and his loss as an institutional leader, its intellectual consequence was that he never brought the various elements of his work together nor had he fully developed some of its key components. Burnes' major contribution has been to create that coherent whole and demonstrate how Lewin's component contributions fit together. In so doing he has dispelled much of the ill-informed critique of Lewin and helped reinstate him as the major figure in the development of change management theory, with continuing relevance for the "here and now" of today.

Reviewing the seven editions of Burnes' *Managing Change*, between 1992 and 2017, shows how Burnes went from drawing attention to Lewin's role in laying the foundations of organizational change as a discipline to presenting Lewin's work as a rounded and coherent whole and setting this within the broader context of the nature and development of organizations. This logic is also present in a sample of the papers he has authored over the last 20 years. The (1996) paper *No such thing as . . . a "one best way" to manage organizational change* really began Burnes' process of restoring Lewin as a major and still relevant figure in the field of change. However, it was Burnes' (2004a) paper *Kurt Lewin and the Planned Approach to Change: A Re-appraisal* that can claim to have set the seal on Lewin's rehabilitation. This brought together and explained the hitherto disparate elements of Lewin's work but also, and significantly, comprehensively refuted the main criticisms of that work.

The paper was downloaded nearly 9000 times in its first year, was judged to be one of top 50 management articles in the world in 2004, and still receives over 100 citations a year. In the same year, Burnes (2004b) showed that rather than being outmoded, there were strong links between Lewin's conception of change and that put forward by those working in the emerging field of complexity studies. Burnes' (2007) paper on the origins of OD showed how it was inspired by and built on Lewin's work. In *Reflections: Ethics and Organisational Change – Time for a Return to Lewinian Values*, Burnes (2009) challenges the ethical basis of contemporary perspectives on organizational change. He argues that many scholars, by their misunderstanding of Lewin and adherence to a power-politics perspective on change, often implicitly and sometimes explicitly encourage unethical behavior. Hence Burnes' call for a return to Lewinian values. Perhaps his most comprehensive examination of Lewin's importance and continuing relevance can be found in a paper we co-authored: *The Past, Present and Future of Organization Development* Burnes and Cooke (2012), which, inter alia, comprehensively shows the central role played by Lewin in OD from its inception to the present day.

*Managing Change*   Generations of students, not to say scholars and practitioners, have been brought up on this book. In seven editions spread over 25 years, it has developed from being a relatively useful overview of the field to being a comprehensive and far-reaching examination of the history, current state, and extent of organizational change. Indeed, as most change scholars recognize, it is both a textbook and a reference work. If you want to know something about particular aspect of change, *Managing Change will be your first port of call, knowing it is the most likely source of relevant knowledge.*

When asked why he wrote the book and why he keeps producing each new editions, Burnes offers (typically) two alternative answers, depending on the audience and how he feels at time. He tells the story of the student who asked him if he had read all the 1700 or so references in its *Bibliography*. He replied, "Yes I have, but I've forgotten most of them, that's why I needed to write the book." The book, in one version, was designed as a personal aide memoire to bring together the work he had done and to Socratically remind him of how much he still needed to do. It is a constant reminder of how big his field of study is, how little he knows, and how much work still remains to be done. The second version is that he wrote the book that he would have liked to have had when he undertook his own doctoral study; and my own experience as a doctoral supervisor is that there are many newly minted PhDs who are grateful that he did.

The most recent edition of the book is a tour de force. It ranges temporally from the prehistory of modern organizations some 4500 years ago to the challenges that sustainability poses for organizations and those who would lead them today. It covers the main organization theories and the central perspectives and debates on organizational life, taking into account how organizations interact with the rest of society. Distinctively, compared to other change management texts, it also covers and integrates strategy to the received corpus of change theories and practices. And it finishes by examining leadership and how it relates to change. Reflecting Burnes

commitment to rigor deriving from his undergraduate historian days, his Socratic ethos, and perhaps even his prior profession as an engineer, each of the chapters is a work of detailed scholarship in and of its own right. I frequently use his final chapter, *Management, Leadership and Change*, as a set reading for my students, believing it provides as thorough coverage of the topics as one might find in other entire books. Yet at the same time, the chapters work together and are integrated as a coherent whole.

Overall, the books provide a comprehensive, compelling, and integrated picture of the field of change, which, with its thoroughness, its strong historical orientation, and its integration of the strategic point of view, set it apart from other books on change management. By its third edition (2000), the distinguished change scholar Dexter Dunphy endorsed it thus:

> Burnes's new book is a thorough revision of what was already the best general text on organisational change.

Another, and important distinctive feature is that, uniquely in change management as far as I am aware, all seven editions of the book have been single-authored, that is, been written by Burnes alone. This clearly makes the authoring task that much harder and will have been particularly hard to sustain over 25 years. Yet the success with which it has been carried out has enabled Burnes to develop an understanding of change management driven by his personal history and experiences, his values and principles, and his commitments to rigor, which redounds to the benefit of the change management community – student, scholar, and practitioner – as a whole. Also he doesn't have to share the royalties.

**Leadership**  I believe it fair to say that while most change scholars recognize the connection of leadership to change management, they tend to deal with it as a side issue best left to specialist leadership scholars. Not so for Bernard Burnes, hence, in a series of papers and books he makes significant contribution to understandings of the relationship between leadership and change and, moreover, of leadership itself, particularly its ethical dimensions. Burnes is not a critic of leaders and managers per se. Rather he seeks to understand and explain why leaders behave as they do and how more responsible and effective leadership can be developed. Again, we can see his formative work and research experiences embody in this endeavor. One of his earliest papers on leadership was *Managerial Competence and New Technology: Don't Shoot the Piano Player – He's Doing His Best* (Burnes 1991). Here he showed that poor managerial decisions were often resulted less from a lack of managerial competence or care and more often arose from the context in which managers worked. Essentially, sometimes circumstances prevent managers from being be competent and can even force them to be incompetent. His (1998) landmark paper *Recipes for Organisational Effectiveness: Mad, Bad, or Just Dangerous to Know*, argued that popular and influential writers on leadership, especially Tom Peters, encouraged arrogant leadership and promoted radical and unproven strategies for organizational change; inter alia Burnes here became one of the first to contest the

case for transformational leadership. *Negative Behaviours in the Workplace: A Study of Two Primary Care Trusts in the NHS* (Burnes 2007) shows how lack of effective oversight of managers leads to a situation where widespread bullying by manager and others can become the norm. In Burnes and By (2012), he argues that we cannot have effective leadership in organizations without also having ethical and participative leadership; and Burnes et al. (2016)'s *Reimagining Organisational Change Leadership* is his most trenchant attack on current leadership practices. In it he argues that the seriousness of the challenges and responsibilities facing organizations is such that a new form of leadership must be reimagined. This, he argues, should put ethical behavior and the needs of all stakeholders at its core.

The nub of Burnes' argument, which like much of his work has gestated over two-and-half decades, is not simply that unchecked power does corrupt; it also creates situations where leaders are not challenged, to the extent that the information and advice they receive is partial and biased, leading to poor decision-making. Going back to his admiration of Barnard (1938), Burnes believes that leaders have the power we allow them to have and that they behave as they do because we allow them to. If we want leaders who act ethically and effectively, in the interests of all stakeholders, participative decision-making and the widespread involvement of all those stakeholders are required. As he increasingly states, in a world where sustainability is the prime concern, where organizations need to balance the interests of "People, Planet, and Profit," meaningful stakeholder inclusion in decision-making is a necessity. In essence, he argues for participative management writ large.

## Key Insights: Drawing Together Burnes' Canon

Following Burnes' own approach to Lewin for Burnes himself of trying to piece the elements into a whole is difficult but worthwhile. Here I pick out what I think are four particular "meta" contributions of Burnes' canon of work.

First, before Burnes began studying change, the field was fragmented. Individual theorists and schools of thought paid little attention to one another or to their own theoretical and practice roots. Some were better than the other, but even the best tended to focus on their "one best way." Even the better contributions tended to focus on one particular approach to change – assuming or claiming that they had discovered the "one best way to manage change" and that all other approaches were wrong. Burnes has not only catalogued the variety of the species of change management, but their relation to one another, where it exists, and the situations in which each is best used (and equally importantly, best not used). Moreover, he has in addition shown that we cannot understand change simply by looking at change. As his work shows at almost every turn, we need to view it within the context of the historical development of organizations, the contemporary needs of society, the range of organization theories, as well as having an appreciation of the role of strategy and leadership. His integrative work in making this contribution has been thorough, unremitting, and sustained. It is, by itself, more of a contribution than this author could ever hope to have made.

Secondly he is primus inter pares among Lewin scholars. Many of us have sought to rethink his contribution, to situate it in its particular historic time, and/or to revise understandings of its relevance for present-day change management. I have had the honor with working together with Bernard Burnes on this project (e.g., in Burnes and Cooke 2015). But Burnes alone has single-mindedly led the drawing together – the reassembly and the reconstruction, however one may term it – of Lewin's contribution to our field past, present, and future (Burnes 2004a; Burnes and Cooke 2012, 2013). He has enabled us to see Lewin's work in the round, to understand how his various elements of planned change fit together, and why they need to be used in unison. His is no hagiography, however. He has shown where Lewin's work still needs to be developed and the areas where Lewin appears to have taken a wrong turn. Ethically, by bringing out the humanist-participative foundations principles of Lewin's work, he challenges those who advocate a power-politics approach to change. In so doing, he provides support for those contesting manipulative and directive approaches to change who find themselves accused of unworldliness or naïvete.

Third, connectedly, Burnes restores the ethical dimensions of change management. Burnes' PhD completion in 1985 coincided with birth of processual approaches to change management (notably Pettigrew 1985). Burnes maintains that in overfocusing on the political and manipulative change, some processualists might legitimize unethical change management (Burnes and By 2012). To reiterate, the case for ethical behavior and ethical change is one that Burnes has been making for many years. For him, the 2008 financial crash underlined the ethical shortcomings of transformational leadership and its encouragement of unfettered managerial power. In its place, Burnes makes the case for ethical leadership and ethical change; again if "People, Planet, and Profit" are to be aligned, this can only be done when ethical principles are given primacy (Burnes et al. 2016). This view may now be commonplace, but Burnes has been making its case and demonstrating how it can be realized with unwavering commitment from the 1990s onward.

Fourth, and last, in exploring the link between choice and commitment, Burnes has constructed a strong, positive case for participative change, participative leadership, and value alignment that goes beyond simplistic claims for effectiveness of outcome. In a series of articles, he demonstrates that involvement in the change process, through mechanisms as ostensibly diverse as action research and kaizen, permits those affected by change to shape its outcome. This case is supported empirically by Burnes' systematically drawing on a wide range of research sources (as we by now would have expected) which show that commitment to change processes and their effectiveness in short and long term is strongly linked to the level of employee involvement (Burnes 2009, 2015; Burnes and By 2012; Burnes and Jackson 2011). Burnes goes on to show that participative change cannot be achieved unless organizations operate under participative leadership. In essence, he argues that the values underpinning an organization's approach to change and the values underpinning how it is led need to be aligned (Burnes and Jackson 2011). Relating change to choice, leadership, and value alignment provides an important and novel way of understanding and managing change.

In any "slicing of the cake" of a scholars' work like this, there are of course other ways of thematizing and prioritizing. This, however, is my view as a fellow traveler of Burnes' in the theory and practice.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business

As might be expected of someone immersed in the life and work of Kurt Lewin, Burnes speaks often of what he thinks is unfinished business and speculates on his own legacy. If he retired tomorrow and stopped writing, he would have given us a substantial and enduring body of work. In addition, he considers his Lewin work is an ongoing project, and there will be more editions of *Managing Change*. The three areas he identifies as unfinished business, though, are as follows:

1. Sustainability. We have seen how Burnes commitment to People, Planet, and Profit combined is informing his work, particular over the last decade, and his view that while responsibility to address sustainability rests in organizations, they are ill prepared to fulfil this. While his third P, Profit, indicates he is not anti-business, he argues the neoliberal philosophy which has driven organizations for the last 50 years is incompatible with sustainability and sees himself working on the connection between political economy, broader society, and organizational processes.

2. The magnitude, frequency, and success of change. The received wisdom is that rapid environmental (in the systems sense) change – for example, in technologies – is driving the need for ever greater and more complex organizational change. Burnes turns this argument on its head. He maintains organizational change is driving larger system level changes. With circularity, the more organizations change, the more the system changes and so the more organizations feel compelled to change. The piling on of change initiatives one after the other he couples with change failures. Managers pile change on change until no one can cope with it. His logic is that overall organizations need less change but better change. Less change stabilizes the environment, reducing the pressure for frequent changes and permitting organizations to focus on the changes they really need to make, particularly in the cause of sustainability. Consultants tell him "nice idea, but it will never work." Burnes is committed to making it work.

The third legacy project is more left-field. Burnes talks of finally authoring his as yet unwritten, but potentially significant "diet book," which seeks to bring together the theories and tools of lifestyle change with those or organizational change. Burnes sees both lifestyle change and organizational change as essentially about focusing on behavioral change. Hence the two literatures complement each other despite being treated separately by different sets of scholars and practitioner. Lifestyle change for Burnes refers to such challenges as alcohol abuse, antisocial behavior, and racism. He most frequently illustrates his argument in relation to dieting, as something most of us will relate to. Burnes maintains that organizational change idea, such as

Lewin's field theory, combined with existing (lifestyle) behavioral approaches to weight loss, will bring significant benefits. Conversely, managing organizational change can benefit from adopting insights and tools of lifestyle change. This has been the topic of a popular talk he gives to both practitioners and scholars as an invited keynote speaker. While unifying these two sets of literature together seems a huge new project, alongside those he is already running, if we know anything about Bernard Burnes it is that he is tenacious, and once he begins work on something, he sees it through.

Whether Burnes has as much influence on individual behavioral change in society as he has had on change management scholarship remains to be seen. But we should be clear, that in the case of the latter, that his influence has been very substantial, very profound, and sustained over a number of decades. So much is this the case, I believe, that his identification as a Change Management "Great" is deserved not simply because of his contribution to the field. Rather it is because of his formative influence – he has made and shaped the field of change management. For that I personally am very grateful, and I believe everyone else should be too.

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# Gervase Roy Bushe: Progressing Ideas and Practices to Make the World a Better Place

# 15

Tom Kenward

**Abstract**

Gervase R. Bushe, for four decades and counting, has explored, challenged, and evolved the field of organizational change. His passion and conviction flow from a desire for more organizations to become places where people have opportunities to make free and informed choices so that they are engaged to give their very best in the work they do. This thread is evident throughout every strand of his work, each manifested as a contribution to create collective, participative engagement methods for organizational change. His work to build useful, relevant change theory and practice spans the disciplines of organizational design, appreciative inquiry, leadership, and organization development (OD).

With a rich lineage in personal and organizational development, Bushe's influences span the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and wider system domains. This eclectic, integrated understanding – in theory and in practice – appears throughout his work, and the complementarity between these builds over time. The two latest examples are the widely used Clear Leadership method and program; and his paradigm shifting work to frame the emerging new threads of OD with the term now becoming known as Dialogic OD. As well as these recent integrated contributions, Bushe has also made incisive contributions within particular areas, perhaps the best known being his work from the earliest days of appreciative inquiry to help define, test, refine, and amplify its power and effectiveness as a method. Tracking and fanning, synergenesis, amplification, generativity, and generative images are all ideas born out of this work, and they have returned over time in Bushe's work on leadership and Dialogic OD. Less well known but highly regarded in academic circles is his early work on parallel learning structures.

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Bushe's strong grounding in both experiential laboratory education such as T-groups and the action research tradition, have influenced his work consistently, giving a clearly recognizable trademark to his contributions, perhaps best summed up as human, accessible, highly practical and progressive.

## Contents

## Influences and Motivations: Activist, Learner, and Collaborator

Bushe studied philosophy and sociology as an undergraduate at Loyola College in Montreal in the 1970s, deeply engaged in the counter culture of the times as a student activist. While a student leader among a highly engaged student body that strongly influenced university affairs from 1974 to 1978 (which culminated in being the valedictorian of his class of 1,200), his change agent tactics evolved considerably. He discovered the world of T-groups, adult education and action research in this period, mentored by Hedley Dimock and Irene Devine at the Sir George Williams Center for Human Relations and Community Studies, affectionately known as the NTL of Canada. Over this period he accumulated 150 h of supervised delivery of T-groups, while studying the work of Lewin, Bradford, Benne, Gibb, Bennis, Schein, and Argyris. Bushe also assisted in action research projects and the design of leadership development programs. This early influence nurtured a deep passion in him for creating democratic, collaborative forms of organizing and for large-scale transformative change processes; these two passions subsequently influenced all his work.

By 1978, with considerable experience in OD and T-groups already, Bushe was accepted on to Case Western Reserve's Department of Organizational Behavior doctoral program at the young age of 23. It was *the* place to study OD and group process. During this time Suresh Srivastva was key in building Bushe's psychoanalytic understanding of group process; Bushe also deepened further his understanding of experiential learning with Dave Kolb and Ron Fry. Macro-organization

behavioral work and organization design with Dave Brown, Bill Pasmore, and Frank Friedlander added a further passion. Doctoral work on implementing quality of work life at General Motors led to interest in how organizational structure could drive development in organizations. He developed the theory of parallel learning structures, working with fellow Case student Rami Shani. During the 1980s, Bushe worked with large, bureaucratic organizations wanting to transform them into more empowered, team-based organizations, writing a series of papers with Rami that culminated in a book in the Addison-Wesley series in OD (Bushe and Shani 1991). While it was credited in academic circles, it did not gain the deserved profile among practitioners.

In the 1980s, he underwent weekly somatic psychotherapy for 5 years with Ian Macnaughton (2004) that had a profound impact on his understanding of personal and organizational processes. At this point what had been largely an intellectual way of knowing for Bushe became enriched by a much closer attention to the body and to lived experience. This coupled with what was happening in his professional life led to a reorientation away from macro organizational phenomena back to the intra and interpersonal.

The 1990s saw socio-technical systems oriented organization design work evaporate as the large consulting companies entered that space with process re-engineering (socio-technical systems, minus the socio). It was also the time when it emerged that most successful team-based and more collaborative organizations were reverting back to command and control in as little as 6 years. Bushe took a sabbatical to join the Stentor startup (described later) and began exploring the micro-processes that led to the failure of collaborative work organizations – a return to his roots in small groups and leadership. Ron Short's work applying family systems theory to organizational learning, alongside the weekly somatic psychotherapy, the early T-group experience, and an interest in social psychology, led Bushe to develop the Clear Leadership model. This has proved very successful in the organizations in which it has been used, with some profile among practitioners, but very little among academics. Bushe undertook a lot of consulting work over this time with fast-growing hi-tech companies.

Bushe also attended the first conference on appreciative inquiry at Case in 1989. He was friends with David Cooperrider and Frank Barrett, who had also been students at Case, as well as Ron Fry who had been his doctoral supervisor and had heard about their early AI experiments. He immediately saw the potential and began experimenting with an early form of positive deviance he called appreciative process (Bushe and Pitman 1991). Experimenting with AI in small groups led him to his first empirical study (Bushe and Coetzer 1995) and to initial emphasis on the generativity of the inquiry (Bushe 1998). Later research on large-scale AI change processes (Bushe and Kassam 2005; Bushe 2010) amplified the interest in generativity and uncovered for Bushe the realization that treating AI like action research with a solely positive focus may actually repress its transformative potential. This became high profile among both practitioners and academics.

This work evolved into a wider envisioning and articulation of Dialogic OD theory. His first paper on this, entitled "Postmodern OD," figured at a Taos Institute

Conference in 2005. That year he was introduced to the parallel work of Robert Marshak. They collaborated on what came to be a seminal paper (Bushe and Marshak 2009) then coining the language of Dialogic OD and contrasting this with what they saw to be a largely different and until now more dominant stream, characterized as "Diagnostic OD." They further developed their ideas through editing a special issue of the OD practitioner (Bushe and Marshak 2013), before then editing a full book (Bushe and Marshak 2015). This work appears to be a paradigm setting contribution with global impact.

## Key Contributions: Clear Leadership, Dialogic OD, and More

### Parallel Learning Structures

Through the 1980s, a collaboration between Abraham (Rami) Shani and Bushe led to a series of publications that culminated in the volume on *Parallel Learning Structures: Increasing Innovation in Bureaucracies* in the Addison-Wesley Series in OD (1991). Parallel learning structures extended Zand's (1974) concept of the collateral organization to explain how ongoing inquiry and organizational learning could be structured into hierarchical organizations. It incorporated Shani's research on action research processes with Bushe's research on quality circles and organization design to identify a way for performance-focused organizations to build a structure and culture for learning without having to redesign the work system. It proposed designing a series of groups that operate in parallel to the formal organization, tasked with identifying issues to innovate around, vetted by a steering committee, and then implemented through the normal chain of command. Their main contribution was to identify how the culture of the parallel groups had to promote inquiry and learning, often diametrically opposed to the operating culture of the formal organization. If the parallel organization was run like a project organization, with performance oriented norms, it was not able to provide an adaptive competency. They identified many of the tensions for implementing and maintaining them and how to resolve those. Through case studies they described how parallel structures could be used for pursuing simultaneous efficiency and innovation, solving problems bureaucracies could not handle, implementing system-transforming, radical innovations, developing cooperative labor-management relations, and providing a transitional structure toward team-based organizing. Textbooks in OD picked up and disseminated these ideas (Ed Schein called it the best book ever written on the structure of OD), and the book was translated into Spanish. The book was not a best seller, perhaps because its subtitle focused on overcoming bureaucracy, which did not incite passion. Twenty-five years later the basic tenets of bureaucratic organizing still predominate, and, while parallel structures are commonly used for change projects today, the same mistakes the book address are being made repeatedly. This early work already had the hallmarks of a practitioner and scholar committed to creating engaging spaces for collective learning and change to take hold in organizations.

## Clear Leadership

As the 1980s came to an end, Bushe became disappointed by research suggesting even the most well-designed team-based organizations were reverting back to command and control. As he sought to understand why, he abandoned his interest in organization design to explore once more the personal and interpersonal processes that might explain this predicament. While consulting to a new company created as a joint venture by the provincial telephone monopolies in Canada to respond to the newly deregulated long distance phone market (Stentor), he had a series of experiences that were to lead him to an explanation.

An admirer of Karl Weick, Bushe was aware of sensemaking processes, and he began to notice how many interactions between people were based on untested sense-making. His job at Stentor was to create a highly collaborative, fully empowered organization. He believed all the people he was working with wanted that; they had a clear vision, the right people, the right structure, and the committed leadership, but it still was not working. He began to notice how people would conduct themselves in meetings to maintain harmony and look good and not surface concerns or issues that could produce conflict or be embarrassing. Instead, they talked about such things "offline" and often not with the people considered to be the problem. He began to focus on what he later called "interpersonal mush" – interactions based on untested sense-making – in his consulting and in his courses with EMBA students, becoming convinced it was part of the explanation for why collaborative work systems fail. He noted that the stories people made up to make sense of others were usually more negative than the reality and that overtime the mush made it difficult to sustain collaborative relationships. What he had not yet uncovered was why the mush was so prevalent.

Encountering Ron Short and John Runyon's work on their organizational learning model in the 1990s provided two more pieces to the puzzle. Short was a professor and cofounder of the Leadership Institute of Spokane (later, Seattle) and a pioneer in applying Bowen Family Systems Theory to organizations. Short's (1998) model emphasized that learning from experience required working with experience as it happens in the moment and that ways of managing anxiety identified by Bowen were key obstacles to people's ability to learn from their experience together. Everyone has a different experience because everyone creates their own experience, but in our fusion we want people to have the "right" experience or in our disconnection assume others are having the same experience as oneself.

This led Bushe to his next key insight into how well-intentioned managers destroyed collaborative relationships with employees. When managers try to engage the people who work for them in well-intentioned attempts to learn from their experience together, they almost always try to analyze some past event to uncover what worked, what did not, and what to do, moving forward. But different people may have very different observations, thoughts, feeling, and wants (experiences). The degree to which those differences are noticed and managed strongly influences collaboration, for ill or good.

One common dysfunctional way to manage people having different experiences is to figure out who has had the "right" experience, which normally ends with the manager having the right experience. At this point, the employees no longer feel responsible for the outcome of the conversation, and their sense of collaboration is diminished. Bushe realized that the model for learning from experience he and others had been using was detrimental to sustaining a relationship where everyone's different experiences are valid. It required a completely different way of thinking about what it means for a group of people to learn from their experience, at work, together. He discovered that people did not have to be having similar thoughts, feelings, or even objectives to work together and that people felt most engaged and committed when they could express what they most desire and care about without threatening their membership in the group.

For the rest of the 1990s, Bushe continued to develop a different set of models for organizational learning to support empowered work systems that culminated in the book *Clear Leadership* (2001). He realized that in order for people to learn from their collective experience, they needed a common model of experience and created the "experience cube" (see Fig. 1), a model that seems to have a resonance or impact on most who try it out. The model proposes that experience is composed of one's moment to moment observations, thoughts, feelings, and wants; that at all times an individual is having all four but that only some are in their awareness and some of their experience is out of their awareness. Individuals vary on how easily and deeply they can access their awareness of each element of experience, and that increasing awareness of experience is a life long journey. With this model, Bushe provides a concrete explanation of what it means for a leader to be "self-aware" and a concrete tool people can use for discussing and understanding their own and other's experiences to clear out interpersonal mush.

Over the next 10 years of applying the model, he came to the conclusion that collaborative organizations rested on micro-relations of "partnership," which he defined as a relationship in which all parties feel responsible for the success of

**Fig. 1** The experience cube

their common purpose. Armed with this key insight, Bushe began investigating all the ways in which leaders unknowingly destroyed that sense of responsibility in subordinates, the skills required to design and lead partnership-based organizations, and the shared assumptions required for cultures that supported collaboration (Bushe 2006). The revised edition of Clear Leadership (2009a) incorporated some of those insights.

This social constructivist approach to organizational learning offers real practical insights into leading organizational change. It defines organizations as patterns of organizing (or interacting) and organizational learning as an inquiry by two or more people into their patterns of organizing/interacting that leads to new knowledge and a change in those patterns. It argues that organizational learning happens one conversation at a time and spreads out, though the impact of those conversations is greater, the higher up the hierarchy they occur (Bushe 2009b). While it is difficult to change others, and difficult to change oneself, Bushe explains that a pattern of interaction can be changed in an instant. Effective leadership of change requires the perspective that everyone is having a different experience, the leader cannot control the experience others are having, and it does more damage than good to take responsibility for other people's experience or try to ensure they have a good experience. Effective change leadership therefore requires curiosity about other people's experience and transparency about the leader's thoughts and intentions. Efforts to produce change by getting people to "buy the vision" only create large dollops of interpersonal mush. Instead, Bushe asserts that it is much more effective to create a space in which people can express very different thoughts, feelings, and wants from each other and from the leader, which a leader can incorporate or not into his/her goals and strategies. Much of what gets called resistance to change is a result of the lack of clarity and the resulting interpersonal mush. A great deal of useful change occurs simply by allowing people to express their differences and check out their stories, according to Bushe.

The recognition of the multiplicity of narratives inherent in any organization, and the detrimental effects of privileging one narrative over others, was one of the early insights that led him beyond diagnostic approaches to organizational change and led to his model of Dialogic OD, discussed later in this chapter.

Acknowledging that his first book had less impact on practice than he and Shani had hoped, Clear Leadership sought, successfully, to directly impact managers and professionals. Bushe identified concrete skills within four skill sets: the Aware Self, the Descriptive Self, the Curious Self, and the Appreciative Self, along with the necessary increases in self-differentiation that are required to use these skills to lead learning in the midst of performing. Building on his knowledge of T-groups and laboratory education, and inspired by the innovations in laboratory education developed at the Leadership Institute of Seattle, he created a course that is transformational for many participants yet can be delivered in only 4 days in a nonresidential setting. Transfer rates of the core concepts have been as high as 90% with most rated by their peers as more effective after the course (Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe 2007; Gossling 2006). One case study attributed a shift in employee engagement from the 61st percentile to the 91st percentile in 3 years, in part, to training all leaders and

managers in Clear Leadership (Bushe and O'Malley 2013). It is now licensed in seven different languages around the world.

Again, we see in Clear Leadership a clear intention to create something for organizations and leaders that could transform their experiences of learning and changing together in a truly collective way.

## Appreciative Inquiry

Bushe was an early champion of appreciative inquiry in academic circles. He witnessed firsthand the resistance David Cooperrider received when initially presenting his ideas – laughed at during the 1986 Academy of Management Conference when he suggested that *seeing organizations as miracles to be appreciated* would produce more generative inquiry. At the OD Network that year, practitioners said, "of course we want to talk about what is going well, but we have to talk about what's not going well too. Your ideas are not practical and our clients would never buy it anyway."

In the early 1990s before the 4D model, Bushe and Pitman were using and teaching a form of AI based on collective attention to "what works," instead of "the problem," and to "tracking and fanning" as a change process that could be applied in micro as well as macro situations (Bushe 2000; Bushe and Pitman 1991). It had three phases: discover, understand, and amplify (Bushe 1995). This line of inquiry produced the model of the Appreciative Self found in Clear Leadership (2001, 2009a) as well as the "performance amplification" approach to OD (Bushe and Pitman 2008).

Bushe is one of a very few who have used empirical methods to study AI. His 1995 paper with Coetzer demonstrated that an AI-based intervention made student teams significantly more effective than a placebo event but so did a standard action research style intervention using task-oriented team building as the diagnostic model and survey. In a later paper (Bushe 2002), he attributed the effect of the AI intervention in those studies to the newness of the teams, a condition he labeled "pre-identity," and argued that the nature of AI – particularly what it could accomplish and therefore how best to organize and lead it – depended on whether the people involved identified with the group/organization/community. He has argued in a variety of ways that unless individuals identify with a group, not a lot of energy goes into worrying if the group is getting its needs met or accomplishing its goals (Bushe 2002, 2004). Bushe and Coetzer's McGregor winning paper (2007) showed how the initial phase of team development hinges on whether members come to identify with and have a desire to belong to the team. What AI offered pre-identity groups was mainly the opportunity to move through the membership phase and develop a shared identity. Consequently, inquiries that focused on goals, aspirations, and what to be, (such as the "life-giving properties" of the group) and only involved members of the coalescing group, were best suited to pre-identity groups, such as AIs that involved multiparty summits. Bushe (1998) proposed that the "best team"

appreciative inquiry could help a pre-identity group bypass the "storming" phase normally associated with group development (a proposition that found support in Head's (2000) study).

In groups with members who already identify with the group (post-identity), Bushe argued that inquiries that only focused on what the group should be would be experienced as unproductive navel gazing. In a pre-identity group, the group is seen by members as one more thing to deal with in pursuing their own individual needs and wants. In a post-identity group, by contrast, members take a personal interest in the needs of the group. Members of a post-identity group already know what the group's purpose is, and are more interested in how to accomplish that purpose. The focus is more on what the group needs to be and do to be effective in its environment, and an appreciative inquiry will need to include others outside the group who have no interest in joining but are stakeholders (e.g. customers, other parts of the organization) if the inquiry is to be useful. This model explains findings in other studies (Newman and Fitzgerald 2001; Powley et al. 2004).

As a consultant, he became fascinated by how conversations could be facilitated to generate new ideas that compelled new actions, seeing this as a practical application of Gergen's (1978) notion of generative theory. Probably his greatest contribution to Appreciative Inquiry has been his research demonstrating the important role generativity plays in transformational outcomes. His research into appreciative inquiry demonstrated the importance of generativity to the success of AI interventions (Bushe and Kassam 2005; Bushe 1998, 2010), leading him to propose that positive emotions were not sufficient for change to occur without generativity and that generativity could be evoked without positive emotions (Bushe 2007, 2013b). One contribution to AI practice that came from this line of inquiry is the synergenesis approach to using appreciative stories to catalyze new ideas (Bushe 1995, 2007, 2010). In this approach to appreciative inquiry, organizational members interview each other and write up the best stories they hear; these stories are collected for synergenesis sessions, where a small group is presented with a question and a deck of people's stories related to that question. They read any story together and then brainstorm answers to the question triggered by the story or by the conversations that ensue. Once they run out of ideas, they read another story and continue to brainstorm. They continue doing so until additional new stories do not generate any new ideas. One field study (Bushe and Paranjpey 2015) found this technique more generative than conventional dialogue processes used in the discovery phase of AI.

Bushe's scholarship on appreciative inquiry resulted in awards (his 1995 paper was chosen as one of the ten best articles published by the OD Journal in the twentieth century; the 2005 paper with Kassam was a runner-up for McGregor Award that year, and many others have been republished) and has made him the "go to" person for academics who want an authoritative voice. He has written the chapters on AI for Sage's Encyclopedia of Management Theory (Bushe 2103c), Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement, and Evaluation (Bushe forthcoming), and Routledge's Companion to Organizational Change (Bushe 2012).

## Dialogic OD

In his work on Dialogic OD, he and Marshak sought to integrate the fragmentation that had occurred in the OD field over the past two decades, demonstrating how techniques that appeared to be quite different, like appreciative inquiry, open space, world café, or Theory U, all rested on the same assumptions about organizations and change. They argued that OD practice had evolved since the 1980s in ways that violated the central tenants of OD orthodoxy but that the key texts in the field were ignoring this and instead presenting these innovations within the traditional action research framework. Their paper on Revisioning OD (Bushe and Marshak 2009), which won the Douglas McGregor Award that year, identified key differences in the assumptions about change in organizations in what they labeled Diagnostic OD and Dialogic OD. They later went on to argue that two key theoretical currents underlie Dialogic OD: complexity science and interpretive social science (Bushe and Marshak 2014). In that paper they proposed that the practice of OD professionals rested on the "mindset" of the practitioner and contrasted two "ideal types" – a Diagnostic Mindset and a Dialogic Mindset. Rather than seeing these as either/or, they argued that both mindsets could coexist in any practitioner, which would lead to the kinds of innovation in practice they were seeing and listed a set of assumptions they called the Dialogic Mindset. They also identified three underlying change mechanisms, one of which they proposed had to be present for transformational change to occur: disruption and emergence, a change in core narrative(s), and/or the appearance of a "generative image" that offered compelling new ways to see old things and motivate new actions. They further suggested (Bushe and Marshak 2015) that Dialogic OD methods had emerged and flourished because they were better suited to taking on adaptive challenges (Heifetz 1998), complex situations (Snowden and Boone 2007), and wicked problems (Grint 2005).

Noting that dialogic change processes have been highly successful, but are not that widely used in business (Bushe 2016), Bushe and Marshak (2016) argue that the problem is they contravene the "leader as visionary" narrative that holds sway in western business culture. They contend that research is pointing pretty dramatically to the conclusion that under conditions of complexity it is very unlikely for anyone to be able to identify the right answer to an adaptive challenge, and the use of emergent change processes and leadership style is far more successful than conventional diagnostic or change management approaches. The diffusion of Dialogic OD approaches into mainstream acceptance, they argue, will require a transformation in the leader-as-visionary narrative.

While Dialogic OD theory was a synthetic act of scholarship, bringing together and making sense of multiple strands of scholarship and practice, Bushe's key addition to this is the importance of generative images to the success of Dialogic OD interventions (1998, 2013a, b; Bushe and Storch 2015). Bushe defined a generative image as "ideas, phrases, objects, pictures, manifestos, stories, or new words with two properties: (1) Generative images allow us to see new alternatives for decisions and actions….(2) Generative images are compelling images – they

generate change because people like the new options in front of them and want to use them" (2013a, p. 12).

As a very recent contribution to organizational change thinking, it is not possible to identify the impact this will have on the field, but there is every indication that it is having an important impact on both scholarship and practice. At time of writing, the original 2009 paper is the 14th most cited ever published in the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science since it was founded in 1965. In 2016, HR Magazine in the UK added him to their annual listing of the 30 most influential HR thinkers in the world.

## New Insights: Learning with Gervase Bushe

As already highlighted, Bushe's regular cycling between theory and practice lies at the heart of his approach. That action research stance no doubt contributes to Bushe's theory and method having such insight and relevance for scholars and practitioners, respectively, myself included. Consulting relationships, executive teaching, and field research in a variety of organizations allows Bushe to triangulate between practicing leaders' contexts and the evolution of thought in academic circles. Each practical assignment is a chance to expose language and method to business scrutiny, in the process sharpening the translation of theory and research to workplace application. In turn this informs where research goes next. Below is my view of what some of these contributions mean in practice.

## Style and Approach

In teaching, Bushe has used a variety of experiential learning processes to create active learning through doing rather than passive absorption of knowledge. Bushe is a developer as well as an educator, however. Alongside his work at large systems level in organization change, Bushe continues to work at the coal face of interpersonal skill development in leaders and developers. Having observed and participated in ongoing group process work over many years, Bushe is at home in the intensity of laboratory interpersonal relation methods such as encounter groups and T-groups but has found ways to make such experiences more accessible, retaining sufficient power but with less risk of overwhelm that can push participants away from learning in the laboratory setting. This background has shaped Bushe's participative, challenging style of training and consulting – a theme across both domains is his desire to create spaces and opportunities for participative work and learning to truly take hold, for everyone's benefit.

Bushe's personal presence, as much as his thoughts, collaborations, and outputs, may be a key factor in his impact in the world. From my first encounters, I experienced him holding a still, quiet attention for me to speak, somehow making it easy for me to find my words. His responses are offered with warmth and respect but also an incisive conviction. This quality of connection seems pertinent, given the

contributions he has made. A particular example is his thinking on the notion of containers, illustrated below from a live video stream to the European Organization Development Network conference in spring 2015:

> I have seen enough instances of change work failing where most of the rules of good practice were being met and as many instances of change work succeeding where none seemed to be being met, to conclude that other things may matter as much. One of these maybe the quality of the container; is it really about having the right structure and process or about the quality of the people in it? Imagine the energy in a group and then consider: "what would it be like now if Nelson Mandela walked into the room?". Certain qualities of presence in and around people seem to matter more than almost anything else about the situation in which people find themselves working together.

It is additionally pertinent that, while this was delivered over video stream, the room was captivated by Bushe's screen presence transmitted from several thousand miles away.

My own belief here is that change work in organizations is so commonly accompanied by high levels of anxiety, in the client and the wider system, that the quality of presence in the practitioner plays a key role. This presence has no doubt also played a role in Bushe's ability to collaborate with others in service of generating new knowledge and method.

Bushe practices what he preaches in Clear Leadership too, with a disarmingly simple (not simplistic) direct style of communicating, grounded in his keen ear for language in both his practice and academic worlds. His written work is accessible to most, from journal papers to books, and his spoken word connects with leaders and practitioners across many disciplines and sectors. Bushe has the knack of explaining complex ideas in practical terms without oversimplifying to the point of contradicting the underpinning philosophy. This is evident, for example, in his navigation of the field of complexity sciences as it can be applied to social processes. In doing so, Bushe avoids the common trap of simple prescriptions but goes further than some purist academics may in providing both principles of practice and some methods.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Many Seeds Sown and Flourishing

Bushe has contributed so many insights to the field of organizational change in part because of his own capability, determination, and curiosity to explore and develop the wide range of disciplines covered already in this chapter. Below are some examples.

On Appreciative Inquiry, Bushe and Pitman's work (1991) in the early 1990s, focusing on "what works" rather than "the problem," predated the 4D model – Bushe was in near the start and the development of ideas and practices to do with amplification remain at the heart of the appreciative philosophy and method. Furthermore, Bushe's exploration of where and how AI has resulted in transformation

and generativity (Bushe 2010; Bushe and Kassam 2005) filtered the background noise and excitement that AI generated over its first two decades in use and illuminated some key success factors. This has shaped my own (and other practitioners' I know) use of AI in practice, highlighting traps and opportunities to be vigilant for throughout the process. His efforts to distinguish between the meaningful and the positive in AI have added further refinement to the methodology (Bushe 2007, 2013b), offering a linguistic reframe that I have seen greatly reassure clients as they decide whether or not the AI approach can work for them, particularly in less positive scenarios. A further refinement, on stages of group identity and its bearing on the focus and impact of AI, signposts another important factor that determines the particular approaches most likely to work in a given context. The power of all of Bushe's contributions in this space as in others is a characteristic of his work – they have real practical utility.

Clear Leadership (Bushe 2009a) is also creating impact on the ground, and in many places, having entrusted his ideas and methods to many different partners in several different languages to run the program. While on the face of it, Clear Leadership may seem separate from Bushe's early work on parallel learning structures (Bushe and Shani 1991), and other ideas, the influences exist in the theory base, and the success of Clear Leadership must in part be due to this solid ground upon which the program sits. The sound practical insights that have emerged from several previous strands of Bushe's achievements have found a deserving integrated home in practice. From personal experience, the impact of this program far outweighs the deceptive lightness of touch of just a 4-day program. Bushe has combined his deep knowledge of theory and powerful practical method to create an experiential program that can fundamentally change awareness and behavior in leaders, almost regardless of their prior level of experience and understanding. Given the growing need for collaboration, partnership, and other contemporary ways of organizing work, global demand for this efficient, effective model may well expand dramatically.

Bushe's contribution also flows from his humility to know his limits of knowledge and to invest the energy in seeking complex collaborations that extend and connect a wider and deeper range of practice and thought than anyone could achieve alone. The most recent example of this on a large scale has been the previously mentioned book on Dialogic OD (Bushe and Marshak 2015). Bushe and Marshak's collaborative approach to this has drawn out the key ideas and developing practices from a wide range of scholars and practitioners at a particular moment in the evolution of OD. Rather than inviting chapters on topics and compiling these without modification, authors were asked to permit substantial editing until Bushe and Marshak were satisfied that a consistency of style and thread of argument ran throughout the volume. The coherence that emerged from negotiation and rewrites totals an offering of great consistency and continuity.

While Bushe and Marshak developed their thinking on Dialogic OD over many years among a broad community, its profile has grown greatly since the label emerged. To create as substantial yet compact a volume on the topic as they did, over just 18 months with more than 20 contributors, suggests that an energy surrounds Bushe and the work that he has framed and helped to evolve in the process. It is testament to

Bushe's work in generativity and generative image specifically that in deploying it in the coining of the term Dialogic OD itself, it has created such generativity.

At a time when the ideas and language of complexity and transformation have become established in the global lexicon of leadership and organizational change, Dialogic OD should prove a very timely contribution to thinking and practice. Based on my personal experience, stories of colleagues, and much of the literature available today, a significant proportion of organizational change work still appears confused in method and philosophy. Change failures appear to be a product in part of ungrounded and outmoded thought and practice as well as being casualties of organizational and societal expectations that hinder the learning needed for real change to flourish. My own experience suggests that Bushe's work to rally a diverse field of evolving practice is helping to re-educate leaders and change practitioners in the complexity of organizational life and the approaches that can withstand scrutiny and deliver results. Bushe is humble enough to acknowledge that the ideas and practices of Dialogic OD have been around for some time and continue today in many people and places, but not in as consistent and coherent a form as might serve its ongoing development:

> there appears a great deal of convergence in what successful dialogic practitioners do. There just wasn't much convergence in how they described what they do (Bushe and Marshak 2015, p. 402)

Drawing on this careful selection of expert sources while bringing his and Marshak's long and deep knowledge alongside others' required him to enact his own principles of collaboration in the production process, but these collaborative ventures are not limited to the written word. Bushe was also instrumental in convening the, to date, one and only Dialogic OD conference in Vancouver (2015), drawing on his own network and energy to convene scholars and practitioners, in a singularly successful event that lived Dialogic OD in practice as 140 participants from around the world engaged in inquiry.

Bushe may be on the cusp of another generative image, in his reusing of the old term heroic/great man leadership (Bushe and Marshak 2016), investing it with new meaning. Rekindling the "good king" archetype (Bushe 2005) with a twist, the leader's heroic act may still be to bring the greatness out of every follower, only now less to lead the way with a vision, and instead more to create and contain spaces for others to lead in a multitude of complex ways. The heroism may come more in having the strength and humility to allow (contain, just enough) the tensions that this inevitably creates, so that they can be tolerated within an organization.

## Conclusion

Bushe's practice and scholarly rigor, his wider vision of the field of theory and practice, and his capacity to invite many into spaces of collective exploration, while

also having the clarity of thought to find coherence in diversity, combine to mean that Bushe has brought to the world many important developments in thinking and practice for organizational change. Bushe's own leadership across these different areas of thinking and practice seem to flow from a heartfelt conviction, perhaps not dissimilar to many of the founders of OD many decades ago, to progress ideas and practice in ways that can make the world and its workplaces better places to work and to fully express individual and collective potential.

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# Raymond Caldwell: Agency and Change in Organizational Theory

# 16

## Mark Hughes

### Abstract

How we conceive our capacity for "agency" in the world has enormous implications for how we think about the possibilities and limits of our ability to manage change in organizations and society. For Raymond Caldwell, agency is the prism through which we think about change. If we conceive ourselves as things, as "substances" that simply think and act intentionally or rationally, we will end up with extremely limited epistemologies for understanding agency. For Caldwell the old models of knowledge and power, rationality and control, and agency and structure in organizations have fallen apart. The idea of "distributed agency" partly captures this reality by treating change as an ongoing process defined by practices, which in turn questions explanations of change that rely on intentional action or abstract notions of organizations as entities that change from one relatively fixed state to another. In sum, he treats agency as a practice and change as a process. But Caldwell's recent work, partly under the philosophical influence of Whitehead, takes these ideas further by including the nonhuman in how we define distributed agency: agency is potentially everywhere in a social-material world in which the ontological divide between the social and the natural world no longer makes much sense. Always provocative, always challenging, Caldwell's work is an important contribution to redefining the boundaries of how we think of agency and change in organizations. After briefly noting some early influences on Caldwell's work, the chapter organizes his contributions into three major phases: agency and change, agency as practice, and change as a process. A key insight section then reflects on how his early contributions have influenced others. The chapter concludes with legacies and new directions in Caldwell's search for a process-in-practice perspective on organizational change.

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## Introduction

Organizational change theory is an emerging field within the notoriously fractured fields and subfields of organizational studies. To write a history of organizational change theory, therefore, poses an enormous challenge, as Demers (2008) discovered discordant pluralism subverts the search for synthesis. But any such history must include at least a chapter on "agency and change," Raymond Caldwell's specialist subfield. Without an exploration of the possibilities of "agency," we cannot understand the possibilities and limits of change in organizations or societies. Through a sociological prism, Caldwell was able to capture profound changes in how we think of agency in relation to the roles of leaders, managers, practitioners, and HR professionals as "change agents" in organizations. His work began by asking what agency was, and he has rightly chastised the coverage of change agency in organizational change theory as fifty years of "dismal reading" (Caldwell 2006). Caldwell has consistently encouraged the unbounded exploration of the relationships between agency and change, and he has only been mildly perplexed by the idea that organizational change theory is not cumulative or that it is in danger of falling apart (Caldwell 2005). He therefore remains a pioneer in challenging more orthodox accounts of organizational change and in encouraging a rethinking of the failures of organizational change practices.

This chapter provides an opportunity to better understand what has influenced him and to take stock of some of his key contributions, but also to learn about his insights, his still emergent legacy, and what new directions his work is taking. In conclusion, I found Caldwell's work provocative, challenging and informative in terms of understanding agency and change. This review is informed by my own extensive reading of his work and a number of meetings with him over the last few years. In taking stock of Caldwell's contribution to the field of organizational change, I felt it essential to communicate with him directly about his work and meet with him to discuss it further. I have signposted his verbatim contributions in italics and quotation marks, as well as paraphrasing what I learned while writing this chapter and discussing his work. I certainly found it fascinating to understand the bigger picture of Caldwell's writing, and I hope you will share this fascination.

## Influences and Motivations: New Beginnings

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Caldwell spent his formative teenage years during the political conflicts and sectarian violence of "the troubles" that began in the late 1960s. A brief visit to America in the summer of 1971 was the crucial point at which he decided he would study there, "no matter what." America was to be his escape from a world he describes as "celtically bleak but always tinged with light:"

> It was easy to feel trapped in a nightmare of history in which everything violently changes and yet everything appears to repeat itself. The violence was the continuation of an ancient quarrel that was dreary and bloody, but the events were new, they were not simply a repetition of the past.

Caldwell got to America. He took his first degree at Hampshire College, a newly established liberal arts college in Amherst, Massachusetts, which he described as an "experimenting," "socially liberal," and a "multidisciplinary learning" alternative to traditional undergraduate education. It was clearly something of a cultural shock, but it worked:

> Whatever the philosophy really was or who it really appealed to, all I know is that it seemed to work for me. I found the place, at first, disconcerting and then exhilarating; you could push yourself as hard as you wished, in whatever direction you wished.

This liberal and alternative educational experience appears to have been very influential, shaping and influencing Caldwell's thinking and subsequent writing. He developed an intense interest in social theory and philosophy, reading everything from the origins of modernity through to every possible version of postmodernism. Initially, he was attracted to the classical sociologists (Durkheim and Weber) but then progressed to cultural anthropologists, such as Levis Strauss. During these formative years, he read about structuralism and poststructuralism and the work of Foucault and Bourdieu, Marx and the Frankfurt School, as well as the work of Mead, Parsons, Habermas, and Giddens. After finding a pristine, hard copy of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* discarded by a fellow student, he read it intensely and soon became fascinated decoding Wittgenstein's cryptic and poetic aphorisms on language and metaphysics, which eventually inspired him to complete his undergraduate dissertation on Hegel, Weber, and Wittgenstein. Caldwell's appetite for philosophically informed social theory appears to have been voracious, and it helps us to partly understand what influenced his organizational change writing. More broadly, Caldwell has acknowledged not only his educational experience but also the allure of the very idea of America itself, which created a space for him to embark on an enormously liberating intellectual journey:

> I was able to absorb the practical virtues of the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism. I can still see some of the traces of Peirce, James, Dewey, and Mead in my work. I was especially drawn to Richard Rorty's version of neo-pragmatism with its poetic ethic and anti-reductionist vision.

Pragmatism taught Caldwell to reverse the traditional relation between theory and practice – theory is practice. This emphasis upon practice was to become a recurring aspect of his work, and it may explain his enduring positive evaluation of the importance of practice and applied research.

After Hampshire, Caldwell embarked on a Ph.D. at the London School of Economics (LSE).Unbeknown to him, he was apparently following a well-trodden path. "Hampshire ranks in the top 1% of colleges in the US in the percentage of graduates going on to complete a doctorate." His Ph.D. addressed the "rationalization" theme in Max Weber's work, which included exploring Weber's "developmental history" of the West, and his idea of bureaucracy as an "iron cage" which threatened individual freedom, rationality, and democracy. He was interested in exploring, not just Weber's ideas about bureaucracy and rationalization, but whether he had a "theory" of development and change in Western societies, which had implications for how organizations change. This interest in Weber was furthered while a Research Fellow at Berkeley which enabled him to work with Reinhard Bendix, a central figure in the development of their famous Sociology Department and a key figure in the assimilation of Weber's work in America (Scaff 2014). It is perhaps no surprise, then, that Caldwell still retains a long-standing interest in the intellectual history of Weber's scholarship and interpretation and continues to publish in this area (Caldwell 2002, 2016). He also admits that Weber's legacy is still very much alive in his imagination:

> Weber was partly my way into organizational theory; but he is probably the greatest and most profoundly misunderstood theorist in the hall of fame of classical organizational theory. Weber was not a proponent of bureaucracy as an 'ideal type' of mechanistic efficiency... In some sense I am still a reluctant Weberian in that I have not found a way to lay to rest Weber's ghost and the iron cage of rationalization.

This brief background note suggests some recurring aspects of Caldwell's work: a disregard for disciplinary boundaries, a preoccupation with theory as practice, a broad interest in the nature of social change, a concern with the genealogy of ideas, and a recurrent indebtedness to the legacy of sociological theory.

## Key Contributions: Agency and Change

In engaging with Caldwell's contribution to organizational change theory, a series of discrete yet interrelated strands of thinking quickly become apparent. He has tried to summarize these contributions as a whole while remaining fully aware that all academic work is always incomplete:

> My research is concerned with exploring how the concept of human 'agency' is theorized in organizational change research and how it is applied to the disparate contingencies of practice. I began my academic career as a sociologist, but my work is now thoroughly interdisciplinary, mainly because agency as a mode of practice and change as a process are hybrid constructs that do not fit neatly within disciplinary boundaries. My current research

*is concerned with thinking agency and change within 'practice theory' and 'process perspectives,' and how we can include nonhuman agency in definitions of human agency. My overall goal is to explore the possibility of a 'process-in-practice' perspective that brings together practice and process perspectives on how we think agency and change.*

Caldwell also made clear the rationale for his focus on agency and change:

*Agency is an increasingly problematic concept that crosses the boundaries between philosophy and social theory. Some would argue that it is no longer viable as a concept that can guide ideals of intention, rationality, individual autonomy, and freedom in a liberal democratic society. Others would suggest, however, that theorizing agency is an even more urgent task in a world of economic crisis, global inequality, terrorism, and the prospect of ecological disaster. Agency may not be located where we once thought it was, because we now know it is distributed, relational, shared, embodied and ecological. But one thing is certain: agency will determine how we think of change, and how we remake the world in our own image.*

Caldwell's wide-ranging contribution to the exploration of agency and change raises important issues for the field of organizational change studies. There are ontological issues around the basic assumptions about the nature of reality: what is agency, what is change, and how do we experience a world that is always changing? Epistemological issues are raised, questioning basic assumptions about how we acquire knowledge of change. Methodological issues are then raised as to how the researcher goes practically about studying what they believe can be known. Finally, practitioner issues relate to what we need to know in order to somehow operate in the "real" world: how do we make a difference, or how do we make the changes that we wish, desire, or intend to happen?

To understand Caldwell's key contributions in addressing these questions, one needs to trace the genealogy of three important phases of his thinking: *phase 1,* agency and change in organizational theory; *phase 2*, thinking of agency as practice; and *phase 3*, thinking change as process.

**Phase 1: Agency and Change in Organizations** *Agency and Change* (2006) is probably Caldwell's most important work in that it is key to his ongoing research questions. The overall ambition of the book was to shift the focus from "outmoded debates on agency and structure to new practice-based discourses on agency and change." Agency was a notoriously under-theorized concept in organizational studies, mainly because "organizations" were conceived as relatively stable structural entities. In organizational change theory, however, "change," rather than stability, is the central problematic, and an adequate exploration of change has to include agency. While *Agency and Change* was primarily a theoretical enterprise, it was ultimately directed at rethinking and reinventing practice, and Caldwell envisaged a second volume. For a variety of reasons, this did not appear, but many of his articles over the last few years are concerned with the issue of practice.

Because of its avowedly theoretical nature and philosophical undercurrents, *Agency and Change* was never going to be an easy read, and this was compounded by Caldwell's attempts to explore the Babel of competing "disciplinary discourses"

on agency and change in organizations. He broadly classifies these discourses into four overlapping categories:

1. Rationalist or social scientific discourses, which are concerned with intentional agency, expert knowledge, and the instrumental management of organizational change as a linear or stage-like process.
2. Contextualist or processual discourses, which are primarily focused on "emergent" change and the more bounded nature of managerial agency and strategic choice.
3. Dispersalist or distributed discourses, which explore the growing challenges of managing change in more complex organizations in which knowledge, power, leadership, and learning are distributed to teams, groups, and other self-organizing actors (Caldwell includes complexity theory, the learning organization, and communities of practice within this category.).
4. Constructionist or postmodern discourses, which seek to "abandon subject–object distinctions"; there are no objective scientific observers or autonomous actors but only "socially constructed worlds of fragmented cultural discourses, practices and fields of knowledge in which the possibilities for agency are fundamentally problematic" (Caldwell 2006, p. 7).

If *Agency and Change* takes its critical lead from a "discourse" paradigm, the discourses are in the background, and there is no prospect of synthesis. What really frames the work is the journey it takes; it begins with an analytical overview of Giddens' work and ends with a critical reappraisal of Foucault. In Caldwell's view, Giddens deserves special consideration for bringing agency back into sociological theory, particularly following the abstract "structural–functional" legacy of Parsons' (1951) social systems theory. Parsons was the most forceful advocate of "functionalism" as a model of modernity, society, and organizations, and his ideas still resonate with rational and managerial views of organizations as entities, *systems with processes*, that give primacy to stability, rather than change. Against this vision, Caldwell (2006) quotes Giddens' affirmation of agency: "It is analytical to the concept of agency: (a) that a person could have acted otherwise and (b) that the world as constituted by a stream of events-in-process independent of the agent does not hold out a predetermined future"(p. 19).

In Caldwell's reading, Giddens' "structuration" theory was an early attempt to re-theorize "structure" as process and agency as the practiced-based enactment of change:

> Using a micro-interpretative perspective influenced by phenomenology, symbolic interactions, and ethnomethodology, and with some highly selective philosophical borrowings from Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Giddens sought to dispatch the individual versus society dualism that had plagued classical sociological discourses of social action and social order. Structuration theory was a sustained attempt to establish the relationship between agency and structure as one of relational identity or synthetic 'duality;' by neither privileging agency nor structure, Giddens sought to reject ontological dualism. Structuration refers

*to the processes of producing–reproducing social relations across time and space, and this requires an ontological shift, an identification of agency with the practices of structuring, which creates new possibility of change.*

In Caldwell's view, however, Giddens' move to a more process-oriented theory of structuration was never fully realized. Ultimately, Giddens' attempt to incorporate time, temporality, and change into sociological theory was only partly successful (Abbott 2016).

Caldwell was also critical of Giddens' exploration of the relationship between agency and practice:

*Agency, for Giddens, is not identified with individual rational action, but an ongoing process of "praxis." While praxis suggests an affinity with Marx's idea that practice proves the truth of knowledge, Giddens argues, following Heidegger, that "the notion of agency is logically prior to subject-object differentiation," because it is always embedded in practice. This does not mean that agency as a category of individual action is completely de-centered into social practices. Rather, agency is redefined as "knowledgeability," a form of "doing," or "practical consciousness," and as intentionality, as something involving purposeful action and reflexivity, that may have unintended consequences. In this way, Giddens appears to dissolve the dualism of agency and structure by collapsing "structure" as process, and structure as system into temporal processes of practice: 'In structuration theory structure has always to be conceived as a property of social systems, "carried" in reproduced practices embedded in time and space' (Giddens 1984, p. 170). Reinforcing this idea of structure as process, actors can reproduce or transform structures, "remaking what is already made in the continuity of praxis" (1984, p. 171).*

In Caldwell's view, this formulation is opaque; we are never sure where structure and agency begins and ends. Nor is it clear as to what Giddens really means by practice and process or agency and change:

*Practice is a mediation category between agency and structure. It partly replaces individual intentional action with practice, and it partly allows structure to become a process defined by the production and reproduction of social practices. But Giddens cannot tell us how agency enacts change through practice.*

If Giddens' classic examination of agency and structure was the natural starting point for an exploration of agency and change, a broader theoretical rationale for this shift has to be justified. Caldwell argues that Giddens was overcritical of Foucault's "defacing" of agency. Instead of conventional ontological dualities between individual and society and agency and structure, Foucault shifted the focus onward the possibilities of *agency and change*, effectively dispensing with the liberal individualist conception of agency as a choice, an idea still very evident in Giddens' work. Giddens and many critics of Foucauldian organizational theory have argued that Foucault had no concept of agency because he allowed autonomous "discursive practices" to become "subjectless." Caldwell challenges this orthodoxy by arguing that Foucault's rejections of humanism, rationalism, and a coherent moral self were not the abandonment of the notion of agency: "Far from destroying intentional agency, decentered

agency allows new possibilities for resistance and the dispersal of agency and change in organizations and societies. Foucault's apparent destruction of the 'subject' is not the postmodern end of agency but its partial reinvention (2006, p. 124)."

This original and unorthodox reading of Foucault undoubtedly influenced Caldwell's focus on agency and change. Nevertheless, he felt that there was something missing from Foucault's work; he did not adequately theorize "agency" in relation to practice by more fully incorporating discourse into practice: "Discourse is nominal and material, a self-referential representation of meaning and a transformative instrument: words and things are inseparable because they have effects in the 'real world' of human practices. Despite this notion of the embeddedness of discourse, Foucault tends to absorb practice as discursive practices into discourse (Caldwell 2006, p. 127)."

**Phase 2: Thinking Agency as Practice** Phase 1 had arrived at a conceptual dilemma: if Foucault made the crucial link between agency and change within "discursive practices," why had his work failed to theorize "practice?" Caldwell argued that Foucault had no need for "a theory of 'practice' or a concept of theory into practice, because discourse is practice: 'theory does not express, translate or serve to apply practice: it is practice' (cited by Caldwell 2006, p. 127)." In Caldwell's view, this reading of discourse as practice was flawed, and he began to reexamine Bourdieu's classic work on the "logic of practice," which was often unfairly critical of Foucault. Bourdieu's work has had an enormous influence on the recent resurgence of "practice theory" in organizational studies, but in Caldwell's judgment, the most important recent contributions in this area have emerged from the work of Theodore Schatzki, who, as Caldwell notes, shares Bourdieu's deep ambivalence toward Foucault: "practice theorists do not like the theoretical connotations of 'discourse' because it suggests that 'saying' takes priority over 'doing.'"

In *Reclaiming Agency, Recovering Change? An Exploration of the Practice Theory of Theodore Schatzki* (Caldwell 2012), Caldwell begins to outline his thinking on "agency as practice." Schatzki's work returns to a central question of classical sociological theory: how do we theorize practices in relation to agency and change? If practices are primarily routine, habitual and normative events that happen, rather than purposeful actions, then how do they change over time? As Caldwell notes, this question has perplexed social theorists from Weber through to Bourdieu and Giddens, and it provides a unifying thematic in his own work.

In Caldwell's view, Schatzki is "a central interlocutor in current debates," because he provides new insights into the major intellectual influences on practice theory, most notably, the philosophical writings of Heidegger and Wittgenstein and the social theories of practice proposed by Bourdieu and Giddens. Caldwell also suggests that Schatzki's (2002, 2010) attempt to conceive agency as "doing" and his "general proposition 'that change comes about through agency' raises fundamental questions of how agency and change can be theorized within the intellectual genealogy of practice theory" (2012, p. 283). To address these questions, Caldwell's article examines the differences between traditional action theories of rationality and the broader teleological perspective of Schatzki's Heideggerian and Wittgensteinian

analysis of "practical intelligibility," rule-following, and the organization of practice, as well as his critique of Bourdieu and Giddens' opposing concepts of agency and practice. Overall, Caldwell is sympathetic to Schatzki's work but highlights some key issues. He believes that Schatzki's notion of "general understanding" is one of the most opaque and poorly defined concepts in his discussion of what holds social practices together, and this is replicated by the neglected treatment of politics and power. While he shares Schatzki's goal to break the links between reflexivity and intentional action by placing practices as temporal events ontologically prior to action and structure, he argues that this requires an explanation of how agency and change can be reconnected in a realistic social ontology of practice. Caldwell also detects traces of "ontological dualism" in Schatzki's distinction between practices and orders, and he is uncomfortable with the absence of a link between practice and learning (2012, p. 292). Finally, Caldwell forcefully argues that "what is missing from Schatzki's neo-Heideggerian ontology of practice is not only a notion of theoretical intelligibility, of practical knowledge and knowing that includes rational, cognitive or representational principles of shared understanding, but also an exploration of the power of language and discourse to redefine the possibilities of self, subjectivity, and agency" (p. 298). Caldwell, who had always been sympathetic to Richard Rorty's almost Foucauldian version of pragmatism, was never going to accept Schatzki's radical downgrading of the "power of language" to define who or what we are. Rorty may have underplayed the unreflective understandings of practice and agency, but he knew that the aim of philosophy and social theory is to "keep the conversation going" with the realization that "human beings are creators of new descriptions rather than beings one hopes to be able to describe accurately" (Rorty 1979, p. 378).

In Caldwell's view, Schatzki's work underplays the important critical legacy of pragmatism in framing his practice theory. He also does not engage with the legacy of process thinking that derives from Whitehead, and it is from this viewpoint that Caldwell takes issue with Schatzki's limited exploration of materiality and non-human agency:

> The idea of agency as doing, as a form of practice, has always been corrosive of philosophies of action and intentionality. But who acts, what acts, becomes even more problematic when the non-human and the material is included in the exploration of human agency. Schatzki attempts to overcome the post-humanist distrust the human derives from his fear that it will dissolve human agency into 'the actions of nonhuman entities' (2002, p. 201). However, his search for a halfway house between humanism and post-humanism that includes human and non-human agency amounts to a weak defense against naturalism, rather than a reaffirmation of human agency.

**Phase 3: Change as Process** While the idea of exploring change as "process" or "becoming" was an important theme of *Agency and Change* (Caldwell 2006, p. 163), it was only really explored in depth when Caldwell engaged with Whitehead's work over the last few years. At the time of writing this chapter, an article entitled *Thinking Agency and Change with Whitehead* is under review. This article is informed by an important and provocative attempt to separate thinking about

"change" from the notion of "becoming" while also radically extending how we think of human and nonhuman agency.

Whitehead's process philosophy on thinking about organizations and change over the last decade has been significant in shifting the focus from stability to "continuous change," from being to becoming:

> All theories of organizational change have used some notion of 'process' in theorising how change happens, but recent Whitehead-inspired process perspectives on organizational change seek to mark a more radical shift in how process, change and agency are defined. Organizational change is not a stage, an outcome, or an episodic event in a 'process' of change defined against a background of stability or ordered organizational entities. Instead, change is the very condition of organizing. From this perspective, the idea that organizations as substantial or stable entities have primacy in understanding that change leads to a narrow definition of 'process' in terms of how entities, things, or events unfold over time. From a process perspective, the world exists as flows, organizations are processes, not things, and 'reality' is in a ceaseless process of becoming.

Caldwell also draws attention to the implications of this reading of becoming:

> The process perspective not only conceives organization as process, it conceives human agency as process. For Whitehead, the self cannot be separated into mind and body entities (Whitehead 2010, p. 26). The self is not the negative self-image of 'nature;' a fixed substance or determinate entity. Nor is the self an entity defined or determined by 'social' structures 'out there' which imposed social behavior. Instead, the self becomes and subjects 'are' within processes of becoming. In other words, agency has to be conceived as a process, not as a set of fixed substances to be discovered in nature or as cognitive entity inside our heads. There is no unchanging nature, there is no unchanging self.

Caldwell argues, however, that theorizing agency and change in this way is highly problematic:

> The status of subjectivity, self and agency as a conceptual domain has been a recurring concern in Whitehead research and scholarship, but this has rarely been examined in relation to 'change.' To explore becoming as a process is to explore the 'process of experience,' of how we as subjects experience the reality of the world and nature as process, yet paradoxically, becoming as process turns subjectivity and agency into process; there appear to be no enduring entities, objects or things within the world.

Caldwell also argues that Whitehead's process metaphysics has created immense difficulty in theorizing agency and change, partly because his work has been misunderstood: "change" and "becoming" are not the same for Whitehead, and to conflate them is very confusing:

> Becoming cannot be defined as change because the most irreducible entities in Whitehead's process metaphysics of process are 'actual occasions' which do not change. Paradoxically, 'becoming' is an unending process, but we cannot identify 'change' with underlying conditions, stages or end-states, nor can we identify 'changing' with the actualization of some sort of potentiality within something–changing things, objects or entities. For Whitehead, the 'illusion of change' occurs in a world of space and time defined by substance

*metaphysics. Becoming is process, and so something that 'changes' has no intrinsic attributes, it perishes instantly into the immanence of becoming.*

In Caldwell's rereading of Whitehead, the notion of becoming is about how we experience the world as process: "The world becomes within the relational and unifying process of experiencing actual entities, they are the world, we are that world." Becoming, therefore, has to be identified with how we experience the world as process rather than abstract theoretical notions of "change" in societies, organizations, or any other entities.

## Key Insights: Reflecting upon Agency and Change

This brief summary of the three key phases of Caldwell's work indicates that it is evolving and moving in new and uncharted directions. However, much of his currently influential work on "change agency" and changing HR roles is associated with phase 1, and so we may have to catch up with the new work before he embarks on yet another phase. Certainly Caldwell's early agency and change writings were the most influential in illuminating my own thinking. The first edition of my textbook (Hughes 2006) was published without any significant coverage of "change agency." Today, it feels like a glaring omission, but all I can say in mitigation was that I was not the only organizational change textbook author guilty of this omission. In the second edition (Hughes 2010), I addressed the omission by including a chapter on change agents and agency, framed in terms of Caldwell's early writings. More recently, my organizational change interests have focused upon the leadership of organizational change (Hughes 2015). I have recently questioned existing explanations of leading change and, instead, encouraged a greater emphasis upon agency as part of a research-informed approach to leading change (Hughes 2016). My research has also been influenced by Caldwell's (2003b) criticisms of change manager/change leader differentiations as either/or false dichotomies; we require a combination of change management and change leadership. While management and organizational studies subsequently witnessed a shift from management toward leadership (Ford and Harding 2007), there are reasons to believe that the organizational change – change leader versus change manager – dualism has been overplayed (Sutherland and Smith 2013). I would finally like to acknowledge that Caldwell's HR writings, particularly Caldwell and Storey (2007), informed the writings of my chapter on the interface between HR and managing change (Hughes 2010). Caldwell's interdisciplinary work built a bridge between two different yet related fields of study. In his view, "HRM" is a strategic approach to managing change and strategy implementation that uses the instrumental processes, tools, and techniques of "people management" (e.g., recruiting, training, and monitoring employee performance) to achieve desired business performance outcomes. This meant that "HRM" and "change management" converge; they focus on ensuring that people have the capacity and motivation to adapt to change.

In reviewing Caldwell's early HR work, the twin themes of agency and change constantly surface, as does his sociological indebtedness to the work of Weber (Caldwell 2001, 2003a). But despite the influence of Caldwell's HR-orientated work, he confided that "John Storey once described my HR work as 'a small tributary' rather than the main river." The HR work clearly needs to be understood as an outcome of Caldwell's broader sociological interests in organizational change. This is certainly evident in what is probably his most influential HR article (2003c, p. 948), which started with a broad sociological exploration of "changes in the nature of managerial work" and their profound and disconcerting impact on the roles of HR managers and other functional specialists. The article also examined HR professionals in Weberian terms as an aspiring "occupational status group" managing the tensions and ambiguities of role change, as well as coping with competing claims to occupational legitimacy in changing organizational contexts. This is a factor generic to all professions in their attempts to maintain autonomy or power through "jurisdictional claims" over the provision of specialist expertise, and in this way, the research echoed Abbott's (1988) classic sociological work on the professions.

The HR-orientated work undoubtedly enabled Caldwell to develop an international profile as an HR researcher with an increasing specialization focus on the organizational transformation of the HR function and the emergence of new, change agent, HR roles, including HR strategic and leadership roles in the boardroom. This work was often critical of the strategic ambitions of HR practitioners in implementing HRM, but what gave it considerable force was the rich empirical evidence base (Caldwell 2004, 2011). The following references demonstrate that this work is continuing to impact upon ongoing debates (Truss 2008; Wright 2008, Alfes et al. 2010; Wylie et al. 2014; Marchington 2015). Wylie et al. (2014), in their exploration of change agency in an occupational context, provide an excellent summary of Caldwell's HR work which helps to reposition it within the context of a recurrent, and some would argue unsuccessful, attempt by HR professionals to "overcome occupational insecurity by establishing a strategically significant role within organizations" (p. 95). They also argue, following Caldwell (2003c), that "change agency is better seen as replaying rather than resolving the ambiguity of HRM's role and identity in organisations" (p. 95). Similarly, Gerpott (2015) revisits the legacy of role conflict, but gives it a new twist by categorizing the "contradictory HRM demands into tensions of (1) identity, (2) learning, (3) performing and (4) organizing," and he argues that the "implementation of the business partner model resolves these tensions in the short-term by addressing the opposing forces separately. Yet, these resolution strategies are not sustainable and threaten the long-term impact of HRM" (p. 214). This position echoes the concerns expressed by Caldwell (2003c, 2008) regarding the long-term future of Ulrich-style HR roles and the move toward a more strategic HR function.

Over the last few years, a shift away from the early HR-orientated work is clearly evident when reviewing Caldwell's recent work. I learned that this arose from a combination of factors: the fallout from the financial crisis of 2007–2008 which, in his view, "shredded the resource-based theory of the firm;" a growing sense of disappointment with the efficacy of HR competency frameworks; and the increasing

challenges to HR in performing a strategic role while affirming its role as an employee champion (Caldwell 2008). All of these factors, as well as others, are discussed further in Marchington (2015), who argues that HR has become obsessed by its strategic business contribution, with the result that it has lost its connection to a more inclusive, ethical vision of employee engagement and progressive HR practices: "Unless HRM reasserts its independence, it is likely to wither both in academic and practitioner circles" (Marchington 2015, p. 176). Caldwell is perhaps a little more sanguine:

> HR professionals are undoubtedly masters of role reinvention. But they did not live-up to the promise of change agency or their role as employee champions. We need to focus less on the rhetoric of what they say and more of what they do. The future of HR research should be focused on the ethnography of practice.

Caldwell's early writings on "change agency" also continue to influence the field of organizational change studies, and this is illustrated through citations taken from the past decade. His influential article on *Models of Change Agency* (2003a) was important in breaking the hold of expert-centered models of the change agent, by opening a debate on distributed or dispersed models of change agency. These ideas have been developed by Buchanan et al. (2007) in their study of "distributive change agency" and Charles and Dawson (2011) in their account of change agency and the improvisation of strategies. Caldwell's (2003a, 2008) consistent criticisms of competency-based notions of change agent roles were also a precursor to the increasing focus on practice approaches to leadership and change management (Carroll et al. 2008). Raelin and Cataldo (2011) have recently developed these ideas in their account of middle management in the context of organizational change, and Raelin's (forthcoming) account of reframing "leadership as practice" draws directly on Caldwell's work. Caldwell's pioneering exploration of Foucault is also replayed by Cummings et al. (2016) in their recently published rethinking of Kurt Lewin's legacy for change management. Like Caldwell they use Foucault to analyze the "canonization" of Lewin's legacy as the originator of the belief in planned change as a linear process, facilitated by change agents (Caldwell 2005, 2006). For Cummings et al. (2016), Foucault offers new possibilities for a "counter-history" that enables us to think differently about the history of organizational change.

In briefly revisiting Caldwell's early work, a theme of locating/repositioning managers, leaders, and HR practitioners is apparent in terms of their competing claims to power and knowledge, expertise, and strategic influence. Essentially there appear to be four recurring categories of agency in Caldwell's early work: change leaders, change managers, change consultants, and change teams. Even though this distributed model has been influential, Caldwell, true to his own critical spirit, has questioned its utility. It originally emerged as a useful, analytical framework for *Agency and Change*, and Caldwell wrote a draft of the whole book following these categories but decided to consign the manuscript to the dustbin after submitting it to the publisher:

*I was never happy with the framework and the publisher was surprised when I then proposed to send them a completely new book, which thankfully they agreed to publish as a 'monograph.' However, some of the original material did resurface. I wrote a very long chapter on Senge for the aborted first book which I later turned into two articles. Similarly, my article (2009) on middle managers as change agents was an updated version of a chapter in the original version of the book that never appeared.*

Caldwell has taken our thinking about "distributed change agency" in new directions, but this focus now appears to have been overtaken by new challenges:

*The era of the change agent as expert, of purely instrumental knowledge and leader-centric change management is over. We need forms of distributed learning that extend into the deepest reaches of organization and embed us in the world. We need human agency that allows us all to practice our capacity to learn and to be part of the human and not so human world we inhabit. If I had one wish, it would be to define an ecological conception of agency that by its very definition would change how we see the world and how we seek to change it.*

## Legacies and New Directions: A Process-In-Practice Perspective

Caldwell's inquisitiveness and interest in how philosophy and social theories can help or seriously rethink organizational change shows no signs of abating, and his mature work has grown in its theoretical ambitions. In this concluding section, two themes are explored in terms of Caldwell's recent attempts to reconcile process and practice thinking about agency and change, which I suspect will become phase 4 of his work. As with most of Caldwell's writing, it reflects an evolution in thinking, rather than a break with previous ideas.

In *Agency and Change*, Caldwell constantly returned to the issue of how change as "process" and "organization" and as an entity or system that changes could be reconciled. One solution intimated in the book, but never fully explored, was to turn "structure" into process and theorize agency as practice. Caldwell now seems to have gone down this path by seeking to find a reconciliation between process perspectives and practice theory:

*The problem with the process perspective is that it can diffuse any notion of agency; process thinking is better at thinking change while practice theory is better at reclaiming agency–and both seriously underplay Whitehead's radical injunction to distribute agency to the non-human; it is not just about 'social' actions or interacting human agents.*

For Caldwell, the call for a process metaphysics of "becoming" in organizational change theory is an attempt to overthrow "being" by a metaphysical reversal: there is only becoming. In his view, this project marks a shift from epistemology toward ontology: "knowledge as substance and organization as entity are replaced by knowing as process and organization as organizing." This is clearly not envisaged as a "relatively minor alteration in ontological emphasis": a weak program designed to enable the process perspective to open up new research horizons. Nor is it positioned as a corrective exercise in overcoming the disjunctions in which

epistemology and ontology "drift" out of alignment with the result that "entities are discussed as if they were processes and processes discussed as if they were entities" (Thompson 2011, p. 757). The overall intent is not to maintain or manage a territorial coexistence between entity and process thinking: substance and being are to be replaced by process and becoming (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, 2011).

Caldwell is clearly perplexed by this ontological divide:

> *Is there any possibility of reconciliation between entity and process thinking in organiza-*
> *tional change theory? Being as 'substance' appears to reject becoming, while becoming as*
> *'process' denies being or relegates it to the outcome of process. Being tends to be conceived*
> *as static present-oriented and representational, while becoming is associated with change,*
> *potentiality, anti-representational thinking and the future. These ontological positions seem*
> *irreconcilable -or are they?*

In answering this question, Caldwell believes that the legacies of Heidegger and Whitehead are central to the choice posed between an event ontology of practice and a process ontology of becoming:

> *They both seek to escape from substance metaphysics, from any ontological commitment to a*
> *permanent, unchanging and unitary world of Being. Being conceived as 'substance'*
> *appears to deny becoming. But for Heidegger, Being-in-the-world includes becoming within*
> *being; change within stability, process within practice. In contrast, Whitehead appears to*
> *argue that stability is an illusion, time is relational, being is becoming. Whitehead's ontology*
> *of process resolves subject and object, the human and nonhuman into the indivisible*
> *relationality of all entities as they become; there is no search for Heidegger's disclosure*
> *of Being-in-the-world, or 'being for us.' Being is not a fixed entity out there; it is always the*
> *immanent and timeless repetition of becoming that creates something always different,*
> *something always new.*

In Caldwell's view, Heidegger's work inspired Schatzki's (2011) more realist "event ontology" of organizing, which favors "neither fluidity over stability nor stability over development" (p. 12). Instead, change happens as practices of doings, sayings, and other events in "any given swath of space-time"; as such, it always occurs as a "mix of change, stability, fluidity, and continuity" (Schatzki 2011, p. 12). In contrast, Tsoukas and Chia (2002, 2011) appear as the natural inheritors of a Whiteheadian process philosophy; becoming and change constitute reality; organization is the outcome of change and the process of organizing.

Practice and process theories of organizations do, of course, share many ontological affinities. Caldwell lists many of them:

> *They are less concerned with a substantive or entitative views of organizations, and more*
> *interested in organizing, changing, and becoming; they prefer a flat ontology without*
> *hierarchical concepts of scale, order or structure; they subsume epistemological ques-*
> *tions of knowledge into ontological categories of practice and process; they prefer a*
> *bottom-up micro-focus on organizing; they appear to reject representational thinking and*
> *naive epistemological realism; they seek to steer away from post-modernist or hyper-*
> *modernist theories as well as the grand narratives of western modernity and the*
> *debilitating legacy of constructionism; they are anti-structuralist, anti-positivist, but*

*not anti-humanist; they are opposed to the idea that theory defines practice - practice is theory, process is practice.*

Crucially for Caldwell, they seek to treat agency in a new manner; rather than a focus on individual actors, subjectivity, or the outmoded agency-structure dichotomy, human agency is distributed and dispersed within processes of becoming or is "carried" within social practices.

There are, however, in Caldwell's view, major differences between a more realist event ontology of practice, in which change and stability coexist within practices as happenings or doings that are indeterminate until they occur, and a process ontology of "organizational becoming," as a continuous process of organizing and changing that is immanent within process (Schatzki 2010). In one case, change and stability are ontologically located in the reality of "social" practices, while in the other case, change or process is treated as ontologically prior to order, stability, or the idea of organization as an entity.

This ontological difference, Caldwell maintains, partly explains why process research is somewhat ambivalent in how it theorizes "practice" and change:

*Becoming is primarily concerned with unpredictable event-like 'processes,' not the repetitive continuity of practices. To suggest that the 'doings' or practices of individuals or organizations as entities might define how change happens appears to be a return to the notion that things or entities are substances that change. There is no substratum or representation substance by which we can define 'organizations' or 'individuals.' But if 'change' is the 'condition of possibility of organization,' this raises important questions of how practices within processes unfold and how they can be carried within processes that are both constantly changing and stable. From the practice perspective, organization and organizing are modes of 'practice,' so continuity and change are coexistent or co-emergent. In contrast, Whiteheadian process perspectives do not derive from a social ontology, so they do not define how 'change' emerges within the vital and indivisible process of becoming–there is only the 'becoming of continuity.'*

Caldwell insists that these important differences need to be addressed:

*The alternative is to become locked into the self-contractions of becoming as a 'process' ontology of 'change' that radically rejects the representational thinking of substance metaphysics and sociological realism, but still treats organizations as relatively stabilized representational entities that are the outcome of organizing. By comparing and contrasting process and the practice theories of change, it may be possible to establish where they are mutually reinforcing and fundamentally incompatible.*

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In terms of further reading, my own personal recommendation would be to start with *Agency and Change* (Caldwell, 2006). It is a difficult read, but it brings together Caldwell's passions about the value of philosophy and social theory in critically advancing organizational change theory, and it is busting with research questions. If, however, one wants to explore the three phases of Caldwell's work, then his separate articles on Foucault, Schatzki, and Whitehead are useful signposts (2007, 2012, forthcoming 2018). Finally, two insightful articles on Senge published in 2012 are also worth

highlighting, because they cover an aspect of Caldwell's work on "system thinking" which preoccupied him in *Agency and Change* and which, I suspect, may reappear, given his long-standing interest in complexity theory as a theory which allows for self-organizing disequilibrium and system change, simultaneously (Caldwell, 2006, p. 99).

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# Kim Cameron Changing the Study of Change: From Effectiveness to Positive Organizational Scholarship

# 17

David S. Bright and Marc Lavine

**Abstract**

Kim Cameron, is a professor at the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. During his career, he has generated several influential contributions that have shaped the field of organizational change. He has been a prolific researcher and writer, authoring 13 books and over 120 articles. Through his research, he has made deep contributions to a broad range of topics including organizational effectiveness, organizational decline and downsizing, organizational culture and the competing values framework, organizational paradox, organizational virtuousness, and positive organizational scholarship.

## Contents

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## Introduction

Kim S. Cameron is the William Russell Kelly Professor of Management and Organizations at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business and professor of higher education in the School of Education. He holds an MA (1976) and Ph.D. (1978) from Yale University and has authored more than 120 articles and 13 books. Cameron's first academic role was as a professor and faculty member at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. After completing a Ph.D. at Yale (1978), he served as an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin. He moved to Boulder, Colorado, where he served as the director of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems – a federally funded research center located on the campus of the University of Colorado. Cameron joined the faculty of the University of Michigan in 1984 and served there until 1995. From 1995 to 2001, he served as Associate Dean at Brigham Young University's Marriott School of Management and then as Dean of Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. He then rejoined the University of Michigan in 2001. He is presently the William Russell Kelly Professor of Management and Organizations and a Professor of the School of Education. He is a cofounder of the Center for Positive Organizations at the University of Michigan.

In preparation for this chapter, we interviewed Cameron for several hours to explore his perspective on how his work has contributed to the field of organizational change. Additionally, we have both coauthored work with Cameron and have long-standing familiarity with, and involvement in, his work. Cameron's work has been highly influential and often groundbreaking. Yet, Cameron is characteristically self-effacing as indicated by his reluctance to many prominent scholars who are featured in this volume. As former students of Cameron's, and as young professors, we have been profoundly touched by his influence and perspective. The process of writing this chapter afforded us an opportunity to explore, and more deeply appreciate, the impressive scope of his work. In this chapter, we interweave his personal history with a discussion of his contributions to scholarly understanding of organizational effectiveness, organizational decline and downsizing, organizational paradox, organizational culture and the competing values framework, organizational virtuousness, and positive organizational scholarship.

## Influences and Motivations: The Son of an Educator

Cameron was raised in the State of Utah where his father, J. Elliot Cameron, was a prominent educational administrator and university president. Kim Cameron's interest in the social sciences grew when he was an undergraduate at Brigham Young

University, where he studied under sociologists James Duke and Reed Bradford. These mentors helped him see the potential for creating positive social change through social science. Also during this period, he served as a teaching assistant under Reed Bradford with his lifelong friends, David Whetten and Robert "Bob" Quinn. Whetten and Quinn also went on to become influential organizational scholars.

After receiving a Master of Science degree in sociology from BYU, Cameron taught for 3 years at Ricks College in Rexburg, Idaho. During this period, he regularly drove the 280 miles from Rexburg to Provo, Utah, to be tutored by another BYU sociologist, W. Keith Warner, who introduced him to evaluation research, a path that he continued to pursue in his Ph.D. studies.

Cameron chose to attend Yale University because of its highly interdisciplinary focus. At Yale, his interest in organizational evaluation led him to focus on the emerging area of organizational effectiveness. Working under the direction of his dissertation chair, Richard Hackman, Cameron conducted a study in which he defined the meaning of organizational effectiveness and created an influential instrument to study the relative effectiveness of 47 universities and colleges, including Harvard and Yale (his colleagues have since joked that his dissertation addressed the question, "Which school is better: Harvard or Yale?").

Other mentors in his early career included Karl Weick, then-editor for *Administrative Science Quarterly*, who pushed Cameron to develop his writing ability and Larry Cummings, a faculty colleague at the University of Wisconsin, who provided much-needed encouragement to Cameron during the challenges of early academic life.

## Key Contributions: A Focus on Practical Problems

Cameron explains that his research topics have been driven by a desire to address problem-centered issues rather than theory-driven issues. After reviewing the full scope of his career, it is clear to us that he possesses a keen sense for the topics that are relevant to particular moments in time. His body of work is characterized by repeated, cutting-edge scholarship that has created a foundation on which others can build. In this review, we primarily address the aspects of his work that may be of particular interest to the organizational development and change community.

## Organizational Effectiveness

In Cameron's first position as an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, he began his scholarly career by publishing works related to his dissertation topic of organizational effectiveness. Two especially influential articles appeared in *Administrative Science Quarterly* (Cameron 1978) and *Organizational Dynamics* (1980). Cameron outlined the major approaches for studying effectiveness and explained that certain organizational systems, such as colleges or universities, can be

characterized as operating through organized chaos. He suggested that many of the then-current ways of understanding organizational effectiveness were irrelevant to higher education, and he established several dimensions for creating an appropriate measure of organizational effectiveness.

Based in this research, he generated a nine-dimensional model of organizational effectiveness that he had derived and validated through his work with 47 colleges in the Northeast: (1) student educational satisfaction, (2) student academic development, (3) student career development, (4) student personal development, (5) faculty and administrator employment satisfaction, (6) professional development and quality of faculty, (7) system openness and community interaction, (8) ability to acquire resources, and (9) organizational health. While this study was particularly relevant to institutions of higher education, it also represented a significant step in the general effort to articulate and measure dimensions of organizational effectiveness in a systematic fashion. In essence, it provided a benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of organizational change in higher education.

This work produced an early, influential instrument, simply known as the Cameron Organizational Effectiveness Instrument (1978). In the study of higher education, Cameron later developed a model (1981) from this instrument that describes four major domains of effectiveness that relate to (1) external adaptation, (2) morale, (3) academics, and (4) extracurricular personal development (see Sidebar 1). These four domains can be used to create a profile of a university's overall effectiveness. Cameron (1981) shows how these fields combine in different configurations to generate different kinds of and degrees of scholarship and other organization-level impacts.

**Sidebar 1 Domains of Organizational Effectiveness in Higher Education**

**External adaptation** includes student development and system openness and community interaction. The community involvement of the institution is the focus given to student preparation and outside-of-school employment.

**Morale** refers to student educational satisfaction, faculty and administration employment satisfaction, and organizational health. High morale among organizational members includes high levels of trust, member commitment, and conflict resolution.

**Academics** envelops student academic development, professional development and quality of the faculty, and ability to acquire resources. These dimensions relate to academic activities and educational outputs.

**Extracurricular** effectiveness focuses on student personal development, the personal nonacademic growth of students, and extracurricular activities.

Source: Adapted from Cameron (1981)

This work from Cameron's early career is still used in research today. His scholarship on organizational effectiveness is summarized in two books:

*Organizational Effectiveness: A Comparison of Multiple Models* (Cameron and Whetten 1983) and, more recently, *Organizational Effectiveness* (Cameron 2010).

## Life Cycles, Decline, and Downsizing

As a result of his work on effectiveness in higher education, Cameron moved to a position at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems where he served as the director of organizational studies. In this role, he was charged to study how to manage colleges and universities more effectively. He traveled the country interviewing important leaders in higher education about the key issues they were facing. He developed a particular interest in the issue of organizational life cycles and organizational decline as dramatic shifts in the US population were slated to result in substantial decline in the number of US undergraduate students. He wrote several prominent articles on organizational life cycles, most notably "Perceptions of organizational life cycles" (Cameron and Whetten 1981) and "Organizational life cycles and shifting criteria of effectiveness" (Quinn and Cameron 1983). A notable model from this work integrated several known models into a four-stage model of development from (1) the entrepreneurial stage, (2) the collectivity stage, (3) the formalization and control stage, and (4) the elaboration and structure stage (see Sidebar 2). This model is valuable as a way of diagnosing the shifting dynamics of change at the organization level, including how the criteria of effectiveness change over time.

**Sidebar 2 Four Stages of the Organizational Life Cycle**
**1. Entrepreneurial stage**

- Marshaling of resources
- Lots of ideas
- Entrepreneurial activities
- Little planning and coordination
- Formation of a "niche"
- "Prime mover" has power

**2. Collectivity stage**

- Informal communication and structure
- Sense of collectivity
- Long hours spent
- Sense of mission
- Innovation continues
- High commitment

(*continued*)

**3. Formalization and control stage**

- Formalization of rules
- Stable structure
- Emphasis on efficiency and maintenance
- Conservatism
- Institutionalized procedures

**4. Elaboration of structure stage**

- Elaboration of structure
- Decentralization
- Domain expansion
- Adaptation
- Renewal

Source: Adapted from Quinn and Cameron (1983)

After 3 years in Colorado, Cameron moved to the University of Michigan in 1984. Shortly after his arrival, he met with an executive from one of the auto companies. As he told it, they had a conversation that went something like the following:

Cameron: "I want to study organizational decline."
Executive: "We're not in decline."
Cameron: "You're about to cut tens of thousands of jobs."
The response: "That's not organizational decline. We call it downsizing."
Cameron: "Well, then that's what I want to study!"

This interest in organizational decline and downsizing shaped much of his research agenda for the next decade. A notable publication of this era was *Organizational Dysfunctions of Decline* (Cameron et al. 1987), which documented the significant, long-term negative impacts of downsizing. In this landmark study, Cameron and his coauthors demonstrated that the large majority of companies receive only a short bump in financial performance when they downsize, but in the long run, they resume their decline.

Later, a coauthored paper with Sara Freeman (Freeman and Cameron 1993) discussed the distinctions between decline and downsizing, and he explained the various strategies for reorganizing and how these relate to changes to work, technology, or organizational structure. He and his colleagues also provided suggestions to managers about how they could carry out a downsizing decision with compassion for the people involved (Cameron et al. 1991).

From a change management perspective, these studies provided important guidance about the potential negative impact of downsizing and suggested the importance of looking at other alternatives for organizational restructuring, as well as the best practices for downsizing in as humane a way as possible.

## Culture and Paradox

As Cameron continued his work on downsizing, he and his colleagues began to see patterns in the tensions that managers were confronting when making difficult decisions. Cameron (1986) and Cameron and Quinn's (1988) edited volume *Organizational Paradox and Transformation*, gave voice to organizational forces beyond those of rationality or linearity, and began to articulate a theory of organizational change that used paradox as a framework to understand change. Cameron (1986) introduced the idea that paradox is an important attribute of effectiveness. That is, "to be effective, an organization must possess attributes that are simultaneously contradictory, even mutually exclusive" (1986, p. 545). He documented several types of "simultaneous opposites" that seem to be essential to effectiveness including loose coupling, specialization vs. generalization, continuity vs. adaptability, deviation amplification vs. deviation reduction, and others. This line of research has been especially insightful and has been cited in over 1,100 publications to date. He helped galvanize interest in paradox by contributing to the foundation for the present-day studies in this area.

Perhaps Cameron's principle contribution in this domain has been through his collaboration with Quinn on the development and use of the competing values framework. The framework highlights the trade-offs, tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes inherent in organizations and their leaders (Cameron et al. 2014; Cameron and Quinn 1988, 2011; Quinn and Cameron 1983). It comprises two dimensions that express the tensions or competing values that characterize all organizations (see Fig. 1). One axis represents the continuum between flexibility and adaptability, juxtaposed by stability or control. The other axis articulates the continuum between efficient internal processes, such as human resources practices or internal control systems, versus external positioning related to stakeholders, such as competitors, customers, and clients. Each continuum highlights performance criteria that are opposite from that of the other end of the continuum, such as internal versus external orientation (horizontal axis) or flexibility versus stability (vertical axis).

Based on the competing values model, Cameron and Quinn developed a widely used instrument to characterize organizational culture and individual leadership, published in *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework* (Cameron and Quinn 2011). This tool has been extensively used as a change management and leadership development resource, and it has been validated through a series of articles and books that have explored its psychometric properties. More than 100,000 people have taken assessment or used the resources in this text (Cameron and Quinn 2011).

The CVF has not only been used to characterize and change organizational culture, but also to promote leadership development. The development of leadership skill also involves paradoxical tensions. Marianne Lewis (2000) has asserted that managers need to recognize and become comfortable with – and even seek to benefit from – the tensions and the anxieties they provoke, for the contribution of paradox to management thinking is the recognition of its power to generate creative insight and change (Lewis 2000, p. 764). Leaders who can embrace inconsistencies and seek to support contradictory elements can simultaneously foster creative, beneficial

Flexibility and Discretion

## Clan (Human Relations)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Orientation** | Collaborative |
| **Leader Type** | Facilitator<br>Mentor<br>Team builder |
| **Value Drivers** | Commitment<br>Communication<br>Development |
| **Theory of Effectiveness** | Human development and participation produce effectiveness |

## Adhocracy (Open Systems)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Orientation** | Creative |
| **Leader Type** | Innovator<br>Entrepreneur<br>Visionary |
| **Value Drivers** | Innovative outputs<br>Transformation<br>Agility |
| **Theory of Effectiveness** | Innovativeness, vision, and new resources produce effectiveness |

Internal focus and integration ← → External Focus and Differentiation

## Hierarchy (Control)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Orientation** | Controlling |
| **Leader Type** | Coordinator<br>Monitor<br>Organizer |
| **Value Drivers** | Efficiency<br>Timeliness<br>Consistency |
| **Theory of Effectiveness** | Control and efficiency with capable processes produce effectiveness |

## Market (Rational Goal)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Orientation** | Competing |
| **Leader Type** | Hard driver<br>Competitor<br>Producer |
| **Value Drivers** | Market share<br>Goal achievement<br>Profitability |
| **Theory of Effectiveness** | Aggressively competing and customer focus produce effectiveness |

Stability and Control

**Fig. 1** The competing values of leadership, effectiveness, and organizational theory (Source: Adapted from Cameron and Quinn 2011)

alternatives (Cameron and Quinn 1988; Poole and van de Ven 1989; Smith and Lewis 2011). Cameron's work in this area has also provided the basis for an articulation of paradoxical leadership (Lavine 2014) and the recognition that paradox can be a useful resource in organizational life.

Cameron's work on paradox has been considerably developed during the last decade. This interest in paradox seems to validate the assertion of several scholars that the transition to the twenty-first century would be characterized by paradox, ambiguity, and complexity (Cameron and Quinn 1988; Handy 1995; Lawrence et al. 2009; Vaill 1989).

## Organizational Virtuousness

As described earlier, Cameron's research in the 1980s and 1990s highlighted the long-term, negative impact of downsizing on most firms (Cameron 1994; Cameron et al. 1987). He noted that this pattern was dominant in more than 80% of the firms he had studied. During the mid-1990s, he became increasingly interested in that atypical subset of organizations, somewhere on the order of 10–15%, which seemed to thrive in the aftermath of downsizing. What accounted for the difference?

This line of questioning led him to hypothesize that these organizations might be characterized by positive dynamics that created a unique set of social resources, which enabled different possibilities during moments of crisis. He began to characterize these organizations as demonstrating "virtuousness."

Feeling very much like he was taking a risk, he summarized his thoughts in a presentation entitled "Organizational Virtues and Organizational Excellence," during the 1997 Academy of Management annual meeting. He was surprised by the positive response this presentation received. One member of the audience suggested that he apply for a grant with the Templeton Foundation on the topic of forgiveness. He applied for and was awarded a sizable grant on the concept of organizational forgiveness, thinking, perhaps, that forgiveness might play a role in recovery from downsizing. This series of interactions led to a dramatic reorientation in the direction of Cameron's research.

In 1998, he assumed the deanship at Case Western Reserve's Weatherhead School of Management, where he began conducting research on forgiveness alongside one of this chapter's coauthors, David Bright, who was then a doctoral student. In 2001, he returned to the faculty at the University of Michigan, where he met another doctoral student, Arran Caza. Together, these three pursued a research stream that examined forgiveness in organizations, along with other virtues. Their efforts culminated in several publications, including "Exploring Organizational Virtuousness and Performance" (Cameron et al. 2004). This article established an empirical foundation for studying perceptions of organizational virtuousness and found that organizations can be generally perceived as virtuous when they encourage the characteristics of optimism. Trust, compassion, forgiveness, and integrity – these virtues were positively related to innovation, quality work, low turnover intent, and customer retention, and all were significantly related to organizational effectiveness.

A later study, "The Amplifying and Buffering Effects of Virtuousness in Downsized Organizations" (Bright et al. 2006), showed that perceptions of various kinds of virtuousness interact to mitigate the harmful effects of downsizing. Specifically, employees were more likely to be forgiving of managers who were willing to take responsibility for the decision to downsize. In addition, forgiveness and responsibility were connected to an overall, general perception of organizational virtuousness. Most importantly, forgiving, virtuous organizations were demonstrably less likely to experience the long-term deleterious effects of downsizing. These findings provided evidence for the amplifying and buffering hypotheses; that is, the nurturing of one or more virtues tends to amplify other virtues, and the general presence of perceived virtuousness tends to buffer organizations from the negative effects of a crisis in organizational life.

Cameron has continued to write about organizational virtuousness in many articles and several books, such as *Leading with Values: Positivity, Virtues and High Performance* (Hess and Cameron 2006) and *The Virtuous Organization* (Manz et al. 2008). These works have stimulated a growing interest in the idea of studying virtues at an organizational level, whereas virtues were previously understood to be the purview of only individual-level analysis.

## Positive Organizational Scholarship

When Cameron returned to the University of Michigan in 2001, he continued to present and promote his developing ideas on organizational virtuousness. At this time, his colleagues Jane Dutton and Robert Quinn were exploring the topics of organizational compassion and authentic leadership. Simultaneously, the positive psychology movement was growing in momentum. In the field of organization development, practices such as appreciative inquiry (AI) were being used to foster transformation and change in organizations.

Together, Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn realized that a fundamental change was emerging among a certain set of scholars and practitioners across the academy. Cameron described it as a shift from studying organizations from a deficiency or deficit perspective toward a perspective of abundance. Thus, these three decided to form a community of scholars who were interested in studying and developing theories that explain and enable positive deviance or unusually favorable outcomes in organizations. Working together with other colleagues at the University of Michigan, they defined a new domain of inquiry: positive organizational scholarship (POS). They later described the phenomenon they were aiming to study as follows:

> Imagine [a] world in which almost all organizations are typified by appreciation, collaboration, virtuousness, vitality, and meaningfulness. Creating abundance and human well-being are key indicators of success. Imagine that members of such organizations are characterized by trustworthiness, resilience, wisdom, humility, and high levels of positive energy. Social relationships and interactions are characterized by compassion, loyalty, honesty, respect, and forgiveness. Significant attention is given to what makes life worth living. Imagine that scholarly researchers emphasize theories of excellence, transcendence, positive deviance, extraordinary performance, and positive spirals of flourishing. (Cameron et al. 2003, p. 1)

Using this vision as an anchor, they organized a small conference – held at the University of Michigan in 2002 – where they invited other scholars to consider how to frame serious scholarship from this "positive" perspective. The event included a number of prominent thinkers such as Whetten, Weick, James March, Jerry Davis, Barbara Fredrickson, Chris Peterson, Amy Wrzesniewski, Jim Ludema, Gretchen Spreitzer, and Wayne Baker, among others, including many doctoral students who were in the formative stages of their careers. The conference marked the beginning of the POS community and area of inquiry. Cameron spearheaded the effort to obtain and assemble chapters from many conference participants, leading to the book *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline* (Cameron et al. 2003) which since has been cited thousands of times.

Cameron and his colleagues have dedicated their efforts to continue and foster momentum on POS. Cameron has written several articles that lay out the basic elements of the POS research agenda or its implications. His books in this area include *Positive Leadership* (Cameron 2012) and *Making the Impossible Possible* (Cameron and Lavine 2006).

## New Insights: Generative Fields of Study

Cameron's work on organizational effectiveness is evident in higher education. His scholarship brought increased precision to the measurement and multidimensional nature of effectiveness. His work on organizational life cycles, decline, and downsizing showed that decline did not ensure ineffectiveness and that downsizing often did not yield the expected performance improvements. Some of his later work in this area, such as Gittell et al. (2006), began to explore topics central to positive organizational scholarship and to Cameron's subsequent research, such as the role that forgiveness and other elements of compassion could play in yielding resilient outcomes in the midst of downsizing and decline.

As authors of this chapter, we both have had the good fortune to be beneficiaries of Cameron's mentorship and collaboration. In the early years of the development of positive organizational scholarship, there was some skepticism about POS and concern that it looked at organizational dynamics through rose-colored glasses. There was, therefore, particular interest in organizational examples that demonstrated POS principles in practice.

Rather than an organization that embodied "sweetness and light," one of the early examples was a situation of organizational decline and downsizing, as well as a first-rate thorny organizational problem: the largest nuclear cleanup and closure in world history at Rocky Flats in Colorado. One of us had the opportunity to conduct research about the organizational performance at Rocky Flats and began to identify positive and resilient practices that seemed to contribute to extraordinary organizational outcomes (work was completed 66 years and $30 billion ahead of schedule to a cleanup standard 200 times greater than initial estimates). This helped provide a rich example and basis for further theorizing about positive organizational dynamics (Cameron and Lavine 2006; Lavine and Cameron 2012).

## A Lasting Legacy: The Positive Lens

When we asked Cameron for his perspective on legacy, he was hesitant to answer the question. Then, he described his belief that work on organizational effectiveness has largely fallen out of favor as an area for serious empirical research. He believes that the reasons for this development are many, but primarily he views the topic of organizational effectiveness as being especially vulnerable to critique and deconstruction. In his view, many different, often competing philosophical approaches have emerged for studying effectiveness, and thus little convergence has occurred around a clearly established set of constructs as the basis for the study of effectiveness.

In this regard, Cameron's greatest hope is that his work of the past two decades on POS will not experience the same fate but rather achieve sustained momentum in the broader social-scientific community. For him, the key is the "S" in Positive Organizational Scholarship. He believes that a research stream can survive only so

long as it provides a conceptual foundation that is amenable to rigorous and empirical scholarship. Thus, though he is hesitant to think about legacy, one of his biggest hopes is that future generations of organizational scholars will be inspired to conduct significant, empirical research on topics that help us understand the conditions for human well-being and flourishing, high-performance organizations.

As we look more carefully at how Cameron's work has influenced various streams of research, the picture is impressive. Scholars who work on any aspect of organizational flourishing or organizational virtues are building on a foundation that Cameron helped establish. Hundreds of articles have emerged from, or been influenced by, the POS movement. Cameron and his colleagues have established the Center for Positive Organizations at the University of Michigan, and the POS community of scholars now includes at least 400 members. Many organization change scholars have drawn on POS research to support innovations in OD practice – for example, in appreciative inquiry and dialogic inquiry.

The phenomenon of organizational virtuousness as a general organizational characteristic has attracted interest from a modest group of researchers, including many in international locations. Researchers have confirmed and extended early findings about perceived organizational virtuousness, including the links to organizational performance. More generally, Cameron's work is often cited to support research on specific virtues, research on values, and writing about corporate social responsibility.

The idea that virtues may be organizational is seen as somewhat controversial, particularly in the virtue ethics community (Bright et al. 2014; Sison and Fontrodona 2015). Just how and under what circumstances, a virtue may be organizational is yet to be clarified. Nevertheless, Cameron's early work has prompted scholars all over the world to explore or consider how to understand this important moral dimension of human organizational systems.

As we noted earlier, the topic of paradox is now a robust area of inquiry. This is evident in the work of scholars such as Marianne Lewis and Wendy Smith and in journal special issues, conference streams, and other scholarly community coalescing around the study of paradox.

As a mentor, Cameron has played an important role in developing future scholars. We have benefited from his tutoring and insight for many years. We entered academia during the nascent stages of Cameron's work on POS. Our collaborations with Cameron propelled us both to continue to explore and contribute to POS research. Notable student coauthors include Sara Freeman and Aneil Mishra, who worked with Cameron on downsizing research. Arran Caza and David Bright worked with him on organizational virtuousness. Marc Lavine partnered with him on work pertaining to positive organizational scholarship. Many others have also benefitted from his teaching.

As a scholar, Cameron has demonstrated a repeated ability to work as a pioneer, or early leader, in many areas of scholarship. Taken as a whole, his deep contribution to many areas of scholarly inquiry is not just impressive, but it would also seem to represent significant change. Yet, another contribution of how Cameron has

approached his work – not just what he has studied – is that he consistently finds ways to integrate or create synergy between topics and even the orientation of varied scholarly views. He has explored empirical and positivist topics, as well as deeply normative ones. This is where his ability to integrate is perhaps most evident. To a topic like effectiveness, Cameron considers the role of paradoxical dynamics and forgiveness. In the normative terrain of positive organizational scholarship and the study of virtuousness, Cameron advocates for empirical rigor and considers the relationship between these things and matters of organizational performance. Finally, he is known as a thoughtful, compassionate, and wise human being who exemplifies the virtues and positive dynamics that he studies.

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# Robert Chin and Kenneth D. Benne: Change Management Biography

# 18

## Mary A. Barnes

### Abstract

Robert Chin and Kenneth Benne spent key years in the middle of their careers working and collaborating with each other. Chin came from a social psychology background while Benne was from an educational philosophy background. During their time together, they founded an interdisciplinary Human Relations Center at Boston University, cowrote a seminal book on planned change with Warren Bennis and, within that text, developed three key strategies for implementing a planned change. Even in their organizational change work, there was always a social undertone to their work. Perhaps more important than the seminal work in planned change that is still referenced today was their individual and collaborative goal to help others accept and leverage – and not just tolerate – diversity in the social system. This chapter discusses their individual influences and motivations, their collaborative work and contributions to the change community, and how their work, both together and separate, inspired others.

### Keywords

Planned change • Change strategies • Organizational change

## Contents

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## Introduction

When I was asked to write about Kenneth Benne and Robert Chin as great change thinkers, I enthusiastically volunteered because of their seminal work on planned change strategies and how much the concept of normative-reeducative change strategies resonated with me and my work as a scholar practitioner/change agent. Until I started researching the comprehensiveness of their work, I had no idea how influential they both were, in their own ways. Benne and Chin found each other when Benne came to Boston University in 1953. At various points in their lives, both had experienced periods of isolation and/or ridicule based on prevailing social norms to which they did not conform. This seemed to bring them together and provided a social undercurrent to their work. While Benne and Chin are known in the organizational change realm, they had much more impact on social change and diversity than I initially realized. Hopefully, the story of Chin and Benne's work and journey will provide the reader with the context and perspective on their work that I found so valuable.

## Influences and Motivations: Isolation Leads to Inspiration

Kenneth D. Benne (1908–1992) was born to German immigrants in rural Kansas. Benne's values were strongly influenced by his father's democratic and unprejudiced attitudes and behavior (Nash 1992). This concept of democracy became a prevailing topic in Benne's work throughout his career.

That career started when Benne became a school teacher in rural Kansas. Benne moved on to complete his B.S. degree in 1930 at Kansas State University with a double major in science and English literature. He completed an M.A. in philosophy at the University of Michigan and a Ph.D. at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1944. After the war, he joined the University of Illinois. He came to the university with glowing recommendations from well-known scholars in the field. John Dewey wrote that he "has one of the most gifted minds in philosophy that I have come across" (Feinberg and Odeshoo 2000, p. 12). W.H. Kilpatrick called him "the most brilliant student who studied under me at Teachers College" (Feinberg and Odeshoo 2000, p. 12). The Dean of the University of Illinois, in justification for the appointment, wrote, "Professor Benne is perhaps the most distinguished scholar who has been brought to the faculty of the College of Education in the past 25 years" (Feinberg and Odeshoo 2000, p. 12).

Benne's earliest influences of his father led him to the first of several distinct concepts for which Benne came to be known. His first focus was as a social

philosopher of education in the vein of John Dewey. The concepts of democracy and democratic education resonated with him, and he focused his theoretical works on this concept. However, theory was not enough. Much like Dewey, he also founded a laboratory for the practical application of theory. In 1947, Benne, along with Kurt Lewin, Ron Lippitt, and Lee Bradford (you can find separate chapters on Lewin and Lippitt in this book), cofounded the National Training Laboratories (NTL) Institute for Applied Behavioral Science. The NTL Institute became a major influence in corporate training of the day and developed the T-group methodology for interpersonal sensitivity training, which is still in use today. His career got off to a great start at Teacher's College and continued to gain momentum at the University of Illinois. However, that only lasted until he was forced to resign in 1953 because of his sexual orientation. In a letter to George Stoddard, the president of the University of Illinois at the time, Benne wrote that "after the initial shock. . . to [his] self-esteem. . . [he has] reassessed as self-objectively as possible my value to the teaching profession. I have concluded that I am worth rehabilitating in the profession, if such rehabilitation is at all possible" (Feinberg and Odeshoo 2000, p. 13). His ability to reflect objectively and willingness to sacrifice in order to spread knowledge as a professor is indicative of his passion for learning and sharing knowledge. After that reflection, and a letter of recommendation from Stoddard, Benne rejoined academia and came to Boston University. At Boston University, his career quickly regained momentum, and he met Robert Chin.

Robert Chin (1918–1990) was born to a Chinese immigrant father and an American-born mother, whose parents had also come from China. His experiences while growing up in New York City (in a neighborhood without other Chinese Americans) left him feeling very different and alone (Saxe and Kubzansky 1991). This early experience seemed to leave an impression on him and found its way into his research and work combatting prejudice and creating social action and change. When World War II began, Chin was a psychology student at Columbia University. He earned his B.A. in 1939, his M.A. in 1940, and his Ph.D. in social psychology in 1943. In 1943, he enrolled in the US Army's Office of Strategic Services where, along with other psychologists, he served in counterintelligence.

At the conclusion of the war, he became a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University. He subsequently moved to Boston University in 1947 where he became a critical part of the institution for the next 32 years. In those first few years at Boston University, he researched and worked with his mentor, Otto Klineberg. Their research looked at the intelligence scores of minorities and challenged the notion of the time that minorities were intellectually inferior to Whites. This work was part of the psychological foundation that contributed to the Brown v. Board of Education decision (Klineberg 1986). Chin met Benne when Benne came to Boston University, and they both became founding members of the Human Relations Center. It was the collaborative nature of the Human Relations Center that produced some of Chin and Benne's most influential work in the organizational change field.

# Key Contributions and Insights: Strategies for Change

## Human Relations Center

In 1953, shortly after Benne joined the faculty at Boston University, the Human Relations Center was created. Endorsed by Harold Case, Boston University's president at the time, Benne was chosen as the center's Executive Director, with Chin from the Department of Psychology, Theodore Berenson from the School of Education, and Francis Hurwitz from the School of Public Relations and Communication as founding members, serving in various roles as administrators, faculty, and staff.

The Human Relations Center had three goals (Choi n.d.):

1. Education – to provide instruction on human relations issues to students, administrators, and faculty
2. Research – to develop and engage applied social science methods to study group and organizational dynamics
3. Community service – to foster best practices on human interactions at the grass roots and local level

A 1956 brochure describes the center not as a school or department, but instead a "university-wide facility which attempts to stimulate and support, in all schools or departments, programs of instruction, research, and community focus in human relations. Its initial focus in the broad spectrum of human relations is upon problems of change in relationships within small groups, organizational, and community settings" (Choi n.d.).

The real power of the center was the collaborative and interdisciplinary environment it fostered. It was here that Chin and Benne began their collaboration. Chin came from a social psychology background, and Benne brought his educational and group dynamics background. At the Human Relations Center, they placed both psychology and social sciences at the center of confronting societal prejudices such as racism and anti-Semitism. It was here that their unique experiences of nonconformity to social norms inspired their research and work. Together, they challenged the limitations of scientific studies on human behavior and relationships.

## The Planning of Change

*The Planning of Change* (1961), written by Warren Bennis, Kenneth Benne, and Robert Chin, was another significant outcome from the collaborative nature of the Human Relations Center and remains one of the most important pieces of literature on understanding organizational planned change. The book is comprised of various works that support the authors' goal to help "the reader in the application of valid and appropriate knowledge in human affairs for the purpose of creating intelligent action necessary to bring about planned change" (Bennis et al. 1961). In the book,

planned change is described as a "conscious, deliberate, and collaborative effort to improve the operation of a human system" (Bennis et al. 1961). Within this book, Benne and Chin bring together the three strategies for implementing change that has become one of their lasting contributions to the study of planned change.

## Strategies for Change

Within the pages of *The Planning of Change*, Chin and Benne partner up to provide three approaches, or strategies, for implementing change in organizational and social contexts. The chapter, which was specifically developed for the second edition of the book, built upon an original paper that Robert Chin developed for a Denver conference in 1967 entitled "Designing Education for the Future – An Eight State Project." Kenneth Benne partnered with Chin in adapting and revising the original paper. In that revision process, a practically new paper emerged. One can see some remnants of the educational focus and first person nature of the paper. Chin and Benne chose to specifically address a planned change. They expanded on the definition of planned change in the broader book by stating that planned changes are "attempts to bring about change [that] are conscious, deliberate, and intended, at least on the part of one or more agents related to the change attempt" (Chin and Benne 1989, p. 22). They further explained that, in planned change, there is "the conscious utilization and application of knowledge as an instrument or tool for modifying patterns and institutions of practice" (Chin and Benne 1989, p. 22).

The strategies of change outlined are empirical-rational, power coercive, and normative-reeducative. They provide a framework for the planning of change that continues to take place in the management of change in organizations and social settings today. The brief description that follows is only meant to provide an overview. For a more detailed understanding of these strategies, explore the other readings suggested in the last section of this chapter.

### Empirical-Rational Strategy

The empirical-rational strategy is founded on the assumption that stakeholders of a change are rational individuals and will change as long as the case is made that it is in their best interests. Furthermore, it is assumed that they will support and enact the change as soon as they understand how the change will benefit them. This strategy, then, is reliant on communicating the benefits convincingly to all concerned and affected parties and delivering appropriate incentives for them to accept the proposed changes.

By looking at Fig. 1 (below), one can see the various components that Chin and Benne attributed to this strategy. Taylor and the concept of scientific management fall under this category, as well as social research and more psychology-driven work. It also makes sense that mass communications is a consideration in this strategy, given the importance of communicating the rationale for change has to the strategy. Components of research and development centers, including Benne and his contemporaries, are also included. While maybe not intuitive, a component of this strategy
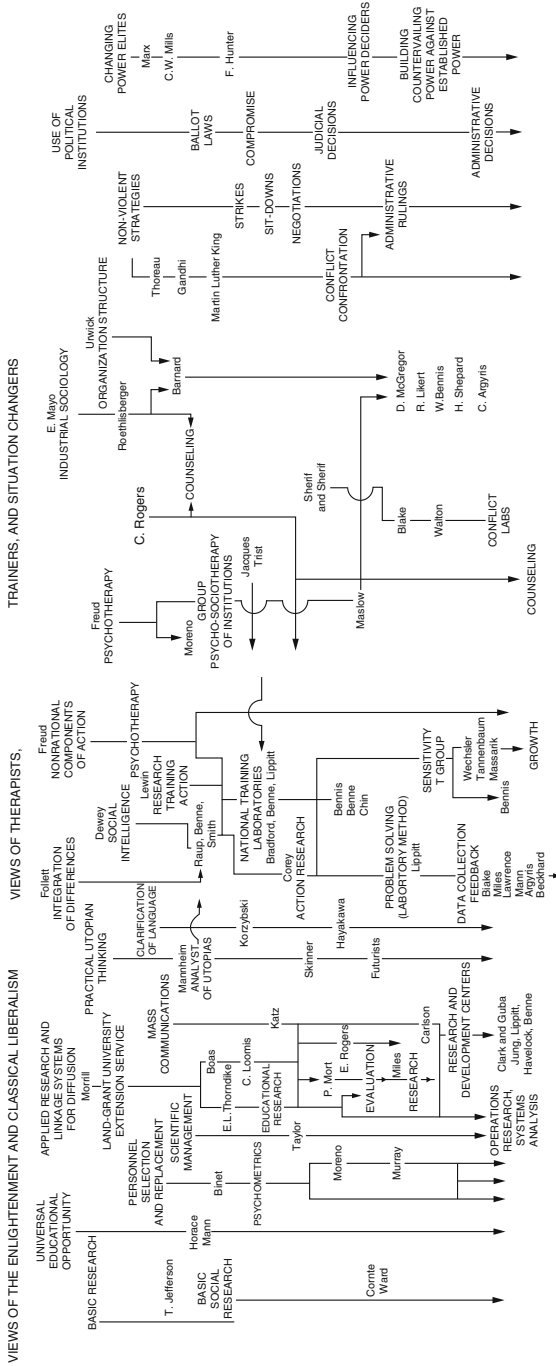
**Fig. 1** Strategies of deliberate changing

is understanding the needs of the stakeholders so that a message can be crafted that will show the stakeholder how the change will meet their needs and/or solve their problems. The psychology and research centers played an important role in figuring out those motivations.

## Power Coercion

The power coercion strategy is best utilized when the urgency for change is high. The basic assumption for this strategy is that the stakeholders of the change will, ultimately, do what they are told. The individual in power assumes the role of a change agent and exercises that power to effect a change. This power may range from subtle manipulation to the application of physical force, and anything in between. The main benefit of this approach is that it is an efficient way to change when urgency is high. However, the presumed benefits of this approach come at the expense of relationships, trust, and the individual commitment and motivation of the employees.

Interestingly, Chin and Benne made specific note that the power can come from a grassroots movement as well. As shown below in the Fig. 1, the nonviolent change strategies of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., union workers, etc. are all listed under this power-coercion strategy. The thought is that the power of numbers and grassroots movements can be used to shame or embarrass leaders into taking the desired action or making the desired change, in effect changing the paradigm and giving the power to coerce and force a change to the masses.

## Normative-Reeducative Strategy

The normative-reeducative strategy is based on the assumption that stakeholders of the change are guided by the desire to conform to social norms and will eventually adhere to the new cultural norms and values established by the social system (normative). This change process is founded on the concept of changing the existing values and norms and developing stakeholder commitment to the new values and norms. Changing values and norms is not as easy as it might sound. This process emphasizes changes in stakeholder skills, knowledge, competencies, and relationships – providing a "reeducation" of the behaviors and values that define the targeted change.

For changes to occur with this strategy, the stakeholder is engaged in the change process. In order to conform to the new social norms, the stakeholder must reflect and reconsider the habits, normative structures, values, institutionalized relationships, and roles that define how they fit into that organizational or social structure. This strategy is reliant on change agents who encourage and support the reeducative process, helping stakeholders develop the new skills and behaviors needed to successfully change. The success of these change agents is dependent on their ability to support learning and to work collaboratively with the stakeholders they are meant to help change.

Chin and Benne note that the normative-reeducative strategy gradually emerged as an effective approach in more modern times. The normative-reeducative strategy emphasizes participation, emergent processes, fair negotiation, trust, and

transparency. This strategy, while seemingly a simple concept, is more complex than the other two and in line with complimentary concepts such as organizational learning.

The figure below provides an overview of the three strategies for change and the various types of change and scholars associated with each strategy. You can see how grassroots, nonviolent strategies find their way under the power-coercive heading. In contrast, their contemporaries, many of whom are in the various chapters of this book, are classified under normative-reeducative.

## New Insights: Continuing on Their Own Path

After Chin and Benne left the Human Relations Center in the 1960s, they continued to expand on their own interests. Kenneth Benne pursued further work on educational theories, building on the concept of reeducation of adults and reconceiving pedagogical authority as "anthropological authority." He expanded his participation and leadership in the Psychology of Education Society (PES), where he collaborated, inspired, and learned from other well-known scholars in the same circle. One such scholar, Maxine Greene (1993), had this to say about Kenneth Benne and his presence at the PES meetings: "when Professor Benne attended meetings of the Philosophy of Education Society, he seemed to many of us to be younger in spirit than the solemn, sometimes cynical, certainly skeptical postmodernists among us. Calling for acknowledgment of an often noble (and too frequently forgotten) past, he was at once beckoning towards a future, trying to move the faithless to a common faith." He continued to write and lecture to attempt to demonstrate, both in theory and in practice, a value in diversity and how we can all come to see that value. Additionally, he explored his passion for poetry, eventually publishing a book of his poems, many of which he had shared in personal correspondence over the years (Nash 1992).

While Benne went back to his academic roots, Robert Chin went back to his ancestral roots, working and studying in Asia. He was a Fulbright scholar at National Taiwan University in 1963 and directed the Social Research Center at the Chinese University in Hong Kong in 1971. In 1969, he and his wife, a sociologist, coauthored a book, *Psychological Research in Communist China*, *1949–1966*. This book, as the title suggests, is an attempt to summarize and analyze the scientific research in the field of psychology from the rise of the Communist Party through the first phases of the Cultural Revolution on mainland China. Beginning in 1979, that collaboration led the Chins to travel throughout China, where they lectured and consulted at major universities, bringing the concept of organizational theory to China, not exactly an easy task. Chin did not spend all of his time after the Human Resource Center in Asia. He participated regularly in the academic and scholarly communities in the West as well. As I spoke to folks about my task of writing this article, I heard personal stories of Chin inviting scholars over to his house to eat Chinese food made from scratch and continue the scholarly conversation with him and his wife in their home. By all accounts, he was a humble, friendly, and brilliant man who enjoyed his

work and colleagues in a pure way. Although both Chin and Benne went their separate ways, their work continued to be influential in the field of social change.

In terms of change, you can see the concepts developed by Chin and Benne in several models and strategies for change developed since, whether they actual cite Chin and Benne and their strategies or not. Some strategies and models – both scholar and practitioner centric – have built on the Chin and Benne model indirectly, addressing perceived shortcomings or creating a more marketable step-by-step process for change agents. Other scholars have taken the three strategies for change outlined by Chin and Benne and built on them more directly.

Quinn et al. (2000) analyzed the common change practices of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jesus Christ. The nonviolent change strategies of Gandhi and King were previously placed in the power-coercive category by Chin and Benne. Quinn, Spreitzer, and Brown (2000) saw a different common thread among those change agents and developed what he called Advanced Change Theory. At the heart of this change theory is the "transforming strategy," a proposed fourth change strategy (Quinn and Sonenshein 2008) for the model Chin and Benne outlined previously.

Szabla (2007) used the Chin and Benne change strategies as his organizing framework to look at resistance to planned change and eventually developed that into the Perception of Change Strategy Scale (Szabla et al. 2016). Nickols (2016) built onto the three original change strategies by Chin and Benne and proposed a fourth, environmental-adaptive. This proposed fourth strategy adds the environment as an additional element and is based on the assumption that people adapt rather easily to new environments, even when they resist change. This fourth strategy advocates creating a new environment and slowly moving people from the old to the new environment and letting undesirable environmental components "die on the vine."

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Quite Elusive Men

For me personally, the legacy of Chin and Benne has evolved as I researched this chapter. At the start, I would have stated that their concepts around normative-reeducative change strategies, and everything that means to scholar practitioners like me, were their legacy – that their concept of culture and learning as the foundation to a successful planned change has helped me build a reputation as someone who successfully creates the desired change with some sense of regularity and reliability. However, as I read and researched their lives before and after their time at the Human Resource Center, I have to say that my understanding of their work and their legacy has deepened. From different perspectives, and founded in different disciplines, Chin and Benne have explored changing hearts and minds, helping people embrace – and not just tolerate – diversity and put their theories into practice in order to actually impact real people in a real way. It is true that Robert Chin and Kenneth Benne have provided important contributions to the organizational change field. However, they have contributed more than that. They each held

true to their early influences and kept a social undertone in their work. Together, they left us the tools and inspiration to leverage, not reject, our differences; to challenge social norms; and to create social change. It is clear that their work is not yet complete and, perhaps, is needed now, more than ever. I feel it is fitting to end with one of Kenneth Benne's poems entitled *Epiphany* from his 1979 Christmas letter (Raywid 1993):

> Others one day, you must agree,
> will voice last words of me.
> Foe, partisan and lover and
> value-free professor.
> Each will think he's true to the man he knew
> Or knows, he feels, from the book.
> Each will say "Look!
> Here he is, this is he;"
> will deal justly,
> Justly as he can, with a quite elusive man.

Both Benne and Chin were elusive in their own way. I'm sure each of them was much more complex than anything I could have pulled up through researching their academic history and work. They seemed to have a passion for their work and let their work take the spotlight. However, I hope that they would think I have captured their essence justly.

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## Further Reading

Below are a few ideas for further reading about Chin and Benne, their influences, and their work. The reference list also has several works to look into, including detailed biographies and tribute articles as well as scholars who have used the Chin and Benne strategies in their modern research.

If you are interested in learning more about the social motivations – about how Chin and Benne were driven to focus on social action and to combat prejudice – you should take a look at historical nonfiction works that describe the prejudice people throughout history have been subjected to.

One to try: Adams, M., Blumenfeld, W., Castaneda, C., Hackman, H. W., Peters, M. L., & Zuniga, X. (Eds.) (2013). *Readings for diversity and social justice* (3rd edn.). New York: Routledge.

If you are interested in their work around social action and planned changex. . .

NTL Institute (http://www.ntl.org/?page=Publications)

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The Bailey/Howe Library at the University of Vermont has a collection of Kenneth Benne's professional papers and correspondence. While the collection is not online and can only be accessed via a trip to the reference library in person, a link to the table of contents can be found here:

http://cdi.uvm.edu/findingaids/resources/bennekenneth/bennekenneth.pdf

In addition to being a great scholar, Kenneth Benne was also a prolific poet, sending a poem each year to friends and family as his Christmas card and eventually self-publishing a collection of his poems

*Teach me to sing of winter: Selected poems, 1930–1987* (self-published in 1988)

Box 7 of the archives of Benne's work at the University of Vermont contains his poetry.

Information on the Human Resource Center at Boston University

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# David Coghlan: The World of the Scholar Practitioner and Practical Knowing

Geralyn Hynes

**Abstract**

David Coghlan is first and foremost a scholar practitioner who has interrogated what this means both philosophically and as a practitioner of and educator in organization development (OD). He is most widely known for his conceptualization of insider action research and for introducing action research and OD to new audiences across different disciplines and settings through the book *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, now in its fourth edition. As action research becomes increasingly diffuse in terms of different modalities, Coghlan's theoretical papers on authenticity, practical knowing and interiority offer core ideas that speak to and transcend the particularity of each modality. Coghlan is a major contributor to the field of OD through his writing and editing work. His exploration of the OD/action research heritage includes its history, modes of expression, and action research's rejected place in the academy. He coedited *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*, a major contribution to the world of action research that brings together its myriad histories, contributors, theories, methods, and practices. This work represents an important characteristic of Coghlan's writing, namely, his exploration of relationships between ideas such as action learning and action research, thus, bringing a freshness to how we apply them to practice. Coghlan remains a prolific writer in his field, and his oeuvre reflects his ongoing work toward articulating of a philosophy of OD.

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## Introduction

David Coghlan, professor emeritus at the Trinity Business School, Trinity College Dublin (FTCD Emeritus), is perhaps most widely known for his writing on organization development (OD) and insider action research. By bringing forward the idea of insider action research, he introduced generations of different professional groups to action research and the world of OD. Along with the late Teresa Brannick, he coauthored *Doing Action Research in Your own Organization*, which is now in its fourth edition (Coghlan and Brannick 2014). That book, which has a wide and international multidisciplinary readership, provides both a conceptualization of insider action research and a practical guide for researchers. Insider action research is now a well-established field of inquiry across public and private sectors (Coghlan et al. 2015) and is gaining increasing traction in doctoral research (Coghlan 2007; Coghlan and Holian 2015; Holian and Coghlan 2013). Coghlan was elected a fellow of Trinity College Dublin in 2005.

In a series of papers, he laid down the building blocks for the development of a philosophy for OD. In this, he is following the footsteps of others – including Edgar Schein – but is marking out new territory through his writing on the scholar-practitioner (Coghlan 2013b; Coghlan and Shani 2009), authenticity (Coghlan 2008), and interiority (Coghlan 2010a) that both speak to the contemporary debates surrounding OD and offer a unifying structure within which OD practitioners using diverse approaches can operate. Along the way, he coedited the groundbreaking *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014) that, for the first time, drew together different traditions, philosophies, settings, and applications of action research. He has also edited a number of special issues for journals, including *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (Coghlan and Shani 2009), *Action Research* (Coghlan and Holian 2007), *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (1995), and *Organization Development Journal* (Coghlan 1996b, 1997a). He remains a prolific writer in the field of OD and action research, with 170 peer-reviewed publications, and sits on the boards of a number of journals that have an interest in

action research. His corpus reflects the juxtaposition of influences including his spirituality, early career, OD education, and the work of the philosopher, Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), culminating in an articulation of first person inquiry that underpins not only his writing but also his own practice and engagement with others.

In his most recent book (Coghlan 2016a), he demonstrated how he operationalizes his own scholarly practice as a university educator. This is significant at several levels. It provides a counterforce to the prevailing techno-rational approach to university education and also demonstrates how practical knowing can be privileged, even within the higher education culture of today. There is a subversive quality to this work that is immediately recognizable to insider action researchers in several ways. Coghlan brings into sharp focus his efforts to align his espoused theories with theories in use; he is challenging embedded practices in third-level education; and he is articulating his first-, second-, and third-person practice with attention to quality and rigor in the process. Thus, in this book, he is speaking to wide multidisciplinary readership in his articulation of what it means to be a scholar-practitioner, to continually question his own practice, and to interrogate his theories in use against a clear set of quality parameters.

## Influences and Motivations: Inquiry as a Way of Being

As a priest and member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuit order) in Ireland, Coghlan is immersed in the tradition of Ignatian and Jesuit spirituality. With this comes a view of prayer and activity as integrally linked in a cycle, with each shaping the other. Coghlan joined the Jesuit order at a time in which profound changes were beginning to unfold in the Catholic Church as a whole. There followed a growing interest in historical research about the Ignatian and Jesuit sources, particularly the writings of Ignatius, the founder, to rediscover his original spirit. In a 2005 paper, Coghlan explored how motifs of Ignatian spirituality – with its emphasis on action – overlap with action research to form a transformational social science (Coghlan 2005). Thus, for those who practice Ignition spirituality, the overlap finds complementarity and added richness in the relationship between experiential knowing that is drawn from religious faith and inquiry in action that is associated with action research and its attendant emphasis on rigor and quality of inquiry. The overlap provides a powerful context and backdrop to Coghlan's focus and development of first-, second-, and third-person inquiry in action research and more recent writing on practical knowing, authenticity, and interiority. But it would be wrong to simply see these themes in his writing as end products of the practice of Ignatian spirituality and action research. More than that, their central concepts are fundamental points of reference that guide his writing and practice.

In his early life as a Jesuit in the 1970s, Coghlan was influenced by Carl Rogers' ideas of the self, the capacity of the person to self-direct, and the role of the professional helper as one who facilitates this self-direction. With psychologist Eddie McIlduff, Coghlan examined the term "nondirectiveness" that was central to a

Rogerian approach. They published papers on structuring-unstructuring and directiveness-nondirectiveness as discrete and interdependent dimensions of facilitator behavior (Coghlan and McIlduff 1990). The level and nature of direction provided by the facilitator is influenced by their attitude/disposition and motivation. However, there is always some degree of structure to group work. Attention to the structuring-unstructuring continuum provides a way of understanding how structures can influence the freedom and ownership experienced by groups of their own decision-making and goal definitions. At the same time, facilitators work along a behavior continuum that can be described in directive-nondirective terms. Coghlan subsequently explored the relevance of these ideas to process consultation and OD (Coghlan 1993, 2002) and to the design and execution of large complex research projects (Coughlan and Coghlan 2011). The structuring-unstructuring and directiveness-nondirectiveness dimensions remain important aspects in Coghlan's practice (Coghlan 2016a). Coghlan maintained a close social and professional 40-year relationship with McIlduff and his wife, Teresa Brannick, an academic. Brannick, known for her expertise in research methodologies, encouraged Coghlan to adopt action research for his doctoral work at a time in which there was no such tradition in Irish universities. Coghlan's collaboration with Brannick eventually led to their writing *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* (Coghlan and Brannick 2014).

## Organization Development

In 1974, Coghlan was sent to work in a newly formed parish and with a newly appointed parish priest who had an interest in bringing organization and community development practices to his way of working and who owned a collection of books on group dynamics and experiential learning. The collection included the set of six books in the Addison-Wesley OD series that were published in 1969 and which were seminal in defining the field. Thus began Coghlan's introduction to OD; among the authors of the priest's books, Dick Beckhard and Edgar Schein became a major influence that continues to the present. Schein's *Process Consultation: It's Role in Organization Development* as an approach to inquiry into organizational dynamics resonated with Rogers' client-centered approach and was directed toward a helping relationship in which collaborative engagement, diagnosis, and intervention run concurrently, allowing clients to make sense of their organizational experiences and to take action. Beckhard's (1969) *Organization Development: Strategy and Models* provided Coghlan with a framework for working with large systems that posed questions about the kinds of issues leaders and facilitators of large system change need to address. This early introduction, which guided the work that Coghlan and his colleague were attempting to do in the parish, marked his entry into the field of OD.

When Coghlan began the master's degree program in the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology's (UMIST) Department of Management Science in 1979, he became familiar with Lewin's work. This, along with his early reading of OD pioneers such as Schein and Beckhard, informed his developing OD practice, and, in 1982, he was asked to support the development and implementation

of a strategy in the Jesuit order in Ireland. This work would subsequently form the basis for his doctoral studies. The influence of OD pioneers including Schein and Beckhard on his OD consultancy practice during the 1990s is evident in his writings about the organizational dynamics of religious orders' strategic planning and change management during that period (Coghlan 1997b). At UMIST, Coghlan was also introduced to action learning and the work of Reginald "Reg" Revans (1907–2003). Much later, Coghlan opened debate on the relationship between action learning and action research, while also integrating action learning into his own practice and research collaborations.

In the 1980s in the USA, fellow Jesuit Nicholas Rashford introduced Coghlan to the notion of organizational levels and interlevel dynamics. Together, they published nine papers exploring organizational levels and interlevels in the contexts of change, strategy, educational administration, and learning. These papers led to a publication in the Addison-Wesley OD series (Rashford and Coghlan 1994) and later *Organizational Change and Strategy: An Interlevel Dynamics Approach*, which is now in its second edition (Coghlan et al. 2016). Coghlan applied the ideas of organizational levels and intervals to his doctoral studies, which were based on and grew out of his strategy work for the Jesuit order in Ireland (Coghlan 1996a). After two workshops in NTL (one with Ron Lippitt), Coghlan reported an increase in confidence and competence in designing and intervening in experiential workshops. He was immersed in what was referred to as the laboratory method, a philosophy of learning and changing that was grounded in humanistic assumptions about the thrust in the human person toward self-actualization, what Rogers called the "formative tendency," and the educator's role in setting the conditions for learning and changing to occur. His core reading at the time was Schein and Bennis's (1965) *Personal and Organizational Change through Group Methods* and Benne et al.'s (1975) *The Laboratory Method of Changing and Learning*.

Coghlan enrolled in the Sloan Fellows program at MIT in 1984 and was mentored by Schein. With Schein's support, Coghlan designed his own elective in which he requested a paper from each of several Sloan faculty members and held a follow-up meeting to discuss those papers. Among those he approached were Donald Schon, John Carroll, Lotte Bailyn, Ed Nevis, and David Anderson. Coghlan's design and completion of this elective emphasized his immersion in OD at that time and also highlighted Schein's mentorship role. Coghlan chose the topic of strategic planning in religious orders under the supervision of Arnoldo Hax, an expert in strategic management, for his thesis. He wrote up his experience of the strategic process in the Irish Jesuit order, in addition to the experiences of two other orders. His subsequent article about this topic (Coghlan 1987) was featured in *The Financial Times* and was picked up by the Irish media.

Upon his return to Ireland, Coghlan continued his work as an internal OD consultant to support the changes underway in the Jesuit order, and he completed his doctoral study in 1993. By that time, he was a full-time faculty member at the National College of Industrial Relations (NCIR) in Dublin and taught OD for personnel managers across a range of programs. He was also increasingly in demand as an OD consultant in both business and nonprofit organizations. In 1994, he joined

the TCD Department of Business Studies. He cited a number of works by OD writers who were of particular importance to him in his intellectual development at the time: Schein's writings, especially a Sloan MIT working paper (Schein 2010/1989; Argyris and Schon's 1974) *Theory-in-Practice*, and Rami Shani and Bill Pasmore's writing on action research (Shani and Pasmore 2010/1985). His OD reading brought him to the connection between OD and action research and the idea of action research as researching in action. At this time, he met Beckhard, who conducted workshops in Dublin on an executive program on which Coghlan worked. Through most of the 1990s, Coghlan's action research was grounded in the ideas of Lewin, Schein, Argyris, Beckhard, and Shani, as well as in other OD literature.

## Action Research and First-Person Inquiry

In 1998, Coghlan was invited to the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) at the University of Bath School of Management. CARPP was established as an international network of people and institutions to develop the theory and practice of action research with a particular focus on bringing an attitude of inquiry and learning to justice and sustainability. Coghlan engaged with CARPP as an examiner for 10 years and participated in several of the center's biannual experiential conferences, Emerging Approaches to Inquiry. Among those he met through CARPP were Peter Reason, Bill Torbert, Judi Marshall, Bjorn Gustavsen, Mike Pedler, and Olav Eikeland. Coghlan was being exposed to different notions of action research, not the least of which were the ideas of first-, second-, and third-person inquiry (Chandler and Torbert 2003) and living life as inquiry (Marshall 1999, 2004). From those ideas, he found an intellectual home that was to subsequently characterize his action research writing, namely, the idea of first-, second-, and third-person practice and the OD/action researcher as a scholar-practitioner.

As he became more immersed in exploring what it means to be a scholar-practitioner, to hold different ways of knowing and to question how people come to know what they know in their everyday worlds of practice, Coghlan returned to the work of philosopher Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984), which he had studied as a young Jesuit. During the past decade, Lonergan's ideas have been central to Coghlan's writing in both advancing the work of his longtime mentor Edgar Schein (Coghlan 2009) and setting out theoretical frameworks for first-, second-, and third-person practice and practical knowing. Through his writing, Coghlan has made it known that he is working toward a Lonergan-based philosophy of OD.

## Key Contributions: Advancing Organization Development Theory and Practice

Coghlan described himself as being situated in the field of OD that is framed within action-oriented philosophy and methods. His major contributions to OD can be viewed from a number of perspectives: first, his theoretical and practical

contributions to OD and action research communities through his writing and education and consultancy practice that range from framing a philosophy for practical knowing to framing interlevel dynamics; second, his framing of insider action research; third, *the SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* that for the first time brought together the broad range of ideas, approaches, and theories in what is an increasingly eclectic field of action research; and fourth, his editing work that included special issues of journals in the OD field and two four-volume sets he coedited with Rami Shani: *The Fundamentals of OD* (Coghlan and Shani 2010) and *Action Research in Business and Management* (Coghlan and Shani 2016).

One might also look at his contributions in terms of the reach he has achieved through his writing. Through insider action research, for example, he introduced OD to a huge audience of practitioners, including educators, healthcare professionals, and managers. Through his collaboration with colleague Paul Coughlan, he introduced action research to the field of operations management (Coughlan and Coghlan 2002). His contributions might equally be seen from his capacity to engage with new ideas and different perspectives as, for example, where he has been to the fore in the debate about action learning as a research methodology in networks (Coughlan and Coghlan 2011).

## Concepts and Philosophy

Coghlan grounded his organization development and action research (OD/AR) scholarship in Lonergan's general empirical method as expressed through the operations of human knowing or operations of cognitional structure, namely, experience, understanding, and judgment. Coghlan made the point that the idea of extended epistemology (Reason and Heron 2008) – or four ways of knowing in action research, namely, experiential, presentational, epistemological, and practical – each involves experience, understanding, and judgment. Examining the conscious process involved in our achievement of knowledge tells us more about *how* we know than *what* we know. Objectivity and subjectivity are complementary rather than oppositional, the former distinguishing between self and other and the latter getting in touch with the particularity of one's own perspective. In applying the general empirical method to modalities of action research, Coghlan (2010b) did not make a case for a single overarching method. Rather, his argument was about the importance of clarifying how operations of cognitional structure are expressed in each modality and how then we attend to them in a way that reflects the conceptual underpinnings of a particular modality. This argument challenged any conflation of modalities, while also addressing the importance of particularity in a given modality.

Coghlan has so far produced three major ideas that draw on Lonergan's general empirical method to frame how the scholar practitioner and action researcher appropriate self-understanding where beliefs, values, assumptions, ways of thinking, strategies, behaviors, and so on are afforded a central place of inquiry in our action research practice. These ideas involve authenticity, practical knowing, and interiority.

I.  Authenticity as a quality in the researcher (as distinct from quality in the data) and first-person practice (Coghlan 2008): Simply put, authenticity as the precept for the general empirical method requires one to be attentive to observable data, be intelligent in envisaging possible explanations of that data, be reasonable in selecting the explanations that provide the best account of the data, and be responsible for his or her actions. This extends well beyond an introspective kind of reflection to a drive toward meaning and action. Coghlan drew attention to how we construct meanings in organizations and social worlds, in language and symbols, and attention to values, behavior, and assumptions in action research. His insight is the relationship between Lonergan and Argyris' action science and Torbert's developmental action inquiry. Those authors share a common focus on the process of inquiry, self-reflection, and attending to the knowing on which we base our actions. Doing so authentically means being in a state of tension or learning to check one's understanding, values, assumptions, and so on. In action science, this finds expression in questioning espoused theories and theories in use, and in developmental action inquiry, through questioning the types of speech that shape a conversation. As a quality in the researcher rather than quality of the data, authenticity is an ongoing process of development and does not have an end point in the sense that it is something to which we aspire.

II. Philosophy of practical knowing for action research (Coghlan 2009, 2016b): A special issue of *The Journal of Behavioral Science* was produced in 2009 and edited by Coghlan and Shani (2009) to mark Schein's 80th birthday and critically engage with his contributions to organizational scholarship and practice. In this issue, Coghlan advanced Schein's work by offering a philosophical epistemological basis for how process consultation and clinical inquiry enable a person to perceive, understand, judge, and act. Coghlan drew on Lonergan's idea of the realm of common sense knowing – that is to say, *what* we know and *how* we know in our everyday living. Coghlan equated common sense knowing with practical knowing that is recognized and privileged in action research, and he grounded Schein's process consultation and clinical inquiry in Lonergan's general empirical method as a philosophical foundation in the realm of practical knowing. In so doing, Coghlan provided epistemic grounds on which clinical inquiry research could be based, creating a framework for methodology and methods, to researchers and scholar practitioners. In a recent paper (Coghlan 2016b), Coghlan detailed the philosophy of practical knowing for action research. Practical knowing focuses on the interest and concerns of human living and the successful performance of daily tasks to deal with situations as they arise and address their particularity. He wrote that "at its core, practical knowing describes things as they relate to us; it is a descriptive, subject-centered context of knowing that is not interested in universal solutions (Coghlan 2010a, p. 293)." It operates in our everyday language and communicative methods – such as body language – and moves fluently between sayings and meanings. Practical knowing provides us with proverbs and rules of advice distinct from propositional knowing with its definitions and universal propositions.

Referring to the ideas of Aristotle, Husserl, Schutz, and Dewey in addition to those of Lonergan, Coghlan set out four core characteristics of practical knowing as (1) everyday concerns of human living, (2) how practical knowing is socially derived and constructed, (3) how practical knowing attends to the particularity of a given situation/moment, and (4) how practical action is driven by values and is fundamentally an ethical process. These four characteristics provide clarity and guidance to the theory and practice of action research through first-, second-, and third-person practice. Coghlan's expression of a philosophy of practical knowing is important not only in terms of how he maps the four characteristics against first-, second-, and third-person practice but in terms of checking the focus on propositional knowledge that characterizes much of the action research literature.

III. Interiority (Coghlan 2010a): Drawing on Lonergan's idea of interiority as a way of holding different forms of knowing by appropriating oneself as a knower in a process of intellectual self-awareness, Coghlan referred to the movement between different forms of knowing, enabling us to understand and find meaning in an experience through, for example, aesthetic knowing, while acknowledging that there are other explanations or ways of understanding or engaging. Interiority thus focuses on awareness of the process of knowing and provides action researchers with a way of recognizing and interrogating the movement between different forms of knowing in the action research process. By way of examples of applying interiority, Coghlan highlighted techniques of action science – such as double-loop learning, the ladder of inference, and treating facts as hypotheses. Such techniques help draw attention to *how* we know rather than on *what* we know.

## Interlevel Dynamics

Large system change is a systemic interlevel process. Levels of analysis typically refer to the identification of issues as units of complexity, such as the individual, the group, the intergroup, and the organization, and are important dimensions of OD and action research. An interlevel perspective holds that each level (the individual, the group/team, the interdepartmental group, and the organization) has a dynamic relationship with each of the others. Dysfunction at any of the four levels can result in dysfunction at any of the remaining three. This relationship is grounded in what is referred to as the recursive system model in system dynamics. The recursive system model represents patterns of feedback loops and sequences of interaction that link and integrate elements of a system. Thus, the focus is on viewing patterns of interaction that influence each other and the impacts that cultural perspectives from any one individual, group, or department bring to bear on a change. Intergroup and interdepartment differences and assumptions need to be acknowledged and explored.

Interlevel dynamics offer important insights on the complex iterations of individual, the group/team, the interdepartmental group, and the organizational interactions in large system change and therefore their importance in strategic action planning and implementation. Position in terms of hierarchy on the chain of command also impacts on the functioning of the four levels. The individual who is higher

up the chain of command and who is not functioning is more likely to have a negative effect on all levels. Individuals such as team leaders, managers, or supervisors who cross boundaries between their area of responsibility and other functions within an organization are interacting in interlevel dynamics.

Since organizational change is a multilevel activity, behavioral change is needed on all four levels. An intervention on one level may have intended and/or unintended impact on another level such as the effect of individual incentive schemes on team working. A systemic view of the interrelationships of individual, team, interdepartmental group, and organization is therefore an important part of OD practitioner's frame of reference for their work. Drawing on Beckhard's writing on work on large system change OD, Coghlan (1998) brought interlevel dynamics to his OD work for religious orders that were experiencing considerable challenges in relation to strategy formulation and implementation. In his writing about process consultation, Schein (1999) drew on interlevel dynamics in his classification of client roles and levels of problems or issues. In addition to providing a framework for examining client roles and issues, interlevel dynamics helps frame importance of examining the implications of the client's decision-making arising from the consultation process.

## Insider Action Research

In 1996, Coghlan noted the absence of relevant reading materials for his students pursuing a Master of Professional Practice Degree. He developed notes for his sessions, picking up on the issues the students raised, and began to frame what he termed "insider action research." This led to the publication of *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, coauthored with Brannick; their book is now recognized as a core text for action researchers undertaking insider action research around the world. Insider action research is understood as action research that is undertaken by complete members of an organization in order to inquire into the workings of their own organizational system and bring about a change through first-, second-, and third-person inquiry (Coghlan and Brannick 2014). In the age of ongoing professional development and education, interest in insider action research as a way of examining the application of extant theory to practice and generating insights toward actionable knowledge has increased. With this interest, insider action research has gained a place on MBA programs and as a method for doctoral research giving rise to a raft of publications from diverse areas such as industry, education, healthcare, and social work including manager-led and practitioner-led projects (Coghlan and Brannick 2014).

Coghlan and Brannick framed the key issues and challenges associated with insider action research as preunderstanding, role duality, and organizational politics, each of which may reflect strengths and challenges in terms of being *within* and knowing the system and challenges in terms of difficulties in identifying and interrogating theories in use. Through his insider action research writing, Coghlan introduced practitioners to the world of OD and action research. This is particularly

significant in sectors such as healthcare, where different professional groups face the challenges of introducing change or developing practice within a complex system without any prior OD training and experience and often with minimal training in change management. Since the first edition, Coghlan has built a body of work around insider action research, addressing theoretical, practical, and organizational themes. He has since incorporated his Lonergan-based ideas as underpinning knowing in action and first-person inquiry in insider action research writing, bringing a focus on practical knowing, first-person inquiry, and the scholar practitioner.

## Encyclopedia of Action Research

In 2010, Sage invited Coghlan to be the lead editor on a proposed *Encyclopedia of Action Research*. Coghlan approached Mary Brydon-Miller, whose field is participatory action research, to coedit, and they built an editorial group representing a spread of expertise in the field of action research. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* was published in 2014 with 320 entries, bringing the increasingly diffuse and dynamic nature of action research and the settings in which it is undertaken together for the first time. The encyclopedia explored the entire area of action research and included an examination of theoretical and methodological trends in the field. It also offered insight into the diffusion of action research, the relationships between different modalities, and the relevance of philosophical concepts to action-oriented inquiry (Brydon-Miller and Coghlan 2014; Dick 2015; Greenwood 2015).

## Editorship and Heritage

Coghlan was invited to contribute to the *Academy of Management Annals* with a paper about action research in which he provided a rich exploration of action research, its history, the varieties of its expression, and its rejected place in the academy (Coghlan 2011). In a separate publication, Coghlan traced the history, modes of expression, and evolving relationship of OD and action research (Coghlan 2012). He also collaborated with Shani in two four-volume sets that brought together the seminal papers in the respective fields of organization development (Coghlan and Shani 2010) and action research in business and management (Coghlan and Shani 2016). These volumes mapped the terrain in both fields and, in so doing, provided researchers with a foundation on the breadth, richness, and depth of OD and action research. They also captured the OD and action research narrative as both fields developed over the years. In OD, they offered seven core characteristics that – though understood differently by different generations – remain core, namely, OD as continually evolving, OD as reflexive, OD as collaborative research, OD work as embedded in relationships, OD as relevant in any context, and educating for OD.

Of the five special issues for OD journals that Coghlan edited or coedited, one – completed in 1995 for the *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, with Schein and Argyris among the contributors – focused on action science and organizational

research. Other special issues included those mentioned earlier (Coghlan and Shani 2009), which addressed the scholar practitioner – focusing on Schein's work – as well as *Action Research* on insider action research (Coghlan and Holian 2007). Coghlan guest-edited a special *Organization Development Journal* issue on OD in voluntary organizations in 1996 and a special issue on "Grandmasters of OD" in 1997. This was a novel undertaking, whereby he invited those whom he considered to be OD grandmasters to contribute their reflections on 30 years in the field. This issue became the most sought-after and reprinted issue of that journal. In 2006, Coghlan coedited another special edition, this time with Joe McDonagh on OD and IT (McDonagh and Coghlan 2001).

## New Insights: Articulating the Conceptual Underpinnings for Action Research

As a field of inquiry, insider action research has opened up new debates within the action research world. Coghlan has been to the fore in articulating what it means to be a scholar practitioner engaged in ongoing inquiry into practice (Coghlan 2013b) with a focus on first-person inquiry. He has invited us to consider how we operate different forms of knowing and our interiority. Coghlan reflected this in his recent book *Inside Organizations: Exploring Organizational Experiences* (Coghlan 2016a), in which he encouraged students to pay attention to what goes on in organizations and to question their experiences not least of the organizational underworld. Understanding the process of change through an interlevel dynamics lens provided an understanding of why a widely supported policy in a hospital should prove impossible to implement. While conflicting philosophies of care lay at the heart of the central problem, they manifested in different ways across individual, team, inter-team, and organizational levels, giving rise to the need for specific strategies in and between each level (Hynes et al. 2015).

Coghlan continues to collaborate with others within the field of OD and beyond, developing different dimensions of insider action research, including ethical issues relating to role duality (Coghlan and Holian 2007; Holian and Coghlan 2013), doctoral research (Coghlan and Holian 2015), quality in action research (Coghlan and Shani 2014), and organizational learning mechanisms (Coghlan et al. 2015). In 2007, the journal, *Action Research*, produced a special issue on insider action research with papers presenting the topic's influence and potential in OD, participatory action research, and education.

While the insider action research literature has a strong focus on the individual, there is also a move toward examining its role in having a broader institutional purpose in continuous organizational learning improvement and enhanced organization agility (Coghlan et al. 2015). This raises the expectation for insider action research in terms of its contribution to the financial and human resources and the organizational vision and strategy. From three longitudinal action research projects within a pharmaceutical company, Roth et al. (2007) identified key strategies for insider action research, namely, establishing the right stakeholders and sponsors to

support decision-making, being street smart, ensuring organizational memory of early wins, and positioning the project as an organization change program. Coghlan and Shani (2015) have recently advanced insider action research as a way to build dynamic change capability within organizations. In addition to enhancing organizations' agility, insider action research enables members to shape their organizations in a way that contrasts sharply with traditional change management. This, however, raises questions about how insider action researchers approach cycles of action research in a planned way in a large system and the conceptual underpinnings informing their action research modality.

Coghlan's reach in terms of engaging with action-oriented inquiry modalities has generated new debates about their interrelationship, the most prominent being the association between action learning and action research. Coghlan has been to the fore in bringing forward the debate about the role of action learning in first- and second-person inquiry. He has incorporated Revans' learning formula $L = P + Q$ (where $L$ = learning, $P$ = programmed knowledge, and $Q$ = questioning insight) as an underpinning for reflexive engagement in planning and implementing change (Coghlan et al. 2016). He has also been to the fore in the debate about action learning research (Coghlan 2013a) and coauthored a series of papers exploring the integration of action learning and action research in the field of operations management (Coghlan and Coughlan 2008, 2011, 2016). Through action learning research, Coghlan and Coughlan (2015) reported on how action learning involving transportation equipment industry generated shared operational and strategic insight into collaborative improvement that resulted in systemic change and improved practice. A key finding from this work was the importance of commitment to action and to the emergent learning that stems from insights arising from the action.

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: Toward a Philosophy for OD

The conceptualization of insider action research and the development of a body of work to support its theoretical underpinnings is one of Coghlan's most important legacies and the one for which he is best known. He positioned himself within the OD/AR tradition and *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization*, setting out to speak to this audience. Coghlan's insider action research with its Lonergan-based ideas is a moral enterprise and stands well apart from a standard research methods text or road map. He characterized practical knowing as being values driven and fundamentally ethical (Coghlan 2013c), better served by the idea of interiority. This reflected a move away from a "system based on logic to a system grounded in method, from ethics imposed from outside to personal authenticity (Coghlan 2013c, p. 350)." Therefore, insider action research must be understood in terms of its theoretical underpinnings. At first blush, *Doing Action Research in Your Own Organization* might seem like an easy read to a person coming to it for the first time. Coghlan's style of writing is indeed engaging and accessible. But the concepts that he presents as its underpinnings are profound and challenging, not least because they privilege a form of knowing that we have been taught to view as not academic,

and they place an onus on us to interrogate our assumptions. In other words, it is my view that his papers setting out authenticity, a philosophy of practical knowing and interiority, should not be construed as background reading but rather as core to developing an understanding of first-person inquiry. Therein lie both a core dimension to his legacy and the danger of insider action research's becoming decoupled from its foundational basis as it becomes more established as a mechanism for organizational change. Coghlan is working toward a complete philosophy of OD; this will be important in ensuring that insider action research is understood in its totality.

Insider action research has also found resonance within action researchers engaged in other action research modalities, including participatory action research. As insider action research finds its way into different modalities, this should generate interesting conversations between them, if undertaken in the spirit of maintaining the integrity of the underlying concepts of each.

*The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research* is a significant legacy and contribution to the action research community around the world. In my view, this legacy does not simply bring together the very different worlds of theories and settings in which action research resides. Rather, it recognizes and celebrates different forms of knowing and cultural contexts from which action research has developed, while also providing an opportunity for conversations across differences. Coghlan reported that – though he has been immersed in action research for nearly 40 years – he was exposed to ideas that he had not previously encountered through his work on the encyclopedia. This demonstrated the diversity of action research and its aliveness in today's world.

By way of unfinished business, Coghlan's development of a complete philosophy of OD is a work in progress, and we can anticipate more on this from him. There are also a number of avenues yet to be explored, which would bring his theoretical underpinnings further into the world of practitioners. His recent book (Coghlan 2016a), which came from his own approach to educating undergraduates, could be complemented by his own first-person inquiry as a scholar-practitioner in higher education. In my view, this would be an important contribution for two reasons. First, the recent book reflected his own distillation of ideas from his long career. Reaching right back to his work with McIlduff and exploring structuring-unstructuring and directiveness-nondirectiveness (Coghlan and McIlduff 1990), he drew together his insights and learning from Schon's critique of technical rationality, Schein's (2013) humble inquiry, and Argyris' action science and applied his appropriation of Lonergan's authenticity and interiority to inform his scholarly practice as a university teacher in OD. This is not made explicit in his book but is clear to those around him who are familiar with his teaching practice that informed this book. Second, the book crystallized his putting into practice the idea of what it means to be a scholar-practitioner in building consistency between his espoused theory and his theory in use and engaging in action inquiry to explore his theories in use or action logics. His stance against the prevailing techno-rationality of higher education brought into sharp relief his conscious engagement with interiority and illustrated the profound nature of the theories that underpin his work and writing.

Beyond the OD/AR tradition, the application of his ideas to different action research modalities has yet to be explored. While Coghlan has demonstrated the relevance of authenticity to first-person inquiry, Lonergan's differentiation of minor and major authenticity may have particular significance for action researchers. An individual may strive to live authentically (minor authenticity), while being in an environment that is inauthentic. Lonergan used the idea of the authentic Nazi to illustrate the distinction, while Coghlan referred to participatory action research as perhaps arising from attempts to examine major authenticity. Arguably, the increasing diversity in the modes of inquiry within the family of action research reflect attempts to tackle major concerns in relation to ecology and institutionalized practices that harm the most vulnerable across the Globe. Major authenticity may prove a useful concept in this endeavor.

## Conclusion

Coghlan has been a major and increasing influence in the world of OD/AR during the past 30 years. He has advanced the ideas of seminal thinkers including Schein and Beckhard through an articulation of practical knowing and interlevel dynamics. He has influenced generations across a wide range of disciplines through his conceptualization of insider action research. While insider action research may be the body of work for which he is best known, the implications of his writing on practical knowing, authenticity, and interiority for how we negotiate our way through the prevailing techno-rationality of our everyday worlds may yet prove to be a lasting and far-reaching legacy.

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# David L. Cooperrider: The Articulator of Appreciative Inquiry

# 20

Frank J. Barrett

## Abstract

This chapter reviews the contributions of David L. Cooperrider, starting from his the outline of Egalitarian Theory, his articulation of Appreciative Inquiry, his work studying social innovations and promoting the Business as an Agent of World Benefit project. The chapter traces his early influences including his parents and uncles, his mentors at Case Western Reserve University – Suresh Srivastva and Ronald Fry, and the writings of Kenneth Gergen, and others. Finally, the chapter outlines the way in which his work has had an impact in the field of Organizational Change.

## Contents

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## Introduction

David Cooperrider is Distinguished University Professor of Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the cofounder and originator of Appreciative Inquiry, an approach to social-organizational change that has revolutionized traditional approaches to action research in Organizational Development. Appreciative Inquiry has had a powerful influence in several areas in the social sciences and in forms of practice. He has written and edited 25 books and over 100 articles and book chapters. He served as the coeditor of the *Journal of Corporate Citizenship* and coedits the series on *Advances for Appreciative Inquiry*. He was given the Distinguished Contribution to Workplace Learning by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD). He won on the Porter Award for best writing in the field of Organizational Development was awarded the Peter F. Drucker Distinguished Fellow by the Drucker School of Management, coauthored the Academy of Management Organizational Development and Change best paper award, and won the Aspen Institute Faculty Pioneer Award for his impact on sustainability. The Champlain College's Stiller School of Business honored his impact by creating the David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry.

## Influences and Motivations: Family Roots and Seminal Teachers

### His Family Roots: A Combination of Head and Heart

David grew up in Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. His formative period, in the 1960s and 1970s, was a time of social and racial unrest and his family was in the midst of it. His father, Loy, was a Lutheran minister who came from a family of Lutheran ministers – David's grandfather and four uncles were also Lutheran ministers. The oldest of the four, his Uncle Ed, a prestigious theologian and a graduate of the University of Chicago, was the head of the Lutheran Press. David recalled his grandfather and uncles sitting around the table discussing theological topics, asking challenging and conceptually rigorous questions. In the Lutheran tradition of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, these debates were centered on existential issues of "ultimate concern," to paraphrase Paul Tillich, questions that asked what it means to be a full human being. David heard his father and uncles in lively dialogue, debating what it meant to live a purposeful life and how to be part of a community that supports the sacramental nature of life-giving community, one that supports members' higher calling. In the Lutheran tradition, he was surrounded with a notion that humans are imperfect but on a journey of formation toward a higher ideal. It espoused that any notion of love of God for men and

women would be embodied in community, that the True, the Good, and the Beautiful were mutually intermingled with human relationships.

It must have been a fruitful time for any curious adolescent to live within these theological questions of life's ultimate purpose, particularly against the backdrop of controversial issues of social and racial justice. For David's father and his uncles, it was a real test of the Lutheran conception of the life-giving force of community. These early discussions must have planted seeds in David's imagination. Perhaps it was his first formative experience witnessing role models passionately engaged in a rigorous exploration of theories and concepts that could have practical implications in helping people live meaningful lives. He was learning that a life devoted to inquiry and scholarship is a noble calling.

His father Loy was particularly passionate about civil rights and race relations and was an active change agent at a time when racial tensions were peaking. Loy was instrumental in the early 1970s in working against institutional housing discrimination. He took these battles for justice head on, confronting racism in his congregation in the strongest terms, such that the stress of his activities eventually compelled him to leave the ministry (I knew his father. He was a man of short stature but a veritable giant of energy. I recall meeting him at their summer home on a lake in Wisconsin that he was putting up for sale. When I told him that I was hoping to find a summer vacation place for my family, he offered to sell me the Wisconsin home and volunteered to finance it himself. He knew that as a graduate student I had few resources, but he was interested in my nascent dream and he was fleshing out in detail what an ideal future would be like, how I could expand the home, build a dock for a boat, invite cousins and friends for visits in the summer, swim, ski, boat, golf. Nothing about his conversation would be remarkable except for one dimension: this all occurred within the first 30 minutes of our very first meeting. He instinctively assessed my present state (as a resource poor graduate student), listened to my dreams and wishes, began to encourage me to dream about the possibilities that could be realized, and offered support for ways to keep my dream alive into the future. Twenty years before Appreciative Inquiry would be fully developed, Loy Cooperrider brought me through the full 4-D cycle in less than half an hour. He was creating a provocative proposition in real time.)

His father's sermons were often provocative challenges to the congregation to live up to their highest values and purpose. His father and uncles probably worked deliberately to see their white middle-class congregations as they were in the present, at the same time continually holding out visions of as they could be in the present, how they could grow and transform themselves and others. This is the double vision that is embodied in many of David's practices and writings, particularly in his notion of provocative propositions.

I knew his father. He was a man of short stature but a veritable giant of energy. I recall meeting him at their summer home on a lake in Wisconsin that he was putting up for sale. When I told him that I was hoping to find a summer vacation place for my family, he offered to sell me the Wisconsin home and volunteered to finance it himself. He knew that as a graduate student I had few resources, but he was interested in my nascent dream and he was fleshing out in detail what an ideal future would be like, how I could expand the home, build a dock for a boat, invite cousins and friends for

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Fran Cooperrider, David's mother, was an active member of the Lutheran Church. Where Loy was serious and focused, Fran had a disarmingly warm and joyful presence. She reached out to community members and held gatherings in the family home in which women would meet in circles, supporting one another and lifting one another up with encouragement and hopeful images of possibility. While his father's discourse was serious and challenging, his mother's was warm and inviting. David accompanied his mother as she worked in inner-city churches.

David learned about the power of ideas to make a practical difference in peoples' lives, that head and heart are best when working in combination, that relationships based on inquiry, curiosity, and wonder are crucial to social change.

## The Influence of Suresh Srivastva

David's mentor at CWRU was Suresh Srivastva, the chair of the Organizational Behavior Department. As a mentor Suresh was passionately dedicated to his students. He had an open-door policy for his mentees and had what seemed like endless hours of time and attention for them. He often said that he was interested in the development of the whole person (the mind, the heart, and the spirit) and loved dialoguing about philosophical ideas that stimulate thinking. He was especially known for his provocative, challenging (and sometimes uncomfortable) questions.

Suresh's interests transcended academic disciplines. He would seldom suggest that his mentees read journal articles or single studies in the field of Organizational Behavior or Management. He downplayed research approaches that sought to "capture" human dynamics by operationalizing dimensions with empirical scales. He continually emphasized the importance of relationships and interaction as the core unit of analysis in organizational systems. Organizations, he felt, are centers of human relatedness, sites where people care, grow, learn, develop, and cocreate. Suresh also was concerned, almost to the point of obsession, with inquiry, particularly the power of questions as interventions in human systems. He encouraged his students to pursue and create "knowledge of consequence." Finally, he eschewed any notion of a value-free approach to social science. He openly called for a normative view of social research. He wanted his students to use value-driven methods that would contribute to the betterment of organizations, society, and the larger world.

He encouraged his students to read books (rather than articles) because they offered a full-length exploration of provocative ideas. In the style of an Oxford Don, he would

assign history books, philosophy books, and works of literature and art. Suresh legitimized inquiry as a spiritual endeavor and gave credence to the search for books that would culminate in several of the philosophical sources that would David would later draw upon.

David recalls:

> Suresh cared about me as a whole human being. His presence was a powerful intervention. He could see into your soul, your doubts, your fears, your potential, your joy. He could sense when I wasn't feeling up for it. His caring was deep. He wouldn't let me stay in a place of doubt. He would push. He said at one point, "*in your work, it's your presence that makes the difference*."

> I was attracted to his towering sense of purpose, his commitment to creating knowledge that would have impact on the human condition, knowledge of enduring consequence. He was always putting human relatedness at the center of his inquiry and he carried that forward into his work with groups, including the power of co-inquiry. No one else was talking like that.

> He made learning dramatic because he wanted us to know that learning makes a real difference. His mother had been part of the Gandhian revolutionary movement in India. Suresh wanted to build a better world through the construction of ideas. When he kept saying that 'every concept we develop can make a difference for years,' I started to believe him.

David would carry this spirit with him as he began working through his dissertation. As he was piling through mounds of data, he was primed to notice the power of ideas.

## Other Influences: Rader's *Aesthetic Theory*, Schweitzer's *Reverence for Life*, and Gergen's *Transformation in Social Knowledge*

David's wife, Nancy, holds an undergraduate degree in Art. David was particularly influenced by a philosophy book of Nancy's, Melvin Rader's *A Modern Book of Aesthetics* (Rader 1978), which explores the creative process and the meaning of artistic forms of inquiry. Rader discusses the difference between scientists who seek to verify facts and artists who are concerned with the "expression of values" (Rader 1978, p. xix). Values and the vivid qualities of experience cannot be captured in scientific description, which, according to Rader, are real but superficial." Rader writes: "you can explain the sunset according to uniform natural laws, but this leaves out its radiance" (Rader 1978, p. xxii). What we value most is expressed not in a language of facts, but in a language of appreciation, a language of feeling, sentiment, volition, values – in short a language of appreciation that seeks to be true to the immediacy of vivid experience. When Rader claimed that there is no language for the world of value, vividness, and radiance "comparable to the exact language of science," David must been have been intrigued by the challenge to provide a language for the more elusive yet vital life experiences. That curiosity eventually led him to qualitative research and the grounded theory approaches of Glazer, Strauss, and Corbin which favored using language that reflects the lived experience of participants. Rader made an intriguing distinction. He talked about "communities of interpretation" which for him meant scientists; and he talked about artists in terms of "communities of appreciation." For

David this raised a series of questions. Why were these two kinds of communities – appreciation and science – held separate? Couldn't science also be about valuing?

David was also influenced by theologian-philosopher Albert Schweitzer's notion of a "reverence for life," from an anthology that sat on David's father's bookshelf. Schweitzer felt that the Enlightenment search for an objective ethics had failed and that the ethical foundation of civilization should be affirmation of life. He called for an ethics of reverence for life in all its forms (a view that was consistent with David's later expansive devotion to sustainability and business as an agent of world benefit). Schweitzer writes:

> As a matter of fact, everything which in the usual ethical valuation of inter-human relations is looked upon as good can be traced back to the material and spiritual maintenance or enhancement of human life and to the effort to raise it to its highest level of value. (Schweitzer 1947, p. 262)

We can see traces here of ideas that will appear in David's work – the notion of "interhuman" social science, the search for life-giving forces, articulating the "highest values" of a social system operating at its best. David would reshape many of these constructs in his articulation of "Appreciative Inquiry."

When David was involved in his dissertation research at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation (described below), he came upon the social constructionist theories of Kenneth Gergen. David was moved by Gergen's notion that social theory can be a generative influence in shaping future worlds in desirable directions. These ideas also resonated with Suresh's notion that traditional social science is limiting because it seeks to predict, to articulate unalterable laws, and to have the final word. Suresh felt strongly that researchers must appreciate the potential of humans to change and shape the world. While Suresh shared these notions, Gergen provided a rich logic. Gergen's article became the philosophical and intellectual impetus that would help explain what was happening in the dissertation study (explored below), an elegant and powerful articulation legitimizing Suresh's view that language, especially theoretical language, can be a positive force for change in social systems.

David was also deeply influenced by Ron Fry, one of our Organizational Behavior professors at Case Western Reserve University and a member of David's dissertation committee. Ron's patience and persistent support for his students is legendary. But more specifically he has a gift for working with small and large groups, a skill he no doubt fine-tuned from his mentor, Richard Beckhard at MIT. Ron has a Buddha-like ability to stay focally present, attend to relational dynamics, and read the tone and rhythm of the group. And he has a sense of timing – he seems to know when and how to ask provocative questions that help groups move forward. One time when David and I were consulting to a particularly conflicted and challenging client system, he said this the evening before we were to meet with the group:

> When I get in tough systems like this one, I close my eyes and envision Ron Fry. He just knows how to pay attention and not get pulled down by negative or cynical relational dynamics. He always sees where a group needs to go next and his thinking is never cloudy. He's a master of attention. He's the best consultant I have ever seen.

In fact, many of the techniques that have become codified in Appreciative Inquiry practice stem from the practice and style of Ron.

## Key Contributions and Insights: Appreciative Inquiry, Egalitarian Theory, and Social innovation

### Egalitarian Theory

Through the mentorship of Suresh Srivastva, David began doing research at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation (CCF), a healthcare facility a few blocks from CWRU. CCF already had a reputation as a professional partnership performing leading edge research and high-quality care in treating the most complicated diseases. One of Suresh's senior students in 1979, Alan Jensen, was working on his dissertation there, studying the physicians' approach to leadership and management. Jensen's dissertation was a study of how doctors, trained in medical specialties, applied their professional instincts to the leadership and management of the organization. The focus was on the individual. While helping Jensen do interviews as a junior research assistant, David became interested in the organization-level data. Suresh asked David to report some preliminary observations to the CEO and Chairman of the Board of Governors, Dr. Bill Kiser.

In that meeting Dr. Kiser asked David if he could take the set of interviews with all the top physicians, examine the data, and do an organizational diagnosis. Dr. Kiser felt that with hundreds of committees, the whole system was confusing, and inefficient, and he saw communication breakdowns throughout the system. As a physician he believed that a diagnosis of the system's problems would be helpful to him as the CEO. David agreed that in the interviews, there was likely some helpful information on organizational dynamics.

But the more he reflected on the request, David did not feel right about creating diagnosis. He had been thoroughly trained in approaches to organizational diagnosis, but felt it would take everyone astray from the bigger story. There was, in David's mind, a monumental social invention happening here. So David sat down with his advisor Suresh and shared the exhilaration: "this is possibly the most important organizational innovation in the world" and therefore "I'm not sure we should be doing an organizational diagnosis as Dr. Kiser is calling for; we might miss the precious details and larger importance of the breakthrough innovation." Suresh quickly agreed with David and told him to go with his curiosity. He said something like: "lead with your excitement – your task is to find everything that propels potential and possibility in this emerging group innovation – and, by the way, forget everything you've ever learned about organizational development."

David began to look at the data from a different perspective than the one Jensen had in mind. In particular what interested Suresh Srivastva and David Cooperrider was the governance model that informed the group practice, and this became the focus of his David reexamined the 1,000 pages of interview data that he and Allen had collected. But instead of diagnostic analysis, he poured over the mountain of

notes by quietly noticing and yet setting *aside in a sideways glance* all the accounts of failures, problems, dysfunctions, or seeming barriers and breakdowns. And he asked of the mountain of data and from the deep listening conversations only one rigorous question: "what gives life to this nascent organizational form – what makes it possible – and when it is most alive and why?" The first report on both the discoveries and the emergent themes (outlined below in the section on egalitarian theory) was presented to CCF leaders in 1981. What he called "emergent themes" took the factors that contributed to helping the group practice flourish and created speculative statements of ideal-type possibiltiies for the future.

David's dissertation was going to be a grounded theory that explored the nature of shared governance focusing specifically on what gives life to the organization, what is happening when the system is operating at its very best. But soon, when the appreciative analysis was presented to the Board of Governors, there was interest and enthusiasm. Seeing the positive reaction, Dr. Kiser, the Chairman of the Board of Governors, put forward a question: "Do you think we can we do this same kind of appreciative approach not simply with our 300 person physician group, but all 8,000 people?" Even more important than the egalitarian theory, was the way the appreciative approach was igniting interest, imaginative dialogue, and change.

From there, David's real dissertation topic began to take a whole new shape. Because of the remarkable way the inquiry was creating such a powerful and positive stir, the research focus shifted to trace how he articulated this kind of appreciative approach could affect change. With time one and time two type data collection, the dissertation tracked the *inquiry-and-change* relationship, and it built the first theory and vision of Appreciative Inquiry as a way to build generative theory, where theory is practice and inquiry is a form of intervention. (This was consistent with Suresh's belief in the power of questions as self-fulfilling).

With no other intervention than data collection, appreciative analysis, and feedback, David tracked how inquiry intervenes. Later he would describe remarkable moment with members of the Board as a "Heisenberg effect on steroids" – the observer effect of inquiry in human systems was the real story emerging here. Inspired by Suresh's belief in the power of ideas, David was becoming a *theoretical activist* where theory and practice are not opposites.

Out of David's qualifying paper and later dissertation, David and Suresh coauthored an article that explored a theory of "the egalitarian organization" (Srivastva and Cooperrider 1986), describing the "ideal membership situation." This was a construct borrowed from Habermas' notion of the "ideal speech situation," a dialogical situation in which participants can have rational dialogue, are free to make assertions and beliefs, and are free of coercive forces. The "egalitarian organization" article explored the life-giving core of the collective practice. The paper posited "ideal-type themes" that appreciated the best of the system. These themes were a provocative stretch and posited that there are three elements that the doctors hold as ideals – a spirit of excellence, (seeking to be the best they possibly can be), a spirit of inclusion (in which all voices are invited and valued), and a spirit

of consensus (in which members operate under the belief that they are at their best when they seek consensus from all members). David and Suresh, in a simple footnote to the egalitarian organization paper, called this an "Appreciative Inquiry" of the life-giving forces that allowed CCF to thrive and innovate.

## Appreciative Inquiry: The Surprising Power of Questions

David presented his emerging themes to the Cleveland Clinic's Board of Governors and in a footnote explained that the study was not focusing on problems but was an "appreciative analysis" that seeks to articulate what gives life to this system. Several leaders in CCF were intrigued by the report and asked David to talk to their departments. The emergent themes of excellence, inclusion, and consensus inspired a hopeful and energetic dialogue during strategic planning sessions, inspiring members to explore how they could move closer to their ideals. David began to notice how the theoretical contributions from his research were inspiring a dialogue that simultaneously triggered the physicians to notice the core strengths of their collective practice while also stretching them to consider ways to extend these principles as they dialogued about their highest ideals. It was a dynamic consistent with Gergen's proposal that theory should be formative and generative, that once we are liberated from the canons of positivist verification rhetoric, we can engage in bolder forms of theorizing that enable broader and more creative forms of action. Expanding on the methodology chapter from David's dissertation, David and Suresh published *Appreciative Inquiry into Organizational Life* in the inaugural RODC volume in 1986 emphasizing the generative potential of theory building in transforming organizations. The chapter asserts that action research has not fulfilled its promise in creating innovative theory that inspires novel forms of organizing. The chapter made a number of contributions. Action research is biased toward a deficiency orientation focused on problem-solving, one that is conservative, utilitarian, and limited in inspiring innovation. Building on Gergen's work, the theory has generative potential to inspire innovative forms of action. Finally, the problem orientation of action research has truncated researchers' capacity for wonder, to ask questions that marvel at the miraculous and mysterious nature of social-organizational life.

The notion that Appreciative Inquiry could be a powerful intervention tool (rather than only as a research approach) was a surprising, unexpected discovery that grew out of the Cleveland Clinic study. The process of inquiry itself is an intervention.

This insight has led to the surprising spread of Appreciative Inquiry as an intervention into organizational and social systems in several sectors, many of which have been documented and published (for reviews of Appreciative Inquiry interventions, see Bushe and Kassam 2005).

Appreciative Inquiry has been developed further in subsequent publications, including Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) and Barrett and Fry (2005). After participating in several change interventions, David began to notice a learning

pattern that he later articulated as the 4-D cycle of change: Discover (identification of strengths that give life to the organization), Dream (envisioning what the organization could evolve toward based on past strengths), Design (creating the processes and structures that support the life-giving forces), and Destiny (realizing the strength-based vision and keeping it alive into the future).

In the early 2000s, inspired by the Search Conference method, David began to design large group interventions informed by AI, known as the Appreciative Inquiry Summit (see Ludema et al. 2003; Powley et al. 2004) in which hundreds of participants would gather for 1–3 days to use AI to develop strategic futures. These events were organized around the 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry, beginning with systematically surfacing the positive core of the organization, imagining desired futures, and designing ways forward. Several organizations, including the United Religions Initiative, the US Navy, Roadway, and others, held AI Summits.

## Studying Social Innovations at the Global Level: GEM, BAWB, UN Global Impact, Fowler Center, and Inquiry into Positive Institutions

In 1990 David, Bill Pasmore, and several of their organizational behavior doctoral students at CWRU began to research globally focused organizations. David received a $3.5 million grant from US AID to bring the field of OD and leadership training into the world of NGOs and PVOs. They worked with several organizations including Save the Children, World Vision, Nature Conservancy, and World Relief, using Appreciative Inquiry methods to study social innovation. David and his students offered management education, and consultation, built networks among systems, and used AI to cultivate the best ideas, methods, skills, and practices for strengthening organizations and building partnerships. They found that when organizations explore deeply the question of what gives life to the system when it is most alive, it emboldens them and inspires them to become more pro-social and expansive in their planning and thinking. These organizations begin to see their own organizations as nested within a larger global system and to expand their concerns outward in wider circles and to begin to consider and to take more pro-social initiatives. They hosted several conferences bringing these organizations together for knowledge sharing and network building, inviting them to share their life-giving core, best practices and to build partnerships.

This was the first effort in David's expansive moves to work with ever-larger systems. The program acknowledged the radical interdependence around the world that is at the root of many challenges, transnational issues that cross conventional borders. The belief was that no global challenge can be adequately addressed without working in and through organizations. Their approach to studying these organizations was appreciative, to challenge the deficit-focused science of global change with special emphasis on constructive human responses to the global agenda. The aim of this program was to search for new forms of human cooperation and global action. Acknowledging the proliferation of global corporations, global networks, and NGOs, David wrote:

> The logic is simple: there is not one item on the global agenda for change that can be understood (much less responded to) without a better understanding of organizations. More than anywhere else, the world's direction and future are being created in the context of human organizations and institutions.

This was the beginning of a larger research program into novel social innovations devoted to noble human purposes, efforts that crossed national and organizational boundaries to link ideas, people, and resources. In 1999 David chaired a conference and coedited a volume with Jane Dutton *Organizational Dimensions of Global Change: No Limits to Cooperation* (Cooperrider and Dutton 1999). The subtitle is telling and is a nod to the Club of Rome's classic *Limits to Growth*. While there might be limits to ecological growth, there are no limits to human cooperation that could innovate to transform these challenges. The conference and ensuing book brought together several organizational scholars exploring the cooperative potential of organizations working across boundaries to address global issues; his doctoral students wrote several case studies on innovative global organizations.

David's instinct has been to approach change systemically, at the scale of the whole system. He began to co-inquire into ever-larger groups. David was deeply impacted by the 9/11 attacks and particularly the choice of the World Trade Center as the prime target. He recalls:

> When the world trade towers came down and as I'm watching it over and over in the media, I kept seeing the words "world" and "trade" as "business" and "society.' This notion of a clash of civilizations with radical Islam could be seen as a clash between capitalism and different views of the relationship between business and society. It's no accident that the target was the world trade symbol. My feeling was that the world needs a big dialogue on economy and 21st century business/society relationships.

At a conference on Appreciative Inquiry in Baltimore in October 2001, he proposed the idea of exploring these questions and was overwhelmed by the enthusiastic response. With a seed grant from CWRU, David began to explore the notion of "Business as an Agent of World Benefit," using AI methods to explore how and when business might operate at a higher level of consciousness and where and when this might already be happening. His work began to get attention, and in 2003, David designed and facilitated a historic summit for the UN General Assembly by Secretary General Kofi Annan called the United Nations Global Impact, gathering 500 CEOs from several global corporations, including Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Alcoa, Unilever, Nova Nordisk, Dutch Royal Shell, and Coca-Cola. The purpose was to "unite the strengths of markets with the authority of universal ideals to make globalization work for everyone." Using the Appreciative Inquiry Summit methodology, they explored the possibility that as the world transitions to a global economy, business could become a positive and creative force that could lead in a transition to planetary healing and create peace and sustainable futures. They used the Appreciative Inquiry method to discuss issues such as "how will we meet the inclusion needs and aspirations of 3 billion middle class people arriving in the next twenty to twenty-five years, without causing unsustainable overshoot beyond planetary boundaries as well as resource wars, runaway system dynamics, depression, and a world of fear where the prospects of terror

and peril become part of our normal existence even if only as a constant background possibility?" They shared stories and dreams of possible innovations that explored ways business could be a force to eradicate extreme poverty, how business could be a force for eco-innovation and how business could promote world peace by creating cooperation in conflict zones. David began to imagine a Nobel Prize for Business, how businesses and business leaders could be acknowledged for advancing human well-being, advancing civil society, and promoting the design of dignified work.

After the Leaders' Summit, Cooperrider applied for and received several grants to continue the global inquiry and began to obtain funds for a center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit (BAWB). He wrote in one of his proposals of his experience of the Global Compact: "business has the opportunity to be one of the most positive and creative forces on the planet, and that the epic transition to a world economy of "full spectrum flourishing" is no longer a utopian urge or mini-trend, but an observable and remarkable trajectory" (Cooperrider, "History of the Business and Human Well-Being," p. 2).

The BAWB has since expanded as a world inquiry project and has involved a vast movement to conduct interviews with business leaders who have helped create innovative solutions for human betterment around the planet. Over 3,000 stories have been collected (see http://aim2flourish.com where these innovations are continually being documented). The BAWB project is committed to the appreciative collection of stories and experiences that generate hope that capitalism can change the way we live, stories about the potential to eliminate extreme poverty, creation of dignified work, using business as an agent for furthering eco-innovation, and using business as a force for peace in extreme-conflict zones.

The poetry in his writing is inspirational:

> With stories of empowering solutions, strengths, and system-wide breakthroughs in the room, there was a groundswell of what can only be described as an emotion of *urgent optimism*. It infused an urgency to act – "to stand up, step up, and scale up" as one respected CEO declared it – propelled not by gloom and doom, but inspiration, opportunity and illumination. The sense in the room was that "the world is getting better and better, and because it is, it can . . . and it must."

BAWB has been devoted to collecting such stories of breakthroughs, entrepreneurial value creation, progress in well-being, efforts to create bridges rather than walls, efforts to connect strengths, resources, and talents through the force of the market place. True to Suresh's insight that questions are windows into the soul, David remains intrigued by questions such as this:

> What might happen for our world if everyone could see and sense its true significance over the broad sweep of history with a kind of time-lapse lens, through which the untold 'story of business' may be placed carefully and scientifically in conjunction with the unprecedented advances in humankind's overall well-being?

An example of a figural story that he has shared several times involved an Israeli business leader, Stef Wertheimer, and his creation of Tefen, a "capitalist kibbutz," an industrial park that has spawned 300 businesses, world-class schools, hospitals,

museums, and community meeting spaces that bring Arab and Jewish people together working and living in collaboration. Tefen became an island of peace and shared prosperity, a place of equality between different religious and ethnic groups, men and women, in the midst of seemingly intractable conflict. As the businesses have thrived, peace and security have increased as well. The BAWB project includes stories of Unilever's Project Shakti, the microenterprise for women in Indian villages. Stories such as this celebrate the role of business enterprise in increasing life expectancy, reducing poverty, providing resources for education, stories of shared value creation, empowerment and innovation, vision and entrepreneurship, dignified work, and human development.

Eventually BAWB morphed into the Fowler Center for Sustainable Value at CWRU with the purpose of researching and disseminating innovations in sustainability as a business opportunity. Funded by Chuck Fowler, the CEO of Fairmont Minerals who had witnessed the transformational impact of an AI Summit in his organization, it is devoted to Business as an Agent of World Benefit and "exists to advance the scholarship and practice of flourishing enterprise," linking with other institutions to "create prosperity while nourishing human and natural systems (https://weatherhead.case.edu/centers/fowler/about/). The center focuses on for-profit organizations that have devoted activities to creating value for society and the environment. Appreciative Inquiry is openly acknowledged as the "primary vehicle for effecting change."

## New Insights: A Positive Revolution in Change

It is nigh impossible to detail the wide breadth of influence that David's work has had on the field of organizational change, let alone the wider body of practitioners in fields such as education, public policy, and social work. There are now two centers that are devoted either to his work or to work he initiated. There are several groups who offer training and certification in Appreciative Inquiry as an intervention method and countless consultants now using Appreciative Inquiry explicitly in their practice. Appreciative Inquiry is regularly used in coaching and team building and in large group interventions.

David had a major influence on Jane Dutton and Kim Cameron when they began to advance their work in Positive Organizational Scholarship at the University of Michigan. Jane attended an Appreciative Inquiry workshop in the 1990s that David and Diana Whitney offered in Taos, New Mexico, and began to consider how scholarship can be an intervention in social-organizational life. Kim was the Dean at Weatherhead School of Management in the 1990s and witnessed firsthand the power of AI to inspire transformational change.

More directly many of David's doctoral students have gone on to make important contributions. Tojo Thatchenkery has written several books that take an appreciative lens, including *Appreciative Intelligence: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn* (Thatchenkery and Metzker 2006; see http://www.appreciativeintelligence.com). James Ludema coauthored *The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: A Practitioner's Guide for Leading Large-Scale Change* (Ludema et al. 2003) and has gone on to

create and lead an innovative doctoral program at Benedictine University devoted to value-based leadership. Nadya Zhexembayeva coauthored *Embedded Sustainability* (Laszlo and Zhexembayeva 2011) and authored *Overfished Ocean Strategy: Powering Innovation for a Resource-Deprived World* (Zhexembayeva 2014). I was deeply influenced by David's friendship and thought trials throughout my time as a doctoral student and in later years as a Professor. I can see traces of David's influence in every article and book I have written, particularly *Yes to the Mess: Surprising Leadership Lessons from Jazz* (Barrett 2012). Even though I had been a musician for years, it was only because of David's influence that I was able to notice the appreciative mindset that allows improvisation to flourish.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Applying Positive Psychology to Social-Organizational Change Processes

David is currently writing a book with Lindsey Godwin that outlines a positive theory of organizational change. The title is *Positive Organization Development: Innovation Inspired Change in an Economy and Ecology of Strengths*. The book reviews the burgeoning field of positive psychology and positive organizational scholarship and argues that sustainable change is most likely successful when it elevates and extends strengths and broadens and builds on capacity. The book documents several of the case studies and interventions that have been sponsored through the Fowler Center, including recent efforts by the City of Cleveland to create regional economic development and to create a sustainable ecology and furthering positive institutions that magnify the highest human potential.

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# Samuel Culbert: The Magician's Work on Organization Change

# 21

Walter Nord

**Abstract**

Samuel Culbert payed attention to his experience and made himself the consummate applied behavioral scientist. He is an almost five decade contributor of pathbreaking ideas, skilled in identifying management dysfunction and original in suggesting models of progressive organizational change. Combining a clinician's eye with system analytic, inductive thinking, he constructs mid-level theoretical frameworks aimed at influencing frontline practitioners along with academically housed students of change. Always "outside the box" challenging conventional wisdom and mainstream practice, his contributions have been both methodological and substantive. His body of work combines an intense humanism with critical thinking that advances the state of knowledge.

This essay attempts to review the roots of his thinking, the essence of his work, and the muckraking advocacy stances he has taken. We see the progression of his thinking in his forthcoming book where he revises some of his previous assumptions about organizations, concluding that far more variables than previously thought must be engaged for the management mentality, mainstream in organizations, to appreciably change.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Elsewhere (Nord 2016), I described Samuel A. Culbert as a *magician*. I did so because his work reminds me of the way Nobel laureate physicist Steven Weinberg (1993) described the work of Werner Heisenberg, who was a great physicist. Weinberg commented that it is difficult to follow the reasoning of magician-physicists, who seem to "jump over all intermediate steps to a new insight about nature (p. 68)."

As I study Culbert's work – as I have done for many years – I often come away thinking that his work is very much like magician-physicists. It is not magic that makes him one of the great thinkers of organizational change but rather his humanism and his way of reasoning that is made possible by a distinctive blend of skill sets that often lead him to profound insights and creative interventions.

I intend this chapter to be an intellectual biography and description of Culbert's muckraking efforts to "make the world of work more fit for human consumption (Culbert 2017)." Throughout it, I will demonstrate how Culbert combines the eye and intuition of a skilled clinician, the big picture purview and inductive logic of a system engineer, and the phenomenologically attentive skills of the consummate action-researcher in his work. I know of no researcher with a stronger commitment to the implementation of humanistic values.

To put Culbert's work in perspective, I begin with several general points I think useful background for understanding his investigative bent. Then I will chronicle his education and the formative professional experiences that led him to pursue a career-long journey studying the dysfunction that prevents people in organizations from realizing their capacities and dreams. I will then highlight the contributions he has made – first methodological and then substantive. Finally, I will bring the reader up to date on his legacy conclusions, which Culbert says came as a surprise. I will do my best to put it in sociological perspective, but it may take a while for the field to deal with. Enough said. Time to get on with Samuel Culbert.

## General Points

To set the context for reviewing Culbert's contributions to the study of organization change, several general points need to be made.

First, as Marrow (1969) wrote that Kurt Lewin "was concerned primarily with the actualities of men's daily lives with one another," the same can be said about Culbert. He has a curiosity about people – their social dynamics and why they interact and organize the way they do. Whatever you do, he wants to know why. Conversations with Culbert almost always turn into a conscious-raising experience, one where he makes you think. His writings reflect this, as well. For example, in his book *Mindset Management* (Culbert 1996), in which he sought to help people become more effective in helping others change, he asked the reader to consider, "What do you need to know prior to influencing people and giving them advice?" This led him to inquire about the mindsets of both the change agents and the person to be changed.

Culbert is a muckraker, often going against the grain of traditional thinking when it comes to organizational change and managerial practices. A great part of his work has been directed toward demystifying mainstream managerial practices and writing exposés that explain what is dysfunctional and the erroneous thinking that brought it about.

For 50 years he has affiliated himself with a university where, to this day, he works as a fulltime tenure-track professor and researcher. He told me, "The world of work is my laboratory where I have a consultant's license to observe, inquire, and then to perturb and probe for deeper understanding."

His work is trans-organizational. The phenomena and management practices he investigates and analyzes are not unique to a particular organization, industry, or locale. Rather, they are endemic in mainstream work culture. The same can be said for the remedies he prescribes which tend to be generic and highly adaptable to local culture considerations. In fact, the literature treats a paper Culbert copublished as the action research's defining articulation of trans-organizational praxis (Culbert et al. 1972).

Culbert does more than just identify dysfunctional behavior and suggest corrections. He constructs midrange theoretical frameworks that allow people to understand what is erroneous in the thinking that led to the dysfunction and allowed it to persist unnoticed. He encourages people to revise their thinking and ways of operating and provides models of what revised practices might entail.

He often illustrates his frameworks and findings with vignettes and short-case descriptions selected to allow people to personally reference what he is describing and reflect on past and current experiences. In this way, Culbert wants others to independently validate for themselves what he has concluded.

Culbert presents his investigations and theoretical frameworks in layman's terms. The use of non-jargon allows him to simultaneously target the two audiences he most wants to influence – practicing managers and students of organizational change. In this respect, he follows the trail blazed by several organizational change writers such as Manfred Kets de Vries, Edgar Schein, and Harry Levinson.

His work has an overarching theme of helping people overcome workplace-induced alienation – in the Marxist commodification sense (Marx 1908) – and to attempt removing freedom-constraining, workplace-manufactured fetishes (Nord 2016). Specifically, he has introduced concepts and ideas that address ways for people to increase consciousness about their lives at work and their self-determination and voice. Many examples of this can be found throughout his work but are perhaps most frequently and powerfully stated in *Mindset Management* (Culbert 1996). As with all of his work, this book reflects values of the humanistic psychology propounded by Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, and T-groups, especially the straight-talk relationship that enables people to improve their work effectiveness. For example, he observed how meetings in organizations are unproductive and unnecessarily long because of political posturing associated with the reluctance of people to express their interests openly and directly. This issue became a highlight feature in his work where he stresses the importance explicitly of recognizing the role self-interests play in organization processes and the value of people establishing straight-talk relationships for purposes of dealing openly with matters that, if they remain latent, lead to dysfunctional political processes.

## Influences and Motivations: Engineer Clinician Activist

Culbert began his college studies in engineering at Northwestern University. Halfway through the program, he became interested in psychology and, by graduation, had accomplished what might be considered a double major. During his senior year, he applied for and was accepted into the doctoral program in social psychology at the University of Wisconsin. A month prior to graduating, he met and bonded with Bob Tannenbaum, a guest lecturer from the School of Business Administration at UCLA, who was presenting material from his groundbreaking book on sensitivity training for leaders (Tannenbaum et al. 1961). Sensing a harmony of purpose and spirit, Culbert withdrew his application at Wisconsin and applied to the clinical psychology doctoral program at UCLA, to which he was admitted.

While enrolled in clinical psychology, Culbert supported himself by working as a research assistant to Tannenbaum and eventually with James V. Clark conducting empirical studies in, at the time, the business school's state-of-the-art small group dynamics T-group laboratory. Culbert also performed all of the clinical psychology course work and internships, graduating in 1966 with what once again could be termed a double major. Board licensed as a clinical psychologist in 1967, Culbert chose to not pursue a clinician's career, saying that it was insufficiently dynamic for him. He wrote, "I was much more fascinated by the awareness, realizations, and life-changing experiences *normal* people were having in short-duration T-groups (Culbert 2016)."

While attending an eight-week postdoctoral internship at the NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, he became noticed and was offered a 2-year contract working for the Institute. He was permitted to delay this assignment for a year so he

could fulfill an assistant professor teaching commitment he had made to the business school.

His T-group training and system skills made him a natural for work at NTL. He was program director in the Center for Organization Studies and director of Intern Studies. Now, instead of leading T-groups, he was formulating and organizing professional development training and overseeing organizational consultancies in which he participated, along with other theoretically inclined behavioral scientists. He worked with the likes of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Chris Argyris, Leland Bradford (who hired him), Charlie Seashore (who he says he did not "know" was his supervisor until Seashore mentioned it 25 years later as he was putting for a birdie at the Bethel Inn golf course), Roger Harrison, and scores of others. While working as staff on his initial NTL assignment, the eight-week program in which he had been a participant in the year before, Culbert developed a very close and lifelong friendship with Warren Bennis.

Two years later, when his contract was completed, Culbert was asked to continue at NTL. However, he declined the offer. When I asked why, he said, "I had too many unprocessed experiences to continue the action-packed NTL pace. I needed time to reflect and download my head." After exploring academic positions at several universities, he decided to return to UCLA.

But the UCLA to which Culbert returned was not the same UCLA that he had left. He found himself more attracted to the system issues being explored by Eric Trist and others in the new Center for Quality of Working Life where he joined an international network of researchers, theorists, social activists, and industry leaders that, he said, "had taken action research to a higher order, trans-organizational plane." Culbert found this discipline aligned with his attraction to the theory and social value commitments of Paulo Freire. The trainer/clinician was in the passenger's seat observing the social scenery, and the system engineer was now in the driver's seat heading for high-impact destinations.

## Key Contributions: Mid-level Theoretical Frameworks

### Methodological

In an effort to pass along his magic, Culbert (2016) described how he conducts his muckraking, trans-organizational action research. He meticulously explained the thinking and behavioral processes involved. He detailed the process of turning passive research "subjects" into phenomena-insightful "informants" and then helping them transition into framework-building and validity verifying "coresearchers." Step by step, he described the routines he uses in deconstructing dysfunctional organizational practices to reveal the erroneous assumptions on which they are based and inducing the system forces provoking them. This methodology caught my eye to the extent that reading his first book (Culbert 1974), I excerpted some of it in a book of readings of my own (Frost et al. 1978).

Specifically, he begins data collection by identifying organizational obstacles (e.g., managerial practices) that prevent people from being their best. He deconstructs the assumptions on which they are based to understand unspoken issues they tacitly address. Then, in step two, he seeks to demystify by exposing obstacles to effectiveness to enable those responsible for the obstacles, those whose performance suffers from them, and other interested parties, to see system elements they previously missed. Step three entails deconstructing system elements to uncover problematic managerial practices that prevent people from performing their best. In step four, he provides a blueprint for replacing what is dysfunctional with liberating actions and systems, based on a humanistic view of people and their collaborative nature. In this context, step five conceptualizes a coherent theoretical framework that describes aspects of the system that need repair and validates it using real-life situations with which readers are apt to identify. Taken together, these steps enable him to link theory with finely nuanced life experiences and revised practice.

## Specific Findings

Culbert has made major contributions to the study of change through a series of eight book-length action research reports. Each book challenges some aspect of conventional wisdom. The best way to capture these contributions is to take a quick, much too short, look at each of these books.

### *The Organization Trap and How to Get Out of It* (1974)

Immersed in the zeitgeist of the women's and minority rights movements of the 1960s and early 1970s which he wrote about in a McKinsey award-winning article (Culbert and Elden 1970), equipped with clinical and small group dynamics skill sets, and fascinated with Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1968), which he utilized in recent book (Culbert 2017, p. 129) "unlocking the past" thesis, Culbert explored the issue of over-socialization in companies. He was concerned about "organization traps" that limit a person's ability to comprehend the forces driving their personal decisions and career choices at work.

The outcome was a theoretical framework from which a five-step consciousness-raising strategy was derived. This is a model that people situated in any company can use, first to raise their awareness of organizational forces bearing on work-life choices and then to conceive of and evaluate the benefits of specific self-emancipating actions. The model extends Freire's self-determination through cultural awareness to personal conduct decision-making at work (Renshaw 1974).

### *The Invisible War: the Pursuit of Self-Interests at Work* (1980) and *Radical Management: Power, Politics, and the Pursuit of Trust* (1985), Both Coauthored

These books take up the basis for the organization politics that are part and parcel of people working together seeing events so differently. It is based on Culbert's, and his coresearcher's, clinical awareness that self-interests are intertwined in every action

an individual takes, in how people interpret any situation, and their self-convenient portrayals of events. It seeks to explain the inevitability of people constantly vying for self-convenient and advancing organizational frames. It speaks as a counterargument to people who eschew organization politics and the pernicious motivations they attribute to other people's self-convenient tilting of truth. The book presents a framework aimed at making sense out of what the authors describe as a natural and inevitable state of human affairs.

Central to the framework is the construct *alignment*: "The individualist way in which a person orients to work events. It reflects an individual's attempt to maximize expression of the subjective, and the personally important, while producing work he or she believes the organization should receive from someone in his or her job and position (Culbert and McDonough 1985, p. 221)." Using this construct the authors introduce a format for people nonjudgmentally realizing the basis and inevitability of a person's (one's own and others') distinctive way of thinking and acting. It makes bias, stylistic preferences, personal proclivities, and self-interested inclinations discussable and, sometimes, explicitly negotiable. The framework stipulates trusting relationships as the most effective tool available to any manager, especially when dealing with adversity.

### Mind-Set Management: The Heart of Leadership (1996)

This manuscript was submitted with the subtitle "Making Management a Psychological Science Instead of a Manipulative Art," which is descriptive of what Culbert set out to accomplish. At the time, the mainstream work culture lacked a means of nonjudgmentally characterizing inclinations, aversions, limitations, imperfections, and stylistic bias, all attributes Culbert considered organic in people's conduct at work.

Prominently used in Culbert's mind-set management framework is the terminology "reality is an artifact of the mind that views it." It makes his message crystal clear: To insure the advice you offer someone is relevant to that person's life and view of their workplace, you should first visit the organization in which that person works. Of course, the organization where a person works is inside that advice-receiver's head and accessible through that individual's mindsets. Culbert's model stipulates how to access that organization, noun and verb.

A substantial contribution comes in the book's inclusion of a refined alignment questionnaire, including detailed instructions for administering it. In addition, his framework provides guidance for accessing what's unique in an individual's perception of events, the meaning that person attributes to them, and identifying orienting mindsets.

### Don't Kill the Bosses! Escaping the Hierarchy Trap (2001), with Coauthor

The back dust cover succinctly describes the issues researched and reported on in this book. It states: "Boss-dominated relationships! What a strange state of affairs. After all that's been said about the advantages of empowerment, participatory decision-making and teamwork, how is it possible that we continue allowing bosses to dominate and subordinates to fake acquiescence to the extent both do today? It's a problem everyone knows about and few know how to fix."

The book analyzed the use of hierarchy in organizations, concluding that while there are many highly functional applications of hierarchy, one major dysfunctional consequence goes unnoticed: the relationship perverting and trust destroying impact of "one-side accountable, boss-dominated relationships."

The theoretical framework Culbert offered describes what is newly achievable in non-boss dominated, two-sided, and reciprocal-accountable relationships. He deconstructs the construct "accountability" to identify the core problem in its conventional mainstream usage. He explains why organizations find it so difficult to get people to own up to mistakes and errors in judgment. Culbert asserts that accountability only becomes real when there are consequences. But in companies, consequences almost always entail punishment and denial of rewards – which makes people reluctant to acknowledge fault. Culbert presents an alternative – "lessons learned accountability" – and goes on to stipulate precisely what that entails.

Redefining boss/subordinate relationships to be two sided, his framework holds both parties accountable to one another and the company. The operative is accountable for getting organizationally needed results, and the boss is accountable for creating the circumstances for the operative to succeed in getting those results. When the outcome is not what it should be, the framework directs that both boss and subordinate stand lesson-learned accountable. The operative needs to learn what was needed and also realize why he or she did not already know it. The boss needs to learn what the operative lacked and why he or she did not realize it was lacking and provide it. Both need to learn what they should be doing differently and, in the boss' case, learn how to prevent similar disappointments from other people in their jurisdiction.

### Beyond Bullsh*t: Straight-Talk at Work (2008a)

A career spent promoting authentic interpersonal communication in the workplace, Culbert was inspired by an essay defining the vernacular word "bullshit," written by Princeton University philosopher Harry Frankfurt (2005). Extrapolating to the mainstream world of organizations and collecting data, Culbert put forth a theoretical framework that conceptualized and meticulously stipulated the alternative to bullshit: straight-talk relationships.

Several noteworthy contributions are contained in the framework he put forth, starting with the realization that "Bullsh*t has become the communications etiquette of choice in corporate communications (Culbert 2008a, p.9)." Describing the negative impact bullshit has on quality of communications and trust in relationships, he also pointed out many practical conveniences it serves, such as "how much more dangerous organization life would be without it."

He then presented what is needed for *straight talk*, which his framework contended is not a moment-in-time episode but the character of a relationship. He extended his alignment theory "*to getting*" an individual to the extent that when viewing that person's distinctive, seemingly aberrant, reactions and behavior, one could knowledgably answer what Culbert calls the "Why (is) This (happening) Now?" question. With clarity he stipulates the conditions and processes required

for evolving straight-talk relationships. He also describes how to recognize the circumstances and conditions when straight-talk relationships are not possible. His framework includes what Culbert believes is the hallmark variable in two-way expressive, relationship-building communications: *I-Speak*.

### *Get Rid of the Performance Review! How Companies Can Stop Intimidating, Start Managing and Focus on Getting Results* (2010) with Coauthor

This was Culbert's all-out effort to rid the workplace of a dysfunctional practice he had been arguing against for 30 years (Culbert and McDonough 1981; Culbert and McDonough 1985; Culbert 1996; Culbert 2008b). Here is how the book's genesis is described on the Anderson School's website: "Articulating the theoretical framework suggested by his findings for the Academy of Management, Culbert was asked about obstacles to managers establishing straight-talk relationships with their direct reports – the people whose effectiveness they're out to enhance. 'Easy,' he said. 'It's the annual pay and performance review.' Following up, he wrote a *Sloan Management Review* paper that was reprinted in another journal, and that sparked a major change that's taking place mainstream today. What journal has that influence? On October 20, 2008, his paper titled 'Get Rid of the Performance Review!' appeared full-page in *The Wall Street Journal*. And that led him and his WSJ editor to write a very influential management book."

More than any other of Culbert's theoretical frameworks, it is possible to identify the impact this thesis has had on the world of work. At least partially as a consequence of his WSJ article – and the book two years later – hundreds, if not thousands, of companies have stopped giving annual pay and performance reviews. Unfortunately, as Culbert related it to me, in most instances, what companies have done is (Culbert's word) "shamful [sic]." He asserted, "Most have substituted alternative ways of 'objectively' evaluating, categorizing, and manipulating people." Tongue-in-cheek, Culbert said, "It's as if there's a cultural conspiracy aimed at preventing people from speaking their truths to people with power." Jumping ahead, his legacy book includes a vivid case study exemplifying the faux acceptance he sees taking place in companies today (Culbert 2017, pp. 143, 148).

Boldly, as is Culbert's style, he opened Get Rid of the Performance Review book saying, "It's time to put the performance review out of its misery (Culbert 2010, p.1)." Then, three sentences later, insuring readers got it, he added, "It's a pretentious, bogus practice that produces absolutely nothing that any thinking executive should call a corporate plus." He supported this view effectively and showed how a political process fueled by the latent self-interests of organizational participants sustains the existence of this practice. He proposed a far better approach – i.e., using performance *previews* instead of reviews.

This leads me to his forthcoming book, which he claims will be his final. While I have heard him say that before, I believe this time he really means it. Why? Because his puzzling and research took him to a surprising conclusion that up to now the

change-management field has failed to acknowledge and would not face up to when another theorist postulated it.

## New Insights: How Work Culture Corrupts Good Intentions

Culbert's last book *Good People, Bad Managers: How Work Culture Corrupts Good Intentions* (2017) contains a breakthrough insight that I believe will be a major part of his legacy. I find the book magnificent, rooted in wisdom Culbert has advanced throughout his previous work. As before, he argued convincingly that organizations would be much better served by managers removing obvious barriers to any person performing his or her best. However – and this is where the surprise ending begins to unfold – somehow, even when they sincerely try, they fail. That is what Culbert has concluded, and he thinks now he knows why it happens. Here's how he put it:

> "I'm sobered by a career spent exposing the negatives in mainstream good management practices, mistakenly assuming that well- intentioned managers would revise their erroneous ways once they realized the negative effect they were having. It's not that I've gotten much pushback about the dysfunction I've exposed, or disagreement about what revisions would be in everybody's best interests. Yet despite all the good intentions, little gets altered. Apparently, the practices I've been urging managers to revise are much too insidious and culturally embedded for any manager, or ad hoc group of non-top-level managers, to change on their own. (p. 64.)

He sees the impediments to change stemming from societal and workplace forces creating a need for pretense that leads success-driven managers to feel too insecure and self-protective to provide employees the focus and expression they need and deserve. Some of the forces reside in MBA education – what Culbert terms "Graduate Schools of Success." He asserts that students are so focused on acquiring disciplinary knowledge that accrue to their own accomplishments that they do not develop the other-directed sensitivity skill sets required for the good management of others.

A few quotes from the forthcoming book help us see what he is up to:

> "There's far more bad management behavior taking place today than the well-intentioned doling it out realize… and even more than those on the receiving end are aware of! There's little mystery about what good management entails; the biggest mystery is why people are calling this bad behavior 'good enough.'" (p. 68)

> "The root cause of most of the bad management behavior taking place today, to which so many well-intentioned managers are oblivious, is what the American work culture, en masse, has managers thinking incorrectly. (p. 12)"

Describing the problem:

> "Too much of what the culture expects flies below most managers' consciousness – vaguely recognized, not engaged, and kept in place because managers are hard pressed to identify how they're being influenced. (p. 123)".

He adds,

> "Personally, I've never been concerned about employees receiving enough feedback, and using what they thought accurate to improve as they were able. But consistent with the accounts I've been reporting in this book, there are plenty of reasons for worrying about managers having sufficient incentive to self-question, and to contemplate what's dysfunctional in their relationships with employees. (p. 147)".
>
> "Stepping back, I see an unfortunate mismatch. Top level leaders have the means, but most won't see gains sufficient to justify the effort required. (p. 153)".

Consequently, the changes he has proposed throughout his career are a long way off, at best. In important respects, Culbert – after living his career advancing humanistic values – seems to have come out experientially where the great sociologist Alvin Gouldner came out, almost a half century earlier, from several decades spent analyzing structural incoherence in society.

I believe that Gouldner's (1970) discussion of the role of sociologists in a capitalist society can help us understand the nature of the problem Culbert sees blocking individual emancipation in companies. Gouldner postulated that there is an underlying dissonance between "power" and "goodness." From this perspective, the self-interests of individuals who hold power are furthered by actions that get them perceived as being good. In many respects, following the advice of applied social scientists that stems from the humanistic values driving Culbert – such as introducing progressive QWL practices and/or speaking favorably of any reformist change-management effort – can help leaders with power to be seen as doing good without actually giving up the power that implementation of the values associated with such programs might entail. In other words, their self-interests can be satisfied by the rhetoric and appearances these programs provide. Hence, the introduction of these programs – at least on a temporary basis – does not require them to actually give away power. Similarly, it is possible that such partially committed efforts can satisfy the self-interests of the social scientists who champion them. For example, the acclaim and consulting fees that many of them gain from championing these programs may be all the reward needed. The situation may be analogous to that described by Gouldner when he wrote that some sociologists "live *off* sociology" rather than "live for it (Gouldner 1970, p. 15)." Thus, we are in a situation in which the self-interests of members of both audiences that Culbert has attempted to address may be satisfied by rhetoric and partial commitment rather than the full change Culbert sought.

Although I am confident that Culbert perceives the problem of the failure of the humanistic values to be sustained as his unfinished work, I am not confident that he agrees with my analysis of causes. However, I suggest that the process he highlights – how pursuit of self-interests by well-intended people can lead to dysfunctional results – is consistent with other theories he has proposed and that his muckraking orientation toward social science has been a reasonable extension of his analyses. Thus, the frame I have developed may be a "natural" extension of his thinking.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Demystifying Pretense

Given what I have written so far about Culbert's forthcoming book, I conclude that it is a legacy book. It builds on insights Culbert has contributed over the years and shows how he is able to learn from his experience and challenge his earlier thinking.

By now it should come as no surprise that his legacy book challenges an aspect of conventional wisdom. What is surprising is that the conventional wisdom he is challenging used to be his own. Prior to writing it, Culbert – along with many change theorists of his ilk – believed that humanistic social scientists can, through careful study, uncover a number of dysfunctional practices and develop ways that can be implemented to overcome them without major cultural change. However, in this book, he said, "Not so fast." He is no longer optimistic. There are pervasive forces in our culture that inhibit a change in managerial mentality and nothing is going to change until those forces are dealt with.

Before concluding, something else needs to be said. The nature of Culbert's legacy will be different than those of most of today's academically unified social scientists. Culbert chose, for the most part, to create coherent theoretical frameworks that spoke to contemporary managers and professionals working in applied fields, as well as academic peers. This path has entailed two steps: use of applied phenomenological methodology that capture complexities and explain real-world experiences and publishing audience appropriate books rather than scholarly journal articles.

While this path did result in prestige and recognition from a somewhat narrow group of applied social scientists, it did not produce the academic standing of a Karl Weick or Bill Starbuck. On the other hand, Culbert's work has incorporated a coherent theoretical framework that has made him suitable for many academics in applied fields. However, I suggest that his attempt to formulate theory that captures the complexity of the phenomena he studied may have limited the popularity of his work with non-academic readers of the sort attracted to Peters and Waterman's In Search of Excellence, or Jim Collins' Good to Great. In many ways these books simplify issues. In contrast Culbert combining of clinical and systems shows up the fallacy of such simplifications. This view is based on my personal judgment and experience which have lead me to use his books successfully with graduate MBA students, and a reluctance to use the more popular books with this audience. Thus, despite the value of his work, it appears unlikely that Culbert's legacy will include the great fame among popular audiences of Collins, Peters and Waterman, or a Weick among academic audiences.

## Conclusion

Culbert has clearly made numerous novel and important contributions to the study of change. However, in addition to all of the insights and inductively developed constructs Culbert introduced during his career, he may be most remembered for the "sobering message" delivered in Good People, Bad Managers. The pretense needed for managers to enact what the work culture erroneously calls "good

management behavior," the ethos of self-advancement and success, and the insecurity and dynamics that derive from what the work culture erroneously assumes stand in the way of people achieving what they could otherwise become. While this outcome is surprising, it is consistent with the messages of Culbert's The Organization Trap and Marx's expository writing on alienation: human beings create worlds for themselves that control them in dysfunctional ways. In his legacy book, Culbert said it this way: "It's as if managers have the cultural programming internalized to the point where, stranded on a deserted island and starting from scratch, they would recreate the very system that wrecks so much havoc for everyone, Especially themselves (p. 101)."

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## Further Reading

Culbert, S.A. with David Muir (downloaded 2017). http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/conversation-performance-review-11126992

For much of his professional career, and up until a few years ago, Samuel Culbert believed bottom-up advocacy was a viable format for progressive organizational change. Still an ardent believer, recent insights have led him to a personal conclusion that more is needed. It is a nuanced outcome he always resisted. That is why his last book (in press, 2017) is an essential read for anyone interested in cultural progression and humanistic change management.

Intricately familiar with Culbert's recent methods article, Transorganizational Muckraking: Method and Style (2016), I find it must reading for every phenomenologically attentive researcher. When reading, I thoroughly advise taking your time. If you do, I believe you will learn to see a great deal that conventional researchers typically miss. Expose yourself to the origins and logic of his unique way of listening to people and getting to the basis of their truths.

If you would like to experience the passion and zest he puts into his public presentations, along with the humor he often inserts, watch the three-minute video he made for ABC News (downloaded 2017). For that matter, google his dozen or so NPR appearances, find the media articles he wrote (including two NY Times Op-eds.), and read what professionals in H.R. and O.D. have written about his work.

# Tom Cummings: A Passion for People and Learning

**22**

Paul S. Adler

### Abstract

Tom Cummings is best known for his text *Organization Development and Change*, widely referred to as "the bible of OD." This chapter traces the development of his thought leading up to that text and beyond. I discuss his long-standing engagement with socio-technical systems and organization design, his synthesis of those with traditional organization development, his work on transorganizational design and on the strategy process, and his emerging work on "care" in organization studies.

### Keywords

Organization development • Organization design • Self-designing organization • Socio-technical systems • Transorganizational design

## Contents

Tom Cummings has been my colleague here at the University of Southern California since I joined the faculty as a tenured associate in 1991. He became department chair soon thereafter and was still in that role as of the time of writing. He has been a supremely generous colleague mentor, and administrator. This essay will summarize some of the key steps in his professional journey and his main intellectual contributions.

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## Influences and Motivations

Cummings was born on March 23, 1944, in Batavia, NY. He began elementary school on the campus of Humboldt State University, while his father, a returning Air Force veteran, earned a degree in waterfowl management. The next few years saw the family living on the New York State Wildlife Refuge in Oakfield, NY, where his father was a manager. Far out in the countryside without much to do but hunt, fish, and roam fields, Cummings became accustomed to being alone – a notable background for a social scientist focused on groups and teams.

In 1959, his father took a new position as manager of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in Seneca Falls, NY, and the family moved nearer to town on the shores of Cayuga Lake. At high school, Cummings excelled at football and track, and won a NY State Regents Fellowship that covered his college tuition and expenses. This supported his undergraduate program at Cornell, where he majored in agricultural economics.

His professional goal at the time was law. A fan of the *Perry Mason* TV show, Cummings was attracted to the idea of becoming an independent lawyer. He was a disciplined student and completed the requirements for his BS degree in three years. He decided that a MBA degree would enhance his planned legal career, so he spent his fourth year as a first year MBA student in Cornell's MBA program. (Cornell at the time allowed a few exceptional students to get both BS and MBA degrees in 5 years instead of 6). In the MBA program's first year, he found himself attracted to personnel and labor relations. As a result, he took all his second year electives in Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations, taking classes on research methods, unions, and organizations taught by such luminaries as William Foote Whyte, Ned Rosen, and Vern Jensen.

After graduation, Cummings had a change of heart and veered away from law. His new direction was influenced by his business-school mentor, Earl Brooks, who was an independent management consultant and taught part-time at Cornell. Inspired by Brooks' example, Cummings resolved that he would get an advanced degree in order to become an organizational consultant. In 1967, he was admitted to UCLA business school's PhD program, planning to major in industrial and labor relations.

At UCLA, because of his background in wildlife, he was assigned to be a research assistant on a study of the US Forest Service. The study was being conducted by faculty in a new business-school academic department – "socio-technical systems" or "STS" for short. STS was an interdisciplinary program with faculty from behavioral science, operations research, management, accounting, and more. It was led by Will McWhinney (a modeling expert who had studied under Herbert Simon at Carnegie) and Eric Trist (who joined UCLA from the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London and was a renowned pioneer of the STS field). Under the influence of these mentors, Cummings shifted his major field from industrial and labor relations to STS.

Cummings thrived in the interdisciplinary world of STS, with its focus on people, groups, organizations, technology, and on the systemic character of their interrelations. He was energized by STS's commitment to action research and by exposure to

the global network of STS action researchers from Scandinavia, England, Ireland, India, Australia, and the US who frequently visited UCLA. Trist was initially famous for his work on teamwork in coal mines and weaving mills. But by the time the STS unit was established at UCLA, Trist and his colleagues had broadened their focus to what they called "social ecology" and the "causal texture of environments." Here, the unit of analysis was the network of interacting organizations and their environments, and the focus was on solving societal problems, often at the regional and nation levels, rather than operational problems for the individual workgroup or plant. This shift was driven by a growing awareness that the ability to jointly optimize social and technical aspects at one level was constrained by the extent of optimization at higher levels of aggregation.

Alongside his participation in STS research, Cummings took courses in organization development and T-group leadership, taught at the time by the business school's behavioral science department faculty including Bob Tannenbaum, Jim Clark, Warren Schmidt, Art Shedlin, and Chuck Ferguson. This department was known as the "West Coast NTL" – the West coast counterpart to the famous National Training Laboratory founded by Kurt Lewin in 1947. Students participated in a year-long T-group and then learned how to lead T-groups and conduct organization development interventions. Long-term OD projects with companies such as TRW and Procter & Gamble were an integral part of the learning experience, and these gave Cummings and his peers both experience intervening in real-world organizations and sites for their dissertation research.

Between the intellectual excitement of STS and the emotional and existential challenges of T-groups and OD, Cummings changed plans once again and resolved to pursue an academic career as an applied social scientist hoping to make a positive impact on organizations and society. In slightly less than three years, he completed not only coursework for his major in STS (with McWhinney and Trist), a minor in behavioral science (with Jim Clark), and another minor in social ecology with faculty from the UCLA psychology, sociology, and geography departments but also his dissertation. The dissertation was on interorganization relations and organization change. It was funded by Procter & Gamble, with McWhinney and Clark as co-chairs and a committee of Peter Vail and Bill McKelvey from the business school, Ivan Light from sociology, and John G. Kennedy from psychology.

Upon graduating from UCLA in 1970, Cummings started his academic career in the organization behavior department at Case Western Reserve University. Although the OB department was part of the business school, it had its own PhD program. Cummings was the youngest member of the faculty. Indeed, he was younger than any of the doctoral students, most of whom had already had successful careers as social activists in various fields. The department had strong humanistic and democratic values, with everyone, faculty and students alike, having a vote on community matters (although not on academic assessment). T-groups flourished throughout the department and were an integral part of both faculty and student development as well as undergraduate and MBA courses and executive education programs. The faculty was a mix of seasoned social psychologists from the University of Michigan, a few colleagues from related disciplines, and some younger PhDs from schools of

business or administration. Cummings taught a year-long doctoral course in systems theory and jointly taught a doctoral course on organizations and environments with the oldest member of the faculty, Nathan Grundstein, a pioneer in public management science and law. Grundstein became a valued mentor and confidant.

In 1976, a fortuitous meeting with Larry Greiner, then head of the management department at the University of Southern California, led to a move to Los Angeles. The department encompassed three areas – organizational behavior, strategy, and business and society. Greiner had recently been hired from Harvard Business School with the goal of revitalizing the department and moving it into the upper echelons of academe. This led to the hiring of leading OB scholars such as Steve Kerr and Mary Ann Von Glinow (both of whom went on to become presidents of the Academy of Management), Chet Schreisheim, Craig Lundberg, Chuck Maxey, Ken Brousseau, Sue Mohrman, and Gretchen Spreitzer; strategy scholars such as Syd Finkelstein, Bill Davidson, Ian Mitroff; and business-and-society scholars such as Warren Bennis and Dick Mason (along with Jim O'Toole who was already in the department). During this period, the department also created an applied research center – the Center for Effective Organizations (known as "CEO") – and hired Ed Lawler to run it and Susan and Monty Mohrman to assist him and later added Gerry Ledford from Michigan and Susan Cohen from Yale.

Cummings remained at USC ever since, becoming department chair in 1996 and serving in that role for the subsequent 21 years. He led several successive mutations of the department as it progressively shed its strongly applied character and became progressively more academic in its profile. The department nevertheless retained elements of that earlier culture. Cummings was known not only for his focus on building community within the department but also for his continual encouragement to focus research and teaching on important organizational and societal issues.

Beyond his home department, Cummings was active in numerous university-wide committees at USC. And beyond his home university, Cummings was elected Chair of the Academy of Management's Organization Development Division (1981–1982), President of the Western Academy of Management (1985–1986), and President of the Academy of Management (2005–2006). He also left his mark on scholarship both as chair of some 37 dissertation committees and as the founding editor of the *Journal of Management Inquiry* (1991–1996), a journal notable for its distinctive focus on "creative, nontraditional research, as well as key controversies in the field."

## Key Contributions and New Insights

The department at Case Western Reserve University relied on funded projects, supported mostly by companies, to pay for almost 50 doctoral students. Cummings led a project with five doctoral students at Alcoa's large unionized forging works in Cleveland's industrial flats. The Alcoa project lasted 5 years and provided the material for his first book, *The Management of Work*, coauthored with Suresh

Srivastva (Cummings and Srivastva 1977). In this book, Cummings offered his statement of the theory and methods of socio-technical systems and their use in field projects. This project also informed several journal articles, most notably, the widely cited "self-regulating work groups" in the *Academy of Management Review* (Cummings 1978).

At Case, Cummings subsequently worked with several faculty and doctoral students on a large National Science Foundation study assessing the scientific validity of the numerous studies on productivity and quality of work that had appeared recently. His contribution to the project assessed the various field experiments using Campbell and Stanley's quasi-experimental methodology. This led to his second book (with Eddie Molloy, a doctoral student), *Improving Productivity and the Quality of Work Life* (Cummings and Molloy 1977), which characterized and assessed several work-improvement strategies: autonomous work groups, job restructuring, participative management, organization-wide change, organizational behavior modification, flexible working hours, and the Scanlon plan. The project also led to several journal articles, most notably "A Methodological Critique of 58 Selected Work Experiments" in *Human Relations* (Cummings et al. 1977) and a jointly authored book, *Job Satisfaction and Productivity* (Srivastva et al. 1975).

On moving to USC, Cummings worked with the CEO team in action research with firms seeking to improve productivity and quality of working life. Lawler was a prominent researcher in this area at Yale and Michigan, and Sue and Monty Mohrman were budding action researchers trying to make organizations more effective and humanly satisfying. Together they undertook major action research projects with Honeywell, Johnson & Johnson, and General Mills. This work expanded Cummings' research, from the shop-floor STS work design that he had done at Alcoa to the design of whole organizations, including reward systems, selection practices, organization structures and control systems, and decision-making processes. The underlying theory was that these systems needed to "fit" with each other and with the external environment if performance and employee satisfaction were to be improved and that these outcomes would be at their peak in what the researchers came to call "high-involvement organizations" and "high-performance organizations."

This action research pioneered a new approach for large-scale organization change – the "self-designing organization." Instead of discrete change projects controlled by managers and experts, the process adopted here was one in which organizational members learned to continually redesign their own organization so as to keep pace with external changes and to continually improve the organization's performance. The new approach was a precursor to the growing interest in organizational learning. The key ideas were presented in a coauthored book, *Self-Designing Organizations* (Mohrman and Cummings 1989), that was part of the reknowned Addison-Wesley OD Series.

This CEO team also explored how field research could produce knowledge that is both scientific and useful. To address those issues, they held two major research conferences with applied research colleagues from across the globe. This resulted in

two co-edited books that were well received in North America and Europe: *Doing Research That is Useful for Theory and Practice* (Lawler et al. 1985) and *Large Scale Organizational Change* (Mohrman et al. 1989).

Around this time, Cummings returned to some of the social ecology themes that had engaged him during his doctoral program at UCLA, developing a new account of what he called "transorganizational systems" (TS) and of planned change efforts to improve and develop such systems that he called "transorganizational development" (TD) (Cummings 1984). Today, we have a vast body of research on interorganizational issues of collaboration, joint ventures, alliances, and networks, but his was a singular and far-reaching approach. He argued that TD was not just OD applied one step upward but rather a whole new approach to planned change, one that required its own theory of how such transorganizational systems function and how they can be changed and developed. Building on a synthesis of the various literatures contributing to our understanding of interorganizational relations (such as resource dependence theory, interorganizational fields, and networks) and the STS literature of social problem-solving, Cummings developed an integrative model of transorganizational systems, summarized in Fig. 1 (reproduced from p. 397).

This framework provided the foundation for his proposed approach to the tasks of transorganizational development (TD). This latter differed from traditional OD in that while OD traditionally focused on collectivities that were bounded and organized – indeed often over-bounded and over-organized – TD's object was typically
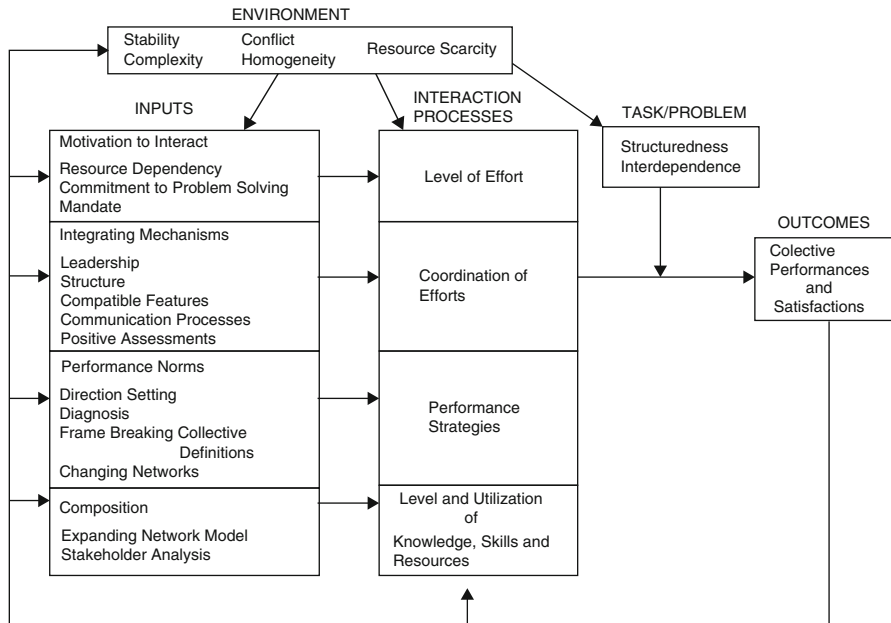


**Fig. 1** Cummings' framework for analyzing transorganizational system (Reproduced from Cummings 1984)

underbounded and underorganized. The key phases of OD intervention – entry, diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation – would therefore not suffice in TD. TD intervention should be structured, Cummings argued, as (a) identifying the organizations that were part of the TS, (b) convening these actors, (c) organizing the system to regularize behaviors, and (d) evaluating that system in terms of its intended effects. His landmark essay marshalled the tools needed for each of these phases.

In retrospect, one notable feature of this argument was its prescient sensitivity to power asymmetries in these transorganizational systems. The TD practitioner's commitment to collaborative values and system maintenance might not be powerful enough to change the power relations in the system. And more importantly, "interventions aimed at enhancing collaboration among organizations may unwittingly damage some participants in situations fraught with power/dependence." Conversely, "changes intended to gain power over others may inadvertently ignore opportunities for mutual gain in situations with underlying interdependencies among organizations." Cummings drew a conclusion whose wisdom still resonates at a time when corporations have become more active in their pursuit of "corporate citizenship": "Until sufficient knowledge about TD becomes available, it seems prudent and ethical to openly question the value premises underlying different intervention choices, including the behaviors of interventionists" (pp. 415–416).

One constant in Cummings work to this point had been his persistent effort to retain a focus on organization performance. He argued that this contrasted with the traditional approach of organization development, which often focused on people rather than on their work, on process more than on content. A second and related long-standing concern was that OD's practical advice was far richer than its underlying theory. He had earlier tried to bridge the difference with an edited volume on *Systems Theory for Organization Development* (Cummings 1980). His approach changed when he was asked by the publisher and wife of the deceased Edgar Huse to take over the major textbook in field, Huse's *Organization Development and Change*. Cummings accepted with the goal of influencing how the field was portrayed and how it developed. He eventually added a coauthor, Chris Worley, a former doctoral student. It has remained the top-selling OD text in the world, often referred to as the "bible of OD." Pushing further in his quest to bring more theory to the OD field, Cummings invited prominent applied researchers to contribute to an academic handbook about their most recent thinking in OD. This resulted in a 35-chapter volume of original contributions, *Handbook of Organization Development* (Cummings 2008), which was recognized in 2007 as the R. Wayne Pace HRD Book of the Year by the Academy of Human Resource Development. He published an updated assessment of the state of OD in 2014 (Cummings and Cummings 2014).

In more recent years, Cummings shifted focus again, to consider the strategy process. In his prior work, whether at Alcoa on STS work design or with CEO on organization design and self-design, the organization's strategy had been taken as a given and the interventions sought to design work and organization to fit the strategy. But if the strategy was flawed, such work-redesign efforts would not help the organization. This new strand of research evolved out of a series of action research projects with Larry Greiner at Rolls Royce's Aircraft Engines Division, Parsons

Construction, and USC's Theatre School and its College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences. These organizations were struggling to adapt to dramatic change in their competitive environments. In helping them address these pressing issues, Cummings and Greiner observed not only that the clients' existing strategies were outdated but also that traditional approaches to creating new strategies were inadequate. The traditional strategy process rested on time-consuming efforts by corporate staff or outside consultants to gather and analyze voluminous data on the competitive environment and the organization. That process was too slow in rapidly changing environments, and it could not generate the organizational buy-in needed for effective implementation. The new strategy process they developed involved multiple stakeholders in an ongoing process of strategy-making, organization redesign, and implementation, and this process was built into the organization's structure and decision processes. Instead of strategy being an activity conducted occasionally and by top executives, it should be a highly participative and continuous process. The logic was the same as the one Cummings and his collaborators had developed in their approach to self-designing organizations, but here the goal was a self-designing strategy. Cummings and Greiner called this continuous, high-involvement approach to strategy "dynamic strategy making" and wrote a book by the same title (Greiner and Cummings 2009). Since then, dynamic approaches to strategy-making have become more prevalent in both the academic literature and practice.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Looking Forward

In his most recent work, Cummings has turned his attention to the state of management scholarship. His work has focused the paucity of strong theory, the increasing frequency of inconsequential empirical studies, the growing ethos of careerism, and the deepening chasm between research and practice. As befits a senior statesman in the field, through a series of publications (Aguinis et al. 2014; Cummings 2011; Schwarz et al. 2015), he has attempted to raise the profession's sights from the multiplication of journal publications that advance careers but not meaningful knowledge, to serving people and society.

Consistent with the joint commitment to people and learning that is the hallmark of his work, Cummings' analysis highlights the debilitating consequences of the currently predominant ethos of the field for both the integrity of the individual scholar and the advance of our science. He and his collaborators identify powerful institutional forces that work to suppress the role of researcher "care" in management research: the apparent productivity (as measured in top journal publications) of research that focuses on tractable rather than important issues, the academic system that rewards such behavior by its focus on counts of publications and scholarly citations, and the narrowing of the researcher's field of ambition to the issues and methods already legitimate in our field. And he argues passionately and convincingly that this devolution of researcher care in turn limits the field's knowledge development by restricting the intellectual variation and exploration.

Consistent too with Cummings' long-standing efforts to bring together STS and OD solutions, the remedies he proposes are at both the system and individual level. At the system level, he and his coauthors argue that our field is well served by the recent emergence of unconventional models of research and publications such as engaged scholarship that seeks to surmount the twin hurdles of scientific quality and practical impact (Van de Ven 2007); critical management studies that marry qualitative management research with critical theory and values (Alvesson and Deetz 2000); transdisciplinary research that aims to address large-scale, complex problems (Wickson et al. 2006); and positive organizational scholarship that focuses on opportunities for more positive outcomes for organizations and their members (Cameron and Spreitzer 2011).

At the individual level, Cummings and his colleagues make a plea that seems to sum up Cummings legacy most aptly. I quote it in full:

> "Notwithstanding strong institutional pressures to cede researcher care to the OS[organization studies] community, the decision about what to invest care in researching organizations ultimately rests with the individual researcher. Each of us makes choices about what issues to study and what theories and methods will gain insight into them. Because these decisions are personal and inherently subjective, an initial step in addressing the devolution issue is for individual researchers to look inward and explicitly reflect on what they care about in doing research and what they are likely to gain or lose if they suppress or alter their care for any appreciable time. Careful and frank appraisal of these issues can help researchers make mindful choices about what to invest their care in researching and what trade-offs, if any, they are willing to make for instrumental gains." (Schwarz et al. 2015, p. 11)

Cummings' legacy in the field of organization change thus lies in three main dimensions: bringing together STS and organization development approaches, strengthening the theoretical infrastructure for both, and extending their relevance to both the strategy process and transorganizational systems. He has, in this way, ensured the continuity of these traditions as powerful influences on the whole world of work design and organization design.

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# Barbara Czarniawska: Organizational Change – Fashions, Institutions, and Translations

# 23

Hervé Corvellec and Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist

### Abstract

Combining neo-institutionalism, actor network theory, and Gabriel Tarde's sociology, Czarniawska considers the key driver of organizational change to be imitation but an imitation that rests on translation. Organizations emulate one another by translating fashionable ideas according to their understanding, traditions, needs, and means. As translation in this tradition always entails a transformation of the translated idea or object, unexpected consequences will be expected. She does not consider these consequences to be necessarily negative; however, because if stabilized and institutionalized, unintended change can turn out to be as positive as planned change. A further strength of Czarniawska's is her ability to provide methodological tools that follow the translation processes for change: organizational ethnographies, narrative methodology, and shadowing.

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> "*Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga com'è bisogna che tutto cambi.*"
> Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa
> *Il gattopardo*

## Introduction

"If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change." This enigmatic assertion by young Tancredi Falconeri, opportunistically rallying behind Garibaldi's Republicans, was made to his aging, aristocratic, and royalist uncle, Don Fabrizio Salina, in Lampedusa's (1960) novel, *The Leopard* could serve to introduce Barbara Czarniawska's approach to change on three accounts. First, Tancredi's statement suggests approaching change through its effects rather than its nature, particularly because the effects of change can be paradoxical. Second, an interest in change can be a commitment to continuity. Across her career, Barbara Czarniawska has changed objects of interest, theoretical focus, countries, and languages of work, but her main interest has remained the same: "how people are managing and organizing, but in different contexts" (Czarniawska, 2016, On change/interviewer: H. Corvellec, personal communication [unpublished]). Third, this reference to Lampedusa does homage to Czarniawska's encompassing interest for narratives, to which we return.

## Influences and Motivations: Her Mother's Daughter

Born in 1948 in Bialystok, Poland, Barbara considers herself her mother's daughter; having cultivated an early taste for languages, she is now fluent in Polish, English, Swedish, and Italian and can read French. She also developed an interest in travel, literature, and writing. By the beginning of 2016, she had authored 33 books, 108 peer-reviewed articles, 88 chapters, 20 encyclopedia and handbook entries,

numerous commentaries and popularizing texts, and 25 edited books and special journal issues.

Czarniawska (2004b) has claimed that her early interest in the study of work led her to pursue a master's degree in social psychology at the University of Warsaw in 1970, followed in 1976 by a Ph.D. in economic sciences at the Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw. After a year at the MIT Sloan School of Management on a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies, she spent a year at Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (Berlin Social Science Center), in what was then West Berlin. She later moved to Sweden at the invitation of Arbetslivscentrum (Swedish Center for Working Life), then took a position at the Stockholm School of Economics, assumed the chair in management at Lund University, and finally moved to the School of Business, Economics and Law at the University of Gothenburg where she has since held a chair as Professor of Management Studies and participated in developing the Gothenburg Research Institute (GRI). She is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences, and the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters and is an honorary fellow of the European Institute of Advanced Studies in Brussels. And she has not only led 35 doctoral students to completion, including the two authors of this text, she shows an all-encompassing interest in meeting young researchers and helping them to connect with one another through her networks.

A scholar in feminist theory on organizing (see, for example, Czarniawska 2004c), Czarniawska has developed an acute perception of what it means to be a female immigrant from an Eastern European country, both for herself and for others. And together with female academics in a variety of fields who gather in her extended personal networks, she personifies the possibility and necessity of a more gender-equal academic community.

Czarniawska (2004b) has credited Nils Brunsson, who had written a dissertation on the propensity for change (1976; see also: 1985) for awakening her interest in organizational change. She became particularly interested in Brunsson's observations and those of Johan P. Olsen (1990, 1993): that reforming – an expression for planned change – is the steady state of affairs in public sectors in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. As reforms do not usually achieve what they are planned to accomplish, a new reform is called for, creating a state of continuous reforming. She rapidly articulated this insight with a neo-institutional theory in organization theory (Czarniawska 2008a; Powell and DiMaggio 1991) and actor-network theory (Latour 1987, 1996). She developed all of this into a theory of action nets (2004d, 2010), to develop an explanation of change as a process that combines fluid and solidified relationships within and among organizations.

To indicate the breadth of her sources of inspiration, no fewer than five deserve mention. First, Albert O. Hirschman (1991), with his idea that practically no planned change reaches its goals, but that the unexpected and unplanned effects of changes are sometimes better and more interesting than the planned ones. The people who are managing the change, however, often do not realize this, focused as they on their own plans and goals. Second was Nicklas Luhman's (1995) view that no system can

change itself, other than by mistake – by a sort of accidental mutation. Even if organizations are open systems in a physical sense, they are closed systems that keep reproducing themselves. So whatever change happens either does so by mistake or by the wrong repetition.

A third source of influence has been Michel Serres's (1982) idea of translation as used by the likes of Michel Callon (1986) and Bruno Latour (1987). The idea of translation makes it possible to explain how change processes that look alike and may even have the same name move across sectors and countries find and invent new contexts in which to take root, produce a variety of foreseeable and unforeseeable results, and eventually become fashionable managerial recipes. Two volumes that Czarniawska edited with Guje Sevón focus on translation: *Translating Organizational Change* (1996) and *Global Ideas: How Ideas, Objects and Practices Travel in the Global Economy* (2005).

Fourth, Czarniawska (2008b) shared with Latour (2002) a renewed interest in the sociology of Gabriel Tarde, a French sociologist from the second half of the nineteenth century. She was particularly interested in the centrality that Tarde gave to imitation and fashion, in order to explain the circulation of ideas, action patterns, and objects – among them, change. Fifth, her interest in narrative as an object of study and a methodological stance (e.g., Bruner 1986) is still an influential source of inspiration. For her, plots, as they combine causality and temporality, offer a way to understand what Karl E. Weick (1979) called the social psychology of organizing: the rationale of changes as actors account their experiences.

## Key Contributions: Change by Translations

Czarniawska's contributions to an enhanced understanding of change are of two related types: theory and methodology. In this section, we examine her theoretical contributions. We first render her brand of institutionalism, then examine the reasons why imitation and fashion drive change, how translations work, and why people may welcome unexpected consequences of change. Finally, we introduce the notion of action net, which describes how organizations are born and evolve.

### Institutional Theory

The starting point of Czarniawska's views on change is institutional theory, particularly popular among Scandinavian organization scholars with an interest in public organizations, as presented by Meyer and Rowan (1977), March and Olsen (1989), and Powell and DiMaggio (1991), among others. Institutional theory comes in many versions. Political scientists tend to use the term *institutions* as a direct synonym for organizations. Sociologists, anthropologists, and organizational scholars tend to stress the way institutions form social action, are self-reproducing, and are underpinned by social norms (Jepperson 1991). And it is not uncommon that

different definitions are applied in the same text. It is critical, therefore, to clarify the term used.

Being among the first organizational scholars to stress this point, Czarniawska (1997, p. 43) defined an institution as "a pattern of social action strengthened by a corresponding social norm" (p. 43) – a definition similar to that later phrased by the editors of *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (Greenwood et al. 2008). Referring to Berger and Luckmann's (1966, p. 72) claim that "institutions posit that actions of type X will be performed by actors of type X," she stressed that a constructive reciprocity is assumed, that performance of an X type of action leads to the perception that a given actor belongs to (or aspires to) type X, and vice versa. Just that, within an institutional order, the actors are often not people but "legitimized social groupings": work units, profit centers, departments, corporations, public administration organizations, associations of organizations, and all those whose interactions "constitute a recognized area of institutional life" (Czarniawska 2009, p. 423). But for individual and collective actors alike, an institutional order limits what it is possible to do, think, and imagine. Institutional orders such as church, marriage, and market control and condition at any given time and place what is possible and appropriate change and how it can be undertaken.

A key contribution of institutionalism is the demonstration that institutions set the possibilities but also the rules and limits of change, inclusive of their own change. Another contribution is the notion that change does not always follow a rationale of expected consequences (March and Olsen 1989). Longitudinal studies of reforms (e.g., Czarniawska 1992) demonstrate that change can follow a logic of appropriateness that provides legitimacy rather than leading to efficacy. When entering change processes, organizations do what they are expected to do rather than what one may think they need to do, an observation that takes us to two of Czarniawska's points of interest: organizational imitation and fashion.

## Imitations and Fashions

"Imitation, claims Tarde, is the main mechanism of sociality, the main mode of binding people (and things) to one another" (Czarniawska 2004a, p. 121). There is sometimes an element of constraint in imitation, but the proportion of constrained to voluntary and unconscious imitations is negligible. Organizations can be forced at times to introduce some forms and practices – because of legal requirements, for example. But in non-totalitarian societies, coercion is rarely the main force behind imitation. Rather, it is norms, especially professional norms, that constitute the key drivers of imitation.

Norms play a critical role, not only because they tell people what to do; norms are key because they are what people "normally" do. "Professional norms exist because professionals willingly imitate one another, not the other way around" (Czarniawska 2004a, p. 121). Specific ways of doing things become norms when more and more people adopt them. And people adopt norms because they alleviate uncertainty and provide the safe guidance of institutions: if more and more do it. . . Norms even

legitimate deviance. When an organization – a city, for example – decides "we will not do that," "that" still proceeds in relation to norms.

With imitation as the driving force, fashion assumes a central role for organizational development. Following Tarde, Czarniawska does not see fashion as negative, irrational, and transient, not least in light of the masculine-oriented metaphors like war, sport, and technology, which are used extensively in the social sciences (Czarniawska 2008b). Fashion, she means, is unavoidable and positive. To be in fashion, a great many organizations show an interest in adopting new ideas to appear contemporary and receive legitimacy from their institutional environment. Fashion provides direction. And when the inspiring potential of a fashion weakens, new fashions arise that serve as fresh sources of inspiration

> When all or almost all city services are privatized, it becomes impossible to privatize any more. The next step is municipalization or nationalization, unless a completely fresh invention has arrived in the field. Fashion constantly renews itself, but it chooses among the many inventions that are present at a certain time and place. (Czarniawska 2002, p. 135)

While working within the limits of the institution, fashion thus provides opportunities for change. By rejuvenating and thereby updating the existing institutional order, changes may occur, which is why fashion is an integral aspect of the institutional order. As Czarniawska (2009, p. 428) wrote:

> Fashion operates at institutional fringes. On the one hand, its variety is limited by the 'iron cage' of existing institutions, which fashion actually reproduces; on the other hand, fashion is engaged in a constant subversion of the existing institutional order, gnawing ant-like at its bars.
>      Similarly, although fashion seems to sabotage and threaten established institutions, it is also an institutional playing field: new fashions can be tried and disposed of or they can be institutionalized, thus revitalizing the existing institutional order. (p. 428)

The following of fashions is a key element in the pragmatics of organizational change and an explanation for the observation made by institutionalists that managers may be more attracted by institutional conformity than by technical performance. In management as in clothes, art, or intellectual fashions, the trends are set by such fashion leaders as a symbolic metropolis or star companies. Others follow these trends, cheered on by consultants, the professional and general press, researchers, the public, and an entrenched belief among them all in the intrinsic value of newness (Campbell 2015). Think of the companies that have imitated General Motors for decades, designing a divisional structure for themselves or of the company officials who dream of imitating Apple, Google, or Facebook. Imitation provides relentless inspiration for change. But imitation comes with a proven risk of failure. So, based on her observations of city management, Czarniawska (2014b) provides some playful but serious advice to managers interested in reform and change: Learn how to treat fashion from sensible women; check whether it fits your figure and whether you can afford it; and then everything will be okay.

## Translations

But how do organizations imitate? Through translations answers Czarniawska. Inspired by Serres (1982), Callon (1986), and Latour (1987), she and Guje Sevón (1996) meant that ideas do not spread through diffusion but through translations. And not translations as understood in a strict linguistic sense but as presented in a lesser-known text by Latour (1993, p. 6): "displacement, drift, invention, mediation, creation of a new link that did not exist before and modifies in part the two agents." "Translations" refer to the way organizational actors make theirs the available ideas, whether fashionable or anti-fashionable, or how actors adapt the use of a management model or an artifact to their own premises: understanding, traditions, needs, and means. Translations are active handlings that suppose choices and massive persuasion. And they always entail a transformation of the translated idea or object (Czarniawska 2009, p. 424).

Czarniawska and Sevón (2005) added the finding that ideas travel around the global economy and are always available. Now and then, a particular idea comes into fashion – because it is adopted by some renowned organizational actor, for example – and is translated into local versions by others, reinforcing its status of idea *à la mode*. The translation starts with the idea being transformed into an object: a buzzword, a model, a PowerPoint presentation, a book, or a pamphlet, for instance. Once transformed into a tangible object, the idea can start travelling and be adopted by actors in other organizations. When translators – planners, managers, coworkers, consultants, but even adversaries – start acting upon the idea, they take various actions to transform the idea into actions that suit their context. A manager in Organization Z, for example, may devise a PowerPoint presentation describing the business potential of digitalization for contemporary organizations. A colleague in Organization A receives a printed version of the presentation, starts talking about how promising is the idea of digitalization, and translates the original presentation into the claim that Organization A needs to change its information system into a more contemporary, efficient, and user-friendly one.

Being materialized and adopted by one organization is a condition for the idea to travel in time and space to other organizations. Yet, the actions taken in the organizations that receive the idea and make it theirs are not sufficient for change to occur. These actions must translate the idea into a day-to-day, repeated, and thus stabilized way of doing things. If the new actions become stabilized to the point of being taken for granted, the new practices originating from the travelling idea have now become institutionalized.

To continue with the hypothetical example of Organization Z and Organization A, the idea of digitalization is first translated into a budget line and task force for the new information and contacts to acquire new software and hardware, and eventually instruction manuals and course invitations are sent to everybody in the organization. When these "everybodies" start acting upon the idea, repeat their actions, and eventually take them for granted, their translation of the idea has become institutionalized.

New ideas must fit the existing patterns or categories; they cannot catch on unless they have existed for some time in people's minds. Yet, translations of ideas into actions are always local, and change processes vary from organization to organization. As for fashion, there is a resemblance that bonds the different realization. But each realization is unique, bound to the local contingencies of translations, which is why one can never really foresee the consequences of change – our next point.

## Unexpected Consequences

To reiterate Hirschman's (1991) view, planned change rarely reaches its goals, but unexpected and unplanned effects of changes are nonetheless valuable, except that the people involved may not realize it, focused as they are on their own plans and goals. Barbara Czarniawska has taken Hirschman's view and combined it with Luhmann's (1995) view that systems are geared toward reproducing rather than changing themselves (And if they change by mistake, it is through accidental mutation.). Bringing those two insights together, she has built an analogy inspired by the fictional Baron of Münchhausen, known for recounting enjoyable stories about his impossible achievements, such as riding a cannonball or traveling to the moon. Reusing the slogan of a consulting company, she asked: "Is it possible to lift oneself by the hair?" (Czarniawska 2005a, p. 78).

Obviously not: One cannot lift oneself by one's hair. But knowing that Münchhausen's adventures are impossible does not prevent anyone from listening and enjoying his stories. And knowing about the difficulties of change does not prevent anyone from listening and believing in the potential of change. The point is that people love change but not just any kind of change. As Czarniawska explained in an interview:

> My main conclusion concerning organizational change is that it is a total nonsense when everybody's claiming that people do not like change. If people did not like change, we would be all sitting in caves, probably standing in caves. People do not like change that they are forced to by superiors. So, the most positive kind of change, I think, is the spontaneous change that may happen even by mistake or by invention or by somebody doing, like with entrepreneurs, not quite aware of what the institutional order is, and doing some idiotic things that turns out to be very interesting. But then again, like with this sort of unexpected consequences, the point is to observe the spontaneous change and stabilize it if it is positive. (Czarniawska, 2016, On change/interviewer: H. Corvellec, personal communication [unpublished])

In her view, people appreciate the possibility of changing things spontaneously, by mistake, by invention, or by not understanding the rules of the institutional order. The challenge resides in stabilizing it if it is positive. It is through translations that imitation and compliance lead to performative processes of change (Joerges and Czarniawska 1998).

Unintended changes happen all the time, as a new terminology, a new management fashion, or a new technology is introduced into the organization, for example.

But these beginnings of change do not necessarily develop into actual change. It may be relatively easily for a process of spontaneous change to reach the first stages of translation, when ideas are turned into tangible objects and translated into actions within a particular organizational setting. Seldom are these actions repeated, and rarely do they evolve into taken-for-granted, even normative, behaviors. Rather, the idea will become loosely coupled to the daily life practices taken to accomplish city infrastructure to be build, social security reimbursement to be made, and taxes to be collected. Organizations such as cities, social security authorities, and tax authorities can thereby continue to incorporate new ideas without risking their own survival (Czarniawska 1997).

## Action Nets

Even unintended consequences can prompt change. Combining institutionalism (from which she borrowed the idea that it is possible in every time and place to speak of a prevailing institutional order) and translation theory (from which she borrowed the idea that connecting actions require the translation of different actions into others), Czarniawska (2004d) employed the concept of action nets to capture organizing at an earlier stage, when things still need to be done, long before organizations can prevail themselves of successful stabilizations. Actions nets provide an understanding of change on the making, suggesting that this making consists of weaving or knitting actions, like threads, through series of translations.

The ground of an action net is recursive actions that connect acting parts through translations. Connections between actions can be as varied as the human imagination. They can be a matter of mutual adjustment, such as when a sommelier helps a restaurant guest choose wine. Connections can also rest on the introduction of a new artifact: an identification program that allows people to sign contracts over the internet, for example. Connections can even be established by individual human action, as when volunteers visit lonely elders to keep them company. The point is that neither action nets nor actors precede actions. No one is a born sommelier, internet banker, or Good Samaritan; one becomes so by performing the type of activities institutionally associated with providing advice, bank services, or care. Organizations and organizational identity are born simultaneously and derive from actions of translations that connect. And change occurs when new actions create new translations that create new connections that create new action nets.

The chronology of an action-net perspective is the opposite of the chronology assumed by a conventional network perspective. According to traditional network theory, actors come first, networks second, and actions in the network third. From the action net perspective, actions come first; networks second; and actors third, whether an individual actor, an artifact, or a formal organization. And at any moment, translations draw from and challenge the existing institutional order.

Once the connections between actions have been made and the action net falls into place, the challenge of change is to stabilize these connections and maintain them in good shape (Lindberg and Czarniawska 2006). When relationships among

actions are not only stabilized but have also reached a normative and cognitive fixity (that is, they can be justified in an appropriate vocabulary and taken for granted), they will become the basis for actors to acquire organizational identity ("She is a specialist of Italian wines.") and allow them to build networks ("No need to look for another internet provider; we can rely on the one we have.") Not all connections between actions will become stable, however, and a researcher's interest in an action net lies in explaining why ongoing processes of organizing practices will or will not build stable relationships (Lindberg and Walter 2013).

Having described how Barbara Czarniawska binds institutionalism, imitation, fashion, translations, unintended consequences, and action net together to explain organizational change, we now turn to her methodological suggestions for studying change.

## New Insights: Processual Methodologies

Czarniawska's theoretical understanding of change as translation provides a valuable insight in the area of change that requires corresponding processual methodological techniques. In this section, we examine her advocacy of three techniques – organizational ethnography, a narrative stance, and shadowing – showing how they amount to a cohesive whole aimed at understanding the vicissitudes of change.

## Organizational Ethnographies

For Czarniawska (2005b), the most reasonable methodology for understanding change processes are ethnographies of change processes. Change processes are good topics for ethnographies:

> .. only what moves is visible. Static pictures dull the senses, as the air traffic controllers know all too well. A smoothly run, well-routinized organization does not offer much insight to a researcher. Things go well because they go well; this might be due to successful routines or to a receptive market, and only a change can reveal the makings of success. (Czarniawska and Sevón 1996, p. 1)

Even failed change processes are periods of great interest, when the taken-for-granted practices are destroyed and reconsidered and new ones are eventually constructed. And ethnographies allow for a focus on the way actors envision change in their translations in their specific settings. They also allow the mapping of the erratic character of organizational processes – and beyond. With coeditors O'Doherty and Neyland, in fact, Czarniawska has recently invited potential contributors to a forthcoming special issue in *Organizations* (O'Doherty et al. 2016). One should aim, they wrote, at surpassing "the traditional anthropological and/or 'Geertzian' approaches still popular in management and organization studies" (described at length in: Czarniawska 2012) and "explore the ways in which the

arbitrary might become the rule, or the ways in which the traditional dualisms of the social sciences – macro/micro, global/local, structure/agent – become unsettled and redrawn, or even inverted and displaced under the influence of these objects of concern."

Optimally, a researcher interested in writing an ethnology of change should become involved with an organization that plans for a major change and be invited to follow the outcome of the process of change over a specific time. Such an approach creates an opportunity to compare plans with outcomes but also to meet a variety of planners of change, managers executing the plans, or people resisting the change. An obvious risk is to be left to "the poor originality" that appears in management-oriented research when the preconceptions of managers, planners, and opponents are confirmed (Czarniawska 2001, p. 14). This is why she suggests following the way in which actors actually translate ideas about change into actions and solicit their reflections on these actions. Czarniawska's background in psychology had led her to understand that laboratory experiments do not lead far, whereas observations of the field can contribute to an understanding of multiple dimensions of actions and provide insights about the way actors make sense in and of processes.

Organizational ethnography is typically a processual methodology, but changes, too, are processes. Czarniawska's (2002) study of the management of the City of Warsaw took her approximately 14 months. During that time, a new city council was elected, which meant that she lost half of her interlocutors, and the neighboring departments changed as a result of an administrative reform. She became acutely aware of the difficulty of dealing with the fact that change happens in many places at once, in a net of fragmented, multiple contexts, through multitudes of kaleidoscopic movements of organizers who move around quickly and frequently (Czarniawska 2012). But what could be understood as impediments to a study of change (if one considers change to be the neat deed of a community of more or less heroic managers) gave her an opportunity to follow the hesitant and imperfect knitting and unknitting (the gerundive form is essential here) of the action nets that constitute the very process of change.

## Narrative Stance

Among the methodological tools serving a processual stance, Czarniawska has paid special attention to narrative throughout her career (Czarniawska 1997, 1998, 2004c; Czarniawska and Gagliardi 2003). Starting from Barthes' (1966) classic statement that the narratives of the world are numberless, she considers, with Bruner (1986), that narrative is a specific form of knowledge that contrasts to the logico-scientific form of knowledge; with MacIntyre (1981) that conceiving of life as a narrative provides a rich source of insight; and with Fisher (1987) that telling stories to entertain, to teach and to learn, to ask for an interpretation, and to give one is a specific form of social life – a specific form of communication.

On these multiple grounds, Czarniawska (2004c) suggested a comprehensive use of narratives. Watch how the stories are being made, for example, unfolding how

leaders bring together temporality and causality to produce a plausible plot about the necessary course of a change process. Collect stories everywhere: in strategic documents, the boardroom, comics posted on office doors, or the elevator. Provoke storytelling by asking respondents to give their views of what happened first, second..., last, and why. And when moving from field to desk (Czarniawska 2014a), interpret the stories by asking what people say; analyze the stories, asking how they say it; and deconstruct the stories, asking which perspective are they privileging and which they are silencing. And set narratives together with or against other narratives. It is then time to assemble your own story, and theorizing being plotting (Czarniawska 2013), produce you own theory.

Narratives on, in, from, about, and around organizations allow researchers to trace and explain how organizational processes move from a state of equilibrium to a rupture of this state, and thereby to another state – the definition of a narrative for Greimas and Courtés (1982). A narrative stance provides an alternative way of reading organization theory. Czarniawska (1999) has argued that organization theory is a specific literary genre, in the sense of an institutionalized and recognizable way of writing and structuring texts. Common bargains at airport newsstands are provided by stories of heroic managers who understand before anyone else does where to head their company; fight mean conservatives, adept at the status quo; and steer their company in the right direction.

## Shadowing

Czarniawska (2007) has had particular interest in another processual methodology: shadowing, considering it "the best field technique in management and organization studies" (Czarniawska 2014c).

Shadowing refers to the technique in which the scholar becomes a shadow, looking over the shoulder of someone or something. The situation is that of an observer, an outsider in time, space, and culture in a relationship that involves following someone or something through daily life. It creates a window of observation opportunity that enables the researcher to generate "knowledge about the ways of life" (Czarniawska 2007, p. 17) in a way that includes both humans and things. Looking at what people do creates openings for interviews about what people actually do, in which a number of insightful aspects of work and processes arise.

Shadowing remedies a shortcoming of "traditional anthropology, à la Malinowski: watching native dances during the day and going at five o'clock to the British embassy (Malinowski that is, not the organization scholars)" (Czarniawska 2014c, p. 91). Contemporary organizational actors are all over the place, which makes observation from a static point less and less relevant. The main attraction of shadowing is thus to make it possible to tackle several of the peculiarities of contemporary management and organizing: the coeval and multiple times, the simultaneity of events occurring in various settings, the non-simultaneity of

experience, and the virtualization of a growing number of practices (Czarniawska 2007). More and more work is done at and through computers, for example, which has the potential of providing fewer insights thereby making observation less rewarding. But when studying the Italian news agency, Czarniawska was simply given a place at a computer with two screens, such as the journalists themselves were using, and although she could not intervene in their work, she could see "the desk" and "the wire" and shadow the news through the production process. When a discussion started in the newsroom concerning a specific news item, she could trace it in the database; so she always (well, almost always) knew what they were talking about (Czarniawska 2012).

Shadowing allows the researcher to capture change in new ways – as it takes place, rather than retrospectively. During the study, the researcher can trace how changers try things, change purposes, and either stick to their plans or adapt themselves to what is happening and what they have learned. Shadowing makes it possible to study the very process of change, providing change with a new perspective. Less importance is paid to a comparison between purposes and effects, and more attention is given to the way unexpected consequences affect the change process.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Unusual Study Object

In addition to her theoretical and methodological contributions, Barbara Czarniawska has contributed to an enlarged understanding of change through an influential choice of "unusual" study objects in management and organization studies. Around cities, action nets, and overflows, she has built multidisciplinary research programs at the Gothenburg Research Institute (GRI) that have attracted the attention of many a PhD student and researchers. This interest in unusual study objects is among her most significant legacies to the field.

In her first research program, *Managing Big Cities*, she set out to explore the organizing of Rome, Stockholm, and Warsaw. The program expanded to include changes in such infrastructures as railroads (Corvellec 2001), broadband nets (Dobers 2003), air quality measurement systems (Adolfsson 2005), waste collection (Zapata Campos and Zapata 2013), new public management, and urban innovation strategies (Brorström 2015), demonstrating how cities are maintained by keeping themselves in a perpetual state of change. In her second research program, *Organizing Action Nets*, Czarniawska stressed the need for organization theory to shift from organizations to organizing, from structures to processes, and focused on the becoming of actors rather than their nature. From the recursive ability of technology to both shape its users and to be shaped by its very use (Eriksson-Zetterquist et al. 2009) to knowledge regimes (Rindzevičiūtė 2013), through the role of social contexts for the management of risk (Diedrich and Styhre 2012), this program has demonstrated the adequacy of processual concepts for underpinning processual studies of organizing.

Her third research program, *Managing Overflow*, refers to the ubiquitous need to manage affluence and surplus, wastefulness and overload. Two volumes (Czarniawska and Löfgren 2013, 2012) have established the theoretical relevance of a concept that questions such notions as equilibrium, balance, or normality and the social and moral orders attached to them.

Many people may associate Barbara Czarniawska with a specific concept: neo-institutionalism, narrative, translations, shadowing, or overflows, for example. What fewer people might have noticed is that these concepts are far from a disparate ensemble. They build a cohesive whole that is open and welcoming to the approaches and concerns of other researchers. In her works, methodological stances dovetail with theoretical notions, to demonstrate that change is never really as expected, but neither is it unrelated to expectations. She shows that although change is forever changing, it shows fascinating similarities across fields, times, and places and that trying to accompany the rich flow of unfolding change may be all that scholars, but also practitioners, can actually do. Her work offers an open cohesiveness that revitalizes "the theory of organizational change, so that it might help us grasp the complexity of organizational life without either reducing it to simplistic models or replacing it with complication of the argument" (Czarniawska and Sevón 1996, p. 8).

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## Further Reading

Czarniawska told us that she considers *Writing management: Organization theory as a literary genre* (Oxford University Press,1999) to be her best book. Yet we believe that *A theory of organizing* (Edward Elgar, 2014, second edition) may be a more comprehensive introduction to her ideas and *Narrating the organization: Dramas of institutional identity* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) her best example of how to combine narrative and institutional theory to address organizational change. *A tale of three cities: Or the glocalization of city management* (Oxford University Press, 2002) illustrates the relevance of studying unusual empirical objects. *Social science research: From field to desk* (SAGE, 2014) summarizes over 20 years of teaching processual methodologies; what is more, it is written in an engaging style that appeals to students and seasoned researchers alike.

# Kathleen D. Dannemiller: Unleashing the Magic in Organizations

# 24

Albert B. Blixt, Mary L. Eggers, Sylvia L. James, Roland J. Loup, and Paul D. Tolchinsky

**Abstract**

This chapter discusses the life and career of Kathleen (Kathie) D. Dannemiller, a gifted teacher and one of the most respected consultants of her era. It takes the reader on Kathie's journey from the influences of her early life as the daughter of a union organizer to the pursuit of her PhD the year prior to her death in 2003. The reader will learn that Kathie saw herself as an action researcher by training and belief and the impact that this orientation had on the groundbreaking practices that she pioneered. Kathie was the first to facilitate large groups in an interactive process that got real work done. The largest of her career, a meeting of over 2,000,

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successfully moved an automotive industry giant closer to its vision of the future. Her passionate, engaging, and direct style profoundly affected many people, from presidents of large complex organizations to front line workers, both by what she said and did and the way she listened and encouraged them to discover their own new ways to move forward. The chapter lays out the underlying values of her work while honoring those that went before her and those that partnered with her in the firm she and Chuck Tyson created, Dannemiller Tyson Associates. Kathie and her partners developed new models and processes that are now used by thousands of leaders and consultants around the world. The chapter closes with tributes to her life and her work from many of those worldwide clients and consultants who attribute much of their success to what they learned from this amazing woman.

**Keywords**

Action learning • Building a common database • Change journey • Creating self-sufficiency • Critical mass • Each person's truth is truth • Engaging the whole system • Large group methods • Max-mix • Microcosm • Simultaneity • One brain one heart • Paradigm shift • Tap the wisdom in the group • The power of purpose • Whole-scale approach • Whole-scale change

## Contents

## Introduction

Kathie Dannemiller was born in Detroit on April 27, 1929. She attended the University of Michigan, receiving both her BA (1950) in French and MA (1974) in Psychology and lived in Ann Arbor the remainder of her life. Prior to founding the consulting firm, Dannemiller Tyson Associates (DTA) in the early 1980s, she served as assistant to the Vice-President for Student Affairs at the University of Michigan. She was a lifelong activist and leader in the community. She was the founding "mother" of the Ark Coffee House in Ann Arbor, a now famous Michigan nonprofit for folk and roots music and considered one of the top music clubs in the world. Part of the Ark's offerings to this day – less well known than the concerts and performances – includes providing educational, counseling, and advocacy support for people in the local community. In addition, she organized and managed campaigns for several officeholders and initiatives and served two terms on the Ann Arbor School Board, one of them as its president. Kathie, like many others in this book, was a product of her times. She lived through the Great Depression, a World War, and devoted herself to bringing about progressive change in the local community, in business, government and not-for-profit organizations, and in the lives of thousands of people she encountered across the globe. She grew up in a union household, and the values she learned influenced her strong desire to create what she called "workplace democracy." Kathie was nearly blind; she wore glasses that were like Coke bottles. She could barely see 10 ft in front of herself. On stage she introduced herself as "see no evil" and, on one occasion, introduced her partner as "hear no evil" (he wore hearing aids) and suggested that together, they would speak no evil. And her glasses were also a gift; through them she could see only the good in the world and in each person.

## Influences and Motivations: There Is Nothing More Practical than a Good Theory

Kathie walked with and learned from giants, one being Ron Lippitt at the University of Michigan. She worked at National Training Labs (NTL) with Richard Beckhard and Robert Tannenbaum and was enormously influenced by the common ground they shared with Kurt Lewin. From them she learned systems thinking, seeing the world through multiple realities, and accepting each person's truth as truth. Also, from them she learned action research and action learning, something she practiced every day with every client and personal encounter. Kathie professed never to have an answer or a preconceived notion. She trusted those she interacted with to uncover their solutions; and when they did, she fought for them as only a community-born activist might. It did not matter if the solution came from the CEO or the lowest level worker in the organization.

Finally, Kathie learned that "there is nothing more practical than a good theory" (Kliener 1996, p. 31). She was not an academic. In fact, she was uncomfortable around them. She was not a researcher, rather she sought out good theory and tested it endlessly in her everyday practitioner way.

Kathie was always surrounded by people whom she adored, no matter what they had done in life or where they came from. She attracted people who were curious to learn, seeking direction or inspiration or simply desired to "hanging out with her" and her merry band. Sleeping over was like going to a party, whether at her home or her cottage on Whitmore Lake where Kathie held regular summer gatherings.

Kathie was a visceral person. She believed that change came from visceral experience and understanding, along with data. She worked with beliefs versus fixed processes. Her process was to bring out the wisdom of all the people in any effort of change and then allow it to influence the outcome of that group's effort.

She lived through her values and from her heart. She often said, "I help organizations become one brain and one heart," meaning everyone seeing the same thing and everyone passionately committed to the actions needed. She had strong values for inclusion, collaboration, unconditional sharing, and affirming people. She always asked others (always other younger people in the field) to join her in writing an article. Her purpose was to stretch her own thinking and to stretch others' thinking in order to go to another level in the article. In all her work, her intention (purpose) was "everyone goes to another level" – including herself.

Telling the story of Kathie Dannemiller is impossible without invoking her voice. Toward the end of Kathie's career, it became important for her, and others, to document her life, her discoveries, and her messages. To that end, several people interviewed and taped conversations with her. What follows is one excerpt from one of those interviews (Dannemiller and Jacobs 1994, cassette tape). It is the essence of Kathie and resonates for the authors, as well.

> I had been a consultant for 20 years doing the kind of consulting we all did in the '70s, and I was at the University of Michigan. I began to worry that the auto industry was dying because I was a Detroit girl, so to speak, and I thought, shouldn't I be helping the auto industry? It seemed to me to make sense. I entered into a partnership with Chuck Tyson, and we had the opportunity, through Al Davenport, to go to Ford and talk to a really amazing Executive Vice President, Tom Page of Diversified Products, and his assistant Nancy Badore who was in charge of employee involvement at the time. The team of us, myself, Chuck Tyson, Al Davenport, and Bruce Gibb, met with Tom and Nancy and learned about how he had carefully trained managers to kick ass and take names and how they rewarded the ones who did it best; and then he said, "It won't work anymore."
>
> We went back to Ann Arbor, and we thought about everything we knew about how to build a team, how to bring about change, how to set strategic direction and how to work through conflict. All that good stuff we'd been doing in groups of thirty. We thought: if you really want to change, you better bring in the whole group at once. So we went back to Tom and said we don't know what we're doing and we have this idea – which is: give us the top five layers of each of your divisions from the general manager to the direct reports to plant managers, which would have been anywhere from 80 in some divisions to 150 in others. Give them to us all at once for three days. We will work with them using adult learning principles, meaning we will not sell; we will not motivate; we will give them experiences of participation, and we will help them decide from that what they want to be. At the end of the

three days, we'd like to have them go back to their jobs for eight weeks, then have them back for two days to say What did we think we'd do, what did we actually do, and where do we think we need to go from here?

Now that sounds very slick, and we didn't know what we were talking about; we were just making it up. We were basing it on Deming's plan-do-check-act and a very important change model that I'd first learned from Dick Beckhard (at NTL), D x V x F > R. Beckhard said, "If you want to bring about change in a whole division at all levels," which Tom did, "you have to have **D**issatisfaction with things as they are now, times a **V**ision that is ennobling and inspiring – something people really want and is possible, times **F**irst steps in the direction of that vision. The product of these three items needs to be greater than **R**esistance to the change." The underpinning of the model is that the product will be zero, if any of the first three don't exist because of the way math works, right? It works because you put your energy on building a common picture of D, V, and F instead of working on R in the formula.

We decided to put people into what we call maximum mixture (max-mix) tables, so each round table would be a microcosm of the whole group that was in the room. We could then build DVF at each table and then connect the tables around the room to see the whole picture. How does this help? The secret we were working on is the only way to bring about the kind of change Tom needed. It was to break down the culture that he had described: the kick ass and take names culture, the hierarchical culture, and the old scientific management culture that had everybody in their little boxes isolated from each other and unable to see what each other was doing. One group could see the customer, another group could see the mechanics – no one, including the person at the top, could see the whole thing. Our thought was, can we connect everybody at once, and maybe together it will occur to them that they ought to be working in teams? Tom was a very courageous man and he went ahead and did this thing. And we designed it, and it worked pretty well. And we redesigned it, and it worked better. And we kept redesigning and getting better and better. (Dannemiller and Jacobs, 1994, personal communication)

The work with Ford led to participative management seminars that were held with Ford managers across the organization for the next 5 years. Many of the principles that became Real Time Strategic Change (Jacobs 1994) and later Whole-Scale Change were forged as the consulting team learned from each session and applied it to the next. Today, the idea of getting the whole system in the room seems obvious, and it was not obvious in the early 1980s.

Of all the theoretical principles that evolved during this time, perhaps the most fundamental is the DVF Change Model that Kathie described. It not only describes the conditions necessary for system change to take place, it also provides a guide for the design of large-scale meetings. Kathie came to realize that this model brought about a paradigm shift. The minute D, V, and F are in place, at that very moment, people see the world differently and cannot go backwards.

**The Formula for Change**

$D \times V \times F > R$

**D** = **Dissatisfaction**, the sense of urgency that comes from not being satisfied with the status quo. D also stands for data, because the more people

know, the less likely they are to be satisfied with the way things are. Dissatisfaction must be public and shared to be effective.

**V = Vision**, a compelling, inspiring, and energizing picture of the future that draws people toward it. The vision must include the hopes and aspirations of the people who will create it. Vision also needs to be public and shared.

**F = First Steps**, actions that move in the direction of the future vision. It is essential that people know where to begin tomorrow and that there be immediate signs of progress that will build momentum.

**R = Resistance**, the natural inertia of a system that keeps it moving in the direction it is going. Resistance comes from culture, behaviors, structures, and most of all from the beliefs and attitudes of the people who need to make the change happen. Resistance can be implicit or explicit and overt or covert. Resisters need to be honored since they may see things we need to address.

Note that D, V, and F are multiplied to create a force greater than R. All must be present in some amount. In a crisis, D is large. When things are okay, D is small and so you need a bigger V. Helping people to see all three is the essence of creating change.

In 1986, Chuck Tyson died suddenly, and Kathie reformed her company, Dannemiller Tyson Associates (DTA), asking Randy Albert, Robert "Jake" Jacobs, and Roland Loup to be, along with her, the core members of the firm. These three were new to Organization Development (OD) and learned through reading, attending workshops, and being velcroed to Kathie's hip as she brought in consulting projects on organizational change. It was important to her that all core members of the firm not only understood the concepts, models, and processes as it evolved from Real Time Strategic Change (RTSC, Jacobs 1995) to that of Whole-Scale, it was also important that they experienced the various parts of the DTA methodology as it grew and developed.

## Key Contributions: The wisdom of Whole-Scale Change (meaning getting to one brain and one heart as a metaphor for system alignment around vision)

### The Whole-Scale Guiding Principles

The principles fall into two areas: (1) principles of the Whole-Scale Approach and (2) principles of Whole-Scale Design. Kathie lived these principles in everything she said and did, and she instilled them in everyone at DTA.

Principles of the Whole-Scale Approach

- Tap the power of the microcosm – this gives one a view into the system because the group is a microcosm of the system – whether it's a large or small group.

- Uncover the wisdom in the organization – it's always there, leaders just need help in uncovering it.
- Engage the whole system.
- Believe that people support what they help create – because they do.
- Live life as an action learning project – all of life and work.
- Create self-sufficiency – leave the client with the ability to carry on without the consultant.
- Plant the seeds of generativity.
- Use reality as a key driver.
- Future before you plan (Lippitt 1982).
- Purpose is the key to drive all choices.
- Honor the past and the present as you create the future.
- Keep the flame of change burning – meaning $\times$ hope $\times$ power $=$ energy for change.

## Principles of Whole-Scale Design

These have to do with the work in large groups, which was the essential underpinning of all of Kathie's work.

- Create a common database. When everyone can see what everyone else sees, people will make informed and aligned decisions.
- Foster empowerment of everyone in the system. Everyone has a voice and all voices should be heard, equally.
- Build the team – whether it's the microcosm team of eight at a table for 2 days or a work team doing ongoing work.
- Take appropriate risks – appropriate for the group at that specific time.
- Ground everything in theory. If you cannot answer the question why? Then maybe you should rethink your position!
- Always use adult learning principles. For Kathie, this meant active experimentation, exploration, reflection, and application. Without these, adults do not internalize what they know or believe.

In 1995, Kathie was again working with Ford, this time at their Milan Plant, with two of her partners, Sylvia James and Paul Tolchinsky. Part of the work included a 300-person microcosm 3-day meeting; as was normal for large meeting, there was a logistics team to support the work of the participants. On the logistics team was Barry Camson, a senior consultant from the Boston area who was experienced in Gestalt theory. On his returning home he typed up his observations of Kathie, Sylvia, and Paul, titling them "Kathie's Principles" and faxed them to her. Kathie renamed them "Kathie and Ron's Principles" because she very clearly saw her mentor Ron Lippitt in Barry's observations. Here are a few of those observations (a more complete list can be found in the Whole-Scale Change (2000)):

- Focus on the details of empowerment.
- Enable the organization to diagnose itself and make meaning out of it.
- Create contact with outside information.
- Bring yourself fully into the process – leader, members, and the consultants.
- This work is about the sincere, deep abiding unwavering and non-faddish view of empowerment that runs to the core of ones being.

## Kathie Was About Democracy in the Workplace

Some of the appealing parts of the approach were:

- *The use of design teams.* Design teams are generally between 10 and 20 members of the organization that represent a microcosm of those that will be in a larger Whole-Scale process. This team represents all the divergent thinking of the larger organization. It can be a diagonal slice of the organization, represent diversity, seniority, levels, functions as long as it is representing the DNA of the change itself. Who will be impacted? Who can influence the choices and ultimately the decisions? Who has information relevant to the decisions that the meeting or the process will require? They are chartered by the leader, and their job is to articulate the purpose, outcomes, and needed conversations/actions that must happen in the larger meeting or process to move them forward. Essentially their task is to co-create the journey they and others take to affect the changes needed.
- *Adaptability of every project or meeting design to meet the emerging needs of the organization's members*. Kathie referred to this adaptability as "real-time design" – called the in-the-moment shifts in the meeting's original agenda to one driven by the participants. This flexibility during meetings was based on everyone learning during the event itself. "Everyone" being the participants, the consultants, and the leadership.
- *Strong involvement of the organization's leadership in leading the change work.* Kathie always imagined a specific role of leadership in leading change, which includes preparing drafts of strategy statements, such as mission, vision, or goals. Then the leadership would receive feedback from the whole "system," and overnight, they would make appropriate changes – what she called "the turn-around," because the next morning, leaders would "report back" to the whole room. This approach required leadership to give their best thinking and then be willing to accept the feedback from the whole system, agreeing in advance to listen to that feedback even if it was not in concert with their current thinking.
- *The importance of a building a common database among a microcosm of the system.* Kathie said, "Given the same information, people will generally come to the same conclusion." She believed that having a common database before making decisions is also an application of the principle of having a common understanding of the current reality, the aspirations of those in the system, and

possibilities for the future, and this database is a precursor to good decision-making. (Eliminating the ready, fire, aim mentality of many corporate decisions.)

## Kathie Was About Excellence

For several years in the early stages of the firm, the four partners would meet on Saturday mornings. Kathie led these meetings, which were about the three new members learning about the OD practice approach (based on the values of NTL). These were meetings about the large-scale approach that Kathie and others had been developing, about Kathie's values for the practice of the firm, for life in general, and about how to "be" a consultant practicing in the firm. In other words, Kathie was building the firm's culture and teaching the content and processes of the consulting work. These sessions were intense, her observations were insightful, and her feedback always direct and, at times, fierce. She was clear what consulting looked like, and she made sure that everyone knew and practiced those values, carried her strong commitments to excellence, and was focused on finding and meeting the client's needs.

## Kathie Built Lasting Relationships

Kathie wasn't intimidated by anyone and was as comfortable at the shop floor level as she was in the boardroom. She had the knack of creating instant rapport with people, primarily because of her authenticity and her belief in the value and worth of every person and position within the organization. In the mid-1980s, Kathie met a financial executive in a large organization. Within a few minutes, she had built a relationship with him that lasted throughout his career, which included supporting him as he moved to becoming a senior financial executive in two Fortune 500 companies, over the next 20 years.

## Kathie Empowered Others

Kathie said that the way she evaluated herself was how people felt when they were with her: "If they feel empowered, then I am successful." When you first met Kathie, it was as if there was a large bright light that shone on you. It was as if you were the only other person in the world. Kathie was totally engaged with you and only you. You began to see and imagine yourself that was bigger than you had ever experienced, and you wanted to grow into that image.

In 2001, Kathie was awarded a lifetime achievement award by the Organization Development Network and the title of that award was "Sharing the Wealth," which was central to who she was in all aspects of her life. Kathie always said yes when

asked to mentor someone. She once invited a mentee to join her for the initial meeting with a potential new client, and, of course, the mentee said yes! By noon Kathie had been hired. Over lunch she said to the president of the organization, "now you need to know I can't do this project without – , the mentee, and it won't cost you anything, I'll split my fee with her!" This came as a great surprise to the mentee!

## Kathie Believed in the Worth of the Individual

She continually taught us, "Everyone's truth is truth; every voice matters." She lived this value in every aspect of her life and in her work this meant that for change to happen all voice in the organization need to be represented without fail.

## Kathie Believed That the Wisdom Is in the People in the Organization

Kathie believed that the wisdom is in the people in the organization and that when you connect people across all levels and functions of the organization, they will have all the wisdom they need to find shared answers. This principle is, we believe, an assumption of process consulting. As a process consultant, you do not come with the answers, rather you come with a robust process for engaging the organization to discover its own answers. In every organization, the people who know the best ways to solve things are those doing the work day-to-day. Trust the people you hire and magic can occur!

## New Insights: Moving Change Thinking from Event to Journey

In the late 1980s, Kathie was invited to Corning's Sullivan Park Research Center to design and facilitate a strategic planning event for the scientists and engineers at the Center. The heart of Corning's innovation and development was Sullivan Park. It needed a refreshed strategic focus and, more importantly, alignment among the various groups within. Simultaneously, Paul Tolchinsky was working at Sullivan Park to create a more meaningful workplace for the hourly workers who built the experiments and worked alongside the engineers. Paul was an organization design consultant, having been a student of Eric Trist and a pioneer in the Ecology of Work Movement in the USA. Paul was steeped in Socio-Technical Systems and had also led numerous study missions to Japan, studying Japanese quality and manufacturing systems.

Kathie immediately saw the opportunity to bring the whole system together and invited Paul to participate in the event planning. The meeting itself was expanded to include the scientists, engineers, and all of the employees on site – an event of over 800 people.

When Kathie and Paul met, they had both been on their own personal journeys. Paul was an experienced organization design consultant, working with labor and

management to enact the Corning Partnership Agreement. For Paul the question was, "How do you move the change along more quickly, engaging the many to decide for themselves?" For Kathie, the question of the moment was, "How do you go deeper into the real issues of the organization and reach down, past the strategy to execution and implementation – something that did not always happen?"

The relationship and the event were huge successes, and a new partnership was born. Kathie and Paul decided to find a client to integrate their work and build the next generation of thinking on change management.

As happens when you put something into the universe, you will be surprised by what comes about. Within a month, Kathie received a call from Gayle Goodrich Harwood, an internal consultant working on the startup of a new United Airlines maintenance facility being built in Indianapolis. Paul was in Japan at the time, leading a study mission of American managers. Kathie called Paul in Japan and asked if he could divert to San Francisco to explain what we imagined creating. A proposal followed, and 2 years later Kathie and Paul had created a new way of engaging people, enabling them to co-create a new workplace for themselves. These pioneers, as United Airlines liked to refer to themselves, brought a project that had been disconnected and behind schedule, on-line and on-time with an enthusiasm United Airlines had rarely seen.

Kathie and Paul were able to take the best of Socio-Technical Systems (Trist 1981) thinking and RTSC and create something different. The core of this was systems thinking and the unwavering notion that the wisdom and answers to serious issues lay within the employees themselves. Unleashing and tapping that energy was the key to organizational success.

By the late-1990s, Kathie was struggling with the focus on events and the growing popularity of large group meetings. At one point she even suggested we write an article, "It's not about an event, stupid!" While we did not write the article, the reality was that (RTSC, Jacobs 1995) no longer reflected the work or the lessons learned in the early 1990s. At an infamous meeting dubbed "the meeting on the patio," in Cleveland in the summer of 1997, Kathie and her partners struggled for 2 days to find a term or language that better represented the work that was now being done.

At the end of our 2-day retreat, we had settled on the term "Whole-Scale Change." Kathie wanted a term that represented whole system thinking, the core of the emerging framework, and scale (both large group, small group, and individual). The hyphen was there, because it was whole system AND large and small scale. "Wholescale" did not convey it and, without the hyphen, the inextricable relationship between the two might be lost. The term represented a new beginning and a shift in the thinking and in Kathie's work. No longer did she do "one-off" meetings. Kathie began to talk about concepts that had been percolating for a long time:

– **Critical mass** – critical mass is that number of individuals within an organization that need to be involved in the change initiative over time in order for it to be successful. It is answered by the following: how many people would have to talk

with how many of their colleagues, in order to shift the rhetoric and dynamic in support of the change. The number can be as small as 10% of the staff in a highly centralized organization to 100% in a highly distributed, decentralized one. You do not have to get "everyone" into the room or the change, and you need sufficient numbers to change the dynamic in the direction of the change.

– **A tipping point** is the point at which a series of small changes or incidents becomes significant enough to cause a larger, more important change. The tipping point was popularized by Gladwell in his book *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference (2006).*

– **Learning journeys** – a learning journey is one where after each step on the journey one reflects on what they have learned and how that learning informs the next step. It is the essence of action research. In the case of the Whole-Scale approach, it means asking these questions: What did we say we would do? What did we actually do? What did we learn from what we did? And now what do we need to do differently in order to achieve our purpose or mission?

– **Energizing the whole** – in the process of engaging a critical mass, high energy for and understanding of the change initiative is created, which in turn energizes the whole organization. In Whole-Scale Change, Kathie and her colleagues describe energy as a function of meaning, hope, and power. For more details, see pages 150, Whole-Scale Change (2000)

## Moving from Event to Journey/Roadmaps

Along with the Star of Success model (described in the section titled "The Final Years of Kathie's Work"), which keeps us focused on the whole system, are the questions at each star point that guide our conversations with clients. In articulating the Star of Success model, two questions arose that apply to creating a roadmap for a specific client. If the client's presenting issue is to help them create and deploy a new strategic plan, then our question related to the Star of Success is Do you have the capacity to carry out that strategic plan, meaning do you have the right processes, structures/relationships, resources, and information flow (Star of Success star points) to allow you to successfully implement the strategy (the first of the star points)? If the client's presenting issue is for process or organization redesign, then the question is Is this change in structures or processes tied to the strategic plan? If it isn't, it will be seen as "the flavor of the month" and not taken seriously.

– The art in building a journey and in the development of a change roadmap is in knowing when to converge or bring together a large group for decision-making and when to diverge into smaller groups for specific work. The converge-diverge process is intimately linked to Action Learning, in that after each step on the journey/roadmap, one pauses to ensure the next step is the right step. When the Whole-Scale workshops shifted from designing an event to designing a journey, the surprise was how the concept of designing a journey was new to many

participants. When designing a meeting, whether it's for 10 or 200, 1 day or 3, the actual meeting design can be 10–30 pages and includes everything that is planned to occur during the meeting. The design is always reviewed and changed if necessary by the planning team prior to the meeting and changes during a meeting are done only after consulting with the planning team (Fig.1).

– The strategic development implementation roadmap, below, is an example of a generic roadmap for a strategy journey. In the generic roadmap the box labeled "special purpose work" is all about the star points that are not strategy.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

Kathie's legacy includes many things, not the least of which are the lasting relationships and the mentoring of a generation of practitioners, all of whom learned from and soaked up her wisdom and charm.

Kathie gave OD many enduring concepts and practical theories. In 2001, after retiring from DTA, Kathie decided to get a PhD and, in the process of deciding on a school, met Professor Steven Cady, PhD at Bowling Green University. Their relationship focused on an exploration that Kathie called the Five Truths, described below. These five "truths" were the meta-principles underlying all whole system change methodologies.

In their research on Whole System Transformation, they studied Whole System approaches and their key founders and thought leaders: Search Conference (Fred Emery and Eric Trist, CITE, 1960), Preferred Futuring (Ronald Lippitt and Ed Lindaman, 1969), Future Search (Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff, 1982), Real time Strategic Change and later Whole-Scale Change (Kathleen Dannemiller and Paul Tolchinsky, 1995), Open Space Technology (founded by Harrison Owen, 1985), Appreciative Inquiry (David Cooperrider, 1987), and The Conference Model (Richard and Emily Axelrod in 1991).

Kathie lived and breathed these five truths, and because of that, she was able to see them as the underpinnings of all of the whole system organizational change approaches in vogue at the time. A more detailed summary of the five truths can be found in Dannemiller and Cady (2004).

## System: Transformation Connects All Things Within and Around the System

The only way to bring about meaningful, organizational change in the twenty-first century is to look at the whole system. Piecework solutions cannot resolve complex system-wide problems. Fixing one thing, while ignoring or trying to hold static the rest, never works. This is the seminal work of Trist and Bamforth (1952), in the 1940s and could not be truer today. Real wisdom and synergy come
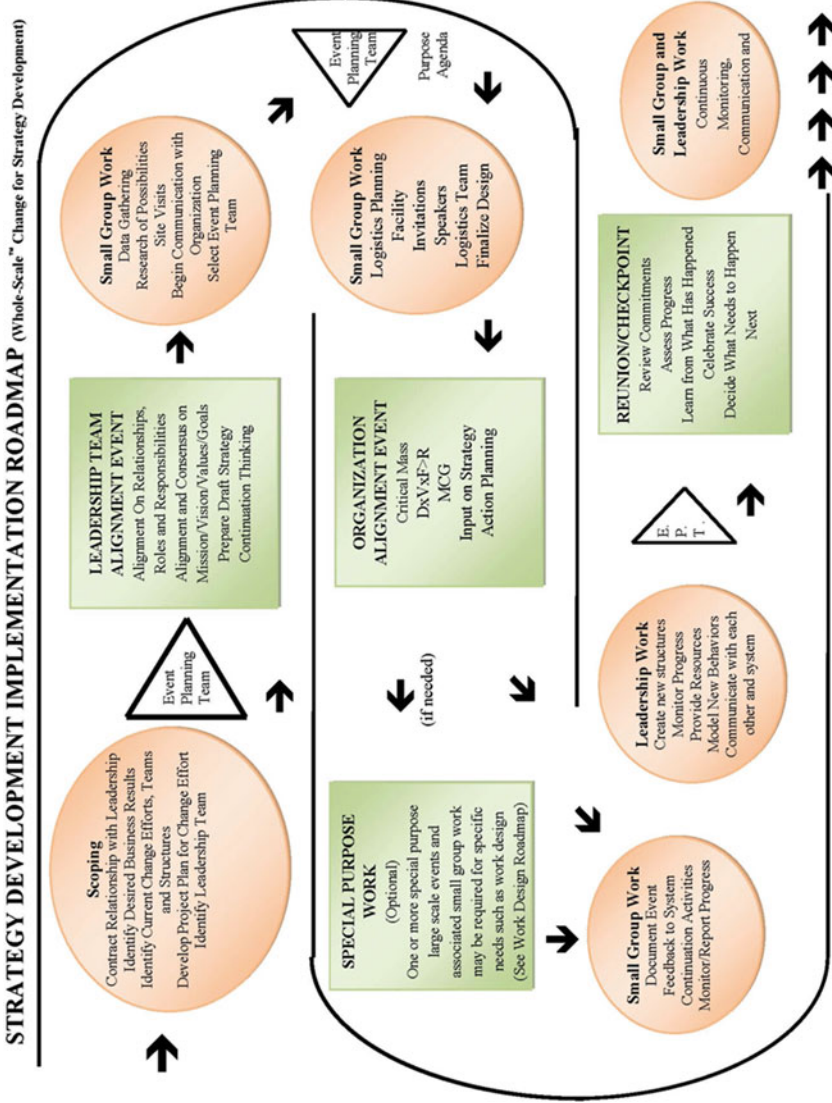
**Fig. 1** Generic Whole-Scale Roadmap

from discovering interconnectedness through shared information. There is undeniable power in thinking "whole system" and in being the whole system as we think. Bringing together various microcosms of the whole organization enables the organization to see itself as a whole and therefore enables it to change in real time, holistically.

## Purpose: The Transformation Is Clearly Purposeful

"If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there," says the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*. In other words, if you don't know where you're going, you literally won't know when you get there. And, this is why having a clear purpose is so important. Purpose is defined as a positive difference that occurs through the transformation. It answers the question, "What will be different in the world because we embarked on this journey that indeed transformed our organization and our lives?" Or, to put it another way, "how will the system be different, as a consequence of the journey we have been on?". Every change begins with an exploration of the end we all seek. When we are aligned on this purpose, it becomes the north star everyone follows.

## Journey: The Transformation Is a Dynamic Journey

Kathie was trained in Action Research and Action Learning. She imagined this journey as a well-designed roadmap, articulated clearly in terms of the purpose and the results-oriented outcomes of each step as well as the requirements between steps. The resulting mental model, or picture, describes the purpose-driven processes needed, as well as the flow of work across the system. When the steps in the journey are clearly delineated and believable, there will be no unintentional turnings or wasted detours – rather the change will be a concise and flexible process that enables rapid deployment.

## Theory: Transformation Is Guided by Theory

Kathie believed in the power of research and the marriage of theory and practice. She honored the work of the people who went before her. As stated by Kurt Lewin, "There is nothing as practical as a good theory" (Kliener 1996, p. 31). In short, when a growing body of evidence has supported a theory, it is robust. That is, the method or technique leads to predictable results in a variety of situations. "When you "poke" the system (intervene in a system), you want to be able to predict the "ouch." When you can predict the "ouch" from the intervention, you have a robust intervention." Kathie believed it was imperative that you are intentional in the chain reaction you set off. If you know the possible reaction to an intervention (i.e., it is predictable

predicated on good research), you will be doing the kind of work that will lead to transformation success.

## Values: Transformation Is Shaped by Values

Kathie believed that all transformation change must profoundly and consistently be driven by values. Social democracy and giving voice to everyone were fundamental. She was committed to empowering people to shape the organizations they live in.

An important part of this truth should be pretty obvious. If we want to make a difference in people's lives within their own organization, we, as consultants, must live these values with every breath we take, every word we utter, and every design we use. When we are intervening in a system – and we always are – it is particularly critical to live our people values at every step.

Some of the values that are consistent among all of the founders are as follows:

- Move people from passivity to activity.
- Create a maximum mixture of viewpoints.
- See the world others see.
- People own that which they help create. Ownership and commitment only come from engagement.
- Live from your heart. Connecting head, hands, and heart creates a powerful force for change.

## The Practices that Live On

In addition, the notions of speed, depth, simultaneity, synchronicity, critical mass, and self-sufficiency became commonplace in the field of Organization Development.

### Faster
In the "old days," it was taught that change took "time." Kathie realized that everything was speeding up. She told Tom Page, at Ford, "If we do it the old way, by the time we built a critical mass, Ford might be out of business!"

### Deeper
In order to create and sustain change, we must go deeper. "Deeper" means that the first step is into the souls of people. People must understand and believe deeply in what they are doing, or they will not do it. "Deeper" means not just using the hands and heads of people, it also means connecting at the heart. "Deeper" also means deeper into the organization, touching managers, leaders, and those doing the work. It means changing not only the words, it means changing the ways of working and the behaviors associated with it. It means touching all levels and connecting heads and hearts, unleashing an energy that is unmatched. When you connect deeper, you

**Star of Success**
**5 Keys to a Successful Journey**
**asks the vital few Whole-Scale® change questions**

**Strategic Direction—*True North***
- What's going on in our environment – now and in the future?
- What business are we in?
- Who are our stakeholders?
- What value do we choose to create for our stakeholders?
- How do we intend to create and deliver our value?
- What does success look like and how do we measure our performance?

Do we have the right strategic direction?

Do we have the right functions?

**Shared Information—**
*Bringing forth a common world*
- What common data and information do we need?
- How are we going to create the data and information?
- How well are we doing?

Do we have the right Pattern of Success?

**Processes and Systems—**
*Ways and Means*
- What work is needed?
- How will we do the work?
- What systems are needed?

Do we have the right information?

Do we have the right form?

**Resources—***Capabilities Needed*
- People?
  - Committed to *True North*?
  - Committed to each other?
  - Skills and knowledge?
- Facilities/Equipment?

Do we have the right resources?

**Relationships—**
*Building Connectivity Between People*
- Reporting relationships?
- Functional relationships?
- Distribution of power—the ability to make and keep decisions?
- External relationships?

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**Fig. 2** Whole-Scale Star of Success

create a paradigm shift you can see and experience. Without depth, follow-through and sustainability are not possible (Fig.2).

## Simultaneity
At United Airlines, Indianapolis, Kathie and Paul often had multiple activities going on simultaneously. It was during this work that Kathie learned to apply PDCA (plan-do-check-act).

## Synchronicity
There is an order or sequence in the work we do. Underlying all organization interventions is a process, and often in that process, there is a logic in the order.

Synchronicity is the notion that the journey has a logic; one continues to build critical mass and expand the circle of involvement, and that requires a process way of thinking.

### Critical Mass

For Kathie, the continual question was, "Do we need the whole system in the room?" If not the whole system, then how many people does it take to shift the energy in the direction of the change? How do you build a critical mass of employees who are committed to a shared future? At United Airlines, Kathie and Paul often experimented with when to use a microcosm and when you must engage the whole. Their concept was to continually expand the circle of involvement" until the tipping point had been reached.

### Self-Sufficiency

Teams learned new ways to dialog with one another and to self-correct, as needed. When the repair of the first plane did not go as planned, mechanics, team leads, and their colleagues shut the site down and designed and facilitated their own 400-person event. Over 2 days, they dissected everything that impacted the work and redesigned, or reaffirmed their plans.

## The Final Years of Kathie's Work

In 1996, Kathie and all of the partners of DTA engaged in a deep dive into systems theory and its relationship to and impact on organizations. This deep dive took the form of a 5-day workshop with Margaret Wheatley, Myron Kellner Rogers, and physicist Frijtof Capra at Sundance in Utah. The structure of the 5 days was lecture in the morning, free time in the afternoon, and experience in the evening. The difference for the ten of us was that, instead of free time, we gathered to talk about what we were learning and the implications on our work.

These 5 days illuminated and made more concrete Kathie's views about how organizations change. As a result, Kathie and DTA developed a systems model that became part of the approach and is now known as the Whole-Scale Star of Success, developed by Allen Gates (a DTA Partner & former executive in aerospace). "Because Whole-Scale is applied systems theory, the Star of Success provides an excellent organizational systems model. As a framework, the Star is a practical tool that helps organizations think though system-wide change. It causes the organization to ask the vital questions. Knowing the answer to these questions ensures focus for moving successfully into the future" (Dannemiller Tyson Associates 2000).

## Implications for the Future: Placed in the Previous Section?

In a paper that Kathie wrote in 2000 titled "Legacy" she says,

> Organization development isn't just a profession we are all involved with: this is a calling. We are called to make sure it matters that we showed up and are here. Nothing in our life or language can be (or is) a throw-away line. Everything I say to my children, my friends, my clients, my partners has an important meaning. I am continually asking myself: What is the purpose of this event? What is the purpose of what I'm about to say or do? Let's make sure it matters.

Kathie lived and breathed the fundamental underpinnings of Whole-Scale, and because of this the last chapter of her life unfolded quite naturally.

Just as the founders practice values that are shared, all leaders and change agents who develop their own methodology will have some common values. They might also have values that distinguish them from other practitioners. OD consultants should use the truth of values to assess what qualities they bring to the table in addition to the values that they practice while consulting on whole system transformation for organizations.

Up until her passing in 2003, Kathie was still thinking systems and how she could help change organizations and the world. In her Portfolio Draft, March 5, 2002, for her PhD application (she died prior to starting her dissertation) she wrote:

> I am a 72-year-old Organization Development consultant, retired by reason of disability from a rewarding professional life. Since 911, I have been possessed by a driving need to continue making a difference, even though I am no longer able to do "real work" (meaning to do it the way I used to do it). The query I find burning in my heart is the following: How do I substantively change my current body of beliefs about how to bring about change, finding a way to make those beliefs relevant to the larger system I now see in the world?
>
> I am an action researcher by training and belief. I believe that life itself is an action research journey. We create beliefs and actions based on reflection on what has happened to us up to this point in our lives. And 911 awakened me, as it did many of us, to an expanded view of the global world, a view different, at least for me, from the "global perspective" I had held up to that time.

## Conclusion: Kathie's Legacy Spans the Globe

The weekend before her death, she was speaking virtually to a contemplative leadership event of 40 leaders sitting in a circle with the phone in the middle. The event was led by Dr. Michael Arena, now head of Talent Management at General Motors, where he says most of his work is influenced by what he learned from Kathie. The question the leaders posed to her was, "What is courage, and how have you lived it?" In a phone conversation with Michael in March 2016, he shared this about her that day: "I saw a vulnerable side of her – she talked about courage and stepping into the world boldly. More uncomfortable than I'd ever seen her and it was very powerful – what do you think that courage is? Her response: "Courage is turning the mirror around and looking at yourself," then she shared the difficulty she was having just getting to her kitchen – "courage is looking at the person you've become."

A large part of Kathie's legacy lies in the thousands of OD practitioners she has inspired directly and indirectly. Especially in the 1980s and 1990s, Kathie worked and taught in Europe and India as well as the United States and Canada. Hundreds of professionals attended DTA workshops on system change and took Whole-Scale Change back home to become the heart of their own practices. Two of her colleagues and friends offered their comments on her influence.

> Kathie's work built capability in hundreds of people for facilitating ways of empowering millions of people in co-creating their future. I was touched by her humility, empathy and the genuine desire to serve to make our world better. (A. Sachdev, Founder and CEO, The School for Inspired Leadership (SOIL), India, March 2016, personal communication)

> The work that I and my colleagues within MPuls do is strongly influenced by the fundamental work of Kathy Dannemiller and that of Paul Tolchinsky. All the major change programs we do in strategy development, implementation, organizational design, mergers and integration processes are based on working with large groups and whole systems methodology. They all involve employees and other stakeholders from the start. Whole-Scale Change is our central paradigm: a well thought-out combination of large and small group interventions and workshops, which we supplement with a diverse set of communication tools, leadership development and (individual) coaching. With direct engagement of the people that are part of the problem, the solution or both. And people who can shed a different light on the matter. This leads to commitment, ownership and ultimately, sustainable results. (M. van Hooft, Managing Partner, MPuls, Netherlands, March 16, personal communication)

The story of Kathie's professional life comes full circle in remembering her relationship with the Ford Motor Company. Her friend and early colleague, Bruce Gibb, describes a time when he, Kathie, and a few others were meeting at her cottage at Whitmore Lake in Michigan discussing the future. Bruce describes what can only be called an epiphany when Kathie said, "We have to save my beloved auto industry!" (B. Gibb, March 2016, personal communication) Kathie became obsessed with that mission and it propelled her forward to bring her passion to scores of companies over the next two decades.

In 1994, DTA held one of the largest meetings in its history, the entire 2,400 workers of the Ford Mustang plant. The meeting took up the entire Cobo Convention Center in Detroit and was designed to help launch the newly redesigned Mustang that year. The scale of this meeting was immense, and the results were remarkable. One marker of Ford's appreciation was that Kathie received the fourth car off the line when the new Mustang went into production. It was, as was typical of Kathie, a red convertible that she drove for years.

She was recognized again by the Ford Motor Company at the time of her last illness:

> I have recently learned of your hospitalization from a good friend of yours. I am sorry to hear of your illness and the challenges presently confronting you. Please know that you have many friends within the Ford extended family who are pulling for you and awaiting

the good news that you have turned the corner to improved health. Thank you for everything you have done to contribute to the strength and progress of Ford Motor Company. We now extend our best wishes for your steady return to improved health. (W, C. Ford Jr., Executive Chairman Ford Motor Company, personal note to Kathie, December 2003)

Kathie died on December 26, 2003 and the final message she left for all of us is:

And so, next generation . . . we pioneers are moving to the next learning environment, and leaving this one to you. My assignment to you, before I go, is the following: Stand on the shoulders of the pioneers who went before you . . . honor and learn from us...and then spring into the future with new and robust concepts that will be more than we old-timers ever dreamed of. You are the creative minds of this unfolding Millennium. (K. Dannemiller, ODN Conference 2001 Life Time Achievement Award acceptance, November 2001)

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# Patrick Dawson: Organizational Change as a Nonlinear, Ongoing, Dynamic Process

Christopher Sykes

**Abstract**

Patrick Dawson is a contemporary organizational sociologist born in England and now based in Australia. His abiding research interest has focused on "why people do the things that they do," His research trajectory was positioned by growing up in a working class family in the industrial Southwest of England and his interests in sociological theory, early urban ethnography, neo-Marxism, and phenomenology. He developed a processual approach to organizational change that promotes the importance of viewing change as a nonlinear dynamic rather than a simple progressive series of causal stages. When first developed, his processual perspective strongly contrasted with the dominance of organization development (OD), contingency, and recipe-type approaches in adopting the view that examining changes as they happen is central to building knowledge about complex change processes. His approach draws attention to commonly overlooked areas in studying the complexity and messiness of change including issues of time and temporality, political process, narratives and sensemaking, and the multiple views and interpretations that all shape and influence change processes. Dawson's research spans multiple sectors and organizations from heavy industry to human services and is characterized by its strong empirical grounding in seeking to understand change as an ongoing dynamic process using fine-grained, longitudinal, ethnographic investigations. Dawson has established himself as a leading international scholar in management research having published 13 books and over 60 refereed journal articles as well as sitting on various international editorial boards.

**Keywords**

Processual change • Organizational ethnography • Sensemaking • Temporality

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## Contents

## Introduction

Patrick Dawson developed a processual approach to organizational change that promotes the importance of viewing change as a nonlinear dynamic rather than a simple progressive series of causal stages. When first developed, his processual perspective strongly contrasted with the dominance of organization development (OD), contingency, and recipe-type approaches in adopting the view that examining changes as they happen is central to building knowledge about complex change processes. This process orientation differed sharply with conventional models that focus on (a) presenting a series of preplanned steps for change, (b) providing retrospective causal explanations from identifying a key set of linear events, or (c) determining appropriate strategies for change from a one-off snapshot of prevailing circumstances. His approach draws attention to commonly overlooked areas in studying the complexity and messiness of change including issues of time and temporality, political process, narratives and sensemaking, and the multiple views and interpretations that all shape and influence change processes. Dawson's research spans multiple sectors and organizations from heavy industry to human services and is characterized by its strong empirical grounding in seeking to understand change as an ongoing dynamic process using fine-grained, longitudinal, ethnographic investigations. He has published 13 books and over 60 refereed journal articles. His work is referenced widely, and his research has also been presented at a number of keynote presentations. With over a 100 conference presentations and 50 book chapters in addition to positions on the editorial board of a number of leading international journals, Dawson has established himself as a leading international scholar in management research.

## Influences and Motivations: An Historical Overview

Patrick Dawson was born in 1958 in the district of St George that lies on the edge of inner city Bristol in the Southwest of England. His father was an active trade unionist who worked for the Co-op (Co-operative Wholesale Society) in distributing coal to the Bristol community (weekend trips to Wales and the local mining villages were common), while his mother worked as a cook preparing school meals. Patrick was the youngest of three brothers and as a musically talented teenager growing up in the

1960s, he was strongly influenced by the emergence of the counterculture associated with rock, punk, and reggae music. In the period from 1973 to 1981, he joined several local bands of differing genres such as rock, jazz, and punk as a drummer, pianist, and guitarist. These creative, formative influences were profoundly shaped by a period of intense family tragedy when his father died suddenly in 1976 and then a few months later his best friend died when cycling home on a wet and windy main road.

After leaving school he entered university in Southampton to study sociology and social policy with the intention of entering a career in social work. During his undergraduate studies in sociology, he became particularly interested in the sociology of crime and deviancy and the work of sociologists such as Howard Becker, Stan Cohen, and William Foote Whyte. He was inspired to consider research work that got close to people to see "why they do what they do" and found a strong resonance with Becker's use of ethnography in probing the lives and interpretations of different groups of people in his studies of jazz musicians and the use of marijuana. Whyte's pioneering research captured in his book *Street Corner Society* (1943) was a major influence, especially in his unusual (for the time) methodological use of participant observation and urban ethnography. Whyte's (1955) study contrasted "college boys" with "corner boys" in a longitudinal fieldwork study that allowed him to get close to the street corner gangs, and in taking their views and interpretations seriously he sought to understand the interpersonal dynamics of gang membership and group behavior.

During this early period in Dawson's undergraduate studies, several other strands of intellectual endeavor were woven together with his interest in urban ethnography. In social policy, he was drawn to works, such as *Schooling in Capitalist America* by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976) and historical accounts of the poor laws, the 10-hour working bill, social reforms, and the influence of British philosophers, such as Jeremy Bentham. While in the area of industrial sociology, the neo-Marxist influenced work of Harry Braverman (1974) in his work *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, piqued his interest in the areas of political process, vested interests, hierarchies, and exploitation. As well as the strong influence of the labor process work of Harry Braverman, he also became interested in the organizational work of Tom Burns, John Child, Michael Rose, and Joan Woodward, as well as classical sociological theory and the phenomenological work of Berger, Schutz, and Winch.

After receiving a "first" in his undergraduate honors dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Jon Clark, in which he examined the effects of new technology on unemployment, he wanted to extend his studies of phenomenology, but in the absence of a suitably qualified supervisor, he discussed with Jon Clark the possibility of doing a workplace study (for a PhD) in industrial sociology. Clark at that time was a new, enthusiastic lecturer and after working as Dawson's honors supervisor recognized his abilities and was keen to see him extend his work as part of a newly established social science and engineering center – the New Technology Research Group (NTRG) – established as a multidisciplinary group to study the introduction and uptake of new technologies associated with what was then

commonly termed as the "microelectronics revolution". Dawson was also offered a position at the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge that spoke to his other main area of academic interest. But just prior to his final exams, another tragedy struck when close brother and friend, Robin Dawson, who was also in his final year studying sociology and philosophy at the University of York, died of a drug overdose.

During this difficult and emotional time, Patrick decided to remain in Southampton and carry out his PhD work under the supervision of Jon Clark. The NTRG team included two engineering faculty, Robin King and Professor Robert Smith, as well as John Smith (Professor of Sociology) and research fellows Ian Mcloughlin, Howard Rose, and Hazel Downing. Together they formed a lively group interested in studying research methods, labor process theory, management of innovation, industrial relations, and workplace change. Dawson was soon intrigued by the way that formal accounts of change were at odds with the interpretations and views of those on the receiving end of change, as well as the way more formal write-ups of research differed from the experiences discussed more informally by researchers. An early project that influenced him during his formative years (1980–1981) centered on examining (with a group of engineers) the newly developed technology of computer-aided design (CAD) on skilled engineering draughtsmen and women in the British aerospace industry.

In 1981 he embarked on his PhD, a 3-year fully funded research project into the effects of computer technology on freight operations in British Rail. He drew upon the ethnographic methods that he discovered in the work of the urban ethnographers, and as it turned out, this would become a defining and continuing characteristic of his approach to research. He "shadowed" or followed around workers undertaking observations and interviews as they performed different types of work, from laboring activities and tasks associated with marshalling wagons in freight yards through to shadowing supervisors in dealing with track, equipment, staff and operational contingencies, travelling on freight trains, and so forth, as well as observing managers in their daily activities and duties. His goal was to identify with the research participants by "becoming native." At times the boundaries of work spilled over into the social activities of the shunters and supervisors, and he soon found that going to the pub with the workers after a shift provided a rich source of data for his study. These social events offered a space and a place where railway staff opened up and reflected upon incidents observed in the yard, often using humor and talking informally in engaging in conversations that sought to make sense of their experiences at work. His research observations required him to cover three shifts, and he often worked for 12 h at a time from 7 pm in the evening to around 7 am in the morning in order to not only cover the night shift – when most of the shunting activities occur within the marshalling yards – but also to be around to observe shift changeovers (when key incidents, events, contingencies, and emergencies are discussed). Fieldwork was conducted over an 18-month period involving a detailed program of observation in five high-capacity marshalling yards in three British Rail regions and also included attendance at supervisory training courses (in which he undertook the training with other employees who were all

aware that he was collecting data for a university project), time spent with managers at area offices and regional headquarters, as well as a trip to Australian freight yards and New Zealand Railways in 1982. During the research a large body of field notes were accumulated from workplace observations, the regular informal individual and group discussions that occurred, as well as data from a series of semi-structured interviews that were conducted with over 80 employees ranging from members of the British Railways Board through to local managers, freight supervisors, and shunting yard staff.

In the early presentations of his research, Dawson established a relationship with a number of influential researchers that would last for decades – with some continuing to this day. He presented an initial paper on his marshalling yard study at a labor process conference, and in the audience were David Knights, Hugh Wilmott, David Buchanan, and John Hassard, all very well-known organizational scholars, with whom Dawson established research networks and collaborations.

In the 1980s, studies of organizational change were mainly anecdotal or retrospective, written from the perspective of management or a key change champion. Dawson, who was interested in the experiences of all employees (from janitor to managing director), wanted to extend studies of change to include the idea of the ongoing and continuous flow of change that he observed in his ethnographic studies. Taken from this perspective, change is a process with no end; it was dynamic and open to multiple interpretations. During this early work, Dawson was not – perhaps surprisingly – influenced by the work of Andrew Pettigrew, despite the fact that Pettigrew and Dawson both developed processual approaches at around the same time. Dawson was writing his PhD in 1983 which was submitted in 1985 (the year that Pettigrew's ICI book was published), and interestingly, there is no reference to the work of Pettigrew in the thesis (Dawson 1985) or in his first major journal article with McLoughlin published in the *Journal of Management Studies* (Dawson and McLoughlin 1986). Although Pettigrew was known by Dawson for the longitudinal research he was conducting at ICI (they both attended a conference at Gregynog Hall in Wales in the early 1980s), this work was not significant in terms of the foundations that have been central to his trajectories. Although during his later work and publications he became aware of the similarities and started to draw on Pettigrew's work (Dawson 1994), he maintained a concern with Pettigrew's overreliance on data taken from a certain level or group of employees and his reluctance to engage with all employees in an organization. Dawson has also been critical of attempts to shortcut ethnography through streamlined case study research and the emphasis placed on the need for multiple comparative case studies (indirectly questioning the value of ethnography within a single organizations in pushing for generalizability). Throughout his studies, Dawson has repelled positivistic pressures that question the value of outlier data in deeming such material as numerically insignificant. He has continually questioned attempts to clean up and at times quantify qualitative processual data, and yet, he has also strongly advocated an approach that is both accessible and practical. On this latter count, Dawson has often criticized Pettigrew for making his approach impenetrable and unusable for practitioners. The essence of Dawson's research philosophy is to engage with the people he is studying or as he

terms, to jump in at the deep end with managers, supervisors, and shop floor employees.

During 1985–1986, he took up a research fellowship in the Department of Sociology at the University of Surrey, in which he became involved (with Sarah Buckland) in setting up and running a two-phase longitudinal study of the public requirements of a computerized system of welfare benefit advice. This study involved extended interviews with low-income households living in urban and rural settings in the Southeast of England. However, prior to full data analysis of the material, Dawson secured a full-time lectureship position at the University of Edinburgh, and on moving to Scotland, he returned to studying processes of organizational change in examining the uptake of just-in-time (JIT) management in Hewlett Packard (1987–1988). This research conducted with Jan Webb comprised interviews with production and operations managers, observation of staff activities, informal discussions, and the use of documentary material. During this time he also began to write-up and present his research at a number of sociological and organizational conferences, such as the British Sociological Conference and the Labour Process Conference, where they were very well received by colleagues. An early success in his publishing career focused on the area of new production arrangements, which eventuated in a coauthored and well-cited publication in *Work*, *Employment & Society* (Dawson and Webb 1989).

In emigrating to Australia in 1988, his attention turned to a number of longitudinal studies in manufacturing in the white goods industry and to a range of companies associated with the automotive industry, including a mirror manufacturer, a seat manufacturer, and a study on the uptake of cellular manufacturing at General Motors, as well as studies in a range of other organizations, including a linen service and a bank. The drive behind such intense research activity centered on the aim to collect a series of in-depth extended case studies for a book on change that would promote his processual approach. Each study followed a process research methodology involving extended periods of observation, repeat interviews over a sustained period of research, and the analysis of documents and other materials in following processes of change as they happen. In the case of General Motors, interview and observational work occurred before, during, and after change, while in some other case study sites, the changes had already commenced, and hence a retrospective element had to be built into the research design. These intensive periods of research, while also being required to fulfill other teaching and administrative responsibilities, also involved data collection during night shifts and 70 km round trips. By the late 1980s, armed with a large collection of new empirical material, Dawson secured a contract with Sage for a book on change. However, on reviewing the manuscript, the publishers became concerned about the depth of the case studies and considered the book unlikely to be of wide-enough interest to warrant publication. After a prolonged period of negotiation, release from the contract was granted in 1991. A new proposal was submitted to Paul Chapman Publishing in 1992, and following further reviews, the book was changed from "a processual approach to organizational change" to *Organizational Change: A Processual Approach* (the first change book to refer to processual in the title) and, shortly after release in 1994, became their

leading publication. Since this time the book has been cited in over 750 scholarly publications and stands as a foundational marker of Dawson's longitudinal studies on workplace change.

Larger collaborative studies followed in examining the uptake of quality management in a range of Australian and New Zealand organizations (including banking, optometry, cable manufacture, and mining). The research program was funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and was undertaken by two research teams: one was located at the Australian Centre in Strategic Management at Queensland University of Technology under the direction of Professor Gill Palmer and the other was based at the University of Adelaide under the direction of Patrick Dawson. Once again, the main methods used in the study comprised in-depth interviewing of key informants (both internal and external to organization); management, union, and shop floor interviews; participant observation; nonparticipant observation; and documentary analysis. A longitudinal element was built into the research strategy, and where practicable, repeat interviews were carried out at a number of different stages during the process of organizational change. The findings from the study were published in 1995 in a coauthored book entitled: *Quality Management: The Theory and Practice of Implementing Change.* The remaining years in Australia were spent engaging in research on technological change and the uptake of lean and best practice techniques in, for example, a bakery, an oil refinery, and a global pharmaceutical company.

In 1997, Dawson applied for and was appointed to the endowed Salvesen Chair in Management at the University of Aberdeen (Andrew Pettigrew acted as the external on the appointments committee, and there has been closer contact between Dawson and Pettigrew since this time). On taking up this position, Dawson set up a change and innovation research group (CIRG) in collaboration with local staff, and he also continued to publish from his extensive Australian fieldwork material. In 1988, he was successful in gaining a Danish guest professorship which was funded by the *working environment and technological development* program, spending half his time in the Department of Environment, Technology and Social Studies at Roskilde University and the other at the Department of Technology and Society at the Technical University of Denmark. During this period he supported the work of a number of Danish researchers who were looking to publish their material outside of Denmark. He secured two special edition journal outlets, and in developing his own work, he started to build narratives and stories into a political process perspective on change (see Dawson 2000; Dawson et al. 2000). On returning to Aberdeen, Dawson continued to engage in empirical fieldwork studies in technology and change in local-based organizations, such as the oil company Shell (see Panteli and Dawson 2001; Dawson and Gunson 2002). But department and collegiate pressures led Dawson to take on significant administrative duties as Deputy Head and then Head of Department, Director of Graduate Programs, and eventually Head of the Business School. During these years of a high administrative load, Dawson worked on the publication of two further books, one that set out to capture his case study material in an examination of the contemporary experience of work (Dawson 2003a) and the other that sought to further develop the conceptual and methodological issues and practices that arise from

engaging in processual research in organizations. This latter book entitled *Reshaping Change: A Processual Perspective* provides empirical grounding to the politics, substance, and context of change framework and explores methodological concerns in the design, collection, and analysis of longitudinal field research. Dawson also includes a chapter that addresses stories and storytelling in an early indication of his growing interest in multiple narratives and competing histories (Dawson 2003b) that was further developed in reestablishing links with David Buchanan and producing two journal articles on processual research, political process, and narratives (Dawson and Buchanan 2005; Buchanan and Dawson 2007). These publications firmly established Dawson's interest in the narrative and sensemaking literatures that were reinforced in his later work with McLean (Dawson and McLean 2013) and Sykes (Dawson and Sykes 2016).

In 2006, Dawson arranged to go part time at the University of Aberdeen in order to take up a dual position at the University of Wollongong in Australia. The aim was to withdraw from heavy administrative duties in order to regain time for research and publication. Over the next 8 years, Dawson spent two block periods per annum in Australia, largely engaged in research, and the remainder of the time was spent carrying out normal duties and responsibilities at the University of Aberdeen. While at Aberdeen, Costas Andriopoulos – an early career academic that Dawson had appointed and was mentoring – asked whether he could have support in submitting a coauthored book proposal on creativity and innovation. Following a number of discussions, it was agreed that Andriopoulos would take the lead in the submission of a book proposal and the management of the process under Dawson's mentorship. As it turned out, the process became more complicated (resonating with some earlier experiences with Sage), and after publisher deliberation, negotiation, conflict, and a period of reconciliation, they were able to extract themselves from a contract with Pearson and proceeded to put in a new proposal with Sage. On acceptance, the two worked closely in developing a pedagogical text for students that would bring together – what they argued were synergistic processes – change, creativity, and innovation. As it turned out, the text was successful, and a second edition was forthcoming in 2014. The authors are currently working on a third edition that is due for publication in 2017 and is marketed as a popular text for postgraduates in the area of change, creativity, and innovation.

During his time in Australia (between 2006 and 2014), Dawson got involved in a number of change projects, including studies on the transitioning of the intellectually disabled into aged care, an examination of the uptake of a performance management system at a colliery in Australia, social innovation, and an ARC-funded project on the uptake of RFID at an electronics company in Sydney. In the work with miners and with the intellectually disabled, Dawson started to reflect on issues of time and temporality, not only as these related to process research methods but also their import to regulatory systems (set chronological age for aged care regardless of health issues), and the sensemaking and sense giving that were occurring among miners as they projected forward while also drawing on the past in reconstituting their sense of the present. In developing this work and in discussions with colleagues at the University of Wollongong, Aberdeen and process organization scholars, Dawson started to produce a number of book chapters and journal articles on time (Dawson

**Table 1**  Patrick Dawson career and institutional affiliations 1978–2016

| Position | Institution | Timeframe |
|---|---|---|
| **Emeritus Professor** | University of Aberdeen, Scotland | 2015 ongoing |
| **Visiting Research Professor** | University of Lund, Sweden | 2016 |
| **Research Professor** | University of Wollongong, Australia | 2006–2014 |
| **Honorary Professorial Fellow** | University of Wollongong, Australia | 2014–2016 |
| **Adjunct Professor** | Monash University, Australia | 2011–2013 |
| **Research Professor** | Roskilde University, Denmark | 1999–2000 |
| **Research Professor** | Danish Technical University, Denmark | 1999–2000 |
| **Salvesen Chair** | University of Aberdeen Business School | 1997–2015 |
| **Honorary Principal Fellow** | University of Wollongong, Australia | 1991 |
| **Senior Lecturer** | School of Commerce, University of Adelaide, Australia | 1988–1997 |
| **Lecturer** | Department of Business Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland | 1986–1988 |
| **Research Fellow** | Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, England | 1984–1986 |
| **PhD Scholarship** | Department of Sociology, University of Southampton, England | 1981–1984 |
| **Undergraduate student** | Department of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Southampton | 1978–1981 |

2013, 2014a, b). During this period, Christopher Sykes, who had also collaborated on the IRT study, got involved in an ambitious project which was conceived during a series of bush walks along the Illawarra coastline in NSW. The aim was to engage with a broad range of disciplinary studies, drawing on science, social science, and philosophical theories and debates on time in developing a process perspective on organizational change that took time seriously. This collaborative work culminated in the publication of a coauthored book titled *Bending the Arrow of Time* (Dawson and Sykes 2016). In August 2015, Dawson took early retirement from the University of Aberdeen but continues to work on his processual approach to understanding organizational change in collaboration with colleagues in the UK, Scandinavia, and Australia. A summary of this career and institutional affiliations is listed in the table below (Table 1).

## Major Contributions to the Field

Dawson's key theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions include the development of the processual approach to change that also critiques n-step approaches, which have been particularly dominant in conventional OD following the legacy of Lewin's unfreeze, change, and refreeze steps of planned change, as

well as the Australian-based contingency models of writers, such as Lex Donaldson, Dexter Dunphy, and Doug Stace. In his focus on the interplay of politics, substance, and context in the unfolding of change, Dawson has also sought to incorporate sensemaking in the multiple views and narratives of change, as well as temporality in the ways in which expectations of the future and accounts of the past (that are continually rewritten and revised often in the light of vested and political interests) all shape the processes they are seeking to explain or make sense of. For Dawson, it is not about the triangulation of data in gaining a common understanding of change but in recognizing not only the dominant accounts but also the outliers and often silenced views in seeking to capture the variety and complexity of change processes. As a researcher, he is happy to position himself unapologetically as an insider and is highly critical of aspects of methodological orthodoxy, such as trimming off deviant or outlier data. As he explained in a methodological piece:

> Processual research on organisational change may require a lot of patience and plenty of time, but it also offers the researcher the chance to study unfolding issues and events as they occur. The 'deviant' or 'outsider' no longer has to be viewed as problematic in final data presentation as fine-grained contextual accounts can easily accommodate diversity. The focus is not on working the data to strengthen the generalisability of the findings but rather, to provide narrative accounts of the continuously developing and complex dynamic of people in organisations. Although general trends can be identified and typical responses recounted, under the processual framework, one is significant. (Dawson 1997, p. 404)

Shaped by his longitudinal ethnographic studies undertaken on the "shop floor" of large manufacturing and service organizations, as well as his sociological and critical theoretical influences, he resisted what he saw as the oversimplified approaches to change emanating from the dominant organizational development movement. While he readily acknowledges the utility of Lewin's contribution in highly controlled contexts, he considers the approach weak on several fronts. One of his main concerns has been with the way in which Lewin's conceptualizations have been oversimplified in supposedly more sophisticated and refined representations, especially with regard to his field theory and the development of multiple stage planned models of change that downplay the dynamic of driving and restraining forces. When these are accounted for, they tend to be used as explanations of resistance in highlighting the need to involve people so that they support and engage with proposed planned change. Along with Kanter (1992), he is critical of the symbolism of the freeze/unfreeze model that underlines a view or organizations as stable entities that over time needed readjusting so that they are realigned with a changing environment. This stability-oriented framework contrasts with Dawson's processual view of organizations in which change is ongoing, an unfolding dynamic ever present in organizational life and captured in his ethnographic studies of the lived experiences of employees at the workplace. Dawson has always recognized that in the context of the 1940s, the notion of longer periods of organizational stability followed by the need for change was common and that while Lewin's notion of quasi-stationary equilibrium and field theory attends to the dynamics of

group behavior, it does not engage with a conceptualization of change as an ongoing process.

## Key Contributions: A Processual Approach to Organizational Change

This is Dawson's foundational work that sets out his processual approach to organizational change. As already noted, the book was due to be published by Sage in 1991, and yet, it took a further 3 years until it was finally published by Paul Chapman in 1994. Ironically, Sage was later to see Dawson as a major author after acquiring Paul Chapman and now publish his widely used coauthored text on *Managing Change, Creativity and Innovation*. After this stressful 3-year delay, for a young academic seeking to make a statement about his processual approach to understanding organizational change, Dawson had finally managed to publish a book that promulgated the processual approach as a method and conceptual frame for studying and explaining processes of change in organizations.

His perspective originally formulated in his 1985 dissertation and further developed in this promotes the importance of viewing change as a nonlinear dynamic. At this important stage of his career and as a young academic, Dawson characterizes the book as having four main aims:

1. To develop a processual approach to organizational change that summarizes and addresses main contemporary organizational issues
2. To draw on grounded empirical evidence collected over 12 years as a basis for theory development
3. To offer an innovative and critical approach to new forms of work that accommodated the views of workers, supervisors, trade unions officials, change agents, and senior managers
4. To promote a coherent conceptual framework for explaining process of organizational transition and new organizational arrangements that underscored the value and importance of processual research

Interestingly, as in the work of many researchers (and other endeavors), it is arguable that these points characterize his work generally and that he has gone on to refine each of these areas in his later work. In this foundational book, he draws on three longitudinal ethnographic studies that covered a period of 12 years, in which to ground the development of what he terms "a processual approach to change," a term that was not widely used until the 1990s. Although Pettigrew provides something of a different history of processual analysis (1997), Dawson maintains the importance and significance of urban and organizational ethnographers (Whyte 1984) and industrial sociologists (Dalton 1959; Gouldner 1965; Roy 1967) as well as the later work of Tony Elger (1975). The empirical studies by Burns and Stalker (1961) and Woodward (1958, 1980) – dubbed a technological determinist – and the conceptual work of Child (1972) all laid the foundations for Dawson's

development of a process orientation to studying and conceptualizing workplace change. Central to this approach is immersion in multiple perspectives with close ethnographic engagement with all people at their place of work regardless of their station and position. Like Pettigrew, the research is longitudinal and contextual and pays particular attention to change as it happens, or as Pettigrew says "capturing reality in flight." The approach stresses the importance of examining movements as they occur from a current position (when possible at the initial conception of a need to change) through processes of change (the planning and implementation of change) to a period of review and evaluation (a post-change period). Examining changes as they happen is central in building knowledge of complex change processes rather than linear models that focus on after-the-event accounts. Data are collected throughout these processes from stakeholders and employees at all levels (not just management) and examined within a broader contextual frame that takes account of the past (historical and retrospective analyses) and the future (analyses of future expectations before and after the event), as well as the current ongoing processes of change (Dawson 2013, p. 252). It is based on the assumption that change is complex and at times chaotic (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2016). The approach also recognizes that the unplanned, unforeseen, and unexpected will occur and that consequently, organizational change should not be reduced to a list of simple sequential steps (Dawson 1994).

Dawson's processual perspective highlights the importance of temporality and context (the history and culture of organizations), political processes, power plays and the decision-making that engages and conflicts with people in negotiations, the communications that occur which may be misinterpreted or reinterpreted in various ways, and create further uncertainties, ambiguities, and confusion. It spotlights how forms of "equivocality" (where multiple interpretations exist) may be progressively resolved through collective sensemaking processes while also sustaining conflicting interpretations between different groups that may be further reinforced through processes of change. Attention is also given to the temporal reconstitution of practices (management strategy, change interventions, and workplace reconfigurations) and how people give and make sense of the way social and material processes, activities, and actions unfold over time. In short, change is viewed as a complex, dynamic, nonlinear, temporal process.

Throughout his research career, Dawson has set out to continually refine and elaborate on his processual approach. In applying the processual approach to a collaborative study on the introduction and uptake of quality management in Australian and New Zealand organizations, Dawson and Palmer (1995) draw attention to the fallacy of quick fix change in developing a more critical analysis of TQM from a series of empirical studies in which they used Dawson's processual elements of politics, context, and substance of change. In offering an important critique they concluded that the ambiguity of TQM offered universal solutions but, in practice, often failed to deliver and was not a management panacea to organizational ills. Dawson has consistently argued that change cannot be packaged into a neat set of tidy linear steps but is "one of stops and starts, of hesitancy, confusion and retreat as well as apparent progress" (Dawson and Palmer 1995, p. 195). Their study

highlights the dangers of any uncritical acceptance of fads and fashions that may appear as golden nuggets and universal solutions (especially when boosting overseas and North American credentials) arguing for the importance of maintaining a critical (and perhaps somewhat cynical) yet open mind to new approaches.

In further developing his processual approach to change, Dawson engaged with the narrative turn in the social sciences that aligned well with the stories captured and analyzed in his grounded processual research on organizational change. Following some early publications and a social meeting with an old friend and colleague, David Buchanan, the idea of integrating some of these narrative developments with a processual political approach seemed readily apparent and an area worthy of time and commitment. They agreed to develop two journal articles around change, multiple narratives, political process, and storytelling in which they would circulate authorship. In the first, the focus is on technological change and how linear mono-logical narratives are used to "sanitize" accounts of change processes. In contrast, the process of change is shown to be more usefully constructed by using nonlinear competing narratives and accounts of change (2005). In the second article, the focus is widened to include organizational change more generally, but yet again, the aim is to show how accounts of organizational change constructed using multiple – or what they term polyvocal narratives – influence stakeholder perceptions (2007). This political use of narratives and stories links to work on sensemaking that Dawson also integrates into his processual approach (see also Dawson and McLean 2013).

In a long-standing commitment to examining technology at work, Dawson has also maintained an ongoing relationship with Ian McLoughlin – a research fellow at NTRG that coauthored his first major journal publication in 1986. Since this time, Dawson has continued to coauthor work with McLoughlin on new technology and change. In a collaboration that has lasted over 30 years, they have produced a range of articles and book chapters on process approaches to technology and change at the workplace. Conceptually, they have promoted a mutual shaping perspective that is not only critical of impact and determinist approaches but also social constructivist accounts that underplay the importance of technology as a material artifact. As they summarize (McLoughlin and Dawson 2003, p. 32):

> We are arguing for a mutual shaping perspective which recognizes that whilst technology is designed and developed by a range of individuals and groups, these and others also engage in constructing meanings of technology within a changing social context. We stress the importance of temporal contextual influences and how over time, there may arise a common understanding among different groups and individuals on what constitutes a particular technology. As such, there may be a form of stabilization and closure in which the technology may appear obdurate. However, we contend that when technology is introduced into the workplace it is likely to be reconfigured by users and a number of configurations in use may arise in different organizational contexts and among different groups within the same organization. This user shaping of the technology may in turn influence further design and developments in the ongoing mutual shaping of technology and organization. In this sense, there is a duality of technology in which the social shaping of technology may at certain periods add to the obduracy of technology and there may be certain reconfigurations of technology in use which present a challenge to previous agreements on what constitutes technology. Such a perspective would take account of

technology as both a 'hard place' – tangible, material entity – and as a socially constructed artifact ('cinema') – given meaning through language and other forms of representation in specific contexts.

More recently, they have been drawing on the work of Leornardi, Orlikowski, and Barad in examining performativity and materiality in the use of technology in the form of decision review systems in professional sport (McLoughlin and Dawson forthcoming). Their essential argument is that the role of umpires, players, and those who frame and interpret their actions might be better understood in terms of enacting "technology in practice," because the sociomaterial lens questions the conventional assumption that technologies are "things" which interact with other equally independent social phenomenon. In short, the process of decision-making is performed in a context that has temporal memory aided by a technology that is sociomaterial and, as such, does not in practice allow for technological determinist outcomes as these are performed in social context over time that is experienced not only by objective clock time but also intersubjectively.

Dawson has turned his attention more fully to explore time and temporality, which he argues had been significantly overlooked in the organizational change literature. In his work on the importance of factoring in time into empirical studies of organizational change, he shows how considerations of concepts of time shed new insights into the dynamics of changing. Initially, he wrote about the importance of including ideas of time and temporality in approaches to change both theoretically and in the performance of the empirical work used in organizational change research practices. In relating his ideas on temporality to ethnographic studies of organizational change in an article in the *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, he developed what he termed a "facilitating frame" that comprised of three elements. As he states: "Temporal awareness, that refers to a broadening of our understanding and sensitivity to time issues...temporal practices, that relate to the research skills (practices) developed in doing the research...and temporal merging, a concept used to capture the interweaving of time conceptions as well as the way temporality can be accommodated in the write-up of research material" (Dawson 2014a, p. 131).

The benefits of including a temporal perspective within research practices include greater awareness of different conceptions of time that enable clearer insights into the processes of change themselves. He also emphasizes that using such an approach highlights the contradictions that may arise between objective and subjective time and also to consider the potential of various practices for dealing with time issues. Importantly, he highlights here an idea that runs through all his work on time and temporality in stating that: "The intention is not to develop a framework for resolving the time paradox (no solutions or final truths) but to promote temporal insight and understanding in developing a more relational processual perspective that enables a fuller understanding of time" (2014a, p. 131).

Shortly after the paper on time and methodology, he wrote a second requested, reflective piece focusing on time for the *Journal of Change Management*. In this

work, he highlights the dearth of writings in the areas of time, employment, and organizations and argues that the main focus has been on discussions over the extent of fixity or flux associated with various theoretical organizational change approaches (Dawson 2014b). He analyzes and critiques for four well-known theories: Lewin's concept of planned change, punctuated equilibrium theory, emergent and incremental change perspectives, and, finally, the processual approach to understanding change, noting that (2014b, p. 302):

> The lack of conceptual clarity on time and temporality in the change management literature has inadvertently resulted in substantial misunderstanding and confusion. There is a need to bring these implicit concepts to the surface in creating greater transparency and explicit awareness of how they inform and are being used not only in the design of empirical studies, but also in the management and analyses of data, and in the development of models and theoretical explanations. The common conception of time as a progressive movement forward (the arrow of time) overplays the inevitability of novel progression as being something essential to the nature of change.

A central argument is that the tendency to differentiate theories according to fixity or macro-orientations and flux or micro-orientations "has inadvertently led scholars to underplay the central dimension of time and temporality...Objective clock time and subjective temporal experience blend, interweave and are continually reconstituted during processes of change yet are strangely absent in theories that seek to explain change in organizations" (2014b, p. 287). This neglect of time and temporality in theorizing change is an ongoing concern and is particularly evident in the recent collaborative work carried out by Dawson and Sykes (Dawson and Sykes 2015; Sykes et al. 2015). Within a broader multidisciplinary concern, they focus on the institutionalization of time-based work regimes and the influence of the Gregorian calendar (following the industrial revolution in Western capitalist economies) on lived experiences. They chart Western historical developments and the growing reliance on standard universal clock time in the control and regulation of international markets, global communication and travel, and the way that clock time dominates scheduled routines of every day existence. However, in their ethnographic process approach to fieldwork studies, they are also aware of the importance of extraspatial time, subjective experiences of temporality, and intersubjectivity. They argue that these more subjective elements have been downplayed in theorization and the modelling of change concepts. They call for a time awakening that not only recognizes the importance of subjective time but also the place and limitations of dualistic conceptualizations that differentiate notions of objective and subjective time. In drawing on scientific studies of time from Newton to Einstein, as well as the more recent and controversial debates on quantum time and multiverse conceptions, they suggest that temporality as experienced lies outside the material world of science. They also draw on long-standing philosophical debates about tense and untensed time, and social science concerns with time disciplines, contending that there is an absence of time-sensitive research in management and organization studies. The authors suggest the need to accommodate objective and subjective

conceptions of time, especially in researching processes of change in organizations, and call for a broader conceptualization of temporality that goes beyond dualism and recognizes the merging and mutual shaping that occurs within the structured and finely compartmentalized time regimes imposed by organizations (see Dawson and Sykes 2016).

In a recent monograph, Dawson worked with Christopher Sykes to more fully explore the notions of time and temporality in the study of organizational change. They argue that as a dimension of organizational change, time and temporality are often assumed to be self-evident but are rarely explained and often underplayed. They suggest that while there is a paucity of research in this area, implicit notions of time pervade organization studies and are central to models and frameworks that set out to explain organizational change. Those who view change as emergent or represent change as a punctuated shift in an otherwise stable equilibrium all draw on elements of time as an unfolding tapestry or as noticeable episodes of disruption to an orderly balance of forces. Once attention turns toward conceptualization, the paradox and problems of explaining time gain intellectual momentum making what appears as commonsensical complicated and difficult to explicate through language.

In this book, they attempt to address the important area of time and temporality, especially as it relates to frameworks and studies for explaining change processes in organizations. They provide a selective overview of the debates on time in science and philosophy in clarifying the central arguments and lines of reasoning. The work offers a more detailed examination of key areas of interest for researchers of organizational change that include discussions on the history of time and temporality, especially in studies of work and employment, and how time has become institutionalized and taken for granted in the way that work is managed and controlled in organizations. They unpack the implicit concepts of time that underlies the main theories of organizational change and critically evaluate and comment upon these perspectives. In seeking to address the practical issues of engaging in longitudinal research on organizational change and how these relate to time and temporality, they introduce a more informed conceptual explanation of the temporal dimensions of organizational change and draw connections that have previously remained hidden from debates and theorization. The authors conclude by suggesting an engagement and opening of disciplinary perspectives on time's temporalities, highlighting some of the insights afforded for process theorization:

> We contend that any resolution of the paradox of time would present time as something other than it is (a representational whole captured by language that is aprocessual and ahistorical). Nevertheless, we do see value in engaging with time as a paradox (a paradox that warrants examination and discussion, not resolution). Likewise with temporality, in which combinations of the past, present, and future can be presented in a number of different ways (e.g., structured narratives provide illustrations of casual-temporal embeddedness), each can shed light on understanding processes of change in organizations. From our perspective, there is no one all-encompassing temporality but multiple temporalities, and whereas we propose a particular processual framework. . .we maintain the need for further process developments in theorizing change (Dawson and Sykes 2016, pp. 235–236).

## New Insights: Studying Lived Experiences in Changing Organizations

In developing and refining his approach over three decades, Dawson's work contributes new insights to studies of organizational change in several important ways. First, his work was among the first to strongly critique the dominant "n" step and OD approaches theoretically in seeking to understand change as an ongoing process. His view that organizational change is continuous and is not usefully understood as a series of discrete steps or as punctuated by periods of inertia or a return to equilibrium was a radical departure from approaches at that time. In developing his processual approach, he sought to integrate determinants or dimensions such as the *politics of change,* referring to "the political activity of consultation, negotiation and resistance that occur during the processes of managing change" (2003b, p. 212). This activity may be as a result of activities external to the organization such as competitive, strategic alliances, or governmental influences or to internal influences such as trade union negotiations and conflicts and resistance between groups and individuals working within the organization (2003b, p. 212). The *substance of change* is "seen to consist of a number of interlocking factors that are related to both the material and social aspects of the change in question" (2003b, p. 214). It is comprised of two components: first, the scale and scope of change initiative, from small discrete to large and radical change, and second, the defining characteristics or the "labels attached to the change projects and the actual content of the change in question" (2003b, p. 214). This group also includes how change is viewed by organizational participants. The *context of change* refers to the external factors such as international competition, social or environmental conditions, or technological innovations, and the internal factors include Leavitt's (1964) fourfold classification of human resources, administrative structures, technology, and product or service and an additional factor added by Dawson comprising the history and culture of an organization (Dawson 2003b, p. 214).

## Unfinished Business: Time to Think Again

Dawson's major contribution and ongoing legacy are in developing a comprehensive, multi-perspective, processual approach that is theoretically and methodologically robust and that is practical enough for use by practitioners. His processual approach provides a major contribution in extending studies of organizational change beyond "n" step and organizational development approaches. His work along with that of Pettigrew is most commonly associated with processual approaches to organizational change and is cited extensively in articles and textbooks used in studying organizational change and management of change. His textbook on organizational change and innovation is widely used and means that a growing number of students are becoming familiar with his work.

It is worth noting that his theoretical and methodological work on process anticipates many of the issues that are being taken up by leading organizational

scholars in a growing body of contemporary research using process approaches to organization associated with groups like the European Group of Organization Studies and Process Research Organization Symposia. His work can thus be said to have continued endorsement both by leading organizational scholars and students alike. His ability to articulate in accessible language, deep theoretical concepts, and methodological rigor, in ways that make them workable for practitioners, is no mean feat. It no doubt stems from his roots and upbringing in St George and his early love of engaged, situated ethnographic research that explores why it is that people do the things they do.

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# Daniel R. Denison: Corporate Culture Teacher, Scholar, and Consultant

# 26

## Levi R. G. Nieminen, Robert Hooijberg, and Lindsey Kotrba

### Abstract

Daniel R. Denison's career sets a high bar for the impact a scholar-practitioner can have through his or her work. As a teacher, scholar, and consultant on the topics of organizational culture and leadership, his contributions have shaped our current understanding and practices for how to measure corporate culture and "bring it to the bottom line" of business performance. His work has gone a long way to push the study of organizational cultures beyond the ivory towers and equip business leaders with the tools and insights needed to make a real difference in the organizations they lead.

### Keywords

Organizational culture • Corporate culture • Leadership development • Culture survey • Culture measurement • Organizational climate

## Contents

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## Introduction

Daniel (Dan) Denison's contributions to the understanding of organizational change follow from his research on the impact that corporate culture has on business performance. That research foundation served as a platform for applying those ideas in many different ways: teaching MBAs, PhDs, and executives at the University of Michigan from 1987 to 1999; teaching executives at IMD Business School in Lausanne, Switzerland, from 1999–2016; and through the creation of his own global firm, Denison Consulting, starting in 1998. His work has been influenced by many factors ranging from his early education and his scholarly research, to the corporate executives he worked with, to the friends and colleagues he worked with in client organizations, the consulting world, and the institutions where he spent his career.

## Influences and Motivations: From Multidisciplinary Roots to Scholar-Practitioner

Dan's early academic years provided a strong multidisciplinary perspective, combining his interests in sociology, anthropology, psychology, and business. He completed his undergraduate work at Albion College in 1973 where broad exposure to everything from survey research to lab studies sparked a keen interest in the logic and methods that are useful for making your point in the social sciences. Throughout his career, Dan generally ignored the idea that the scholarly disciplines should compete for supremacy and instead looked for ways to embrace a practical, multidisciplinary, problem-focused orientation. From this vantage point, each of the different perspectives he discovered always looked useful and complementary.

Dan's undergraduate years were also strongly influenced by close relationships with several of his professors. Their mentorship quickly helped him to see an academic career and life as an attractive possibility. One of his undergraduate psychology professors, David K. Hogberg, not only inspired him in class but also invited him to give guitar lessons to his 10-year-old son Daniel. A cold beer with Dave after each week's lesson became a tradition that helped Dan start to uncover some of the mysteries of academic life. Another psychology professor, Frances Lucas, held her senior seminar in her living room each week. Dan always loved talking with Fran, especially one winter evening when the three other members of the seminar all fell asleep! An Albion sociology professor, Robert D. Cooper, was the one who most strongly encouraged Dan to go to graduate school. He even personally drove Dan down to his alma mater, Kent State University, to meet the faculty.

Dan's master's thesis at Kent in 1974 examined the research on community power structures and noted how the conclusions reached about the elitist and pluralist perspectives were as much about the theory and methods used to frame the research questions as they were about the phenomenon itself. This perspective – that theories and methods provide powerful lenses through which to view the phenomenon – can be seen clearly in Dan's later writings, especially in his well-known *Academy of Management Review* commentary on the culture-climate debate (Denison 1996).

Dan spent the next phase of his academic career at the University of Michigan. He started as a research assistant at the Institute for Social Research (ISR) in 1977 and then joined the PhD program in organizational psychology (1979–1982). After graduating in late 1982, he became an assistant research scientist in ISR and assistant professor in psychology (1983–1986). In 1987, he joined the organizational behavior faculty in the business school (1987–1999).

His first few years at ISR played a strong role in shaping his career. He got to see a number of world-class scholars in action, and delighted in walking the halls on the way to and from the café each day, exploring the world of empirical social science that was unfolding around each corner. He even got to know several of ISR's founders, including Rensis Likert and Angus Campbell, and was deeply influenced by the history of how they had worked together as a small, entrepreneurial team to develop empirical social science in the post-WWII era. Dan's first organizational behavior course was taught by Edward E. Lawler III and his second by Robert L. Kahn, who taught his seminar winter term 1978 from the page proofs of the second edition of Katz and Kahn's seminal text, *The Social Psychology of Organizations* (1978). He also had the good fortune to learn organizational research from Rensis Likert and David G. Bowers while working with client organizations doing *Survey of Organizations* projects at ISR. This gave him great practical experience doing large survey projects with corporate clients and was very influential in shaping his perspective on organizational culture.

In the early 1980s, with unprecedented competition from Japanese manufacturers and the publication of the business world's first best seller, *In Search of Excellence*, by Tom Peters and Bob Waterman, the new interest in organizational culture proved to be a compelling way to frame his research agenda. His 1982 dissertation research pieced together a sample of 34 companies that had good representative survey samples of the people's perceptions of their work environment that could be aggregated to the organizational level. Fellow ISR colleague Gerald H. B. Ross taught Dan the rudiments of financial analysis so that he could do one of the first "linkage" studies of the impact of culture on business performance. One of the important findings from this work was that the aggregated data on organizational characteristics, like organizational climate or culture, were better predictors of the companies' *future* financial performance than they were of *current* financial performance. More conventional measures of leadership or employee satisfaction were good predictors of current performance but appeared to have a shorter lag time than the organization-level measures. From this set of findings, Dan observed the power of organization-level measures to tap into constructs that seemed to have much more momentum and inertia. With the encouragement and advice of Stanley Seashore and Richard Hackman, Dan added a set of case studies to help explain these quantitative findings and wrote up this combination of results in his 1990 book, *Corporate Culture and Organizational Effectiveness* (Denison 1990).

After finishing his dissertation at the end of 1982, Dan took a faculty position at ISR as an assistant research scientist and began teaching in Michigan's organizational psychology program. After 4 years and an extensive job search, he moved to the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan in 1987. Working alongside

colleagues in finance, marketing, and strategy further broadened his multidisciplinary perspective. Learning how to teach executives and MBA students was challenging and stimulating and helped to build Dan's experience in translating the practical implications of his work for managers and executives. Teaching in a large executive program for Ford with regular trips to teach in Europe, and then living in Tokyo with his wife and children while working with Ikujiro Nonaka at Hitotsubashi University, were important life experiences that helped to add a global perspective to his work.

This phase was a strong growth period in Dan's career. He found wonderfully stimulating collaborations with numerous colleagues – Karl Weick, C.K. Prahalad, Noel Tichy, Stu Hart, Jane Dutton, Lance Sandelands, Jim Walsh, Bob Quinn, Kim Cameron, and Claes Fornell, among others. He also published several new culture-performance studies that provided the foundation for developing his own culture model and survey method.

Dan also found a number of uphill challenges. It was becoming clear that it would be difficult if not impossible to fuel a robust program of comparative organizational research within the traditional academic setting. The funding alternatives were limited, and narrow academic publication pressures were strong disincentives for pursuing a large-scale research agenda. Leading scholars such as Edgar Schein and Joanne Martin also advocated the exclusive use of qualitative methods and were strongly opposed to quantitative methods for studying culture. So, Dan's approach of studying whole organizations, over time, as single "data points" in a way that combined qualitative and quantitative methods with a clinical, interventionist perspective did not receive much support. Over time, Dan's approach certainly helped to usher in the wider acceptance of the mixed methods approach that dominates the field today. Notably, Edgar Schein has since commended Dan's work and perspective, writing the foreword of his 2012 book, *Leading Culture Change in Global Organizations: Aligning Culture and Strategy.*

In 1998, Dan teamed up with Bill Neale to form Denison Consulting, LLC. The firm was a practical way to scale the application and impact of the culture and performance work in the business world and also provided the means to build the depth and scope of their research program. A leadership 360 assessment was soon added to the culture survey, and over the next few years, the firm developed the delivery capacity and the consulting support to build a successful business. These two founding partners led the firm together for over a decade. Today, the normative databases that the firm has amassed allow for comparisons with over 1000 organizations and over 15,000 leaders, with millions of people using the surveys in over 50 different languages all over the world. The firm has grown and developed a successful consulting practice over its two decades, while also expanding its global reach and client base. Denison Consulting opened an office in China in 2005 with Bill Mobley and more recently expanded its European presence by opening a second HQ in Zurich with Karl-Heinz Oehler (2014).

In 1999, the year after founding Denison Consulting, Dan joined the faculty of the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) and moved to Lausanne, Switzerland. His teaching at IMD focused primarily on executive programs for corporate clients, working closely with companies like Shell, Canon, Dow, Henkel,

Sun Microsystems, Swiss Re, Philip Morris, Air France, Metso, Konecranes, Allianz, and Deloitte. His teaching often focused on issues of culture change and leadership development, and his favorite programs were always those designed as learning interventions intended to drive strategic change. His close relationships with faculty colleagues- including Peter Lorange, Vladimir Pucik, Bill Fischer, Phil Rosenzweig, Robert Hooijberg, Shlomo Ben-Hur, Tom Malnight, Peter Killing, Paul Strebel, Joe DiStefano, Martha Maznevski, Maury Peiperl, Bala Chakravarthy, and many others-provided stimulation, insight, challenge, and friendship at every turn. Over 15 years of splitting his time between being a professor of management and organization at IMD *and* chairman of Denison Consulting set a unique context for refining the practical message and impact of his culture research. The collaborations that grew from IMD also helped to create a robust program of cross-cultural research, as well as a continuous stream of truly global case studies.

Over time, the need to respond to a wide range of client-driven business imperatives broadened the scope and depth of the research and commercial applications to include mergers and acquisitions, leadership transitions, turnaround and transformation, strategic alignment, and leadership development. Dan's work and writing in each of these areas took on a distinctly practical and action-oriented viewpoint, centering on how to bring people and culture to the center point of executives' discussion about their businesses.

## Key Contributions: Bringing Culture to the Bottom Line

The central theme of Dan's work is the impact that organizational culture has on business performance. The early studies showed that survey data measuring perceptions of participative management practices was a good predictor of subsequent levels of profitability and growth (Denison 1984, 1990). Denison and Mishra (1995) extended this work through a series of case studies and the development of a theoretical model. This framework, which came to be known as the *Denison model*, specified four key cultural traits (or characteristics) of high-performing organizations: a clear sense of the *mission*, the ability to *adapt* to external forces, a high degree of *involvement* of the people, and strong mechanisms for internal *consistency.*

Denison and Mishra (1995) provided an initial test of the theory, correlating survey data with the financial performance of over 200 companies. Their study indicated a direct positive relationship between each of the culture traits and subsequent levels of performance, while pointing to the unique importance of the stability traits (*mission + consistency*) for profitability outcomes (e.g., ROA) and the flexibility traits (*involvement + adaptability*) for growth outcomes (e.g., sales growth). Subsequent studies have built on these findings, studying the culture trait-performance linkages across a wide variety of settings. For example, Gillespie, Denison et al. (2008) found that the culture traits were positively related to customer satisfaction ratings in home construction companies. In a longitudinal test of causal

sequence, Boyce et al. (2015) demonstrated how the traits *preceded* customer satisfaction and vehicle sales in car dealerships.

More importantly, Denison and Mishra's (1995) theory also specified the importance of *balance* among the traits, reinforcing how the culture positions an organization to effectively manage the competing demands of creating internal alignment and external adaptability. Kotrba et al. (2012) provided empirical support for this idea, demonstrating how the culture traits interact to predict the sales growth and market-to-book ratio of public companies (see also Yilmaz and Ergun 2008). Denison et al. (2014) provided an overview of the linkage studies using the Denison model and noted the importance of this work as part of the proliferation of published studies in the 2000s. As noted in Sackmann's (2011) comprehensive review, the number of published culture-performance studies grew fivefold in the decade!

This proliferation of culture-performance research would certainly not have occurred if it were not for significant advances in the quantitative measurement of culture. As summarized by Ashkanasy et al. (2000), culture surveys have sprung up with a wide range of purposes, from the broad categorization of companies into a typology, to measures of value congruence and fit, to dimensional measures used to describe a culture, and to dimensional measures that assert more narrow predictive purposes, such as *safety* culture, *innovation* culture, *service* culture, and so on.

Dan's development and validation of the *Denison Organizational Culture Survey* (DOCS) as a broad predictive measure of effectiveness made several important contributions to this domain, the most fundamental being the establishment of a basis for comparing across organizations and across studies. In this way, the DOCS was one of a handful of instruments that added a nomothetic layer to a previously idiographic domain. The competing values framework (CVF) is another important measure for nomothetic research (Quinn and Cameron 1988; Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1981), possessing a number of similarities with DOCS and some key differences too. One key difference is that the CVF produces *types*, whereas the DOCS produces *profiles*. The preponderance of evidence using either instrument has shown that the dimensions of culture are positively correlated, therefore rejecting the idea of orthogonal culture types (Hartnell et al. 2011). At the root of Denison's work is the principle that it is not only possible for organizations to be *both* stable *and* flexible, internally focused *and* externally focused, but that *this* appears to be essential for high-performing organizations!

Thus, the DOCS is one of the few culture effectiveness measures that continues to survive the test of time. Denison et al. (2014) published a review of nine instruments of this type, finding that most had "come and gone" with little empirical testing beyond the initial publications. In comparison, research on the DOCS has accrued substantial validity and reliability evidence, including factor analytic support for the proposed theoretical model, evidence for aggregating individual perceptions as a good measure of team- and organization-level culture, and support for the proposed linkages between each of the constructs and organizational performance. In addition, the measure has been tested extensively across national and societal boundaries, and the central thesis of the traits' linkages to organizational effectiveness has been validated in Spain, Russia, Turkey, China, and several other countries in multiple

studies (e.g., Bonavia et al. 2009; Fey and Denison 2003; Denison et al. 2003; Yilmaz and Ergun 2008).

One of Dan's most widely cited scholarly contributions was his 1996 *Academy of Management Review* article, "What is the difference between organizational culture and organizational climate? A native's point of view on a decade of paradigm wars." This article was later shown by Asif (2011) to be "seminal across academic disciplines from its appearance" (p. 454). Asif noted that the citations of this article continued to rise more than 10 years after it was originally published.

This article contrasted the culture and climate perspectives as they had been presented in the academic literature and argued that "the primary difference between these two literatures is not a substantive difference in the phenomena under investigation, but rather … a difference in the perspective taken on the phenomenon" (p. 621). The climate perspective, he argued, is grounded in a Lewinian theory of social context, which assumed that the individual and their environment were separate entities $[B = f(p,e)]$. In contrast, the culture perspective is grounded in a social constructionist theory of social context in which "self and society are two sides of the same coin" (Mead 1934).

Dan also argued that these two perspectives were quite complementary. The climate perspective is very useful when trying to understand the impact that an existing context has on an individual, whereas the culture perspective is a much more useful theory when trying to explain how organizational contexts are formed over time. In classic form, Dan's work grounds these two complementary perspectives both in the deep sociological theorizing of Anthony Giddens on "structuration" and in the practical old adage, "what goes around comes around."

Dan's treatment of these issues was the perfect multidisciplinary "nudge" to a debate that was highly entrenched. And its message resonated! Armed with this insight, the pragmatist can locate a complementarity in the two perspectives and help create a richer understanding of the social context of organizations and the important impact it has on business outcomes. And this is exactly what Dan has done.

Another clear contribution of Dan's work focuses on the process by which organizations can use assessment, dialogue, and action learning to stimulate change on a cultural level. In his scholarly writing, Dan frequently used a mixed methods approach and told the culture change stories of the clients whom he consulted to. Among others, these case studies have chronicled the culture transformations of Procter & Gamble and Detroit Edison (Denison 1990); Domino's Pizza, GE, and Swiss Re (Denison et al. 2012); and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority – New York City (Nieminen et al. 2016). In each of these stories, the executives became more aware of the culture and how it inhibited or supported the business strategy. They came to view the two things – culture and strategy – as highly interdependent. From there, the effective leaders were able to challenge the old habits and assumptions and build alignment around the new ones.

These cases underscore the challenge that executives face when trying to make culture change stick and the wide range of tactics they use, whether it was Dave Brandon trying on the uniforms worn by the Domino's employees who make the pizzas, Matti Lehtonen sending his engineers into the operating room (Denison et al. 2012), or

Carmen Bianco spearheading a program to upgrade the New York City subway system (Nieminen et al. 2016). Each case helps to reject the notion that "the business" and "the culture" are separate matters, or as Dan recently wrote in response to Lorsch and McTague's HBR piece in April 2016:

> After twenty years working with "culture change" projects, I'd be a little careful about positioning culture as an automatic result of fixing the business – it's probably more helpful to recognize culture as an essential ingredient of a learning process that is necessary to make sure that those business fixes *stick*. (Denison 2016)

## New Insights: Perspectives on Culture Change

For the past 25 years, first at the University of Michigan and then at IMD, Dan's teaching efforts have been primarily devoted to corporate executive programs. In this context, there is often a high degree of overlap between teaching in executive programs that are designed as a catalyst to build alignment around strategic change initiatives *and* the culture transformation work of his consulting firm. But this opportunity to work with literally dozens of leading corporations each year to create learning interventions has been a powerful influence on the way that Dan's teaching and consulting have evolved. The opportunity to apply the culture framework in so many real-life companies has also provided a number of new insights that have crystallized over the course of Dan's career: (1) the psychological limits that organizations place on their opportunities for action, (2) the contrast between what executives think and what they actually do, (3) the recognition that intervention is actually an advanced form of diagnosis, and (4) understanding that sometimes you are better off changing behavior first and assumptions later. Undergirding each of these, Dan describes the profound difference between the lofty aspirations of strategy *formulation* and the hard work of strategy *implementation*.

*The psychological limits to opportunities for action*. Dan's experience has taught him firsthand how a discussion of the results of a culture survey with executives often builds a high level of consensus and insight regarding both the issues that hamper their effectiveness and the many alternative paths to addressing these issues. At a basic level, this means that the executives always need to prioritize the issues they will address and the actions they will take. But what really stood out to Dan are the psychological limits they face to change. The psychological limits are formidable at the individual level, but they are even stronger at the group or the "tribal" level.

Dan described a clear example of this in a European bank where the various business units experienced high levels of empowerment and invested a lot in the development of their people. There was, however, little collaboration among the business units, and the CEO felt that many opportunities for value creation were underutilized or even ignored because of that. At a cognitive level, everybody understood the need to address these cross-boundary value creation opportunities. Emotionally, however, people were really attached to their freedom to operate and to run their business the way they thought best. Each of the business units was relatively successful on their own, *so what is the problem*? All the talk was good, but

for the next 2 years, Dan observed nothing change. This was partly because of the individual attachment to the freedom to operate their own way, but this was significantly strengthened by the tribal feelings in each of the business units. Each business unit had done a great job of creating a strong culture, and people felt much more strongly attached to their "tribe" than to the bank. That created a psychological boundary that took a long time to transcend.

*It is not about what executives think but about what they do*. Dan has observed that far too many organizational culture programs get stuck in thinking and talking rather than doing. One dynamic Dan has seen many times is an overemphasis on the "process" of the change (e.g., the process of how an organization moves from diagnosis to alignment on key priorities, communication plans, etc.) rather than the substantive actions themselves. Dan's perspective is that while the process is clearly important, it should be balanced by a heavy emphasis on action. Big, broad action plans can also be an obstacle to progress. In their drive to show employees that they take the survey results seriously, Dan has seen how many executives will develop big, bold, broad-brush plans. Of course, the bigger and bolder the plan, the more discussion and disagreement they will have, and hence, the less likely it becomes that anything happens. Dan's insight here is that, in culture change, smaller targeted actions that are repeated many times (such as in habits and routines) are an important complement to a few of the big, bold actions that executives often seek.

*Intervention is diagnosis*. Dan's perspective is that each step in the implementation process offers an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the organization's culture. Defining the targets of intervention in the action planning process always says a lot about how the organization typically goes about solving problems. As an example, Dan described one major petrochemical company that he worked with, in which the culture results showed low adaptability and high consistency. After extended discussion, the executive team decided that their key intervention should be to train more six sigma black belts! *Why?* Because that was what they knew how to do! That was how they approached the change process in the past and that had yielded positive results for them. With a great deal of negotiation, Dan's team managed to persuade them to focus at least some of their six sigma projects on customer-facing targets for improvement.

Dan has suggested that, as the implementation process unfolds the force field of momentum and resistance that emerges, says a lot about the organization's culture. The reaction to both the superficial and the deeper aspects of change reveals a lot. He warns that superficial acceptance of change structures and processes should not be confused with change itself. Sometimes accepting the process can even be a clever way of resisting the actual change. Finally, Dan's perspective underscores the importance of *seeing which changes stick*. It is hard enough to initiate change, but it is far harder to sustain it.

*Sometimes it is better to change structures and behaviors first and assumptions later*. A lot of work in organizational culture change focuses on changing the assumptions people hold, in the belief that once assumptions change, behavioral change will follow. However, Dan's experience has taught him that this does not always happen. More often, extensive discussions about a set of culture results may

open people's minds but, in the end, still not lead to a change in people's basic assumptions. Dan articulates how sometimes what you need to do is to change the structure and processes in such a way that they force different behaviors. Once forced to display different behaviors over an extended period of time, then assumptions will change as well. Reflecting on the European bank example described earlier, Dan described how after 2 years of no progress, a new CEO was appointed. Her approach to culture change was radically different. She changed the governance structure, the bonus system, the strategy development process, and the performance measurement system all to promote cross-boundary collaboration and value creation. And that did dramatically change the culture and did so in less than 2 years.

Thus, another key lesson that was nurtured by Dan's experience was the insight that successful "culture" change usually occurs through a realignment at three levels: the *mindset* of individuals; the *behavior* of organizational members, especially the leaders; and finally, the logic of the organizational *system* that links these together. Without all three of these components, culture change seldom sticks. This was one of the greatest learning points of teaching in corporate executive programs at IMD, where Dan got to work with many companies over a period of years and, in some cases, longer than a decade. For a keen student of culture change and leadership development, that has been the best vantage point of all.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: An Empirical Foundation for Culture Intervention

From early in his career, Dan pushed the boundaries of traditional thinking on organizational culture. He developed and validated a quantitative measure of the construct at a time where qualitative measurement was king and, in doing so, blew open the door to research demonstrating the linkages between organizational culture and organization-level performance. Today, there is an ever growing body of literature that is becoming more and more sophisticated in how it is exploring this linkage (e.g., Sackmann 2011; Boyce et al. 2015). As a thought leader, Dan has helped pave the way for this body of research, but beyond, he has helped take what had been a largely academic construct and made it not only relevant but critically important for business.

While today it is common to see daily blogs and popular press business articles discussing the importance of organizational culture, not too long ago, it was either largely unheard of in the C-suite or quickly dismissed as too "touchy feely." But as Dan straddled the academic and management worlds, he provided an actionable and valid framework and became a leading force for bringing organizational culture into the mainstream. Thus, part of his legacy can be read in leading headlines and heard through a CEO like Richard Anderson of Delta as he describes how "The culture here at Delta . . . is one the reasons why the airline has been so successful."

With the linkages to performance well established and the demand for culture change going through the roof, what does Dan see as the next set of boundaries that need to be pushed? For Dan, his entire career has been driven by his passion for

improving the performance of organizations. So perhaps unsurprising, his attention is on transformation and what we as a field have to say to organizations about how and where to intervene to drive meaningful change.

From Dan's vantage point, the field has not evolved all that much in this regard. He would agree that organizational development is better understood and more commonplace today, that thought leaders such as Kotter and Collins have made outstanding and admirable contributions to our understanding of change management, and that organizations are complex, dynamic, and nested labyrinths, less like an iceberg, and more like a river full of ice cubes that are melting and reforming as they flow to their destination. He would also point out that, if the discipline of organizational change is to really evolve, we have to get a lot less abstract and a lot more practical. We need to be disciplined in tracking change initiatives over time and a lot more specific in terms of guiding organizations toward meaningful action.

So, knowing that there is a lot more work to do in this area, where should we "stick the crow bar" to gain leverage that will drive change? On this point, Dan indicates that we should "assess broadly and intervene narrowly." Diagnostics are content focused and provide information about where to look and what to look for. It is very important that organizations cast this wide net so that they understand what is most important. But from there, Dan describes the potential in focusing interventions more narrowly – on the "ice cubes" so to speak. A lot of his recent work has done this through the lens of habits and routines. As a field, we have struggled to figure out the fundamental processes that shape work. From Dan's perspective, to truly intervene, you have to understand employees' perspective at a very local level and at a systemic level. How do things actually work, what are the routines? Each of these routines, at a local level, has their own values and habits. Without peeling back the layers of each of those specific onions, it will be difficult to drive different behaviors and to implement new and "sticky" ways of working together that change the dynamics at the system level.

To ensure that all of the ice cubes are floating down the same river, we need to make meaning at the level of the river. We absolutely have to understand what makes the business tick as a whole and where it is headed, but we also have to recognize that the point of intervention is not only in the mission and values posters hanging on organizations' walls. It is much more narrow and rooted in a depth of understanding around how people do what they do in their unique contexts. You need action at a local level and from Dan's perspective, to do that, you have to be there. In his words:

> Specifying dysfunction is easier than understanding how things function; and implementing change is hardest of all. But that is what needs to be done, and we need to be thinking a lot more about how we create mechanisms and support organizations to understand and intervene at many local levels, on a large scale, and in an aligned way. (D. Denison, personal communication, October 17, 2016)

In short, Dan's perspective is that understanding the link between meaning and functionality is still the most powerful combination and is something that organizational development professionals should be feverishly trying to better understand.

Dan points out that corporate practice also has a long way to go. At last year's Academy of Management, the time series culture-performance linkage study mentioned earlier, by Boyce and colleagues, received a major award from the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. That was in large part because this study is one of the few studies ever that even addresses any of the issues of cause and effect. From Dan's perspective, this should signal the beginning of a new era of research, rather than the final statement on an old era of research. To pursue this, one of the major untapped resources in the change field is the hundreds of major corporations that collect abundant employee data and performance metrics but, for some strange reason, have never taken the time to connect the dots and try to understand the impact on the business. *Why?*

For this purpose, Dan cites corporations that have a retail, hotel and restaurant chain, franchise, or brokerage structure as exceptionally attractive. But unfortunately, the status quo often remains an employee engagement survey process that is relatively disconnected from business practice and poorly supported by an effective action planning process. Perhaps it is time to expect more from our corporate colleagues and to use the influence that we have to move things forward.

Unquestionably, Dan has helped define and shape the field of organizational culture and the key role it plays in the change process. His thought leadership across both academic and practical pursuits has shaped the work of many and has undoubtedly left a lasting legacy. Looking to the future, his passion for driving organizational transformation will continue to push boundaries and will shape our perspective on organizational intervention for decades to come.

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## Further Reading

Dan's writing on organizational culture has spanned a number of topics including the measurement of culture, the linkage between culture and business performance, and corporate case studies on culture change in global organizations. Interested readers should consider the following books and articles as essential to further understanding Dan's work and perspective:

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# Kevin J. Dooley: Complexity – Simple and Useful

27

Glenda H. Eoyang

**Abstract**

Kevin Dooley began his career as an industrial engineer and continues his work as a designer of complex human and information networks. His curiosity about how change emerged over time led him to explore complexity at the edge of many fields, including mathematics, philosophy, physics, and computer science. His passion for pragmatic applications led him to engage in complex patterns of individual and institutional behavior as it emerged in the real world.

Kevin pioneered the use of inductive quantitative data analysis to understand options and influence decision-making and action in complex social, business, and natural environments. Rather than positing a hypothesis, then testing it with data, as most change researchers usually do, Kevin analyzed data as it was generated and looked for the patterns. He then used those patterns to understand and influence change in complex human systems. He used the principles of complex adaptive systems sciences to see, understand, and improve patterns in teams, organizations, and processes.

At various times in his career, he was engaged with total quality management, process analysis and improvement, and supply chain management. He held the first joint chair in engineering and business at the Arizona State University and continues to explore the sometimes chaotic intersection between physical and social systems. His master work is still a work in progress. Currently, he leads The Sustainability Consortium, an international network of organizations that captures, stores, and reports information about the carbon footprints for supply chains of consumer products.

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## Contents

## Introduction

As the twentieth century drew to a close, many scholars and practitioners of organizational sciences drew from the language of complexity to describe the change they observed and tried to influence. Most of them found it easy to use the metaphors and language of the field but few reached into the technical methodologies to inform their theory and practice. Kevin Dooley did and continues to do so.

## Influences and Motivations: Spanning Boundaries

I met Kevin Dooley at the first Chaos Network Conference in 1992. An industrial engineer, he was a bit of an outlier in the group of Jungian psychologists, artists, industrial psychologists, economists, and budding management gurus. This motley crew had been brought together by Mark Michaels (2000) to explore applications of the new sciences of chaos and complexity to human behavior. These new, nonlinear sciences were challenging long-held expectations and assumptions of both physical and social scientists around the world (Gleick 1987). The one thing this group had in common was that we were exploring the applications and implications of these new sciences on our work with people, institutions, and communities. We hoped to gain new understanding about how change happened in human systems and how we could make better choices to support and influence it.

Kevin quickly became a magnet for those of us in the Chaos Network who wanted to understand the physical sciences behind the social sciences of complex human systems. He knew quantitative methods, and he was creative and patient enough to help us learn to see the secrets in the numbers. He, on the other hand, was exploring the social sciences behind the physical phenomena that had fascinated him since childhood.

In particular, Kevin was perplexed at that moment by Deming's System of Profound Knowledge (Deming 1986). He approached that challenge with the same precision and care that had served him well in analyzing sports teams, popular music, manufacturing systems, and unpredictable processes throughout his life. But this new and more ambiguous content required a different kind of conversation. His questions about the rigor and underlying dynamics of human systems challenged our long-held assumptions about how individuals and organizations functioned. Our questions helped him move into the emergent world of patterns and unpredictable possibilities, so familiar in the world of social and organizational change. In that first Chaos Network gathering, Kevin stood, as he often has, at an intersection of mathematical analysis and emergent patterns of human choices and behaviors.

He has used his gift of boundary spanning to serve colleagues, clients, and students throughout his career. This chapter explores some of the applications and implications of Kevin's work at the data-based boundary between controlled and emergent phenomena of dynamical processes and human systems change. Before we begin that journey, though, it's important to review the singularity of his moment in the evolution of organizational theory and practice.

## Key Contributions: Inductive Research

### The Age of Complexity

Since the birth of Cartesian rationality in the seventeenth century, physical sciences focused on understanding change well enough to predict and control it. At the turn of the twentieth century, Frederick Taylor created an approach to scientific management that took the certainty of physical sciences into the corporate world. By the mid-twentieth century, Taylor's methods of performance management (Taylor 2015) had given way to strategy. Less precise, but almost as predictable and control oriented as Taylor, strategy focused on analyses and structures of decision-making. The promise was that disciplined strategic thinking could optimize decision-making and action in the context of emerging industries and expanding economies (Kiechel 2010). Deming stepped into this world of expert-based action with methods to reduce variation in processes and products to continuously improve quality (Deming 1986). He and others imported process improvement strategies into human interactions at many scales. In social and management sciences, the theory and practice of change were moving ever closer to total control, predictability, and reliability.

At the same time, in the communities of the physical sciences, discoveries were moving in the opposite direction. Many different fields in the physical sciences were

discovering systems that could neither be predicted nor controlled (Lorenz 1963; Prigogine 1989; Bak 1990). Chaos theory, complexity science, and multiple applications of nonlinear dynamics were challenging deterministic assumptions and expectations across a wide range of contexts. The methods that drove prediction and control in the world of mechanical engineering were opening up methods and mathematics to reveal a new, but somewhat knowable, uncertainty. Fractals, dynamical networks, attractor patterns, and bifurcation charts revealed a new quantitative reality that was patterned, but not predictable (Boulton et al. 2015).

Outside the predictable theoretical frames of business and the insights into emergent natural phenomena, intuitive management practitioners encountered and responded to unpredictable situations all the time. In spite of the advice from expert consultants to ensure stability, predictability, and control, some decision-makers had the knack of seeing, understanding, and influencing social patterns as they emerged. Entrepreneurs, traders, and innovators ignored management pundits and turned uncertainty to their own advantage. The new sciences of chaos and complexity promised objective confirmation of their nonconformist approaches. It gave solid scientific evidence for the inherent unpredictability of life in teams, organizations, and communities.

Deming's System of Profound Knowledge was one doorway between the reliability of systems under control and the innovation of complex adaptive systems. Kevin's preoccupation with measurement of human performance and changes in time series prepared him perfectly to step through that doorway and bring many others with him. His deep insights into the dynamics of change and his incessant curiosity about patterns of behavior prepared Kevin to help academics and practitioners understand the unknowable and act upon the unpredictable.

Kevin's most recent adventure as leader of The Sustainability Consortium integrates his complex history of theory and practice. It is a collaboration of more than 80 companies working together to understand and intentionally influence the carbon footprints across entire supply chains of consumer products. In leading this complex program from its inception, Kevin has drawn from his history of inductive practice to meld predictable and emergent, quantitative and qualitative, and theories and practices into a massive social, corporate, technical innovation.

## It Is About Time

Even as a young child, Kevin's interest in change was linked to a narrative of everyday life. At 6 years old, he began listening to professional sports on the radio. As luck would have it, this was 1967, and Kevin's Chicago Blackhawks won hockey's Stanley Cup. What began as a persistent curiosity emerged over the season into a story of triumph over adversity. The next year, baseball captured his attention. Again, game by game the season unfolded. Predictions gave way to reality as the season progressed. His mother brought him magazines filled with statistics and predictions for his favorite teams, and he was hooked. Unlike other fans, his interest was not just in following the winning team. Kevin was more engrossed with the fact

that the experts could make predictions (sometimes right and sometimes wrong) about the future, based on the players' performances in the previous season.

In 1969, the Chicago Cubs were on top of the world. Everyone expected them to win their pennant race, but the Cubs fell apart late in the season and lost first place to the upstart New York Mets. The loss was disappointing, but what really appealed to Kevin was the evidence of the evolving story. It didn't occur quickly. The surprises emerged over a period of time, and as they accumulated each one contribute to the horrible, emerging pattern of the outcome. Prediction, emerging surprises, data, and outcomes, these formed the basis of Kevin's later research and work.

Working for and reading daily newspapers, following multiple sports, working in political campaigns, and tracking music at the top of the charts were all fun distractions for Kevin as he grew up in the city of Chicago. They were all storylines consisting of streams of data that emerged day by day at the intersection of prediction and surprise.

Statistics were important to him, but stats changing over time were fascinating. In his sophomore year of high school, Kevin found his way to the Chicago Public Library and started reading books about time. As diverse ideas sparked his interest, he kept exploring various concepts of time. As he read, he encountered a complex conception of time that included not just mechanical and analytical time but many other manifestations as well. Change in time – its causes and consequences – became even more intriguing in Kevin's serious and playful explorations of reality.

His passion for change over time evolved into an academic program in industrial and mechanical engineering and a research focus on process and process improvement. His interest in data, coupled with computing capacity and artificial intelligence, focused his work on methods of automated process analysis, control, optimization, and learning. At this stage in his work, he used data to recognize when processes changed and to understand why they changed.

Tracking change over time led him to questions about the causes of change, which led him to bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial engineering. Working with Shiv Kapoor at the University of Illinois, Dooley completed his doctoral research, improving process quality by detecting and classifying faults as they occur (Dooley 1987). During his graduate studies, Dick DeVor became an informal advisor, supporting Kevin as he developed a software-based process control system (Dooley 1985). This was the first computer system product of Kevin's career, and it provided both data and income as he got settled into his professional work at the University of Minnesota (Dooley et al. 1986).

## It Is About Quality

Those were the early days of the quality movement, and the intersection of data and process offered opportunities for innovative research and practice. This emerging field became the foundation for Dooley's research and teaching. As an engineer, Kevin used time series data from the real world to explore patterns, causes, and consequences of change over time. Like other engineers, Kevin's methods were

empirical and inductive. In this context, research begins with raw data. Disciplined analysis reveals patterns. Rigorous reasoning leads to hypotheses about the dynamics that generated the data and informed the patterns. Kevin studied many examples of this inductive analytical approach with complex time series data. Some came from artificial intelligence and expert systems, seismographic data to detect nuclear testing, changes in brain waves, and earthquakes. He applied these same methods to detect the causes of changes in physical systems including statistical process control (Dooley 1985), quality improvement (Dooley and Kapoor 1990a, b), and process improvement (Dooley et al. 1986).

While an inductive research method is common in engineering and physical sciences, it is quite different from deductive social science methodologies. Most qualitative, social science methods begin with a hypothesis and design and execute experiments to collect data that will either confirm or deny the hypothesis. As a general rule, social scientists work from such a deductive paradigm. The researcher begins with a hypothesis and then collects and analyzes data to disprove the hypothesis. The inductive approach, Kevin's engineering mindset, moves in the other direction, from data to hypothesis. The differences between this standard deductive method and Kevin's inductive method became a hallmark in his early research and efforts to publish his work. Over time, he developed methods to shape his investigations in inductive practice, moving from data to hypothesis, but follow deductive methods to document and disseminate his findings. In this way, he was able to find a synergy between data and pattern that served him well in both his research and his practice.

Kevin's official connection to the social sciences came through the intersection of total quality and chaos theory. As he worked with causality in complex physical systems and processes, questions emerged about randomness – What is it? Where does it come from? Those questions led to chaos, and chaos led to time series analysis in social systems. The transition from physical to social systems was not simple.

His empirical practice put Kevin outside the methodologies and discourse communities of most social scientists, including those he encountered in the Chaos Network. Discovering hypotheses in data streams was a new and useful paradigm for many social scientists trying to understand the dynamics of change in complex human systems. In 1991, Kevin collaborated with others who shared his questions and methods to found and lead an academic society that focused on quantitative analysis of complex systems, the Society for Chaos in Psychology and the Life Sciences (SCTPLS). This 300-person organization is "... an international forum that brings together researchers, theoreticians, and practitioners interested in applying dynamical systems theory, self- organization, neural nets, fractals, cellular automata, agent-based modeling, and related forms of chaos, catastrophes, bifurcations, non-linear dynamics, and complexity theories to psychology and the life sciences." (https://www.societyforchaostheory.org/). SCTPLS continues to be a source of inspiration and collaboration for Kevin and others standing at this intersection of prediction and emergence in social sciences from psychology to international relations.

In his research program and classes, Kevin studied a wide range of questions at the intersection of data and process intelligence. His diverse studies included evaluating various options for collecting and analyzing data (Guo and Dooley 1992; Dooley et al. 1986). He explored multiple research methods in process performance, including neural networks (Guo and Dooley 1995) and computer simulation models (Vig and Dooley 1993). Each of these projects expanded Kevin's repertoire of change analysis tools and deepened his insights about the complex dynamics of systemic change.

His research questions and mathematical and analytical methods increased in sophistication over time to accommodate more complex challenges. In addition to capturing and assessing information about mechanical processes, Dooley explored the use of data to support prediction and decision support for scheduling (Mahmoodi and Dooley 1992). He took interactions between processes and the environment into consideration with algorithmic approaches to robustness and dispersion (Dooley and Mahmoodi 1992). He also expanded his theory and practice to take past performance into account (Vig and Dooley 1991). Issues of learning and adaptations in monitoring over time also added complexity to his research methods and findings (Dooley and Kapoor 1990a, b).

Multiple factors contributed to the increased complexity of Dooley's work during this period. He shifted from strictly mechanical processes to ones involving human interaction. He considered environmental interactions and historical performance. Improvements in computing capacity and statistical tools expanded the scope and power of his work. Kevin's first work with social systems data dealt with the incidence of teen pregnancy in Texas. He and his colleagues analyzed 26 years of time series data to discern patterns and hypothesize conditions that influenced adolescent childbearing (Dooley et al. 1997).

From the early 1990s (Dooley 1991) through his current work with The Sustainability Consortium, the quality improvement movement has been a context where Kevin consistently made important contributions. As his theory and methods emerged, so did his questions and insights about quality as a science and a discipline. As Kevin continued his work in process analysis in social and mechanical systems, the total quality movement engaged more people with more questions in the field of process analysis and control.

As TQM spread, questions emerged about acceptance and implementation. What began as an interest in inductive analysis of mechanical processes and had shifted to business processes took another turn into an interest in understanding and influencing processes of change in human systems. Over time, questions of total quality moved from the technical analysis of process performance and into the social science realm of people performance. Working with Andrew Van de Ven, Dooley began to see how his models and methods could be used for sophisticated analysis of social processes (Dooley and Van de Ven 1999; Dooley et al. 1997).

Focusing still on total quality management, but considering the changing of the paradigm, in 2000 he wrote about the evolution of quality thinking through three phases from a preindustrial paradigm of caveat emptor, through an industrial paradigm of *quality control*, and a postindustrial paradigm of *total quality management*. In this

paper he went on to explore how environmental factors had driven the evolution of the discipline in the past and to speculate about what the next phase of development might entail, given current environmental factors (Dooley 2000). The quality movement challenged Kevin's assumptions about predictability and randomness in mechanical and social processes, and he ultimately challenged its relevance and evolutionary path to deal with management and manufacturing in the future.

## It Is About Systems

Kevin's inductive analysis focused on a particular kind of change that emerged step by step over time. Patterns in time series data indicated patterns and causes of change in physical and social processes. Focusing on complexity and chaos in processes and process improvement opened questions about larger structures and more complex human systems.

Kevin's encounters with systemic organizational change opened a new line of inquiry. When he encountered individual and organization resistance to change in total quality management projects, he recognized a different kind of change. It was a change that affected systems and systemic structure, not just processes that created or sustained systems.

Technical innovation was another example of systemic change. Insights about innovation could be derived from analysis of time series data, but the change itself influenced and focused on a more complex combination of multiple features and factors. Exploring innovation of cochlear implant technologies, Andrew Van de Ven introduced Kevin to the processes of intermittent and transformative change in innovative complex human systems (Dooley and Van de Ven 1996).

Kevin's focus had been on incremental change in physical processes over time, but working with patterns of resistance and innovation, he became aware of another kind of change: organizational and personal transformation. Such instances of complex, transformative change moved Kevin more deeply into the world of complex adaptive systems applied to the behavior of people and organizations.

In 1999, Dooley and Van de Ven published a paper in Organization Science that laid the groundwork for systematic analysis of organizations and complex adaptive systems (Dooley and Van de Ven 1999). Using diagnostic storytelling, they explored underlying social systems and the kinds of generative mechanisms that could feed into the system performance and culture. It was a departure from his usual inductive method of analyzing data, finding the pattern, and reporting the pattern. He had realized how difficult it was for such inductive research to be published in social science journals. Working with Van de Ven, Kevin did not abandon the inductive strategy, but he moved the analysis and hypothesis building processes earlier in the writing process. Based on his analysis of the data, he generated a hypothesis; then, in the paper, he posed the hypothesis and proceeded to test it (Dooley, personal correspondence with the author 2016). Hypothesis building drew from multiple sources, including the contextual expertise and intuition of the researcher. In complex human systems, the inductive analysis was only the beginning, but a robust

hypothesis required a wider and more subtle range of sources. Specific data sets tell stories, but the stories have to be connected with conceptual understanding of the systems you're dealing with.

Given this expanding view of change at multiple scales, Kevin left the University of Minnesota in 1997 to accept a joint appointment at Arizona State University as Professor of Management and Professor of Industrial Engineering. This new position demonstrated the emerging power of Kevin's brand of research that drew hypotheses from streams of real-time data and enriched and tested hypotheses in the contexts of complex business environments.

Kevin's concern with context and meaning in context led him to the second major software development project of his career and his first patents (Dooley 2007a, b). Working with Steven Corman at Arizona State University, Kevin developed Crawdad (Dooley et al. 2004), a natural language processing tool that used dynamic centering resonance analysis to create a network map of meaning in a given passage of natural text (Dooley and Corman 2004; Dooley et al. 2003). Kevin and his colleagues used the tool to find centers of expertise in resumes of the university faculty (Dooley et al. 2002), to track political discourse (Dooley 2007a), to map organizational discourse (McPhee et al. 2002), and to monitor media messages in times of crisis (Dooley and Corman 2004; Corman and Dooley 2007). Continuing his inductive analysis and expanding it with his systems perspective, he was able to capture, analyze, and explain patterns as they emerged in complex systems of human discourse.

Kevin's work with complex systems continued along with a focus on supply chain management. He collaborated with many different social scientists to focus on a variety of issues as he brought his unique combination of data analysis, conceptual coherence, and rigorous theory building and testing. One of his collaborators was the Canadian Brenda Zimmerman, with whom he dealt with mergers as marriages (Dooley and Zimmerman 2003), structural change in healthcare systems (Zimmerman and Dooley 2001), and healthcare systems as complex adaptive systems (Begun et al. 2003). With Benyamin Lichtenstein and others, he explored complex dynamics of entrepreneurship (Lichtenstein et al. 2006, 2007) and leadership (Dooley and Lichtenstein 2008; Dooley 2007; Jennings and Dooley 2007). He contributed insights about methods of research in complex adaptive systems through his 2000 collaboration on *Organizational Change and Innovation Processes: Theory and Methods for Research* (Poole et al. 2000), which won Best Book Award, International Communication Association, and Organization Communication Division, 2001. In each of these collaborations, Kevin applied his engineering methods and his wide-ranging curiosity to find patterns in data and make meaning of those patterns in the contexts of day-to-day business decisions and emerging theory of complex dynamics.

## New Insights: Making Complexity Useful

Kevin's history with complex process analysis and patterns that emerge from complex time series helped him find ways to influence, rather than control, complex interactions of people and processes. His knowledge of dynamical networks helped

him understand complex, interdependent processes and to establish personal and professional network relationships inside his field and beyond it.

Throughout my own career, Kevin has inspired and informed me. As I explored emergent dynamics of human systems, I experimented with traditional psychological, organization development, management, and political science approaches. None of them captured the surprising predictability of complex adaptive systems. While other writers built on beautiful and powerful metaphorical descriptions from complexity science (Wheatley 1994), I wanted an explanation. I needed to understand the dynamics that generated patterns of complex human behaviors. I was, and remain, convinced that such technical and analytical understanding is the only path to effectively see, understand, and influence complex change. Kevin's inductive methods and engineering rigor provided the foundation I needed to explore this strange world of nonlinear causality. Ultimately, it led to my discovery of conditions for self-organizing in human systems – the CDE Model (Eoyang 2001).

Beyond my own learning, Kevin informed how a whole generation of complexity scholar-practitioners conceived of and interacted with change in complex adaptive systems. His work informed the fundamental principles of complex change, including self-organizing, path independence, scale-free structures, surprising and recognizable emergence, and loose/tight coupling. Kevin's work with The Sustainability Consortium (TSC), the ground-breaking project to document the carbon footprint of supply chains for consumer products, is a great demonstration of these principles.

## Self-Organizing

Complex systems are self-organizing. The TSC team chose not to design rigid process- and knowledge-management systems to control implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of standards. Instead, they designed a self-monitoring protocol. Using the protocol, businesses could assess and improve their own performance and that of their suppliers. The TSC program focused on organizations setting their own standards and monitoring their own performance to ensure commitment and ongoing learning and process improvement to reduce their own carbon emissions.

## Multiple Paths to the Same End

Complex systems can follow multiple paths to the same end. Earlier systems transformation programs, including the Baldridge Award, had perfected protocol-based assessment of processes. Rather than measuring sustainability of processes, TSC focused on outcomes. Earlier, total quality management self-assessment processes had depended on complicated documentation of process requirements. Success and quality were defined as reliable implementation of predefined processes that could be unique in each setting. In contrast, TSC provided guidance to identify and measure the outcomes of those processes. This approach normalized behavior across the system and provided more consistent measures and more accessible comparison

across organizations, industries, and product categories. Actors all along the supply chain could base their decisions and actions on information about common features and functions, rather on processes that were unique to their industry, locale, or position in the value chain.

## Multiple Scales at the Same Time

Complex systems work at multiple scales at the same time. Earlier project sustainability methods had focused on either organization-wide performance or on particular products. Organizations or industries could be identified as problem polluters, or specific products could be targeted for improvement. The TSC members and the team found organizational data to be useful at an industry level, but not precise enough to inform management decision-making. Negative judgements about particular corporations also threatened the collaborative relationships of the many, diverse organizations that contributed to TSC's collaborative group. Product-level measures, on the other hand, were impractical to develop and maintain on such a large scale. To resolve this challenge, TSC collected and reported data by product category. At this level of analysis, information could be consolidated more easily and provide actionable data within the practical constraints of time and resource investments. This strategy also allowed TSC member organizations to focus their efforts, make a difference, and prove their commitment without investing in massive, institution-wide changes.

## Patterned, Not Homogeneous

Complex systems are patterned, not homogeneous. For efficiency, the team needed to avoid collecting and maintaining complete data about every step in the supply chain. To accommodate the unpredictable inconsistency of the system, they could not work with random samples taken from across the process. So, the TSC team focused on most significant differences among carbon-producing processes and identified them as "hot spots." Using published studies, they found the points in the product lifecycle that were most at risk of high carbon emissions. They used standard life cycle analysis techniques, but also drew from other sources of research to provide information about hot spots, which could inform decision-making and action all along the supply chain. They focused the product-group protocol to address those most egregious situations.

## Surprising, but Recognizable

Complex systems generate surprising, but recognizable, patterns over time. Because the team focused on product groups and recognizable hotspots, they also were able to draw inferences from one product category to make hypotheses about other

categories. This sped up the entire project progress by setting baselines for multiple product groups at the same time without losing precision or accuracy that would degrade the usefulness of the program or the reliability of the findings.

## Simultaneous Loose/Tight Control

Complex systems require simultaneous loose/tight control. Because the ultimate decisions were made by the TSC members, the project required careful analysis and management of the complex adaptive human system at the root of the Consortium. Decisions of the entire consortium "were consensus driven, but not consensus bound." A sustainable process had to allow for flexibility of action and maintain coherence among the members over multiple contexts and over time. Initially, trust was a major issue, as many of the members were competitors or regulators to each other. Over time, however, the transparency and even-handedness of the process built sufficient trust for the program to move forward (personal correspondence with the author).

Each of these design decisions emerged from cycles of prototyping, testing, learning, and adapting. Each decision or design alternative is accommodated to the emergent complexity of the system. All of them drew from Kevin's sense of data and data integrity, his theory and practice in supply chain management and dynamical networks, as well as his appreciation for the interdependency and indeterminacy of complex adaptive systems. TSC integrated the diverse threads of Kevin's work, and it establishes a baseline and a framework for change projects in other complex, adaptive, and emergent environments.

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: A Network About Networks

The Sustainability Consortium (TSC), which has both demonstrated and tested principles of complexity, began in 2008. Kevin's work in complex systems, emergent change, and supply chains merged into a ground-breaking leadership opportunity. TSC brings together academic, manufacturing, retail, nongovernmental organization, and government stakeholders "to create a science-based system for measuring and reporting product sustainability." Led by Arizona State University, University of Arkansas, and Wageningen University, over 90 corporate and civil society members participate in TSC, whose "sustainability measurement and reporting system identifies material environmental and social impacts across a product life cycle, in a standard way, for high impact consumer goods sold in retail stores." (Dooley and Johnson 2015).

In simple language, TSC's original goal was to place a "carbon footprint" label on every retail product available from Walmart stores. In principle, consumers could use this information about sustainability to make choices, just as many currently use nutritional information when they shop. Manufacturers, distributors, and retailers would recognize sustainability as a competitive advantage. The commercial world

would align with climate science to move toward global targets to control carbon emissions worldwide. This massive change process could be driven by data, emergent complexity, and network supply chain analysis. In short, it depended on the kinds of methods and expertise Kevin had been developing throughout his career.

The complexity of the task was literally overwhelming. Every node in the supply chain network for every product would have to track and report the impact of their processes on carbon emissions. This would require standardized measuring and reporting protocols, regulations, and monitoring institutions, collaboration and cooperation across competing organizations, and integration throughout the lifecycle for each product and all of its component ingredients. The detail complexity of defining, collecting, and reporting the data would be enough to stop the project in its tracks, but that was not the most complex challenge. TSC is a complex social system, a consortium consisting of more than 90 separate organizations. Each organization and each individual came to the table with agendas and concerns, histories, and cultures. The emergent complexity, arising from the many interdependencies and uncertainties across this system, made the project even more challenging.

The goal was clear, but the path to it was hard to imagine, much less to design and implement. Traditional process- and information-management systems were insufficient to manage these open, high-dimension, nonlinear patterns of relationship. A new approach was required, one that could integrate networks, data, complex adaptive systems, supply chains, and systemic transformation. The approach needed to be both rigorous and flexible to work at multiple scales and in diverse environments. In short, the program needed the quirky combination of interests and competencies of Kevin Dooley.

At various times, Kevin served as the Academic Director, Executive Co-Director, and Chief Scientist for TSC. When the program began, there was no roadmap for such an endeavor. No one knew what a workable plan might include. Previous programs to develop product standards had worked within particular sectors, not with the diverse, cross-sector membership of TSC. After some promising starts and disappointing developments, Kevin and his team adopted a prototyping approach to allow them to explore and exploit opportunities as they emerged. The prototyping method allowed them to iterate as they quickly developed and tested solutions. They focused on building adaptive capacity for themselves and the system, rather than committing large-scale investments to upfront design efforts with unpredictable results.

Kevin Dooley's career spans a significant transformation in the way that change is understood and managed. The change management industry moved from the command and control methods of Taylor, through the information and process-driven methods of Baldridge, and into emergent methods of The Sustainability Consortium. His research and practice were informed by his passion for inductive reasoning about change over time and his curiosity about emergence and uncertainty. He continues to learn lessons from the complex human, economic, and mechanical dynamics of supply chain networks, and his work informs theory and practice across fields as diverse as public health and environmental sciences. As the study of change continues to emerge over the next decades, Kevin Dooley's scholarship and leadership will continue to emerge with it.

## Conclusion

As we move toward the middle of the twenty-first century, people and organizations experience ever-increasing complexity. The systemic work of Dooley and his students will continue to inform strategic decision making and action at multiple scales and in many contexts.

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# Dexter Dunphy: Pushing the Boundaries of Change

<span style="font-size:2em">28</span>

Doug Stace

**Abstract**

Dexter Dunphy is an Australian who contributed to organization development theory in the early 1970s and then in the 1990s (with colleague Doug Stace) introduced to the field of organization theory a comprehensive contingency model of organization change. He held academic appointments at Harvard University, the University of New South Wales (UNSW), and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

He also contributed to the internationalization of management theory through studies of management, including change management, in East Asia. Subsequently, after 2000 (with colleagues Andrew Griffiths and Suzanne Benn), he developed a comprehensive phase model outlining key stages through which organizations can progress to become both sustainable and sustaining. These models were supported by detailed organizational case studies describing how change programs were undertaken and evaluating the outcomes in terms of a variety of performance criteria. These conceptual developments were responses to major challenges occurring in the environments of organizations subsequent to the end of World War II through to the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Dunphy worked with senior executives of corporations, companies, and organizations, in Australia and internationally, in designing large-scale in-house and system-wide change programs. He was involved in training organizational change agents and creating and maintaining active networks of change consultants for the exchange of ideas and approaches. The chapter concludes with an outline of key issues for the future development of the field.

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## Introduction

Dunphy was born in 1934 in Sydney, Australia, to a family with strong environmental and social convictions. His father, Myles, is known as the father of Australian wilderness. Like John Muir in the United States, he spent his life working to establish major national parks. Dunphy's mother, Margaret, of Huguenot and Methodist ancestry, held strong values supporting justice and freedom. His elder brother, Milo, was an environmental activist. Dunphy's consciousness was formed in this family matrix where ecology and people were valued and strong convictions translated into action.

At age 18, Dunphy established a youth club and was intrigued by how individuals changed their behavior when they joined a group. He enrolled in an arts degree program at Sydney University, majored in education, and was introduced to John Dewey's progressive education philosophy and pragmatism (Dewey 1933). These writings emphasized intervening to make change and learning by doing and through seeking feedback. His undergraduate honors thesis in education was supervised by Hugh Philp, who held a PhD in social relations from Harvard. Philp introduced him to contributions to small-group theory by Robert F. Bales, professor of social relations at Harvard, and colleagues (Bales 1950). Their research findings demonstrated the power of groups to influence individual behavior. These writers sought to understand social systems as dynamic entities and to intervene to enhance goal achievement and member satisfaction.

In his undergraduate honors thesis, Dunphy repeated and extended Bales's laboratory experiments – studies of developmental processes in leaderless student groups (Bales and Strodtbeck 1951; Heinicke and Bales 1953). Dunphy's study showed similar results despite the different cultural environment (Philp and Dunphy 1959). He became fascinated by how roles differentiate in small groups: social evolution on a microscale.

After receiving his BA with honors, he enrolled in a master's in education degree program at Sydney University in 1960, again supervised by Philp. His thesis explored how peer groups influence the psychosocial development of adolescents. For 3 years, Dunphy located informal teenage groups in Sydney and joined these groups on street corners, at beaches, wherever they hung out. He developed a new theory of the evolution of peer-group structures and leadership, showing how this affected adolescent development as the peer group replaced the family as the prime socialization influence. The study was published in a widely reprinted and quoted article (Dunphy 1963) and a book (Dunphy 1969) that became standard reading for teachers in training in Australia.

## Influences and Motivations: Defining an Intellectual Agenda

Philp encouraged Dunphy to undertake a PhD abroad, preferably at Harvard in the Department of Social Relations. Dunphy mailed a summary of his MEd thesis to Bales and received a very encouraging response. He applied for admission and, after being awarded a first-class honors MEd, was accepted into the Harvard social relations department PhD program in sociology. He joined a research team on the General Inquirer Project, directed by Bales and Philip J. Stone. This was a groundbreaking use of computer technology to analyze content in small-group interaction – an early initiative in computer-based text processing. Dunphy contributed to the development of the automated content-analysis system the General Inquirer (Stone et al. 1966) and used the methodology in his PhD thesis (Dunphy 1968). The thesis was a study of group process in self-analytic groups. While at Harvard, he also enrolled in postgraduate classes in sociology, social psychology, clinical psychology, and social anthropology. He worked with and was influenced by Robert F. Bales, Talcott Parsons, Philip J. Stone, Marshall Smith, and Daniel Ogilvie.

At Harvard, he met leading figures in small-group theory and organization theory. He also taught courses in the Department of Social Relations – one was the team-led Social Relations 120: Analysis of Interpersonal Behavior, taught in parallel classes by Bales and leading psychoanalysts. He spent hundreds of hours systematically observing group process in these classes. About this time Dunphy decided "to continue to climb the sociological ladder" (Personal communication, May 3, 2016). He felt that he had a reasonable grasp of personality psychology and small-group theory. The organization is the next step up the ladder after the individual and the small group. So he began working with Harvard Business School (HBS) faculty who were actively involved in researching and consulting in organizations. Beyond that he envisioned going further to understand societal structure and culture, and this guided much of his subsequent career development.

Dunphy gained his PhD in sociology at Harvard in 1964 and was offered a position as assistant professor jointly in the Department of Social Relations and HBS. At HBS he taught in another team-led course: Human Behavior in Organizations, a foundation MBA course. Colleagues who influenced his thinking at this time

were Paul Lawrence, Jay Lorsch, Renato Tagiuri, and Richard Walton, who were actively involved in researching organizational change and in change consulting.

In 1967 Dunphy returned to Sydney, Australia, to take up a senior lectureship in sociology at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). There was strong growth in student numbers in sociology – a new academic discipline in Australia.

After 2 years, he accepted a chair in Organizational Behavior in the Faculty of Commerce, UNSW. Apart from administering the OB department and contributing to the MBA program, Dunphy researched, particularly with colleague Bill Ford, new developments in work redesign, industrial democracy, and the impact of new technologies on work organization. These studies involved field research in a variety of industries where new technologies were being introduced, change interventions, and evaluation of the impact of changes on variables such as productivity, work satisfaction, and industrial relations. Also at this time he and his colleagues initiated personal and organizational change workshops for executives. These residential workshops attracted many private and public sector executives. Dunphy also supervised PhD students who went on to occupy senior academic positions or establish successful consulting companies.

The work of the Department of Organization Behavior had a major impact on the policies of national and state governments, particularly policies for workplace change, job redesign, and productivity improvement. Ongoing links were established with Scandinavian and British researchers driving workplace redesign in their countries, and faculty interchanges took place. In the 1970s, Dunphy's colleague Bill Ford worked closely with the national Labor government and gained commitment and funding to exchange between Australia and Sweden, senior civil servants and academics with work redesign, and industrial relations expertise. Some researchers were attached directly to the Department of Organization Behaviour.

In 1972 Dunphy delivered the Australian Broadcasting Commission's Boyer Lectures on "The Challenge of Change" (Dunphy 1972). The Boyer Lectures are a series of five radio lectures delivered annually by an outstanding individual (the Australian equivalent of the BBC's Reith Lectures). Dunphy used this opportunity to examine the impact of the increasing speed of technological and social change on the economy, society, the workplace, and personal life. The printed version of the lectures went through four editions and were widely read and referenced.

He became increasingly interested in broadening management theory beyond what he saw as the cultural insularity of US theories. So in the 1970s with colleague Bill Ford, he initiated studies of management in Asia, particularly Japan and China, where some of the largest organizational changes in history were in process (Dunphy and Stening 1984; Dunphy 1986; Dunphy and Shi 1988). This led in 1985 to organizing an academic conference with Professor Gordon Redding, University of Hong Kong. The conference, the Enterprise and Management in East Asia (Clegg et al. 1986), held in Hong Kong, brought together a select group of 30 academics from around the world, each specializing in some aspect of management in East Asia. Later that year he organized the lead symposium in the International Division of the (American) Academy of Management on management in East Asia and delivered the opening paper, "A Comparative Study of Enterprise Management in

Japan and the People's Republic of China." His work was informed by several invited visits to Japanese and Chinese universities; in China, in 1974, he gave what may have been the first lectures in post-revolutionary China on Western management (until then a forbidden subject).

In 1981 Dunphy authored *Organizational Change by Choice* (Dunphy 1981), widely used by managers in Australia as well as in MBA courses. Reprinted several times over the next 10 years, it became an Australian best-selling management book that broadened the OD model of change to include large-scale organizational redesign. An early chapter "change begins with me" discussed the importance of managers and supervisors at all levels exemplifying in their personal behavior the changes they wanted to bring about in the organization, thus directly linking personal to structural and cultural change.

In 1977 the Australian government set up a commission of international business academics to inquire into management education in Australia. The commission, headed by Dean Cyert of Carnegie-Mellon University, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, recommended that a national school of management be set up at the University of New South Wales; eventually the Australian Graduate School of Management (AGSM) was founded. From 1982 Dunphy played a significant role in the school's development. At the AGSM, he designed and taught the school's first organizational change course. Each year he invited 10 practicing managers, with ongoing organizational change programs, to attend. They participated in class discussion sessions, and the students worked in change programs under their direction. Dunphy and colleagues also instituted an executive MBA program for managers delivered online nationally, with face-to-face tutorials in capital cities. An integral part of the program was a Change Management Qualification (CMQ) designed by a team of change agents under Dunphy's direction; the curriculum development was financed by Andersen Consulting.

In 1990, 18 Australian special research centers were funded by the Australian federal government – the Australian Research Council's most prestigious and highly funded centers. Each was established under the leadership of an academic with an outstanding research record. Dunphy was awarded one of these centers, the Centre for Corporate Change (CCC), the only special research center funded to conduct research on management. This allowed him to recruit staff and initiate multiple organizational change research projects. The CCC working paper series was written for executives and widely read across Australian-based organizations. They presented results from the broad range of research being conducted in the CCC into leading edge change in contemporary organizations. He was concerned to ensure that developing organizational theory and research were put into immediate practice.

In 1994 Dunphy initiated the first International Conference on Organizational Change, jointly sponsored by the University of Southern California and the University of Warwick, in England. The conference was held at the AGSM over 2 days and assembled 30 leading researchers in organizational change from around the world. Immediately following this, selected conference participants spoke at the Australian Human Resources Institute's national conference, Empowering People for High-Performance Organizations. The presentations were to a large audience of human-

resource practitioners in Sydney and relayed by satellite to audiences in other capital cities. Again this reflected a commitment to ensuring practitioners had timely access to the best contemporary research findings.

In 1998 Dunphy cooperated with Michael Beer (Harvard Business School) to hold a second international conference on organizational change, Breaking the Code of Change, held at HBS. Ninety leading change researchers and practitioners attended, and the conference resulted in a major publication (Beer and Nohria 2000).

Dunphy was also integrating issues of sustainability into his developing understanding of organizational change because he perceived the increasing impact of organizations on the natural and social environment (Dunphy and Griffiths 1998). He therefore began developing a new model of change, the sustainability phase model, to define a path for enterprises to move toward more sustainable operations. In this he was influenced by his love of the natural world and by developments in sustainability and corporate social responsibility. Dunphy saw that successful organizations pursued larger goals than simply financial returns. The sustainability phase model was first outlined in *Sustainability: The Corporate Challenge of the 21st Century* (Dunphy et al. 2000) and more fully developed and elaborated in *Organizational Change for Corporate Sustainability* (2003, 2007, 2014) and in other books and articles. Key collaborators were Andrew Griffiths and Suzanne Benn. The model has been used worldwide and influenced the practice of many managers. The principles in this and other related publications were extensively illustrated with international case studies. Work on this comprehensive change model has continued and been reported in many publications coauthored with colleagues Andrew Griffiths, Suzanne Benn, and others (for further discussion of this model, see "Key Contributions: Developing Contingency Theories of Change" and Fig. 2 below).

While on the AGSM faculty, Dunphy designed and led many executive programs. Some programs included participants from a range of private and public sector organizations, while others were in-house programs. An example of one such in-house program was the Zurich Asia Academy, designed by Dunphy for Zurich Insurance's Asian managers and repeated annually for 5 years. Each program consisted of three 1-week residential segments held successively in Sydney, Singapore, and Hong Kong. The program was designed around executive development and emphasized managing personal, career, and organizational change.

In 2007 Dunphy was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Australian Honors List for service to education, particularly in the fields of organization change, corporate sustainability, and management. This recognized that his contributions in these areas deserved national recognition.

Dunphy has consulted to over 170 organizations in Australia and abroad, including many of Australia's largest companies and multinationals operating in Australia. His consulting has covered a wide range of projects mainly in large- and medium-sized organizations in different industries and centered on the effective management of change. In most cases he has worked directly with the CEO and executive team, often reporting directly to the CEO, although his work has usually taken him to all organizational levels. A leading aim has been to improve organizational performance and employee satisfaction – for example, Agnew Mining and Fuji Xerox Australia

(see "Key Contributions: Developing Contingency Theories of Change" below). His consulting has usually involved working with senior executive teams managing large-scale organizational transformation.

In 2000 Dunphy left the AGSM and moved to the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) as a distinguished professor. While there he concentrated primarily on research on organizational change but with increasing emphasis on corporate culture. A research collaboration with the international consulting firm Human Synergistics analyzed their large quantitative database of organizational change cases. Results were published as *In Great Company: Unlocking the Secrets of Cultural Transformation* (Jones et al. 2006); the second edition (2011) included a follow-up study of how the same organizations fared in the subsequent financial crisis.

Dunphy has also led training courses and programs for change consultants. For example, from 2011 to 2014, he designed and led annual residential organizational and workforce development workshops for the 60 full-time change agents in the Queensland State Department of Communities. The department was undergoing extensive change, and these change agents were embedded with senior managers across the state to implement the planned changes. The workshops introduced practicing change agents in the organization to current theory and research in organizational change and included custom-designed experiential exercises to develop the understandings and interpersonal skills needed for participants to work directly with area managers. For instance, participants used role plays to experiment with different influence strategies and to develop the most promising ones. Each workshop was followed by weekly teleconferences with Dunphy when the change agents, scattered across a large state, raised ongoing issues in their change implementation.

## Key Contributions: Developing Contingency Theories of Change

Dunphy's early work on small groups provided insights into how individual and small-group behavior are modified by their social setting, how leadership roles emerge, social structures evolve, and how culture – "the way we do things around here" – is created and internalized by those in the system. These early insights informed the following major contributions.

In *Organizational Change by Choice* (1981), Dunphy developed a comprehensive model for managers, showing how to initiate and implement change at different levels and to manage organizations as ongoing systems. It provided analytic and intervention strategies appropriate for individual change as well as change in workgroups, intergroup relations, corporate structure, and culture. The prevailing organization development (OD) model had emphasized intervention at the individual and work-group level, the dominant financial models stressed restructuring organizations from above, and technological models focused on redesigning workflows. This book integrated these approaches and was widely used in business and management courses in Australia and by Australian managers. The book also

drew on change research from the U.K. and Europe, particularly covering innovative work redesign on sociotechnical design principles and industrial democracy (ID).

In the 1970s and 1980s, Dunphy and his colleagues initiated cross-cultural research, making a systematic comparison of differences between East Asian management approaches and the dominant US model. These studies examined approaches to organizational change in China under the communist revolution and innovative post-World War II Japanese management transformations of production systems. This research analyzed how contrasting cultural assumptions led to differing management and change processes. For example, the collective orientation of Japanese cultures contrasted to the individualistic orientation of US managers and led to more widespread consultation (nemawashi) at the early stages change initiation. At the time these studies commenced, most theorists in the United States assumed that US management principles were superior to those of others and applied universally. Only when the Japanese began to dominate world markets and compete successfully against US enterprises in the United States were these cultural assumptions challenged by US-based management writers, such as Ezra Vogel in *Japan as Number One* (1979).

Another theoretical breakthrough was the development of a contingency theory of organization change. The dominant OD and ID models advocated a "one best way" to manage organizational change, specifically incremental, participative bottom-up approaches with internal stakeholders. Dunphy and Stace (1988) were the first to apply contingency theory in organizational change theory, by linking the strategic scale of change to the dominant styles of change leadership. Nadler and Tushman's model followed closely in 1989. The Dunphy-Stace research controversially formed a critique of the OD and ID models, particularly of their suitability as universal prescriptions for change. The research demonstrated that, under certain conditions, directive/coercive top-down strategies for change could be successful.

The point was made that no *one* strategic change approach should be universally prescribed; different change strategies are called for in different circumstances. If the organization itself is at risk because of failure to adapt to widespread environmental and industry change, dictated transformation may be necessary to transform the organization and ensure its survival. In particular, the model (see Fig. 1) provides for different strategies of change according to the organization's current "fit" or lack thereof with its environment. This was an innovative idea at the time; the OD, ID, and OB literatures mostly ignored the importance of the strategic environment for the organization, an important omission as the pace of Western economic restructuring, geopolitical, and technological change increased. If organizations failed to change to meet these changed conditions, they faced inefficiencies and eventually extinction.

The model proposes that the strategy for managing change should be based first on the degree or scale of change needed to bring the organization back into environmental fit or to retain its fit in a fast-moving environment. The other axis in the model specifies the style of change leadership that will best bring about the degree of change needed (on a scale from collaborative to coercive). The choice as to what style will work best depends on the speed with which the change needs to be
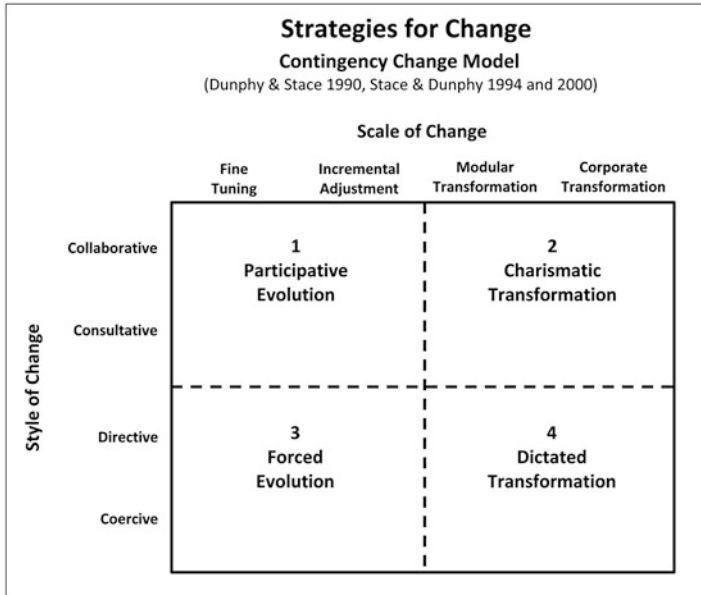
**Fig. 1**  Stace-Dunphy contingency model (Dunphy and Stace 1990)

brought about and the latent support from key interest groups within and beyond the organization. Where there is little urgency and a fair degree of support for change by stakeholders, participative approaches are called for. Where there is urgency and little support, a directive/coercive approach may be more effective in ensuring the organization's survival and/or success.

This study was also innovative in the way case studies were selected for research. To this point in the field's development, organization theorists had generally chosen as cases organizations where they consulted. Clearly there is a potential built-in bias in this approach that may invalidate the conclusions. Stace's PhD thesis, the basis of this study, created a systematic arm's length sampling frame for the selection of case study organizations. The financial services and insurance industries were chosen for analysis (later extended to the manufacturing sector and the public sector). Chosen within each of these industries were four high-performance organizations and two low-performance organizations. The choice was based on independently assessed factors – financial performance, industry rankings, and leadership – by a panel of three senior industry analysts. These organizations were then approached to agree to be subject to a case study. Most agreed. Where the CEO did not agree the organization was replaced by the same method. Thus the choice of organizations was independent of any investigator biases. The study involved up to 120 individual and focus-group interviews in each organization and collected qualitative data along with the administration of a "scale of change" and "change leadership style" diagnostic instrument. The study covered three time periods so that the path of organizational change could be tracked.

Publications from this research were widely sourced and referenced. The early paper "Transformational and Coercive Strategies for Planned Organizational Change: Beyond the O.D. Model" (Dunphy and Stace 1988) and the subsequent "The Strategic Management of Corporate Change" (Dunphy and Stace 1993) presented the core thinking, the latter article being the second "Most-Frequently Read" article in the *Human Relations* journal for several years. The research was also published in two books, widely used in Australia, the United Kingdom, and Asia – *Under New Management: Australian Organizations in Transition* (Dunphy and Stace 1990) and *Beyond the Boundaries: Leading and Re-creating the Successful Enterprise* (Stace and Dunphy 1994, 2001), both with multiple reprintings. The core change model is still widely used in academic teaching and by practitioners.

A more recent contribution has been the incorporation of ecological and human (social) sustainability into a systematic phase model of organizational change. The sustainability phase model (Dunphy et al. 2003, 2007; Benn et al. 2014) extends the prevailing economic/financial model of performance to include social and ecological outcomes as legitimate and necessary goals. The model outlines developmental phases through which corporations' progress toward human and ecological sustainability. Organizations can progress from active rejection of sustainability principles to becoming fully sustainable and sustaining of their social and ecological environment. Six phases are distinguished, ranging from active opposition to investment in sustainable practices to fully incorporating sustainability practices throughout the organization's operations. The six phases are:

1. Rejection
2. Non-responsiveness
3. Compliance
4. Efficiency
5. Strategic proactivity
6. The sustaining corporation

In addition, each phase distinguishes actions appropriate to achieving the sustainable outcomes typical of that phase for both human sustainability and for ecological sustainability.

**Rejection** involves an attitude on the part of the organization's dominant elite that resources are to be exploited for immediate financial gain and that devoting resources to reducing destructive ecological or social impacts of the organization's activities is to be avoided. The prevailing cultural theme at this phase is *exploit resources for maintaining short-term financial gain.* **Non-responsiveness** usually results from lack of awareness or ignorance rather than opposition to taking sustainable measures. Sustainability is regarded as irrelevant rather than actively opposed, and the central cultural theme is *business as usual.* **Compliance** focuses on reducing the risk of sanctions for failing to meet minimum standards as an employer or producer, avoiding legal action for breaches of regulations prescribing safety measures or prohibiting environmental pollution. The central cultural theme is to *avoid risk.* **Efficiency** reflects a growing awareness on the part of the corporation's

dominant elite that there are real advantages to be gained by proactively instituting sustainable practices. For example, what was defined as "waste" can be reprocessed and become a valuable resource. This is the beginning of incorporating sustainability as integral to the business. The central cultural theme of this phase is *do more with less.* **Strategic proactivity** sees sustainability becoming an important part of the organization's business strategy. Sustainability provides a competitive advantage through innovation and adding value. The central cultural theme is *lead in adding value and innovation.* **The sustaining corporation** phase emerges as the corporation's elite, and most corporate members have internalized the ideology of working for a sustainable world. The corporation works to "change the rules of the game" to model best practice in sustainability and to build political and social commitment to creating a fully sustainable world. The central cultural theme is *transforming ourselves: lead in creating a sustainable world.*

At each stage, performance is enhanced by adding value and eliminating waste, but the kind of value added and waste eliminated differs. At the efficiency phase, value is typically added by achieving new efficiencies through significant cost reductions by, for example, reuse of material resources formerly defined as waste and sent to landfill. But there are also efficiencies to be achieved using formerly wasted human potential such as loss of key skills through turnover or poorly integrated work systems. At the strategic proactivity phase, value added comes through the contribution sustainability makes to building stronger stakeholder support and winning increased market share. At this phase also the concept of waste is enlarged to include unrealized or missed strategic opportunities in sustainability, particularly lost market share through lack of innovation, failure to develop more high-added-value products that secure market leadership, or too-slow divestment of unsustainable operations.

Another contribution of the model is that it specifies a wide range of change leadership roles needed to guide organizations through the phases and shows the direct relevance of historical theories of leadership to phases in the model. So the kind of change leadership needed for the efficiency phase is distributed/enabling; for the strategic proactivity phase, it is enabling/transformational; and for the sustaining corporation phase, it is transformational/complexity management (Benn et al. 2014). Key change-agent competencies are also specified. Overall the phase model defines the central managerial task as the leadership of change but also documents the necessity of leadership styles being modified as the organization moves through the phases. The knowledge and skills needed for successfully moving an organization into the efficiency phase are therefore different from those needed for moving it into the phase of strategic proactivity or sustainable organization phase. Maintaining high performance in the sustainable organization phase involves managing a process of continuous transformation (reinvention) of the organization and managing high levels of internal and external complexity.

The model also integrates developments in human-resource management and corporate social responsibility with change-management theory. Achieving corporate sustainability is seen as managing an integrated development in the organization between ecological sustainability (e.g., eliminating waste, using natural resources

more efficiently) and social sustainability (e.g., building workforce capabilities, generating stakeholder support). Before this model was developed, the role of human-resource strategies in developing ecological sustainability was largely ignored; HR and OD were not seen as integral to successful achievement of corporate contributions to creating and maintaining a healthy natural environment. The model stresses the interdependence of human and ecological sustainability.

Overall the model shows that achieving corporate sustainability is a change process and that successive phases enable the organization to achieve higher levels of performance in the traditional financial sense but also in the increasingly important areas of ecological and human sustainability. Figure 2 shows how optimal development across phases balances change on each of these dimensions to reach the point of becoming a fully sustainable organization. A large number of carefully researched case studies that accompanied the development of the model document how this performance enhancement takes place (see, e.g., Benn et al. 2011b).

The sustainability phase model is widely used internationally in business programs and by practicing managers. A fourth edition of *Organizational Change for Corporate Sustainability* is in preparation.

Dunphy's work also shows the importance of using large-scale databases in research on organizational change. Over several years, he collaborated with the consulting firm Human Synergistics International, strongly represented in Australia and New Zealand. Human Synergistics uses the organizational Culture Inventory (OCI) and the Life Style Inventory (LSI), systematic survey instruments designed to measure organization culture and leadership behavior. From the existing
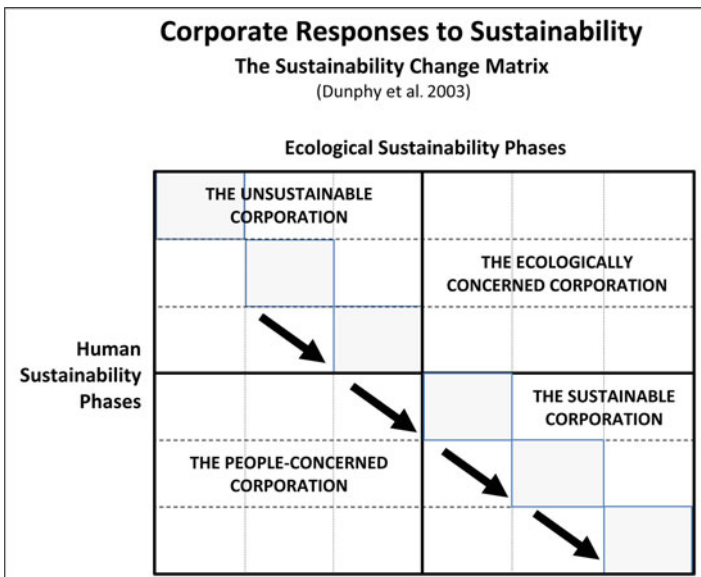


**Fig. 2** The sustainability change matrix

database, Dunphy and colleagues at Human Synergistics extracted data on 40 organizations that had undertaken an initial survey and at least one other survey over the following 2 years (Jones et al. 2006, 2011). These organizations were then ranked by degree of cultural shift from a passive/defensive culture and aggressive/defensive culture toward a constructive culture (the goal of the culture change programs).

Five organizations were chosen that had made the most successful transformations toward their ideal culture as measured by results on the OCI. In these organizations, all OCI categories showed highly statistically significant shifts in the desired direction. An intensive case study of the change process was then carried out in these organizations. The CEO, all senior executives, internal change leaders, and external change consultants were interviewed, and systematic samples of employees used to form focus groups. Data was gathered on all performance measures, including financial, used by each organization. The shift to a more constructive culture in these five organizations was accompanied by maintenance or improvement, sometimes dramatic improvement, in almost all financial and nonfinancial performance measures.

Detailed case studies of the five organizations are presented in *In Great Company*, and a model is presented of the common characteristics of these successful change projects. The study was completed in 2006. In 2011 the same organizations were studied again to see how their cultures had affected their ability to survive and thrive through the global recession of 2008 to 2010. A second edition updates the case studies and shows that the investment in creating more constructive cultures not only had an overwhelmingly positive impact on performance measures in good times but also enabled these organizations to better handle tough times (Jones et al. 2011).

The way change was successfully achieved in these five organizations supported much of what has been written in the change literature about how to create successful corporate change; what was unusual was that these organizations actually did what the literature recommends. A summary "metacapability model" details four key activities emphasized in all five organizations: leading, engaging, redesigning, and reflexivity. The first three are well documented in the change literature. Reflexivity however represents a new contribution and includes building self-awareness through feedback, creating a reality check through appreciating others' viewpoints, and monitoring of progress toward the preferred culture (Jones et al. 2011).

The study results also supported the sustainability phase model and helped add detail to an understanding of the relationships between the phases (Jones et al. 2011) as well as the impact of progressing through the phases on variables such as performance and workforce satisfaction.

The research carried out by Dunphy and his colleagues demonstrates the value of using a variety of research methods to ensure the validity of conclusions about effective change interventions. The studies have often combined surveys, interviews, gathering, and analysis of existing organizational performance data, focus groups with employees and stakeholders, and field observation. Using data derived with differing methods from different sources has proved invaluable in describing ongoing organizational change processes and the impact on performance. Using these methods at different hierarchical levels and in different departments and units also captures the multiple perspectives that underlie the complexity of change.

In working sessions, managers can readily apply the model to their own organizations. This increases their understanding of their organizations as a system undergoing change and helps them design and monitor interventions to improve corporate performance. In developing this approach, Dunphy was strongly influenced by his early study of John Dewey's idea that practical application is the best way to refine developing theory.

## New Insights: Aligning Theory and Practice

Dunphy has always sought to move between theory and practice. This is to ensure that theory illuminates practice, that practice ensures the relevance of theory, and that theory is modified on the basis of experience. He has used qualitative research methods and field research extensively but tried to move qualitative research toward the more quantitative and/or to supplement qualitative research with quantitative approaches.

Ongoing consulting relationships, executive teaching, and field research in a variety of organizations ensured that he was engaged in an ongoing dialogue with practicing managers about what constitutes best practice under different circumstances and the issues encountered leading organizational change. These activities also provided opportunities to develop ways of communicating theory and research findings to practicing managers. Dunphy has preferred simple direct English expression and an absence of jargon in both speaking and writing – characteristics welcomed by busy managers. He has also had a commitment to accepting the complexity of the managerial task and the importance of making theory relevant to management practice.

Dunphy holds the University of NSW Vice-Chancellor's Award for Teaching Excellence. In teaching he had a preference for using a variety of experiential learning processes – simulations, role plays, case studies, coaching, and problem-solving workshops – to create active learning through doing rather than passive absorption of knowledge. Because he closely observed ongoing group processes over many years, he feels at ease working with the "hot human process" of experiential learning. He is strongly committed to educating the whole person – mind, emotions, and behaviors. He has been concerned not only with ideas but how individuals translate ideas into action. This means ensuring that each individual has the repertoire of requisite behaviors to make the needed changes in their workplace. Knowledge is not enough; people also need the skills to intervene effectively.

Dunphy works to help organizational change leaders understand the organization as a living social system in which people share some similar understandings but also have different views depending on where in the organizational hierarchy and departmental/unit structure they are situated. The organization is a phenomenological entity with some common cultural elements but also subcultures based on interests that may conflict. The organization is a social fiction that lives in the minds, emotions, and wills of its members and stakeholders. The managerial task is to build, among organizational members and stakeholders, a sufficient sense of

ownership, commitment, and understanding of the organizational goals to create efficient and effective movement toward those goals. Working with corporate culture is vital to ensure that organizational change initiatives are effective. These views represent a strong move away from "the rational person" view of the individual and the economic view of the organization as primarily a financial entity.

The essence of each of the theoretical models developed is readily explained to executives in a single session. The depth is specified in greater detail in books, articles, and teaching/learning units and can be actively explored and applied within the target organization in collaboration with practicing managers. These are both descriptive and prescriptive models. They allow managers to identify where in a spectrum of change their organization is located and also what actions are required for improved performance outcomes.

The models are supplemented with detailed case studies providing practical information on how change had been made and with what results. In addition, Dunphy organized active networks to facilitate ongoing exchange of information between change agents (managers and consultants). Organizations making successful change were brought to public attention through workshops, seminars, and publications to ensure that managers and other change agents became aware of positive models from which they can learn.

Dunphy's work has had a major influence particularly on organizations operating in Australia. Two examples are consulting with Agnew Mining, which involved the successful planning and establishment of a new mining organization and new town in Western Australia, and Fuji Xerox Australia, which involved the planning and establishment of the innovative eco manufacturing plant in Sydney. These are now briefly summarized.

For 5 years from 1975, Dunphy undertook a major consulting assignment with a new mining organization, Agnew Mining, which involved the design, construction, and operation of a new nickel mine and town in a remote desert region of Western Australia. He worked with the senior executive team who asked him to challenge all assumptions they held for the design and operations of a mining organization and town. The executives wished to avoid the industrial unrest, high turnover, and male-dominated culture of binge drinking that prevailed in existing mining operations. The Agnew Mine and the associated new town, Leinster, saw the successful redesign of traditional forms of mining organization, for instance, by handing much more decision-making to self-managing work teams and by opening jobs to women. It also resulted in a town designed on innovative principles – former residents in a recent book describing their time there as some of the most fulfilling of their lives (Siddall 2015). The dedication to the book thanks Dunphy for "his original input that changed the philosophy of mining town projects" (p. xiii).

Fuji Xerox is an international company that produces a wide range of products designed to manage electronic or paper documents. In the 1990s the company sought to establish itself as a leader in the development and application of sustainable manufacturing operations. Fuji Xerox Australia played a leading role in this worldwide development; its new remanufacturing plant, the Fuji Xerox Eco Manufacturing Plant, established in Sydney in 1993, introduced the remanufacturing principles

later adopted worldwide by the Japanese parent company. Dunphy worked with the plant managers to establish these principles and put them into practice.

A key step in the change to sustainable manufacturing at Xerox was a decision to replace selling printers with leasing service contracts to repair or replace consumables. The manufacturing process was completely redesigned so that worn and failed items, once considered waste, were redefined as potential valuable resources. Instead of worn or broken parts being discarded to landfill, they were fed back into the production process and remanufactured. Eventually all waste was eliminated, product design was improved to increase reliability and enhance performance, and major savings were made from import substitution and new export earnings. This had major environmental benefits, reduced costs to consumers, and increased profits. In 2010 the company reported that, over 10 years of its operations, the Eco Manufacturing Center had achieved AU$240 million return on AU$22 million investment (Benn et al. 2011a).

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: The Way Forward

Throughout his career, Dunphy has pushed the boundaries of change theory in response to emerging issues in the environment of organizations. Documenting how approaches to change in Asian economies differed from Western models was a response to the increasing internationalization of business. Advancing a novel contingency model of change, as against a simplistic adherence to OD theory regardless of situation, was a response to the sharp economic downturn of the late 1980s, particularly in Western economies, and large-scale restructuring and reshaping of organizations. The sustainability phase model was a response to climate change and the deterioration of the environment under the impact of modern industrial technologies. Change theory cannot be a static body of knowledge but must deal with the enterprise as a complex self-organizing system that needs to adapt to its dynamic environment and strategically influence that environment to create favorable conditions for future high performance.

This raises the question of how organizational change theory can change *itself* to prepare for the impacts of the dramatic processes now transforming our world. Many theorists, including Dunphy, see future organizational success as dependent on managing the constant self-renewal of organizations as highly complex socio-technical systems. Given that managerial leadership is crucial to change success, this has major implications for the ability of the senior executives to live with ambiguity, constant change (including self-change), and complexity (Benn et al. 2014; Jones et al. 2010; Parry 2015). To achieve this, executives and others require real-time, ongoing feedback from a system undergoing change that differs in scale and pace from one part of the organization to another. Systems theory is clearly the way to go but, despite its long history in the field (Kirsch et al. 2008), has delivered few practical outcomes because the technology to monitor complexity didn't exist.

To overcome this, Dunphy saw the need to work with large databases of organizational change programs, but few such databases existed. The Human Synergistics

database referred to above was a rare exception. Academics seldom have the resources needed to amass longitudinal-change data from across many organizations and industries. Some consulting firms with large change-consultancy arms have the clients, personnel, and financial resources to gather organizational data on a large scale. But creating the database is not enough; the data gathered must be continually updated, use relevant valid variables, employ sophisticated multivariate statistical methods for analysis, and suggest useful "interventions" with predictive validity. In a digital world, the use of sophisticated technologies to provide real-time analytical feedback to leaders, enabling self-correction, will become the new norm, taking change management into the next level of evolution.

One such recent development, Change Tracking, is documented by Parry and his colleagues (Parry 2015; Parry et al. 2013). "Over more than 15 years of research, he and his team have created the most comprehensive data set on what happens during the process of change. To date they have collected data from more than 750,000 individual respondents across hundreds of change programs in more than 150 organizations across all sectors and sizes . . . and this data set continues to grow" (2015, p. ix). Elsewhere Parry comments that the Change Tracking model that uses this resource "provides the basis for the development of a 'situational' or 'contingency' model, called for by Dunphy and Stace (1993), which will allow for the ongoing feedback required to produce actionable data to guide the adaptation of change strategies and interventions required to keep projects on track to achieving intended objectives" (2013, p. 23). We need more pioneering work like this in developing sophisticated theoretically based analysis and predictive intervention strategies.

However, the world faces revolutionary changes at least equivalent to those of the industrial revolution. Central to these changes are new developments in information and communication technologies (ICT), digital transformation, and what McKinsey & Company refer to as the "Internet of Things" (McKinsey Classics 2016). Add to this mix sophisticated robotization. A fully integrated global communication system is developing with sensors and activators increasingly embedded in things such as roads, homes, cars, our bodies, and human substitutes such as robots. This system will smash existing business models and see much current executive work subsumed by complex autonomous decision-making systems that sense conditions in real time, make instant decisions, and then monitor the impact.

All these developments will transform organizations, impacting most obviously on employment of both low-skilled and highly skilled workforces. As yet unknown is how the new digital world, increasingly peopled by "digital natives," will affect the shape, size, and functioning of organizations themselves.

There are also the major uncertainties of geopolitical tensions. Globalization seemed an unstoppable force but is now challenged by the strengthening centrifugal forces of localization. Ease of mobility across the planet is being challenged by forces of terrorism and large-scale refugee migration. Most threatening is the deterioration of the natural world under the impact of human population increase and unsustainable organizational practices and lifestyles. In 2015 the global average temperature rose 0.9% degrees above the twentieth-century average, just one of many indicators showing that human-caused climate change is a current reality

threatening the viability of civilization (NASA 2016). The world's organizations must be rapidly transformed so they act as living cells in the biosphere and society, contributing to the health of the planet and human society. Dunphy has contributed to this transition by charting phases through which organizations can move to sustainability – an important step in redefining the goals and functions of organizations.

## Conclusion

The field of organization theory must adapt to and inform these changes. Contingency theory will be critical in improving the effectiveness of change programs in meeting their objectives – the critical contingences will emerge from the sophisticated computer-based models developed in concert with these changes. But change theory needs to be concerned with more than *means*; it must also be concerned with *ends*, particularly the ends to which change is directed. Dunphy argues that: "At this time, we must ask of all organizations in our society: What value do you add to the earth, the source of our being, and to society, which is our home?" (Personal communication, May 3, 2016). In Dunphy's view, theorists and practitioners need to contribute both to redefining the goals of organizational change and to researching how change projects can be designed to achieve these goals. The future of the field will depend on how future theorists and practitioners meet these challenges.

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# Mary Parker Follett: Change in the Paradigm of Integration

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**Abstract**

The work of Mary Parker Follett, an intellectual pioneer of the early twentieth century, resists categorization or assignment to any one category or field of study. A political and management theorist, Follett proposed a renewed vision of participative democracy as she anticipated the future practice of conflict mediation and of management as a profession.

Follett's work, rooted in her integrative philosophy of addressing conflict and problems, is particularly and perennially relevant to managing change. The following chapter first presents the profound influences of Follett's academic, personal, and professional experiences in shaping her perspectives. We then delve into what we view as Follett's most important, enduring contributions to management study and practice – integration and circular response – as a paradigm for managing change. We highlight different contexts in which Follett has translated her integrative philosophy into practical concepts, such as power-with management, the law of the situation, the invisible leader and the common purpose, and circular behavior as the basis of integration. We will conclude this collective reflection by illustrating how Follett's legacy is unfinished; her ideas endure and are relevant even today in governing our period of complexity and interdependent challenges. Follett still shows the way.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933) was an atypical writer, hard to assign to any one
category or field of study. Follett proposed a renewed vision of democracy, changing
representations, and understanding of mediation, negotiation, leadership, and man-
agement. The intellectual edifice that Follett built constitutes a useful theoretical
frame for organizational change. The notion of integration (Follett 1918), at the heart
of this paradigm, describes the social process as a process of unifying and differing.
Social interactions are the result of perpetually coinfluencing dynamics.

Circular behavior (Follett 1924), the iterative back-and-forth of living relations, is
the basis of integration. This proposed dynamic back-and-forth of interinfluencing,
interpenetrating, and interweaving through unavoidable moments of difference,
friction, and conflict, leads, according to Follett (1941), to the creation of new and
more evolved levels of integration. Considering this, Follett's solution to control is
not to be found in a force "outside" or "over" the individual or the collective but
within the individual and the collective's own process of organizing and integrating.

Follett's early academic and professional influences were essential in shaping her perspectives on integration and the circular response as a means to enhance interpersonal and group relations, to manage conflict, and to generate collective creativity. We extend the scope of Follett's integrative philosophy to devise prescriptions for managing change in organizations. We start our examination of Follett's integrative philosophy by reviewing people and events of profound influence on her worldview and work.

We then look at aspects of group psychology. Understanding Follett's dynamics of integration in group psychology sheds light on the levers needed to initiate the processes of building common representations of a situation (not merely compromises between different individual representations) and of resolving complex problems in a creative and collaborative manner.

We assert that Follett's work is as relevant as ever. Today, contemporary thought leaders in the field of management and organizational change unanimously acknowledge three things: (a) the great degree to which Follett's management philosophy was avant-garde and pioneering for her time; (b) the dearth of knowledge and recognition of Follett, as a theorist, and of her ideas; and (c) the still impressive relevance, if not critical importance, of her integrative philosophy in helping us understand and manage change in all aspects of life today.

## Influences and Motivations: From Quakerism to a Strong Interest for Management as a Profession

Several studies have attempted to highlight elements of Follett's life that influenced the shaping of her ideas. We have summarized here the major elements of Follett's by considering four main categories of influence: (a) the family and the cultural context of the young Mary Parker Follett; (b) her early influences during her studies; (c) her social entrepreneurship activities in Boston and, eventually, throughout the United States; and, finally, (d) her links with the world of business and entrepreneurship during the last third of her life in the United States and in Europe.

## Family Context, Cultural, and Religious Influences

Mary Parker Follett was born in 1868, shortly after the end of the American Civil War, in Quincy, Massachusetts. Other than the fact that she was the elder of two children and that Follett's mother was the daughter of a Boston-area bourgeois merchant, we know little more about Follett as a child. That said, the few testimonies gathered by researchers evoke a short childhood; Follett was quickly thrust into the world of adults due to a depressed mother and an absent father, a veteran of the Civil War, who suffered from alcoholism and died early (Tonn 2003).

We also know little about the actual cultural and religious influences of Follett's family and those influences on the development of her later ideas. She was exposed

to Quakerism as a child although little has been written, by Follett or others, about the subject. Worth noting, however, is the striking proximity between the philosophy developed by Follett and some of the basic principles of Quaker spirituality, including the direct dialogue with God and the rejection of some form of representative religious democracy, the direct governance of the affairs of the church without recourse to a vote, and a spirit of equality of all and a social commitment to peace and pacifism (Dandelion 2007).

## First Intellectual Influences and Early Work

Follett, in 1888, after a brilliant school career, entered the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women of Harvard College in Cambridge (Massachusetts), which was to later become Radcliffe College, Harvard's annex for women. At a time when only a small minority of women enrolled in the university, Follett studied political economy, literature, history, and, especially, American history, all of which, at the time, were taught very little. In her early university days, she took lessons on the banking system, modern politics, and constitutional history as well as European history, both ancient and modern. Follett at Radcliffe developed a taste for eclecticism that she would keep thereafter.

Follett was also significantly influenced by one of her professors, Albert Bushnell Hart, renowned American historian, who, in 1909, became the president of the American Historical Association. Hart challenged his students by involving them in investigative work on issues that had never been treated before, such as citizens' rights under the Sedition Act or the fate of the Indians displaced from their native territories under the Jackson administration. Follett was noticed by Hart, who, undoubtedly, taught her the principles of investigation and a taste for the analysis of facts (Tonn 2003).

Follett embarked on a summer school trip to Cambridge University in 1890 and returned to the United States in the summer of 1891. A few weeks after her return, she gave her first lecture in political science, in the private school of Mrs. Quincy Shaw in Boston. There, she met her future life companion, Miss Isobel L. Briggs, then director of the school. Follett and Briggs shared their life together until Brigg's death in 1926.

In 1896, after 4 years of extensive work combining documentary research and qualitative data collection (using systematic interviews of the most recognized people in politics at her time), Follett published her doctoral thesis, *The Speaker of the House of Representatives*. Her work was hailed at the time as an original work and reference and is still considered to be one of the best books ever written on the functioning of Congress and the role of the Speaker of the House. President Theodore Roosevelt (1896), then New York City's police commissioner, called her work "[a]s a whole, marvellously well done" (p. 177), and the *New York Times* listed it among "The Fifty Best Books of 1896" (1897; see also Davis 2015). Follett graduated summa cum laude from Radcliffe College in 1898.

## Mary Parker Follett, Social Entrepreneur

The period of 1900–1915 was, for Follett, a major period of social engagement. She was involved in several social change projects that helped forge her ideas related to change and group dynamics, leadership, and participatory democracy. She dedicated herself to the integration of young immigrants in the suburbs of Boston by creating social centers, the Roxbury Debating Club for Boys, the Highland Union, and finally Roxbury League. She campaigned for the opening of municipal school buildings in the evening as a way to organize community activities by the community and for the community. One of her first major successes was in 1911, when she initiated the opening of the East Boston High School Social Center, a secondary school where evening classes could take place for socially disadvantaged people. The model for the East Boston High School Social Center eventually grew into the nationwide movement of the National Community Centers Association in the United States. Meanwhile, Follett, tackling many different civic projects, also campaigned for women's suffrage through an active militancy in the Boston Equal Suffrage Association for Good Government (BESAGG).

Follett first interacted with managers and entrepreneurs in the mid-1910s when she succeeded in raising funds to set up the Boston Placement Bureau, a local agency designed to accompany and support young people in their employability. On this occasion, Follett met and began collaboration with Henry Dennison. Dennison was a famous entrepreneur reputed for being innovative in the field of employer-employee relations, experimenting with various workers' participation mechanisms and self-control. He was also president of the Taylor Society and a major player in the development of scientific management (McQuaid 1977).

We must emphasize here that the work of Follett was written and published in the context of the rapid development of ideas related to scientific management. Follett's first writings were published from the 1910s, a period that marked the birth and growth of scientific management (Brown 1925). (F. W. Taylor published his seminal work *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911). References to scientific management made by Follett in her writings are abundant. Follett was a reader of the bulletins of the Taylor Society (Stout et al. 2015). We find many similarities between Taylor and Follett, notably, their need to rely on the law of the situation and facts and their optimistic opinions about cooperative relationships between management and workers.

## Philosophical Influences and Interest in Management as a Profession

Mary Parker Follett published her second book, *The New State: Group Organization, the Solution of Popular Government*, in 1918. Reprinted three times in its first 2 years, *The New State* proposes a new understanding of democracy via the active participation of all individuals within their groups at work, in their neighborhood, and in their city. Follett's philosophy deals with power and rights, not so much from a legal but from a psychosocial perspective (Follett 1918).

*The New State* is a gold mine for one who wants to know more about political, philosophical, legal, and managerial influences on Follett. Follett cites the American pragmatist philosopher and psychologist William James (1895) the most, and one can especially see the correspondence with James in how Follett emphasizes the "active" and "experiential" aspects of integrating. The famed American legal scholar and botanist Roscoe Pound is also often cited where Follett defends a new dynamic and socially constructed conception of law, where human rights are seen as outputs of a proactive and coercive deliberate change process and no longer as the legacy of ancient and universal principles.

Meanwhile, Mary Parker Follett was appointed to the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board, whose role was to ensure respect of the application of the Act of 1912 on the minimum wage for women. Her social and civic activity led her to meet more and more business leaders and gradually became more and more interested in the world of business management, as her later involvement in the Bureau of Personnel Administration in New York showed.

Follett published *Creative Experience*, a fertile reflection on social interaction and the creative process of valuing differences through integration, in 1924. Touching on political science, philosophy, and management, the book is one of the first written record of Follett's growing interest for the "managerial thing" (Follett 1924). *Creative Experience* (1924), like *The New State* (1918), is a valuable resource for understanding the contextual influences of Follett's early twentieth-century ideas.

*The New State* was published around the time of the implementation of the 1919 Versailles Treaty, which, itself, was later seen as a prelude to World War II. Despite the establishment of the League of Nations in 1920, an event that seemed to have impressed Follett, she argued that the settlement of World War I contained the seeds of a new conflict; in *Creative Experience*, she explicitly analyzes these events. Follett also gave tribute to F.W. Taylor when developing, for example, her *law of the situation*. Other important references include those concerning Gestalt psychology and the holistic conception of individual interaction and society.

As Follett gained prominence in 1925–1933 as a management thinker, she gave a series of conference lectures from Boston to London via New York, speaking of such topics as power, conflict, authority, control, leadership, roles of managers, coordination, etc. These conferences were aimed at businessmen who welcomed with great interest Follett's innovative ideas. Follett saw, in these entrepreneurs, men interested in creative experimentations, stimulating her interest to work with business managers as they were the most ready to experiment and innovate socially (O'Connor 2011). After a final series of conferences at the inauguration of the new Department of Business Administration of the London School of Economics, she returned to Boston for personal affairs and died there on December 18, 1933.

Henry C. Metcalf and Lyndall Urwick (1941) later collected Follett's conference papers in a first book titled *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett*. Elliot Fox and Urwick (1949) would later edit Follett's 1949 London School of Economics conference papers in a book titled *Freedom and Coordination*.

## Key Contributions: Change in the Paradigm of Integrating

Follett's contributions all have in common a process-based approach. Change is, therefore, consubstantial with her intellectual construction. This translates into two different approaches: The notion of integration, at the heart of Follett's work, describes the social process as a process of unifying and differing. Social interactions are the result of perpetually coinfluencing dynamics. Following from these approaches is the main idea that leading change is a social process of integrating.

## Social Process as the Process of Integrating

### Unifying

Integration is a central notion in Follett's intellectual construction. Integration refers to the social process of encountering, confronting, and unifying the desires and interests of various parties; it is neither the making of a compromise nor the result of a distributive negotiation that one of the stakeholders would win. Integration is a creative process – the confrontation of differences (or conflict) is sought in order to generate new ideas, and thus a collective mind, feeling, and will (Follett 1918).

Urwick (1935) identified the first principle focus of integration, the "unifying" of business activity, as Follett's "most important contribution to the business literature of our time" (p. 166). She proposed a processual philosophy (Stout and Staton 2011) in which the act of coordinating one's self with others consisted of a dynamic process of integrating – dynamic because life, according to Follett, was ever changing. Unity, as she said, was never static.

The processual quality of integration permeates all of Follett's philosophy, whether she speaks of integrating at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, or societal levels. She wrote about managing complexity and change in new modern organizations as an experience of free and intelligent men and women creating together common endeavors, thereby bringing material and spiritual livelihood. Her theme of integration applies eloquently to the field of management and organizational change as it also informs other domains (e.g., public administration, conflict mediation, and justice) and even the most simple and significant human experiences of everyday life governance. Follett (1919) observes:

> The most familiar example of integrating as the social process is when two or three people meet to decide on some course of action, and separate with a purpose, a will, which was not possessed by anyone when he came to the meeting but is the result of the interweaving of all. In this true social process there takes place neither absorption nor compromise. (p. 576)

### Differing and Constructive Conflict

Social relations, according to Follett (1941), lead inevitably to differences, friction, and conflict, as she noticed firsthand in creating the community-led evening school

centers in Boston and, later, throughout the United States: "[S]parks would inevitably fly" (Follett 1941, p. 114). But Follett considers these "sparks" as positive energy and a source of creative change. Rather than seeing differences as obstacles and seeing conflict as battling, she proposes that differences are opportunities for confrontation and friction of ideas, which mutually influence – or more precisely, *interinfluence*, *interpenetrate*, and *interweave* – in ways which something new and better is created for both parties. Follett (1941) sees human diversity and conflict as the necessary passages to true unity and to higher and higher states of integration and development, as indicated here:

> As conflict – difference – is here in this world, as we cannot avoid it, we should, I think, use it. Instead of condemning it, we should set it to work for us. (. . .) All polishing is done by friction. The music of the violin we get by friction. We left the savage state when we discovered fire by friction. We talk of the friction of mind on mind as a good thing. So in business too, we have to know when to try to eliminate friction and when to try to capitalize it, when to see what work we can make it do. (pp. 30–31)

For Follett, the friction of diversity is not only good but also necessary for evolution to take place and the true source of unity integration. Again, there is no such thing as a static unity according to Follett; there is, however, constant unifying.

## Social Interactions as Coinfluencing Dynamics

### Circular Response

Circular behavior, the iterative back-and-forth of living relations, is the basis of integration. This proposed dynamic back and forth of interinfluencing, interpenetrating, and interweaving through the unavoidable moments of differences, friction, and conflict, leads, according to Follett, to the creation of new and more evolved levels of integration. According to the dynamics of the circular response, behaviors are reactions to the behaviors of others, themselves constructed as responses to the behaviors of others, and so on Follett (1924) explains:

> In human relations, as I have said, this is obvious: I never react to you but to you-plus-me; or to be more accurate, it is I-plus-you reacting to you-plus-me. 'I' can never influence 'you' because you have already influenced me; that is, in the very process of meeting, by the very process of meeting, we both become something different. It begins even before we meet, in the anticipation of meeting. (pp. 62–63)

The dynamics are, therefore, circular and infinite. This view of social interaction has two primary consequences on the conception of change. First, it implies that social systems are in permanent motion and that change is consubstantial to any collective system. Second, Follett's view corresponds to Taylor and Mayo's (as cited in Trahair 1984) notion of the *total situation*: Two individuals are linked by the

mechanics of the circular response and, therefore, they live the same unique situation – the total situation.

As we will see later in this chapter, this implies thinking about power and leadership in quite another way. Stout and Love (2015) also refer to Follett's philosophy as a relational ontology of becoming. Follett had studied Plato and Aristotle's notion of praxis as a human capacity to reflect and act upon the world. Rather than separate managers as thinkers from employees as doers, Follett (1918) proposes a democratic vision where everyone is called to maximize their thinking and doing capabilities.

## The Group Process

As a precursor to group psychology, Follett's work differentiates between crowd and group psychology and, subsequently, educates on group psychology dynamics, which are still, if not even more, relevant for organizational management today. The psychologically regressive tendencies that humans can exhibit in groups (Bion 1957), and which Jung (1923) wanted to prevent by raising individual consciousness, are also what Follett (1918) refers to as crowd psychology, where individual behaviors are "governed by suggestion and imitation" (p. 22). Follett proposes instead a group psychology based on the law of interpenetration and integration. A true group process, as she proposes, is a process of coinfluencing, which invites the full contribution of every member in, collectively, creating something new. Follett elucidates that the group creates something new, while the crowd does not:

> Whenever we have a real group something new is actually created. (…) The object of a conference is not to get at a lot of different ideas, as is often thought, but just the opposite – to get at one idea. There is nothing rigid or fixed about thoughts, they are entirely plastic, and ready to yield themselves completely to their master – the group spirit. (p. 30)

## Leading Change as the Process of Integrating

### "Power-With" and Social Control

One of the most original contributions Mary Parker Follett made in addressing the question of organizational management and change is her distinction between *power-over* and *power-with* management. For Follett, the new social process emerging out of democratic living means relinquishing the Darwinian mindset of survival of the fittest and consequent understanding of social relations as battles of desires with the ultimate victory of one over the other. And move instead toward a more creative and interdependent perspective of social relations in which desires can be confronted, but then integrated to create new and mutually satisfying solutions. Follett believed that true power is cogenerated and ideas could be confronted as

plastic and malleable, thus framing social relations as integrative and creative processes.

For Follett, power-over, albeit inevitable, prevents the free and creative act of self-adjusting and integrating, which a power-with orientation enables. She efforts to distinguish power-with management as "coactive," that is, a voluntary engagement toward integrative solutions, rather than "coequal power"; in other words, "the stage [is] set for a fair fight" (Follett 1941, p. 114), whereas "power-with is a jointly developing power" (p. 114). Follett aims to change the perspective of social relations from "battling" to "creating." Her cooperative perspective explains, according to many scholars, the gradual marginalization of her ideas within a more combative and patriarchal US management culture in the early twentieth century (see essays and commentary by Kanter 1995; Drucker 1995; Child 1995). Whether Follett speaks of individual control or collective control, her solution to control is not to be found in a force "outside" or "over" the individual or the collective but within the individual and the collective's own process of organizing and integrating.

## Change Under the Law of the Situation

Follett's scientific and experimental perspective is best exemplified in her concept of the law of the situation. Rather than focusing on increasing the leader's capacity to persuade or command obedience, Follett depersonalizes the giving of orders by making everyone observant and cooperative learners of the situation. The conduct of change is fully impacted by this conception of the given order. The necessities of the situation govern, and leading change is no longer a matter of persuasion or conviction.

While the law of the situation is appropriately praised as a means to avoid arbitrary abuse of power in decision-making, thus depersonalizing decision taking, Follett adds that the law of the situation also repersonalizes decisions. This repersonalization Follett mentions is remarkable by the notion that listening to everyone's point of view and appreciating the different aspects of a situation enable an inclusive and unitive experience.

## Leadership as Integrating

Follett proposes a totally renewed version of leadership (when compared to, at least, Thomas Carlyle's Great Man Theory, which was dominant in her time, and more recent transformational and situational representations of leadership) – a more egalitarian version of leadership in which members of a group could be cocreators of their common purpose and coleaders of their future. The functional leader, according to Follett, facilitates the constant integrating and learning of the living system as it evolves and grows through elevating levels of conflicts and integrations and from purpose to purpose, as she explains here:

> The best leader does not ask people to serve him, but the common end. The best leader has not followers, but men and women working with him. [...] We want to arouse not the attitudes of obedience, but the attitudes of co-operation, and we cannot do that effectively unless we are working for a common purpose understood and defined as such. (Follett 1941, p. 262)

The leader no longer convinces others to follow. He or she is no longer the one who expresses the loudest, a power of persuasion. The leader is the one who connects everyone together. In the dynamics of organizational change, the leader creates the team by promoting, via integration, the emergence of a collective power as a form of democratic power-with, rather than any authoritative power-over, dynamic.

## New Insights: Looking Backward to See the Path Forward

One theory as to why Follett's work has gone underappreciated for so long, especially in America, is the American penchant to adopt management "gurus" and the latest fads and innovations of the day (Feldheim 2004; Parker and Ritson 2005). Why look backward to Follett when one should look forward?

We should look to the past, because Follett's "old" (read: presented several decades ago) ideas are "new" again. Today's increasing appreciation for Follett's work – as evidenced in small part by her inclusion in this very text – signals that the mismatch between Follett's theories and the times has resolved itself, as if Follett's ideas have been waiting for human civilization in general, and Western industries specifically, to catch up.

Many current management theorists are trying to make up for lost time. Michele Simms (2009) lists "Peter Drucker, Kurt Lewin, Warren Bennis, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Lawrence and Lorsch, and Blake and Mouton, to name a few" as citing Follett as "ahead of time given her foreknowledge of systems theory, action research, and leadership" (p. 352). Management theorists and practitioners have had no choice but to evolve to her ways of thinking not only about organizational systems but also about the people who manage and work within them, in order to benefit from her insight. The movement away from purely scientific management toward human-oriented behavioral management has necessitated this evolution.

Indeed, Mary Parker Follett's theoretical edifice has become a source of insight for managers, consultants, researchers, and mediators involved in the facilitation of change. Her theories can be appropriated today to guide the development of social tools for social interaction and for structuring support-group work. Particularly, understanding her dynamics of integration in group psychology sheds light on the levers needed to initiate the processes of building common representations of a situation (not merely compromises between different individual representations) and of resolving complex problems in a creative and collaborative manner.

In this section, we discuss how Mary Parker Follett's work has endured in modern approaches to conflict resolution, to leadership, and to change management. First,

we feature Follett's concept of integration as the foundation for interest-based conflict resolution. Then, we highlight mediation expert Albie Davis' (2015) case on how Follett's management philosophy influenced the leadership of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) during the 1960s. Finally, we once again call on Follett's theories on conflict and offer a prescription for leading others through change.

## Mediation and Conflict

Mary Parker Follett, in her speech to a personnel administration conference in 1925 (see Fox and Urwick 1973; Graham 1995), posits three main ways of resolving conflict: domination, compromise, and integration. These conflict resolution modes have been adapted by many researchers, including Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (1964), Richard Walton and Robert McKersie (1965), Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch (1967), and Ralph Kilmann and Kenneth Thomas (1977).

The genius of Follett's insight about interest-based conflict resolution is evident in her observations of human nature. Follett notices that domination, where we have a winner and a loser, might satisfy us in the short term but "is not usually successful in the long run" (Follett, as cited in Davis 2015, p. 269). The implication here is that domination does not seek to cultivate and to preserve relationships that Follett sees as necessary for the practice of integration. Follett remarks that compromise is also human nature to want to maintain harmony, so compromise "is the way we settle most of our controversies...Yet no one really wants to compromise, because that means a giving up of something" (Follett, as cited in Davis 2015, p. 269). Integration, then, cultivates and preserves relationships and builds toward a solution leaving both parties fulfilled and respected.

Follett's process-oriented and humanistic methods of going beyond understanding to seek common interests actively promote cooperation and emphasize relationships in conflict resolution. Increasing diversity, social complexity, and intractable problems demand more than a zero-sum or distributive approach to negotiation and conflict resolution (see Fisher and Ury 1981, 2001; Fisher et al. 2011).

Follett's interest-based conflict resolution approach has been advocated by Walton and McKersie (1965), where, in their classic *Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations: An Analysis of Systemic Interaction*, they promote the option of integrative negotiation as a means to solve problems and to maximize solutions through creativity and collaboration. "[T]he parties see themselves as having a joint problem" (Kochan and Lipsky 2003, p. 16) where they must address both conflicting and shared interests.

The Thomas-Kilmann Mode lnstrument (TKI), notably, has adapted and expanded upon Follett's conflict resolution modes to create a model of five conflict resolution styles: competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating; each style considers how one is concerned with fulfilling one's own interests vis-à-vis another party's interests. The collaborating style maximizes concern for fulfilling one's own interests as well as those of the other party, thus maximizing the

solution and representing what we identify as Follett's approach to integration and interest-based conflict resolution.

Roger Fisher and William Ury (1981) credit Follett's common-interest approach as the cornerstone of their famous *Getting to Yes: Negotiation Agreement Without Giving In*. Fisher and Ury, with Bruce Patton (2011), call their approach *principled negotiation*; the point is to reach beyond compromising in a collaborative environment where parties can maximize solution toward mutual advantage. Fisher and Ury were the first directors of Harvard's Negotiation Project. Today, various scholars and practitioners from "widely different intellectual and professional traditions associated with Harvard's Program on Negotiation all characterize their approach as 'interest-based'" (Sebenius 2013, p. 163), sustaining Mary Parker Follett's philosophy in research and in practice.

## Humans as Change Agents: The Leadership Example of James E. Webb, NASA

Mary Parker Follett's concept "of group power at the level of organizational leadership" (Lambright, as cited in Davis 2015, p. 275) played a significant role in change management enacted at a critical time on the American side of the Space Race. James E. Webb, who served as the second administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) from 1961 to 1968, led the Apollo 11 mission of "putting a man on the moon and returning him safely to earth" (p. 279). The 1960s for NASA was a time of great technological change, expanding scope, and intense focus, yielding the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo projects (Garber and Launius 2005).

Mediation expert Albie Davis (2015) studied two documents authored by Webb, one a 1979 letter Webb wrote to then-doctoral student Frances Cooper and the other a transcript from a lecture Webb delivered to the General Accounting Office (GAO). Webb, in both documents, speaks at length about Follett's impact on his work under President Harry S. Truman at the Bureau of the Budget, on his leadership of NASA, and on his relationship with President John F. Kennedy. Davis articulates areas where she sees Follett's imprint on Webb's approach to managing groups, citing, specifically, "power-with" relationships and "the law of the situation" (p. 280).

Webb (as cited in Davis 2015) professed to Frances Cooper that "[Follett's] influence was indeed profound in all I did at the Bureau of the Budget and at NASA" (Webb, as cited in Davis 2015, p. 277). He also invoked Follett's own words in his speech to the GAO, remarking how Follett "saw the duties of the leader of an organization as to 'draw out from each his fullest possibilities'...as 'more responsible than anyone else for the integrated unity which is the aim of organization." ...[T]he best leader is not the greatest hustler or the most persuasive orator or even the best trader, the great leader is he who is able to integrate the experience of all and use it for a common purpose." (Webb, as cited in Davis 2015, p. 277).

Davis (2015) implies that Webb was at a disadvantage in that he was a manager who "never [was] an engineer and never [saw] a rocket fly" (Arlington National

Cemetery, as cited in Davis 2015, p. 275). He "solv[ed] his dilemma" by creating a "triad" of himself and NASA's two best engineers, Hugh Dryden and Robert Seamans. Webb, for his part, contributed "rich management and political experience" (p. 275). Each had autonomy in decision-making, but "[n]o policy would be approved for NASA until the three. . .had talked it over" (Webb, as cited in Davis, p. 275). All three gentlemen regarded each other and their respective ideas with respect – an integrative group process.

Follett's vision of the group process as a cocreative experience can still be used today as a roadmap for groups to work productively as innovative collectives. Her three-staged group process, as outlined in her 1918 work *The New State*, of the collective idea, the collective feeling, and the collective will foreshadows many of today's collaborative approaches, including Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney 1999, 2005) and Search Conferences (Weisbord 1992), related to managing organizational change.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Mary Parker Follett – A Prophetic Legacy

Mary Parker Follett is an intellectual giant whose ideas are still considered prophetic and insufficiently recognized. Since Follett's death in 1933, writers in the field of organizational change and management have periodically praised the woman's genius and called for greater education and application of her ideas. Metcalf and Urwick (1941), for instance, attest in their introduction to *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Works of Mary Parker Follett*:

> Fifteen years ago Mary Follett expounded a philosophy of management that even to-day is a generation ahead of practice, and one can find therein a significant parallel with the pioneering work of Frederick W. Taylor. It is as modern and applicable to-day as it was when first she spoke; it will be as modern and applicable to-morrow. (p. 9)

Today, contemporary thought leaders in the field of management and organizational change (see Graham 1995) unanimously acknowledge three things: (a) how much Follett's management philosophy was avant-garde and pioneering for her time, (b) how little knowledge and recognition there is of her as a theorist and of her ideas, and (c) the still impressive relevance, if not importance, of her integrative philosophy in helping us understand and manage change in all aspects of life today. Rosabeth Moss (1995), in particular, points out:

> Follett focused on that which makes us most human, but which is almost the most difficult to do and likely to bring the least short-term glory. As she herself put it, 'integration leaves no thrill of victory' the way adversarial management does. (p. xviii)

Management theorist Peter Drucker (1995), having discovered Follett's work later in his illustrious career, shares Kanter's (1995) admiration: "[Follett] was the

prophet of management. Management and society in general should welcome her return" (p. 9).

Paul R. Lawrence (1995), confesses that, although he was exposed to Follett's writings as a Ph.D. student at Harvard, he could not appreciate then the significance of her writings:

> I found her work invaluable, but the truth is that I simply did not know enough about management to appreciate it *fully*. ... Thus I must humbly confess that her work was not more recognized by me because I was not that wise. Perhaps it was so with others. (p. 291)

While Follett's audience was originally concentrated in the United States and Great Britain, her international appeal is also highlighted by Japanese professor Tokihiko Enomoto. Enomoto (as cited in Graham 1995) testifies that Follett's integrative philosophy has long been valued and recognized in Japan, where the integrative group process is not perceived as a threat to an individual's identity, as it could have been in Western culture. Enomoto questions, "How is it, one might well speculate, that Follett, still today an unknown quantity in the United States, is known and highly prized in Japanese management circles?" (p. 242).

## Mary Parker Follett: Unfinished Business

As the twenty-first century evolves with increasing complexity, diversity, and challenges to effective management of democratic institutions, Mary Parker Follett's ecological philosophy remains as fresh and relevant today as it did 100 years ago. Kanter (1995) presents a prescription for managing change today: "And now? We should all stand on Follett's shoulders in order to see further into the possibilities for organizational perfectibility – even as we see the limits to a belief in human goodness" (p. xviii).

While so many aspects of Follett's integrative philosophy endure as practical legacies in managing today's organizational change, we propose to conclude this reflection by commenting on what Follett considered to be salient key challenges to integration. Follett (1941), in her seminal opening conference speech on constructive conflict, posits first:

1. *Finally, let us consider the chief obstacles to integration. It requires a high order of intelligence, keen perception and discrimination, more than all, a brilliant inventiveness; it is easier for the trade union to fight than to suggest a better way of running the factory.* (p. 45)

Follett ideates her core notion of integration as a creative act, one in which every single person is responsible for their own integration within themselves and with others. Rather than organize human relations around a logic of "fighting," Follett favors instead the creative perspective of integrating, which unifies common desires and can create "win-win" solutions. But integrating is often more demanding in time, energy, good will, and inventiveness than fighting and power-over settlements of differences and direction. Follett's vision of leadership as an act of integrating

around a common will extends the concept of transformational leadership to a cooperative and cocreative experience of unifying.

Follett's ideas remain novel in how they address the human and social aspects of human governance, focusing on the dynamic, active, and relational perspectives involved in managing human systems. Again, circular response demands that managing change, ideally, should be interactive and dynamic in order for an organization to adequately respond to the needs of the situation or problem at hand and to new ones as they arise.

According to Follett, organizations, and life and behavior within them, are not comprised of linear relationships between variables (e.g., people, actions, concepts, etc.). Follett provides a "conceptual bridge" between the social sciences and the natural and physical sciences in studying organizations (Mendenhall et al. 2000, p. 200). Also, a nonlinear approach to studying organizations is useful because of contingencies; "facts change value over time" (Follett, as cited in Boje and Rosile 2001, p. 102).

Follett's ideas on nonlinearity in organizations were presented years before social processes became a named area of study. Yet they promoted an interindividual mind-set beyond instruments, data collection, and analysis toward experimentation, participant observation, and putting facts into appropriate social contexts in order to understand organizations better. This nonlinear (read: creative) process cannot take place without solving the second obstacle to integration, the need for dominance and a power-over attitude toward others and the situation, which Follett identifies:

> 2. *Another obstacle to integration is that our way of life has habituated many of us to enjoy domination. Integration seems to many a tamer affair; it leaves no "thrills" of conquest.* (p. 45)

Follett's egalitarian philosophy appears to be part of the explanation for her relative disappearance from the front stage of leading management thinkers after her death. John Child (1995) observes how Follett's egalitarian vision fell behind the conventional hierarchical vision proposed by contemporaries such as Elton Mayo:

> So when British management writers (including Urwick) looked to synthesize the ideas of the two thinkers (Follett and Mayo) into a common managerial philosophy, they adopted a vision of paternalistic, top-down management that came primarily from Mayo and his colleagues and that was in fact, intrinsically alien to Follett's basic premises. (p. 88)

Power-with management, then, is a cocreative way to channel human potential toward common ends. It is not a fair fight of equals but a genuine coengagement toward integrative solutions.

> 3. *Another obstacle to integration is that the matter in dispute is often theorized over instead of being taken up as a proposed activity.* (Follett 1941, p. 46)

Celebrated with such luminaries as William James, Kurt Lewin, and John Dewey, as a foundational scholar of experiential learning (Kolb 2014), Follett constantly reminds her audience that integration is an active, experimental, and pragmatic practice of interinfluencing, interpenetrating, and interweaving.

Follett's point about studying organizations is that simple understanding is not enough; possibilities for increasing and enhancing productivity and moral and social progress must be identified and enacted: "[W]e want something more than [simply saying what is or what should be]; we want to find out...the possibilities now open to us. This we can only discover by experiment" (Follett, as cited in Mendenhall et al. 2000, p. 203).

4. *A serious obstacle to integration which every business man should consider is the language used. We have noted the necessity of making preparation in the other man, and in ourselves too, for the attitude most favourable to reconciliation.* (Follett 1941, p. 47)

Follett here again precedes socioconstructionist understandings of management and the importance of language in managing organizational change and conflict (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987; Gergen 1982; Weick 1979). Follett's process-oriented and humanistic philosophy seeks common interests and promotes cooperation in conflict. Conflict resolution and negotiation are often understood to be processes (Rubin and Brown, as cited in Stoshikj 2014) in which human beings participate.

Increasing diversity, social complexity, and intractable problems demand more than a zero-sum or distributive approach to negotiation and conflict resolution (see Fisher and Ury 2011). We find that we can once again look toward Follett's ideas about coordination to examine integrative approaches to resolving conflicts and navigating negotiations. Ever the pragmatist, Follett views resolving conflict as a practical exercise, in that conflict cannot be avoided, so people should make it work for them (Davis 2015).

5. *I have left untouched one of the chief obstacles to integration – namely, the undue influence of leaders – the manipulation of the unscrupulous on the one hand and the suggestibility of the crowd on the other.* (Follett 1941, p. 47)

Again, we see here Follett's reassertion of the primacy of the group process above and beyond any arbitrary form of power-over, or crowd, suggestion. Follett's vision of scientific management in that sense possesses an unscrupulous respect for facts and all factors and influences involved in a situation.

An understanding of Follett's ideal organizational structure is helpful here: Follett's "organization is well coordinated with a 'horizontal rather than a vertical authority' "(Follett, as cited in Wheelock and Callahan 2006, p. 265). "Authority is not exercised hierarchically. Instead, authority is exercised in reciprocally conditioned relationships" (Fry and Thomas 1996, para. 5). Follett is describing a movement, trending in recent decades, from mechanistic, taller organizations toward more organic, flatter organizations (Colquitt et al. 2015).

The idea of "discovering orders" as an interindividual, participatory process, for example, aligns with Follett's concept of the law of the situation. We see that Follett has laid the foundation for workplace empowerment (Eylon 1998) through the introduction of reciprocal leadership (Follett, as cited in Wheelock and Callahan 2006). Moreover, "anyone can be a leader if they possess the necessary competencies for the current circumstances (McLarney and Rhyno 1998, p. 294).

A manager's approach to making decisions "reflects the process the leader uses to generate and choose from a set of alternatives to solve a problem" (Colquitt et al. 2015, p. 467). Elton Mayo, for instance, views managers from a patriarchal perspective as having superior status and directed by a "logic of cost and efficiency," while employees followed, guided by a "logic of sentiment" (Kelly 1966, p. 74). Mayo's view is philosophically and practically at odds with a more egalitarian approach proposed by Follett. Follett promotes educating employees about the "general business...prospective contracts, even opening of new markets" (Follett, as cited in Boje and Rosile 2001, p. 99).

Follett, in contrast to Mayo, sees functional differences between managers and employees, but her humanistic and integrative philosophy of "interinfluence" deems both to be fundamentally equal. Both managers and employees, according to Follett, are called, respectively, to express their full creative potential to think, to feel, to do, to follow, and to lead together in a common purpose – and to become fuller human beings in the process: "There is no above and below. We cannot schematize men as space objects. The study of community as process will bring us, I believe, not to the overindividual mind, but to the interindividual mind, an entirely different conception" (Follett, as cited in Héon et al. 2014, p. 234).

6. *Finally, perhaps the greatest of all obstacles to integration is our lack of training for it. In our college debates we try always to beat the other side.* (Follett 1941, p. 48)

The Greek philosopher Erasmus professed, "We are born animals but we become human." Follett's early social entrepreneurial work and creation of nationwide community centers is evidence of her belief in the need for group training in democratic living—specifically, in group organizing, cooperation and dialogue, prerequisites for free and creative self-governance.

## Conclusion: Follett, Perennial Wisdom for Managing Change

Follett's scientific and integrative approach to management favors methods that can elicit the greatest autonomy and creativity in every member of a group while simultaneously unifying each member's contribution toward a common end (McGregor 1960).

Follett's integrative philosophy of addressing conflict and problems "constructively" or "creatively," is particularly and perennially relevant to managing change. In this chapter, we presented the influences that shaped Follett's work, and we highlighted her most important and enduring contributions relying on the core concept of integration. Thus a pillar and paradigm for managing change.

We showed how modern, if not postmodern, her writings and conferences produced between 1918 and 1933 are. Her ideas endure and are as relevant today in governing our period of diversity, complexity and interdependent challenges. More importantly, as well as perceptively and generously, Follett gave us the method. She translated her integrative approach into practical concepts such as power-with management, the law of the situation, the invisible leader and the common purpose, and circular behavior.

Although Follett was trained as a political scientist and specialized in democracy, Follett chose to focus the later part of her life on the emerging profession of business management to find leadership in social innovation and a readiness for social experimentation. Challenging us to consider using the power of business for social good, Follett (1941) avers:

> Men may be making useful products, but beyond this, by helping to solve the problems of human relations, they are perhaps destined to lead the world in the solution of those great problems of co-ordination and control upon which our future progress must depend. (p. 25)

Business management, to Mary Parker Follett, is not only relevant to the conducting of competitive profit-making enterprises but also relevant to the wider question of human government and social innovation in a free and democratic world.

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# Jeffrey Ford and the Seemingly Invisible Made Obvious: Pushing Change Scholars and Practitioners to Rethink Taken-for-Granted Truths

# 30

Richard W. Stackman

**Abstract**

In an academic career spanning over 40 years, Jeffrey Ford has repeatedly questioned taken-for-granted truths or recognized something so obvious it begs further thought and study. Seminal contributions on change management from the second period of his career (starting in 1989) are the focus of this chapter. Management, networks, and conversations are the commonalities of his scholarship, and each is evident in a body of work that enhances our understanding of intentional change management through his scholarly contributions – with his wife, Laurie Ford – on the logics of change, the role of conversations in producing intentional change, and the resistance to change. For managers and leaders, Ford's work continues to focus our attention as scholars and practitioners on the ongoing day-to-day efforts to bring about organizational change.

## Contents

Jeffrey Ford considers himself a contrarian, a characteristic he attributes to his mother. If you were to say to him something was "up," he would likely reply: "Well, it may not be up" or "It's not quite up." This contrarian perspective is

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reflected, if not pronounced, in his academic career. Over his 40 years in academia, he has repeatedly questioned taken-for-granted truths or recognized something so obvious – at least to him – he was left wondering why hadn't someone else studied it before. Ford is not – in the traditional sense of the term – a "gap-spotting" researcher. Such researchers focus on ever more incremental studies rarely leading to influential theories and insights (Alvesson and Sandberg 2013). Instead, Ford has said what needed to be said and moved on, not interested in producing "endless variations on tired themes" (Ashforth 2005, p. 400). (Direct quotes and other attributions throughout this chapter are from a 3-hour discussion with Dr. Ford in May 2016.)

His academic career can be divided into two distinct periods – 1975–1988 (the period of classic organizational behavior and theory research) and 1989–present (the period of change management theoretical contributions). The seminal contributions from the second period are the focus of this chapter. Management, networks, and conversations are the commonalities of his scholarship on change management. Each is evident in a body of work that enhances our understanding of intentional change management through Ford's scholarly contributions on the logics of change (Ford and Ford 1994), the role of conversations in producing intentional change (Ford and Ford 1995a, 2008; Ford 1999a, b; Ford et al. 2002), and the resistance to change (Ford et al. 2002, 2008; Ford and Ford 2009, 2010). Any review of Ford's record during the second period is not complete without acknowledging his collaboration with his wife, Laurie Ford.

Ford views organizations as networks of conversations. Organizations ". . . exist neither as objective entities nor as meanings people carry around in their heads, but in the conversations for, about, and around a limited number of matters in a few physical places within the particular people usually encountered there" (Ford 1999b, p. 4). These networks of conversations are central to his study of what is *actually* going on in organizations. One is drawn to the rigor of the thinking and, in reading his body of work, how his thinking *changes* how we understand intentional organizational change. His research exemplifies the best in theoretical work: it attracts attention and becomes influential by challenging our assumptions and, consequently, reframing how we study and manage change in organizations.

## Influences and Motivations: Classical Training Meets the Perspective of Laurie Ford

Ford was born into a military family in Waukegan, Illinois, just north of downtown Chicago. His formative years were spent in Maryland when his father transitioned from active military to that of a civilian toxins researcher at the Aberdeen Proving Ground. His undergraduate major at the University of Maryland was marketing (with an emphasis in statistics). His plan was to be a market researcher. After completing an MBA (with a consumer behavior emphasis) at the Ohio State University (OSU), he started his Ph.D. in marketing at OSU. However, he was soon "seduced" by the organizational behavior faculty and students, and he became an organizational behavior major, joining a "great gang" of students who were "talking

to one another and challenging each other." The faculty members, though not prolific researchers, were great teachers. Randall Bobbitt, the chair of his dissertation committee, and Robert Backoff, a dissertation committee member, continually raised provocative questions. And Steven Kerr reminded his students that just because everyone says it is so doesn't necessarily mean that it is.

Over a 40-year career, Ford worked at three institutions: Rutgers University (from 1975 to 1976), Indiana University (1976–1983), and the Ohio State University (1983–2015). The first 14 years of his career reflect that of a classic organizational theorist given his simultaneous study of organization structure and organization decline. Of the 14 published papers during this period, seven were in the *Academy of Management Review* and four in the *Academy of Management Journal*. In one 4-year period, 1979–1982, he published six papers in the two *Academy of Management Journals*. Three of the six were in 1980.

Key influences were James Thompson (*Organizations in Action*, 1967), Herbert Simon (*Administrative Behavior*, 1976; *Organizations* (with James March), 1958), and Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch (*Organization and Environment*, 1967). Ford's early research considered the impact of decision makers' cognitive and motivational orientations (Bobbitt and Ford 1980) and decision-making processes (Ford and Hagerty 1984) on an organization's structure and its relationship with its context. Ford was also studying organizational decline. If any work could be deemed a precursor to his work on change, it was his research on organizational decline. Ford (1980a, b) concluded there was something not quite right about how we approached organizational performance, via a decline lens. At the time, poor organizational performance was blamed on management shortcomings, but Ford chose to question whether this was in fact true. Could it be that managers are really competent, working hard, doing the best they can, and what they were doing wasn't working? To his thinking, all organizations will experience periods of decline, and not all organizations will make it, no matter how well managed they might be. His work with Schellenberg addressed which criteria and indicators of performance should be employed, who should set the criteria and conduct the assessment, and what organizational characteristics or other variables are relevant to the study of performance (Ford and Schellenberg 1982). Ultimately, an organization's adaptation process is dependent on the decision maker's causal attributions regarding the downturn (Ford 1985) and the decision maker's ability to detect threats and protect the organization from those threats while stimulating action via response strategies (Ford and Baucus 1987).

His scholarship during this time also explicitly addressed the importance of the longitudinal study of organizational phenomena. Bobbitt and Ford (1980) conclude inconsistencies in research findings are related to methodology, specifically, static, cross-sectional, bivariate studies. His piece on structural hysteresis – as a conceptual framework that introduces the concept of "lag" – indicates that relationships between size and structure in declining organizations do not parallel those found in growing organizations (Ford 1980b). Thus, research on growth and decline should employ longitudinal measures within organizations (Ford 1980a, b). Even his research on decision makers' beliefs (Ford and Hagerty 1984) reflects a longitudinal focus: to

understand the acquisition of causality beliefs entails studying how different cognitive maps get resolved over time among decision makers.

Two papers, published in 1987 and 1988, respectively, mark the transition of Ford's contributions toward change management. Ford and Baucus (1987) refer to the strategic and top-level decision makers as the arbitrators and architects of formal organizational interpretations, which are something more than individuals' interpretations. "Reality is defined through social processes wherein interpretations are offered and affirmed, modified, or abandoned with others' interpretations" (Ford and Baucus 1987, p. 367). There are multiple right interpretations, and successful adaptation – that is, weathering the storm (downturn), unlearning yesterday, and inventing tomorrow – can only be retrospectively known. How organizations evolve into new forms is the basis of the 1988 paper. It is through the "interplay of paradoxical tendencies that transformation occurs" (Ford and Backoff 1988, p. 81).

What connects the two periods is Ford's belief in learning how to manage well. Organization success, and the success of a given change effort, is dependent on managers who manage well over time. By the late 1980s, Ford came to understand that the real test of a manager was his or her ability to manage change. There is a 6-year gap between the paradox book chapter and Ford's next published articles in 1994. In those 6 years, much shifted in Jeff's life. He met his wife, Laurie. And he continued to read widely outside of the field.

Laurie Ford, who earned a Ph.D. in operations research engineering, is coauthor on the three seminal pieces (Ford and Ford 1994a, 1995a; Ford et al. 2008) during the second half of Ford's academic career. Through Laurie, Ford became interested in language, specifically the role of language in the day-to-day machinations of the organization. While both question the obvious, it was Laurie, based on her consulting experience, who brought a distinctly different perspective. She was the one who noted the realities of how it actually worked in organizations did not match existing theories and change models. How they collaborated is a study in balancing theory with practice. Ford would develop the logic – theoretically – before Laurie would critique it, practically. Key questions included: Does this make theoretical *and* practical sense? Does it really work this way? Do we want to – and can we – say this? Overall, Ford's work bridges the scholar-practitioner gap retaining both rigor and relevance, thanks in part to Laurie being the scholar-practitioner in the relationship and Ford the scholar-teacher.

By this time, as noted, Ford was focusing his reading on other areas and authors, the likes of which included Richard Rorty, Kenneth Gergen, and Paul Watzlawick, and away from extant research in organizational behavior and theory. In their writings he saw applications to management, specifically to the management of change. Rorty (1989) argued the chief instrument of cultural change was speaking differently rather than arguing well. Gergen (1978, p. 1357) coined the term "generative theories" which had the capacity to unseat the comfortable truths of wide acceptance. Generative theories, thus, engender a flexibility to enhance adaptive capacity. Finally, Watzlawick is known for his study of international patterns and the five communication axioms, the most well-known axiom being "one cannot not

communicate" (Watzlawick 1978; Watzlawick et al. 1967). Watzlawick also wrote of meta-communication in that the meaning of any communication is part of a communication web of both past and future communications, and the communication webs are further influenced by the relationships among the communicators. Such readings forged Ford's view that "change agents use interventions not to bring about a greater alignment with a 'true' reality, but rather to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct existing realities so as to bring about different performances" (Ford 1999a, p. 480). This view is distinct from the structural-functionalist view where ". . . the job of change agents is to align, fit, or adapt organizations, through interventions, to an objective reality that exists 'out there'" (Ford 1999a, p. 480).

This constructionist view extended beyond Ford's research; it affected how he taught. In the early 1990s, Ford received a grant from OSU to create a new three-course sequence for the MBA program. The three courses were Impossible Change (a.k.a. Producing Change in Organizations), Managerial Literacy, and High-Performance Teams. Although he had first taught organizational change while at Indiana University, he now admits he did not really start *teaching* until the 1990s when the Impossible Change course was first offered. "It was when I started to invent instead of using [the material that] everyone thought you should teach that I became a professor. I taught my own stuff, and that stuff had to be usable". Pragmatically, Ford recognized that not everything the students learned would work every time. In a chaotic world, the pre-learned formulae and recipes weren't going to suffice (Ford 1994). Instead, students would need to push beyond what they already knew and invent opportunities to produce change in organizations. If there was a technique or model and they could not figure out how to use it or make it work, then it was not useful.

The Impossible Change course was developed around the following graded assignment: students had to produce real change in an organization. There were three caveats to completing the assignment: (1) the change cannot be something that each student could do alone, (2) it must impact more than one person, and (3) it must be something that the student and others say is "impossible" to accomplish (Ford 1994). Throughout the course, students were reminded of the following questions:

- What exactly is the change you want to produce?
- What has to happen to produce the change in the organization?
- How will you know when you have produced the change?

A favorite story from my own formative years in academia is from David Whetten who was speaking at a conference. Whetten, early in his own career, sought out the advice of a mentor when he was questioning whether he would ever see himself as a professor. The mentor responded: "Oh, David, you become a professor when you have something to profess." By the 1990s, Ford became a professor and a renewed scholar, shifting his focus from applying others' theoretical contributions to developing his own. By the 1990s Ford had something to say with respect to change management.

## Key Contributions: Change Logics, Conversations, and Resistance

What Ford came to study and profess was based on the realization that the management of change, as currently researched and taught, was not working. It was not his wife's experience from her consulting work. It was not his students' experiences at their workplaces. What Ford recognized was both simple and substantive: producing intentional change successfully is best facilitated by intentional communication. Organizational change required bringing into existence, through communication, a new reality or set of social structures (Ford and Ford 1995a). To change an organization, managers needed to change the conversations occurring within organizations. Organizations are *networks of conversations*, and if one accepts that premise, the true focus of and unit in producing change is conversation (Ford 1999b). This contribution is the gestalt of the three seminal papers on the logics of change, the role of conversations in producing (intentional) change, and the value of resistance to change efforts.

Before discussing these papers individually, we must dispense with the requisite numerical impact details. The three *Academy of Management Review* pieces are Ford's most cited works to date: nearly 400 citations for "Logics of Identity, Contradiction, and Attraction to Change," over 850 for "The Role of Conversations in Producing Intentional Change in Organizations," and over 560 for "Resistance to Change: The Rest of the Story." The three papers alone account for nearly one-third of his 5000 citations (and counting). Over 50% of his citations are accounted for if one includes the related papers published since 1998.

**Logics of Change**   As cited in the paper (Ford and Ford 1994, p. 756), Goodman and Kurke (1982) had previously argued that both researchers and practitioners alike did not have an adequate understanding of and theoretical framework for change. Ford and Ford address how our logics – our fundamental assumptions of how things are – generate change within organizations (Ford and Ford 1995b). Moreover, alternative logics give a different reality and a different way to construct change. They outline three logics, including trialectics, which they introduce to the change logic debate. The three logics are:

- *Formal*, or *change through replacement*. Identity is viewed as a fixed position and permanent. Change is simply the replacement of one "thing" for another "thing" regardless of why the replacement occurs. There is no specific motivation necessary for change.
- *Dialectics*, or *change through contradiction*. Identity is a unity of dynamic contradictions in which change is caused by the pressure exerted between opposites. Conflict is necessary for change to occur.
- *Trialectics*, or *change through attraction*. Attraction, not conflict, brings about change. The intent of trialectics is not to replace formal logic or dialectics but to supplement and complement them.

Additionally, each logic is defined by its own language or vocabulary:

- *Formal*: Gives people things and certainty, an identity. People constitute themselves in language such that things really are that way.
- *Dialectics*: Provides power metaphors. People must be sufficiently dissatisfied before change can occur.
- Trialectics: Offers a vocabulary of relationship and possibility. There are many things that are possible or attractive.

Ford and Ford (1994) argue it is through discourse individuals can identify underlying logics, making them visible and opening them up to scrutiny. While there is a rich tradition of opposition, conflict, and contradiction with respect to change, trialectics creates the place where the attraction to a vision (or a desired future) drives changes. Based on trialectics, "a proposed change is not an invalidation of something people have done or are doing, which would leave them defending the past, but rather it is an invitation to create a future full of promise (attractive), with an opportunity to be active in its fulfillment" (Ford and Ford 1994, p. 781).

**Role of Conversations in Producing Intentional Change** Intentional change occurs through conversations and the language embedded in (or which dominates) four distinct conversations (Ford and Ford 1995a). Because our points of view are represented by logics, most discussions of organization change – the discussing, the describing, and the explaining of change – happen within these conversations, which occur both simultaneously and sequentially in an organization among its members. A change agent's effectiveness in producing intentional change can be increased through the effective management of the four conversations. The four conversations are:

- *Initiating – starting a change*. These conversations focus on what could or should be done. Such conversations rely on assertions, directives, commissives, and declarations.
- *Understanding – generating understanding*. These conversations examine the assumptions which underlie thinking; they are used to develop a common language among participants, and they help create a shared context in which people learn how to talk to each other. Such conversations are characterized by assertions and expressives.
- *Performance – getting into action*. These conversations identify the agreements for achieving success in terms of results and time by setting clear conditions of satisfaction, insisting on accountability for fulfilling these conditions, and/or communicating straightforwardly to renegotiate the performance agreement. Such conversations reflect interplay of directives and commissives, given the focus on producing intended results.

- *Closure – completing the change.* These conversations bring the change to closure, including the acknowledgment that there are now new possibilities and new futures that did not exist prior to the efforts of those engaged in the change. Such conversations are characterized by assertions, expressives, and declarations.

In a 2008 study, Ford and Ford outline a methodology for creating and analyzing a manager's conversational profile, testing for the under- and overuse of the four conversations with respect to difficult (or stalled) change initiatives. For 2 weeks executives (who were also students) tracked their conversations to identify their conversational patterns. By creating the profile, they could, if necessary, conduct a conversational intervention. They could alter their conversations as needed in an attempt to accelerate, slow, or alter the course of change. The results reflected individuals who relied heavily on initiating and understanding conversations. It was only when they increased the frequency of performance and closure conversations – thus, upgrading the quality and rigor of the conversations – did they perceive marked progress in making change. It is important to note that there is no set sequence or frequency to the four conversations. Each change effort is distinct. Furthermore, a key conclusion provides a cautionary tale to the often-cited recommendation to "communicate openly and frequently." Change is not simply the continuous communication of a new vision, repeated by leaders and top managers. Frequent communication of just the "what" (initiating) the "why" (initiating) will doom a much-needed change effort. The goal is for change managers to shift not only their conversations but also the conversations of all individuals in the organization. And these new conversations must be sustained (Ford 1999a).

**Resistance to Change** While the logics and conversations research reflect the socially constructed reality of change, Ford's contrarian nature, the questioning the obvious, is most evident in the resistance to change research. At its core, the Ford et al. (2008) paper questions extant literature's focus on the change agent. Overwhelmingly researchers have considered the change agent's perspective, ignoring the change recipients' perspective. The presumption is change agents are doing the right and proper things, while change recipients throw up unreasonable obstacles or barriers intent on "doing in" or "screwing up" the change. Resistance is therefore viewed as irrational and dysfunctional. Ford et al. (2008) raise the possibility that change agents contribute to the occurrence of what they call "resistant behaviors and communications" through their actions and inactions, owing to their own ignorance, incompetence, or mismanagement. It is not "why do recipients resist change?" but "why do change agents call some actions resistance and not others?"

From a trialectics standpoint, there is no resistance (Ford and Ford 1994). Resistance is an interpretation given by a change agent to a particular event or circumstance and is not, therefore, some "thing" to be overcome. Resistance reflects an attraction by another to something different. It is not necessarily that people are resistant to a given change; instead, they may be attracted to a different possibility. Resistance can then be understood as the legitimate response of engaged and

committed people who want a voice in something that is important to them (Ford and Ford 2010).

As a response, resistance can be viewed from a network and discourse perspective. Building on a 2002 piece on resistance and background conversations, Ford et al. (2008) argue that resistance, for all intents and purposes, is located in conversation patterns. Existing conversations act like filters for subsequent conversations, making it hard for new conversations to take hold (Ford 1999b). Complicating attempts to alter the conversations (and conversational patterns) are background conversations. A background conversation is an implicit, unspoken "backdrop" within which explicit conversations occur and on which they rely for grounding and understanding (Ford 1999a; Ford et al. 2002). Background conversations reflect an organization's history. Given the paucity of successful change stories, most organizational histories reflect damaged trust, feelings of mistreatment or injustice, and destroyed managerial credibility (through broken agreements or overstating the benefits and understating the downside to change). Instead of outright revolt against a proposed change, change recipient reactions reflect complacency (nothing new or different is needed), resignation (this probably won't work either), and/or cynicism (the change is motivated through self-interest) (Ford et al. 2002). These consequences have to be dealt with to bring closure to the past (Ford et al. 2002, 2008). Successfully dealing with this source of resistance requires distinguishing the background conversations and completing the past.

Resistance is never just about what is happening now. Resistance is also about what has happened before and the meanings assigned to possibilities in the future (Ford et al. 2002). What Ford's research on resistance makes evident is resistance has value. In fact, what is oftentimes construed as resistance is actually evidence that the introduction of a new conversation (about change) is being contested by other conversations (1999b) – conversations between change agents and change recipients, change agents and other change agents, and change recipients and other change recipients. At any given time, the change agents are primarily focused on "how will this change get accomplished?" and the change recipients on "what will happen to me?" (Ford et al. 2008). Finally, one thought worth remembering is "[I]n a world with absolutely no resistance, no change would stick and recipients would completely accept the advocacy of all messages received, including those detrimental to the organization" (Ford and Ford 1994, p. 777).

## New Insights: Leadership Is Not Enough

A paper that has become a personal favorite is one Ford wrote in 1999. It is unfortunate, in my view, that the paper has not been more widely cited. Quite possibly, the paper was ahead of its time. The paper – "Conversations and the Epidemiology of Change" – contains several insights worthy of repeating and of future research. Ford's sense of play with ideas beyond the traditions of organizational behavior is on display with respect to networks and conversations. To write this piece, Ford learned epidemiology and then applied what he learned to

intentional change. In doing so, Ford sought to treat the spread of social phenomena (change) in a manner analogous to the way infectious diseases move through populations to gain new insights into the dynamics of successful intentional change. Specifically, Ford (1999b) queried whether change managers could purposely infect an organization with new conversations that would spread and become part of the organization's network of conversations, altering the day-to-day conversations and the background conversations. Again, rather than simply a tool in the process of change, conversations are central to change. By infecting an organization with a new vocabulary in support of change, managers attempt to stimulate new actions that were previously unimagined possibilities, thus altering underlying assumptions and beliefs (Ford 1999b). Ford's thinking is akin to positive deviance (Spreitzer and Sonenshein 2004) and the introduction of change through intentional behaviors that depart from the norms in honorable ways.

Among the epidemiology terms, there are four – susceptibility, prevalence, incubation, and immunity – that help reframe how we conceptualize, study, and produce change. *Susceptibility* is analogous to "readiness for" or a "receptiveness to" infection. Part of the job of infecting the susceptible organization with new conversations is finding ways to keep the conversations in existence or increase their *prevalence*. Prevalence reflects both the number of conversations in support of the change and also the number of individuals having such conversations. Of particular interest is the *incubation* period. It may take time for the new vocabulary to take hold and to see tangible actions toward change. It is during the incubation period that change managers can misread the absence of an actual change intervention (the infection of new conversations) having any recognizable effect. Such a misread could lead to introducing other interventions, one on top of the other. The result could be an overwhelmed system in the near term where nothing eventually changes. Eventually only the background conversations of complacency, resignation, and/or cynicism prevail.

In reflecting on this piece today, what Ford acknowledges is epidemiology unfortunately tells us more about how to stop an infection from becoming an epidemic. It is easy to kill change efforts by thwarting network ties from altering conversations, especially the background conversations. A sobering conclusion, given the paucity of successful change stories, is the difficulties managers face in changing conversations are reflective of organizations having developed *immunity* to intentional change attempts.

More recently, Ford has turned his attention to leadership with respect to change. In a review of empirical evidence from the past 20 years, Ford and Ford (2012) conclude the leadership of change is more complex than envisioned. The leadership of change involves multiple forms of leadership engaged in different approaches, behaviors, and activities, which likely explain the lack of any consistent findings that would bring about successful change. In turning his attention to leadership, Ford acknowledges that it takes more than just sound management to bring about organizational change. Still, Ford argues that leadership, alone, is not enough either to bring about change. Ford has witnessed leadership become

the sine qua non in change management, squeezing management (and its role) out of the conversation. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to adequately discuss the distinctions between leadership and management, there remains much to be learned about the management-leadership relationship and how this relationship – rooted in networks and bound through conversations – brings forth successful organizational change. The dynamic nature of change implies that the relative importance and emphasis of different behaviors and the generic functions – task oriented, relations oriented, and change oriented (House and Aditya 1997; Yukl et al. 2002) – managers and leaders enact will vary over the duration of change (Ford et al. 2014).

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Conversations Matter

Ford's research has challenged our assumptions and reframed how we *study* and *manage* change in organizations. That, in and of itself, is a legacy. Change is longitudinal, and according to Ford it should be studied and implemented longitudinally if we truly wish to create and sustain organizations that thrive instead of merely survive. For academics, single-point data collection excludes the temporality of change and its implications for processes and interactions of leadership (Ford and Ford 2012). "Using only cross-sectional studies misses the psychophysiological costs to leaders and managers, the factors that increase those costs (e.g., resistance and conflict), and the impact these costs have on specific leadership behaviors, thereby overstating the sustainability of leading change" (Ford et al. 2014, p. 25).

For managers and leaders, Ford's work continues to remind us of three interconnected ideas. His scholarly trilogy – trialectics, conversations, and resistance – focus our attention as scholars and practitioners on the ongoing day-to-day efforts to bring about organizational change. First, change is not necessarily about replacement or conflict but also about attraction (trialectics). It is attraction that creates an invitation to fashion a future without invalidating what people have done or are doing. Second, and related to trialectics, resistance has value. Resistance reflects an attraction by another to something different. It is not that people are necessarily resistant to a given change but, instead, they are attracted to a different possibility. Finally, how we converse – the third idea – produces and sustains change. It is through the four conversations that we discuss what future(s) we are attracted to and resolve potentially conflicting views. These conversations help us initiate and understand change; they also focus attention on the actions needed to bring about the change. Change efforts must also be successfully ended so that attention can be turned to previously unimagined possibilities. Conversations matter. If we elect to speak complaints, and complaining spreads, then we should not be surprised when we find ourselves in an organization of complainers (Ford 1999b). Taking liberties, the sentence can be altered: if we elect to speak of change, and the change spreads, then we should not be surprised when we find ourselves in organizations of change agents.

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# Jay R. Galbraith: Master of Organization Design – Recognizing Patterns from Living, Breathing Organizations

Sasha Galbraith

**Abstract**

Jay Galbraith was the leading scholar and practitioner in the field of organization design. His early work focused on the amount, type, and complexity of information that an organization needed to process in order to get work done. Galbraith's information-processing model of organization design was influential among academic circles and became widely used in the corporate arena. In addition, he developed key concepts such as organization design as a prescriptive model, equifinality, strategy implementation the Star Model™ framework of organization design, the front-back organization, and lateral forms of organization – all of which are used today in the organization change process. Galbraith was unique among his academic colleagues in that his research derived primarily from the clients he advised. His gift was a rare ability to synthesize information and distill it down to useful and repeatable solutions to complex organizational challenges.

**Keywords**

Organization design • Strategy and structure • Star model • Organization change • Information processing • Matrix organization • Front-back organization • Big data • Customer-centric organization • New organizational forms • Lateral organization • Equifinality

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## Contents

## Introduction

Jay R. Galbraith was a seminal researcher, theorist, author, and consultant in the field of organization design. He was best known in academic circles for his information-processing theory of organization design. That is, an organization is comprised of people who must deal with information – both predictable and unpredictable – in carrying out the tasks of producing the work. The greater the uncertainty of the task, the more information must be processed by decision-makers in executing the task. Galbraith identified a number of ways that organizations can develop the capacity to handle such variances in information flow. Galbraith's Star Model™ is a practical framework that arose from his early research. It is used worldwide in companies large and small to guide managers who must keep their organizations nimble and profitable in response to strategic initiatives and environmental changes. A humble, insightful and affable man, Jay Galbraith's impact on the academic and business worlds is significant and has stood the test of time.

## Influences and Motivations: Clients Pushing the Envelope

Jay Galbraith was born in 1939 into a working class family in Cincinnati, Ohio. His father, Carl, was a clerk at the local General Motors plant who spent his days (and sometimes nights) chasing missing boxcars full of parts. Carl did not finish high school but relished the fact that his son was academically talented. Galbraith's mother was a homemaker and dubious cook, who became known throughout the neighborhood as "Mrs. Campbell" for her skill at opening canned soups. Galbraith often quipped that as a management consultant, he was merely following his family's

Scottish heritage since his forebears often ended up in the icehouse (jail) for stealing someone's sheep.

Jay Galbraith's grandfather, Jesse Galbraith, was a major influence in his life. Jesse told Jay to do well in school and major in Chemical Engineering so that he could go to work for Procter & Gamble where Jesse had worked. Galbraith did as his grandfather bid and graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. Galbraith was in the "work-study" program, which allowed students to work full-time during a semester each year to pay for their tuition during the rest of the year. His job was on a General Motors assembly line. The experience triggered Galbraith's early interest in how factories worked, why so much dysfunction existed within production organizations, and how much information needed to be gathered and balanced along the assembly line. Immediately following graduation, Galbraith embarked on Master and then Doctor of Business Administration degrees at Indiana University. Galbraith won a National Defense Education Fellowship grant in 1962 that paid him the sum of $1,700 per year plus $200 per child throughout his studies. His grandfather, Jesse, was less than thrilled asking him, "Are you going to work for a living or waste your life being a professor?"

During his studies at Indiana University, Galbraith focused on operations management. After passing his written exams in his third year at Indiana University, he changed course and spent the next 6 months reading all the available organization behavior literature. His primary, and arguably most important, influence was James D. Thompson, who taught a graduate class at Indiana University. Each of Thompson's lectures became a chapter in his seminal book, *Organizations in Action*. Thompson was a mentor and encouraged Galbraith's interest in studying organizations as a system, as well as his examination of information processing in organizations. Galbraith explained his intellectual debt to Thompson in the preface of his second book, *Organization Design* (Galbraith 1977).

> He is the one responsible for my focusing on organizations rather than computers. I was extremely fortunate to be able to take his doctoral seminar as he was writing Organizations in Action. The class discussions of each new chapter gave me an appreciation of the man as well as the material. I was greatly impressed with both. After that experience I changed career orientations, and I am still grateful. For this reason, I would like to dedicate this book to him.

Through his readings, Galbraith's eyes were opened to the social and contingency side of business management, which influenced his later development of the Star Model™ framework for organization design. Herbert Simon, a Nobel Prize-winning economist, introduced the idea that there are limits to rational thinking in organizations (calling it "bounded" rationality) and that these limits have important consequences for economic theory. With James March, Simon developed the concept of slack resources in an organization to aid in information processing. Galbraith found Simon's contributions are particularly useful for two reasons. First, Simon spanned a number of disciplines (economics, political science, organization theory, computer

science, sociology, and psychology) all in the effort to understand human decision-making. This cross-disciplinary rigor became a hallmark of Galbraith's own research. Second, Simon developed a new approach to studying organizations that revolved around behaviors and how people make decisions. Galbraith wrote about his debt to Simon in the preface to his 1973 book, *Designing Complex Organizations*, "There are times when it seems to me that I have merely rewritten his thinking on the basis of the last ten years' empirical evidence. The footnotes do not give sufficient credit to [him]."

Alfred D. Chandler and his study of America's largest industrial firms helped Galbraith solidify the connection of an organization's strategy with its particular structural form. Although Galbraith doesn't specifically mention Chandler's influence on him, every one of his major writings cites the contributions of Chandler (1962).

Jay abandoned his research in operations management and pursued his new interest in organization behavior. He changed thesis advisors and asked Larry Cummings to supervise his dissertation. Six months later, on June 29, 1966, Galbraith had completed his doctoral thesis, "Motivational Determinants of Job Performance."

Victor Vroom's motivational model (Vroom 1964) provided the theoretical basis for Galbraith's empirical research. Whereas the prevailing industrial research at the time studied how workers' abilities limited efficiency gains (Simon 1957), Galbraith sought to understand how decision-making limitations and motivation impacted efficiency in workers. Using questionnaires, he polled workers at a Cummins Engine plant in Indiana. He wanted to test a theoretical model that could explain productivity differences among factory workers.

> If such a model can explain a significant portion of the variation and also identify the organizationally controllable variables, it can serve as a basis for removing the decision-making limits of efficiency. (Galbraith 1966)

What Galbraith found was that among all the variables he studied (wage increases, bonuses, fringe benefits, promotions, supervisor and peer group relationships), the most significant impact on increased performance was supportive behavior of the supervisor. At the time, this was an important finding since industrial engineers had always used wage increases to motivate workers.

At 27 years old and a newly minted Doctor of Business Administration, Jay Galbraith joined the Sloan School of Management faculty at MIT. He was terrified. He had uprooted his young wife and two small children (with a third on the way) to move from a sleepy town in Indiana to Boston. For Jay, this was his first and most extreme experience with culture shock. His fellow faculty members were well known and famous for having developed groundbreaking academic theories. At the time, Galbraith felt a bit of the imposter syndrome: unsure of what mistake led him to being installed at one of the top universities in the country.

But everything changed when Galbraith won first prize in the McKinsey Foundation Doctoral Thesis Awards for his dissertation. His colleagues at MIT treated him with newly found respect. And he learned that "they all put their pants on one

leg at a time." In June 1967, during Galbraith's first summer at MIT, the department head was looking around for faculty who could lead a research project out in Seattle. President Kennedy's challenge to the aerospace community to put a man on the moon by the end of the decade left many military contractors scrambling. Boeing needed help organizing their simultaneous efforts in building commercial aircraft as well as delivering on their military and space projects. The problem at MIT was that none of the senior faculty was interested in spending the summer on the other side of the country. Don Carroll, the principal investigator on the Boeing MIT Research Project, appointed Galbraith as the on-site faculty member. For Jay, this was a huge opportunity and he took it on with gusto.

The Boeing study was instrumental for four reasons. First, he was able to test and verify many of the concepts proposed by Thompson (1967) and Lawrence and Lorsch (1967). It was during the Boeing project that he developed his theory on information processing as a critical factor in the design of an organization. Second, it helped him synthesize his emerging view of an organization as a collection of interrelated policies that management can manipulate. For Boeing, this observation was key since management's goal was to implement a change management program inside the company. Third, it gave him a front row seat to observe how matrix organizations work (or don't). Boeing had implemented a matrix organization to tackle the twin demands of producing technically excellent products for the space program as well as meeting commercial airline customer delivery demands for the 727, 737, and 747 aircraft in an extremely competitive environment. And finally, the fact that Galbraith spent 2 months interviewing and consulting with a variety of people at different levels within Boeing's manufacturing facilities taught him that clear, concise, logical, and well-framed ideas are the most effective way to communicate his observations and analyses. This talent served him well as he went on to define many of the concepts he is now known for.

In 1972, Jay took a leave of absence from MIT to join the European Institute of Advanced Studies in Management in Brussels, Belgium. This was driven in part by a desire to refocus on his family, which had paid a price for his academic commitments and frequent travel. During his 2-year tenure as professor there, he wrote his first book, *Designing Complex Organizations*, which, among other things, expanded the research he had published in a 1971 article on matrix organizations.

Galbraith returned to the States in 1974, and Don Carroll, then Dean of the Wharton School, hired him as a fully tenured professor. One of the courses Galbraith taught was on matrix organizations. At the time, Wharton was taking its course offerings to executive audiences around the country. Galbraith was tapped to teach a course on organization design with an emphasis on matrix organizations. He loved it. He was traveling frequently and became known as an expert in matrix organizations and organization change. He started consulting with companies on their organizational issues and discovered that many of them were coming up with new and unique solutions to thorny problems. In 1978 Galbraith resigned his tenured position at Wharton and embarked on a full-time career as a management consultant. Many, if not all, of his colleagues thought he had lost his mind.

For the next 8 years, Galbraith consulted extensively with companies large and small. Procter and Gamble was an early client, and their evolution at the time into a three-dimensional matrix organization challenged him to help them manage it and the requisite organization changes. He later developed the front-back organization concept as a result of work at P&G. At Intel he worked with Andy Grove and his team to refine their organizational response to rapid product and material advances in the semiconductor industry. Intel became a classic example of a balanced matrix with various levels of integrator roles and hierarchical teams. Andy Grove was a unique leader with many talents, but what Jay learned most from Grove was how he navigated, managed, and even embraced the numerous conflicts inherent in a matrix organization. Hewlett-Packard was a frequent client where the HR and organization development groups appreciated his no-nonsense prescriptions for integrating the various hardware units – but where senior management systematically ignored his advice. According to Jay, every time an HP unit got too big, the senior leadership team effectively put the management challenge into the "too hard pile" and split the group apart. Jay learned about innovation and start-ups through his work with Exxon Enterprises and 3M. Motorola, Shell, and Honeywell taught him about cross-border expansion and how to handle country managers in product- or service-driven organizations.

Galbraith's consulting work took him throughout the United States, Europe, Asia, and South Africa. He loved the travel, but he found he missed the intellectual stimulation from his colleagues in academia. So he contacted Ed Lawler and in 1986 joined Lawler's Center for Effective Organizations at the University of Southern California. It seemed to be the perfect match since the Center's mandate was to do "useful research" in organization design, change, and management. Galbraith and Lawler collaborated on a number of research and consulting projects and produced two books and a number of articles. The partnership between Galbraith and Lawler grew from mutual respect and admiration of the other's work and turned into a personal friendship that spanned decades.

Jay Galbraith's research methods were somewhat unorthodox. His primary source of information came from the business press (*Financial Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *Businessweek*, *Fortune*), which he combined with extensive knowledge of, and communication with, executives at leading companies. He also consulted the academic literature and corporate white papers for current studies on topics that interested him. For example, when researching the impact of data analytics ("Big Data") for his last book (Galbraith 2014a), he collected articles on IBM, Nike, Procter & Gamble, GE, Bosch, and many of the large banks. He consumed any and all publicly available information on those and other companies as well as recent research on data analytics. (Galbraith had an ability to construct a surprisingly accurate organization chart based on his reading of a company's annual report and other public data.) He contacted executives at Analog Devices, P&G, IBM, and others who could provide clarification on how their companies handled processes related to data acquisition and use. The products of that research were several chapters in his last book and an article on the impact of Big Data on organizations (Galbraith 2014b).

However, much of Jay's most prescient research was inspired from his consulting work with clients. During his 45 years of consulting, Jay's client list reads like a "who's who" of the global business world. He often said that he learned more from what cutting-edge companies were doing organizationally than from any academic publication. And as consultant to many senior managers, he was able to provide a series of road maps to help them implement organization change.

In the mid-1970s, as a result of his work with Shell and British Petroleum, Jay produced an article on how multinationals manage their talent. He specifically addressed how rotational assignments across borders built personal networks and shaped the culture of the organizations. Twenty years later, after a number of consulting assignments with IBM, UBS, Asea Brown Boveri, Nestlé, Nokia, 3M, and others, Jay wrote a book on organizing global corporations (Galbraith 2000). It incorporates much of what he learned during an 18-month project in Indonesia studying joint ventures. It also discusses how global companies run their businesses in regions, like China, that have very active host governments. And finally, it shows how companies handle the complexity of five-dimensional matrix organizations spanning multiple regions in the world. All of those topics (and their solutions) were prompted from Galbraith's work with clients.

Some observers have wondered who was the source of many creative organizational solutions: the client companies or Galbraith's advice to them. Citigroup, for example, had pioneered global customer accounts in the late 1980s. When paired with its extraordinarily detailed accounting and information system, Citibank could run reports on customer, product, and service profitability across any number of segments (industries, geographies, sales channels, and account representatives to name a few). Cisco used hierarchical teams and councils to manage multi-dimensional profit centers across diverse geographies. Analog Devices was struggling with how to respond to customer demands to provide more than just a handful of products and integrate them with diverse software and competitor product offerings into "solutions." These examples found their way into several of Jay's writings.

In 1995 Jay moved back to Europe, but this time to Switzerland where his second wife, Sasha, was born. He joined the faculty of IMD (the International Institute of Management Development) in Lausanne, which was under the direction of Peter Lorange. For the next 3 years, he taught a full load of courses to the mostly European executive audience. It was a difficult time for Jay, as he felt underappreciated by both the faculty and students. Students criticized him for being "too academic" or offering too many American examples (and not enough European/Russian/Asian examples). Many of the faculty disdained anyone with a perceived "guru" status, which was somewhat paradoxical since Jay was widely praised for his humility. But around the middle of 1999, Nathaniel Foote, the Organization Design Practice Manager at McKinsey & Co., asked Jay if he wanted to work with a group of practitioner/academics to study best practices in organization design. This project invigorated Jay. It was everything he loved: working with cutting-edge companies that were pushing new limits on organizational complexity and collaborating with intelligent, thoughtful, and creative colleagues to analyze and publish the research. In mid-2000 Jay moved back to the United States where most of the project work was taking

place. That study culminated in Jay's book on customer-centric organizations (Galbraith 2005).

In 2005, Don Robert and Chris Callero, CEO and COO, respectively, of Experian, the large consumer data and credit reporting company, contacted Galbraith. The industry was growing rapidly, and they were experiencing growing pains in managing the disparate business groups in the company. This began a 5-year partnership wherein Galbraith helped them design and install a matrix organization as well as sort through the various country/region/business manager roles as Experian expanded internationally. What was notable here was that matrix, having long been banished as an organization form that "doesn't work," was coming back into the management lexicon. Managers realized that a matrix organization was the only way to meet customer demands to produce high-quality products and/or services, deliver them around the globe with localized specifications, and do so at the lowest cost with minimal lead times. Experian and several other clients were all wrestling with the dilemma of how to manage a matrix organization. This led Galbraith to write a book on the topic (Galbraith 2009). In addition, Experian, with its treasure trove of consumer data, showed Galbraith how it was manipulating that information to create new products, services, and entirely new lines of business. The Experian projects were what sparked Galbraith's interest in studying "Big Data" as an emergent dimension in organizations.

## Key Contributions: Practical, Useful Prescriptions for Change

Jay Galbraith was arguably the pioneer, leader, and father of modern organization design (Obel and Snow 2014). He spurred a new domain in management theory (organization design) by viewing organizations under a normative lens combining organization theory with organization behavior.

Jay Galbraith was an odd bird in the sense that he straddled the two, somewhat mutually exclusive, worlds of academia and corporate management. And each world cites two significant contributions (as well as a few corollary contributions) that Jay has made. It is fitting, then, that he was honored in 2011 by the Academy of Management with the Distinguished Scholar-Practitioner Award. It's an award given to the few academics in management who have successfully applied theory in practice and whose scholarly works have substantively affected the practice of management. One of his colleagues, Richard Burton, said of Jay, "As an academic, he spoke to practitioners. As a practitioner, he spoke to academics" (Obel and Snow 2014).

### Information-Processing Theory

Galbraith's first and most important academic contribution was that organizational complexity is a result of task uncertainty (Galbraith 1968, 1973, 1977). The concept

is also often cited as Galbraith's "information-processing theory of organizations" and resulted from a research project at Boeing.

The greater the uncertainty of the task, the greater the amount of information that has to be processed between decision-makers during the execution of the task. To reduce task uncertainty one has to either reduce the amount of information required or increase the amount of information processed. In order to achieve one or the other, the organization has four organization design strategies it can pursue:

1. Create slack resources (increase lead time, inventory, or manpower).
2. Create self-contained tasks that are predictable and rules driven (thus requiring less management oversight).
3. Invest in vertical information systems (bring the information down to the decision-makers, automate routine decisions, match decision frequency with the need).
4. Create lateral relationships (enable joint decision processes across lines of authority).

Under each of the four design strategies, Galbraith further developed specific options that the designer can choose from. Each option has an organizational cost in management time and financial and/or human resources. Galbraith made it clear that a cost-benefit analysis had to be considered before implementing any design change. This "information processing" view of managing task uncertainty became a key problem in the field of project management and especially matrix organizations.

## Equifinality

A second important, and often overlooked, concept proposed by Galbraith is the notion of equifinality. That is, an organization designer has several, equally feasible, design choices in solving for a given organizational problem. There is no one best solution. But each choice carries a cost. For example, an organization facing increased uncertainty in the information it must process, it can either respond by centralizing decision-making and investing in technology that will increase the capacity of information processing, or it can decentralize decision-making and create lateral information processes at lower levels in the organization. Both choices can be equally effective options. (See Drazin and Van de Ven 1985, for further discussion.)

## Organization Design as a Prescriptive Field

Galbraith's third contribution was a strong corollary that emerged from his first two contributions: the notion that organizations can and should be actively designed. Furthermore, organizations can and should be easily reconfigurable in answer to environmental and/or strategic changes. Organization change, according to Galbraith, is common and normal, and managers must learn how to lead those changes.

Jay often said, "A good organization is one that lasts until you get your next one." In his 1973 book, *Designing Complex Organizations*, Galbraith delved deeper into his prescriptions for managing task uncertainty by giving concrete examples of how a number of organization change decisions were implemented in several manufacturing organizations. That book is still assigned reading in many graduate level, organization theory courses. Moreover, the concepts he presented are very relevant to organization designers and change managers at large companies today.

His philosophy on organizations held three tenets:

- Different organizational strategies will lead to different structures.
- Organization is more than just structure.
- Alignment among the five policy areas of the Star Model (described below) will bring organizational effectiveness.

But Jay's thinking was never dogmatic. He disdained the "flavor of the month" fads of organization design. He would often press clients to articulate exactly why they felt the need to, for example, install a matrix organization. (And frequently the answer was, "because our competitor is doing it.") Writing in the preface to his book, *Designing the Global Corporation*, Galbraith explained his guiding philosophy:

> I am an agnostic concerning the design of organizations. Despite the fact that I wrote a book entitled *Designing Complex Organizations*, I have always tried to present the dual options of either simplifying the complexity or building the capacity to manage the complexity; both options have costs and benefits. My advice has always been to articulate both the good news and the bad news; if proponents of an option can articulate the bad news of that option, they will make an informed choice.

This view of organization change also points to another subtlety in Jay's thinking. He saw virtually all organization design decisions on a continuum rather than as a discrete set of on/off nominal choices.

## The Star Model™

Jay Galbraith's most enduring contribution to the field of organization change and organization development has been his Star Model™ framework for analyzing organizations, shown in Fig. 1. He was the first scholar to map organization strategy against structures, information-processing functions, reward systems, and people practices. The model was first published in his 1977 book, *Organization Design.*

The Star Model™ has stood the test of time and is used today in numerous corporations and organizations worldwide. The fact that it has been adapted and modified by scholars and practitioners (McKinsey's Seven-S, Mintzberg's Pentagon, Nadler & Tushman's Congruence Model, etc.) is a testament to its inherent value.

At its core, the Star Model™ is a prescriptive framework comprising five "levers" or design policies – strategy, structure, processes, rewards, and people. Each policy

**Fig. 1** The Star Model™
(Reproduced with permission
from Jay R. Galbraith Marital
Trust)



area can be changed and manipulated by the organization designer. The idea stems from Jay's fundamental belief that organizations are collections of individuals who process information in order to get the work of an organization done. Thus, managers can shape employee behavior and culture by changing how power is held and manifested in an organization structure; how information is processed and moves through the organization; how people are motivated, measured, and compensated; and what kind of people sit in particular roles and get promoted. Maximum organizational effectiveness is achieved when all of the "levers" are aligned with the strategy and with one another.

Strategy is at the top and is where any organization change project must start. It defines the company's direction – what the organization is to produce, where it will play and be active in the market, and how it will be profitable. Structure defines the locus of power and where decisions are made. Key design choices are the hierarchical shape of the organization, the degree of specialization in jobs, the distribution of power (centralized versus decentralized), and the amount of departmentalization at each level of the structure. Processes embody the flow of information. Vertical processes, such as business planning, resource allocation, and budgeting, define how decisions to move up and down the hierarchy. Lateral processes, such as new product development and order fulfillment, utilize information generated from cross-functional, cross-unit, and cross-regional groups to enable rapid decision-making. Reward systems work surprisingly well, but they are not always well designed. A good reward system aligns the goals of the employee with the goals of the organization and motivates the employee to perform at his or her best. The final policy area, people, encompasses how human talent is recruited, selected, trained, developed, and moved through the organization. The strategy and structure of the organization will define the types of skills and mind-sets required to implement the organization's goals.

Jay represented the framework graphically as a star, with interconnecting lines joining the five levers, to stress that the five policy areas are interdependent and must be aligned. He was one of the first scholars to propose that the notion of fit or congruence among all the levers is key to an organization's top performance.

## Strategy Implementation

In the late 1970s, the field of strategic management was emerging as an accepted area of research. Chuck Hofer and Dan Schendel organized a conference and published the proceedings in 1977. Jay authored a chapter with Dan Nathanson on the topic of strategy implementation, which became his 1978 book, *Strategy Implementation*, coauthored with Nathanson. The approach, still widely used today, was the first strategic approach to organization design. Jay's information-processing model used the primary tasks of the organization as the prime contingency for design choices. Thus, the design is responsive to task uncertainty, diversity, and interdependence. But Jay was a careful student of others who looked at external factors' effects on design (mostly structure). These included Perrow (technology), Chandler (growth strategy), Lawrence and Lorsch (personality type and tolerance for uncertainty), and others who argued the role of environment. Jay was the first scholar to specifically make strategy the key driver for design choices and any organization change project. Thus, the starting point for strategy implementation was to develop the alignment of the entire organization (not just structure) to the strategy. Jay was also the first to propose a prescriptive and comprehensive model for strategy implementation that incorporated the notion of "fit" or congruence among all organization dimensions. This is a major contribution to the strategy discipline.

## Lateral Organization Processes

By the mid-1980s when matrix organization was widely believed to be unworkable, Galbraith's clients would complain about the complexity in their organizations and ask him to help them simplify their lives. His response was always that complex strategies required complex organizations and that organizations must be as simple or complex as their strategy dictates. But he also believed that organizations should try to "keep it simple" for customers and frontline employees. However, that meant that the challenge of managing complexity sits squarely on the shoulders of managers. Galbraith's many books sought to help management tackle this complexity and create opportunities where competitors have failed. According to Jay, "You get no competitive advantage from doing simple things; by definition, anyone can do them. Firms create competitive advantages by surmounting challenges that their competitors cannot" (Galbraith 2000).

One of the primary ways that management can deal with such complexity is to develop extraordinary skills at lateral processes. Such processes include facilitating voluntary networks, colocating employees at crucial interfaces, connecting important groups electronically, and progressively ramping up the power and influence of people and teams who are responsible for coordinating disparate subtasks in the organization. All of these processes involved increasing degrees of information flow and communication paths. And all of these processes are built upon a solid foundation of social capital. The concept is shown graphically in Fig. 2.
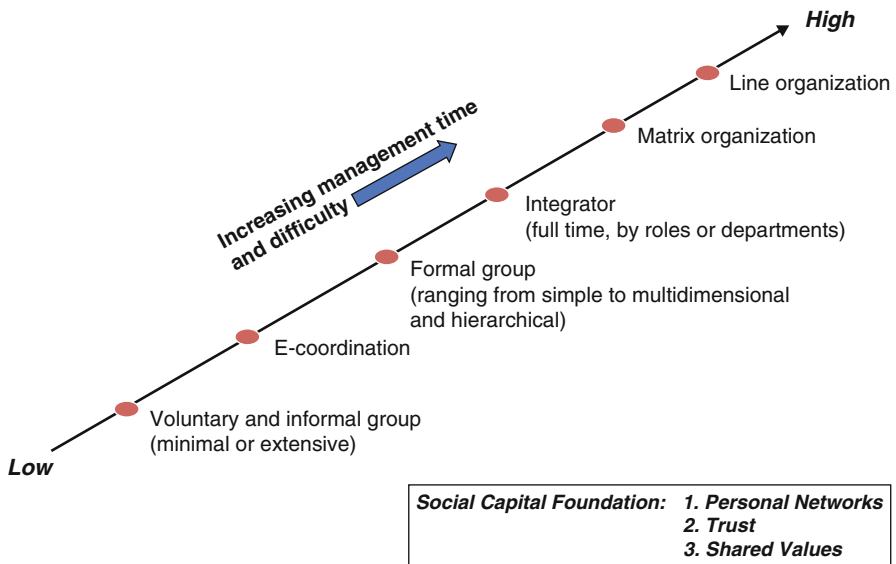
**Fig. 2** Types of lateral forms (Reproduced with permission from Jay R. Galbraith Marital Trust)

Galbraith depicted the types of lateral processes on a "ramp" to make it clear that each step up the ramp required building upon the skills and infrastructure put in place for the preceding lateral process. The cost of implementing more formal processes is management's time and effort. Thus, the organization designer must balance the level of lateral processes required with the concurrent cost to management. The choice of lateral processes underpinned much of what Galbraith discussed when proposing solutions to organizational challenges at client companies. Clients often wanted to "install the new organization" instantly, without going through the change process to build the lateral capabilities necessary for running more complex organizations. Galbraith's "Ramp," as it became known, was crucial in explaining to managers why the social capital foundations were so important. He published a book that dealt specifically with lateral processes (Galbraith 1994).

## The Front-Back Organization

Galbraith's work with clients led him to define a new organizational form, the front-back organization that was a kind of "matrix-lite" organization. The "front" of the organization faced the customer and was organized around customer segments, channels, services, and/or geographies. The "back" was organized around products, functions, and/or technologies. At the time, Citigroup and Procter & Gamble used this type of organization. The challenge fell to management to ensure that the products/technologies produced in the back were what the sales teams in the front

could profitably sell to customers. The front-back organization required intensive communication and coordination between the two ends of the structure. It also required sophisticated management skills in allocating resources, setting priorities, and resolving inevitable conflicts that naturally arise as a result of the often diametrically opposed goals between product- and customer-focused organizations. Well-designed lateral processes were key to resolving many of those challenges. As with his early work on information processing, Jay's view of the front-back organization, and, indeed, most lateral processes, encompassed decisions about the type, intensity, and location of information within the organization that are required to get the task(s) done. And as most of his client work involved organization change projects, he frequently used the front-back model to steer clients away from implementing a full-fledged matrix organization.

## Customer-Centric Organization and Strategy Locator

The late 1990s and early 2000s saw the rise of customer power, and many companies struggled to meet the challenge. Stand-alone products and services proliferated, but the best ones commoditized rapidly because they were easy to copy. Customers became fed up with trying to integrate the vast array of product, service, and software offerings and demanded that companies provide integrated packages or "solutions" when, where, and how they desired. Most companies responded by "putting the customer first" and tried to satisfy demands from their most vocal customers. In Jay Galbraith's view, these efforts amounted to little more than cosmetic changes in how their organizations operated. He argued that most companies, while they thought they were customer centric, were still very much product centric.

In order to be truly customer centric, Galbraith said that companies must do two things. First, they needed to truly understand the complete mind-shift required to organize around the customer. It means embracing a strategy of finding the best solution for the customer and customizing a package – including products and/or services from a competitor if necessary – that provides the best value for the customer. It means structuring the organization around customer segments, customer teams, and customer P&Ls rather than product or business units. It means prioritizing customer relationship management processes rather than new product development processes. It means measuring and rewarding people based on the customer "share of wallet" and degree to which they delight and retain the most profitable and loyal customers. It means giving power to the people who have the most in-depth knowledge of a customer's business rather than the best product engineers. The second, and often most difficult, thing companies needed to do to be truly customer centric was to recognize that they were, in fact, still product centric albeit "customer focused."

Galbraith argued with many clients about how customer centric they were (or weren't). He recognized that not all companies needed to be 100% customer centric. For example, most pharmaceutical companies could exist quite well as a customer-focused but product-centric organization. As was typical for Jay, he saw
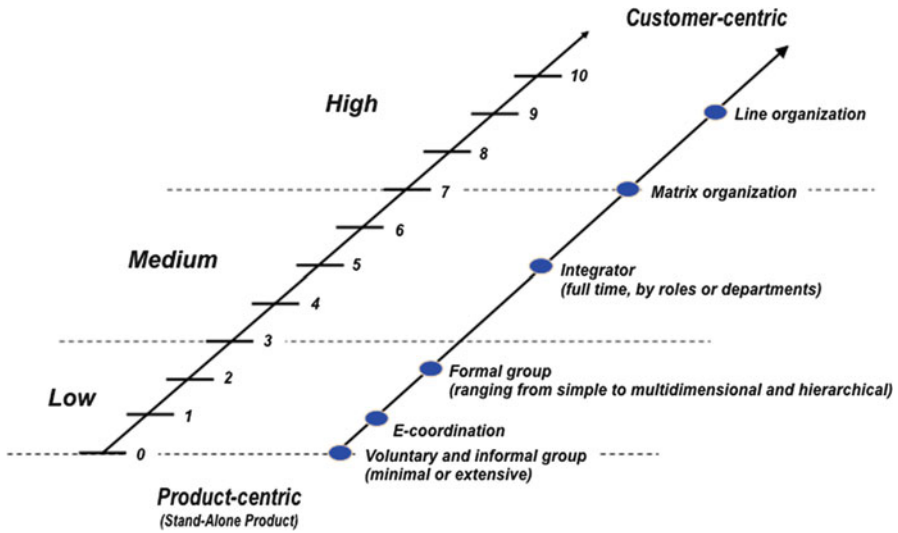
**Fig. 3** Matching solutions strategy location to lateral coordination requirements (Reproduced with permission from Jay R. Galbraith Marital Trust)

the customer-centric strategy along a continuum with corresponding degrees of customer centricity that an organization had to adopt. So in order to assist his clients in sorting out where they sat on this strategic continuum, he developed a "strategy locator" that suggested low, medium, or high customer centricity. This is shown graphically in Fig. 3.

The degree of customer-centric strategy depends on four factors: the number of products and/or services a company sells to a particular customer and how different the products and/or services are from one another (scale and scope), how much the company's customers require those products/services to work together (integration), whether the integrated products and services can be sold across a wide variety of industries (horizontal solutions) or if they are industry specific (vertical solutions), and the percentage of total company revenue that comes from the integrated solutions. A company that sells less than five products/services that are mostly the same and require minimal integration in order for them to work properly is pursuing a "low" customer-centric strategy. The large multinational food and beverage producer, Nestlé, falls into this category. By contrast, IBM falls into the "high" customer-centric strategy level of the continuum. IBM sells many different products and services (computer hardware, software, cloud computing, storage capacity, consulting, systems integration, training, technical support, financing, security services, an advanced medical diagnostic assistant, and so on) to thousands of global clients in virtually every industry. Moreover, each customer wants to do business with IBM in a number of different ways. Some, like Mitsubishi, want to purchase an entire trading floor for operations in six global locations. Others only want to purchase a mainframe computer.

For each level of complexity in the solution strategy that is required, Galbraith prescribed a corresponding level of customer-centric structure, lateral coordination processes, reward policies, and people practices, following the Star Model™ framework. As always, there is a cost to implementing more intensive customer-centric steps. Thus, an organization needed to implement only as much as was necessary to satisfy the complexity required by the customer solution strategy. Managers could then use Galbraith's Star Model™ as a road map to ensure that the organization's structure, information processes, reward systems, and people decisions were aligned with the requisite strategy.

## New Insights: Change Management and the Star Model Applied to a Multitude of Organizations

Jay Galbraith's writings have inspired countless scholars and practitioners to probe deeper into the concepts that he pioneered. Of the many researchers whose ideas have been rooted in the information-processing model, two in particular stand out. William Joyce's empirical study of matrix management is the only controlled field experiment that has been conducted on this important type of organization. This study was directly informed by Jay's first book, *Designing Complex Organizations*. Jay was the first to write systematically about these forms, and Joyce's research was the first to present rigorous evidence assessing their impact. Jay and Bill became friends as a result of this mutual interest, and Bill joined Jay in teaching organizational design at Wharton following the completion of his doctoral degree. They remained close friends and colleagues for the next 35 years. Jay's influence also stimulated Joyce to write his book *Implementing Strategy*, in which the information-processing framework was directly applied and extended within the strategic management field.

Galbraith and Joyce had the good fortune of having Robert Kazanjian as a doctoral student at Wharton. Rob was quick to appreciate the importance of Jay's thinking, and together with Jay he revised Jay's book, *Strategy Implementation*. Galbraith, Joyce, and Kazanjian pursued these mutual interests throughout their careers, consulting and teaching together regularly, while each continued to extend Jay's pioneering ideas and prescriptions.

Others also extended the information-processing perspective. Using Galbraith's insights on information shortfalls ("exceptions") during task execution, Ray Levitt at Stanford led a research project to develop the Virtual Design Team simulation of project organizations. According to Levitt, the research team "quantified the magnitude of exceptions in typical engineering organizations and implemented a discrete event simulation of information processing and flow through an organization required to carry out direct work, supervision and coordination" (Levitt quoted (p. 63) in Obel and Snow 2014).

The Star Model™ has provided numerous scholars an opportunity to further develop the concept of fit in organizations. One example is a paper published in

1985 by Jay's colleagues, Andy Van de Ven and Robert Drazin, which examined the fit issue in an empirical study. In addition, a Brazilian consulting firm developed a "matrix index" using the Star Model as a foundation to quantify the type of matrix organization present in various research firms.

Galbraith's Star Model™ continues to be used as a framework for analysis in numerous corporations worldwide. Diane Downey took an early interest in the Star Model during her work with Citibank in the early 1990s. She found ways to operationalize it and develop tools to bring it alive for managers. This led to collaboration with Jay, which resulted in a workbook (Galbraith et al. 2002). In addition, many public entities such as police departments, nongovernmental organizations and even the US Department of Homeland Security, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, CIA, and National Reconnaissance Organization also rely on the Star Model™ to help them change and align their organizations with changes in strategy.

From my own perspective, I had always been interested in how women progress up the corporate ladder and why so many of them seemed to opt out at the prime of their careers. Many of these former corporate executives left their companies to start their own businesses. In fact, one study (Buttner and Moore 1997) suggested that the main reason women left their high-powered corporate jobs was because the environment and culture did not reflect their own values. It led me to wonder whether Jay's Star Model applied differently to female-designed organizations. That question became the basis for my doctoral research and dissertation in 2004. (To Jay's surprise, I did find several differences in how women organize their companies, particularly in the areas of communication and knowledge transfer processes, reward systems, and people practices.)

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Information Processing Meets Big Data

Jay Galbraith always had yet another book up his sleeve. In 2009, he had started writing a book about the corporate center and how large, multidimensional companies manage their portfolio of businesses. Book writing for Jay was usually relegated to times when the consulting business ebbed. During his last years, Jay's consulting business was booming, so his corporate center book suffered and was never finished. But he then became fascinated by how many companies were using "Big Data" to not only run their businesses but learn more about their customers. This allowed them to provide more innovative products and services – including some that the customers themselves didn't know they needed or wanted (iPad anyone? Fitbit? Running shoes with sensors?).

Given his enthusiasm over how certain companies (Disney, Experian, and Nike) were handling data, Jay's next book would almost certainly have been on the impact of data analytics on organizations and how organizations should structure

themselves to capture the best of what data technology has to offer. One can read a preview in his last published article, "Organization Design Challenges Resulting from Big Data" (Galbraith 2014b). He believed that data analytics would become the next major dimension in organization design. A digital data function would be equivalent in power and importance to an organization's existing function, geography, product, customer, channel, and/or category structure. Galbraith foresaw a "chief data officer" on the leadership team who would oversee an organization built around capturing various types of data in real time to make rapid business decisions and drive profitability.

In order to harness the power of Big Data, Jay identified three key hurdles an organization needed to address. First, he saw the power of data analytics as bringing on new strategic opportunities, but also causing friction in the existing organization's power structure. At issue is whether the addition of a sophisticated data analytics capability is competence enhancing or competence destroying to the organization's current competitive advantage. Nike was able to use data gathered from its NikePlus running community to quickly design better running shoes as well as develop the world's largest online collection of trail running maps. Nike's embrace of data is competence enhancing. In contrast, Hewlett-Packard had relied on its superior relationships with resellers and retailers to develop and market its products, so Big Data and e-commerce were competence-destroying innovations. Thus, a company that's aspiring to use data analytics in real time had to match the power of the new digital division to where it currently sat on the competence enhancing-destroying spectrum. The newer and more challenging the data analytics capacity is to an organization, the more horsepower (in terms of title, experience, reporting relationships, budget, etc.) the data manager has to own.

Second, a data savvy company needs to develop information and decision processes to support the digital strategy and structure. Today, credit card companies can use data captured in in real time to influence events and their outcomes. A fraudulent transaction can be detected while it's in progress, and the perpetrator could potentially be apprehended in the act. But in order to achieve this, the organization needs to have nimble processes in place that can identify when a stolen credit card is being used and then immediately transmit the appropriate instructions to the retailer or merchant in real time. This requires an organization to significantly increase its own clock speed (ability to move in real time).

And finally, to gain the most advantage from Big Data, Jay believed that an organization had to invest in digital resources (in the form of people and technology) to build data analytic capabilities across the organization and develop new revenue sources. This could start as a small digital division that might eventually grow into an entire business unit or strategic dimension that's matrixed across the organization. Several companies have found that sophisticated analysis of Big Data can spur entire new business opportunities. Bosch's Software Innovation group collects and analyzes information from the sensors it places in various automobile components to sell insights to drivers about safety and maintenance. J.P. Morgan and Wells Fargo

sell reports on consumer trends based on information they gather from their credit card and banking customers. Citibank, with operations in 100 countries, says it can identify the next "silk roads" in commerce based on data it analyzes. It sells these insights to retailers like Zara and H&M.

Rob Kazanjian has postulated that Galbraith's work on lateral processes, and the social capital required to make them work properly will find a new home in the burgeoning field of network theory. Galbraith has often written about the importance of social capital (personal ties), networks, and formal and informal lateral processes in a well-functioning matrix organization. Kazanjian believes that with the reduced power of hierarchies and formal structures, we will see an increase in the power of other levers, such as lateral processes and networks, in organization design.

To some degree, Jay Galbraith lamented the fact that the field of management did not operate like other professions such as Law or Medicine, where academic research was useful in that it advanced the field and, indeed, was embraced by the practitioners. Bill Joyce summarized it best:

> Jay provided an elaborate and convincing argument that academics were not advancing the field of organizational design. In his opinion, it was managers who were innovating new organizational forms, and he believed that academics must look to those innovations as a source for advancing the field. The search for new organizational forms dominated his career as both an academic and a consultant... Jay's humility and interest in practice resulted in the greatest contributions to the field of organizational design of any scholar to date. Jay studied new organizational forms that emerged with their roots firmly in practice, but did it in a way that made fundamental and enduring contributions to theory. He always worked from practice to theory and not the reverse. (Joyce quoted (pp. 60–61) in Obel and Snow 2014)

## Conclusion

Jay Galbraith became known as the founding father and premier expert in organization design. He had a passion for analyzing how information moves through various organization types and studying the bottlenecks that arose. He is most well known in the academic community for his information-processing model of organization design. In the corporate world, he is very well known for his Star Model™ framework of organization design. He also developed a number of other practical tools useful to the organization change manager, such as the front-back organization, the customer-centric strategy locator, and the lateral process "ramp." Galbraith's work is still used today by many companies worldwide.

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# Robert T. Golembiewski: Wit, Wisdom, and Exacting Standards

**32**

Joanne C. Preston and Anthony F. Buono

**Abstract**

As a major contributor to the field of organization development and change, Robert T. Golembiewski was a perfectionist who drove himself and others to achieve their best. Although interaction with him was often tinged with tough criticism, going beyond his gruff exterior was a caring man with a wonderful sense of humor. He had the ability to write quickly with precision that got directly to the point he wanted to make in a colloquial style. For those of us fortunate to work with him, his sharp mind and prolific writing kept us busy reading and thinking about the past, present, and future direction of the field. Bob influenced all of us who knew him – and countless others who never met him – through his copious articles and books. This chapter will discuss his influences and motivations to enter the OD field, his key contributions – his intervention in the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), his work on burnout and stress, and his insights into the ramifications of different types of change – and how his work has influenced others. Emphasis will also be placed on the legacy he left behind, with suggestions for additional reading that will help the reader learn more about this prolific scholar and why he is considered a thought leader in organization development and change.

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## Contents

## Influences and Motivations: A Multifaceted Mind

Golembiewski (1932–2016) was raised in Lawrenceville, New Jersey, in a very close knit Catholic family, which had a lasting impact on his life. His parents were Polish immigrants, and until he began formal schooling, he did not speak English. His elementary school days were spent at St. Hedwig's Grammar School in Trenton, where he won all but one of the academic prizes upon graduation in 1946 (*Trentonian*, February 28, 2016). He attended Trenton Catholic Boys' High School and was named 1950 class valedictorian as well as lettering in football and baseball and arguing for the state champion debate team.

He was the first in his family to go to college, and he won a scholarship to pursue his AB at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public Service and International Affairs, Princeton University, in 1954. Following his graduation with honors from Princeton, he pursued an MA (1956) and PhD (1958) at Yale University in Political Science. To Bob, political science and organization development were part of a multidisciplinary approach to creating positive social change, a perspective that guided his career. He never saw them as separate disciplines. His dissertation, an expanded version of which was published by the University of Chicago Press as *The Small Group* (1962), was an in-depth analysis of group dynamics. Drawing on over 1,500 sources, he worked toward a convergence of concepts and operations, synthesizing the material into an insightful framework on small group structure and processes.

During graduate school, in 1956 he married Margaret Mary (Peggy) Hughes, and they remained together his entire life. His athletic prowess from his high school days continued well into middle age, as he continued to play intramural sports into his late 50s, at which point he began to question whether he was "too old for that stuff." He did, however, celebrate his 70th birthday by skydiving.

Throughout his life, he was rarely called Robert. As a teenager, he was known as "Killer" and "Earthquake," largely because of his aggressiveness in football and baseball. Later in life, he was affectionately referred to by his friends and colleagues as "Bob G," partly due to the tendency many people had in mangling his last name.

An avid fly fishing buff, he promised he would give a lecture anywhere – as long as there were good streams, hunting, and nearby opportunities to collect silver and mentor the next generation of scholars. Golembiewski, a man with gruff exterior and a heart of gold, reflected on his life by noting that his epitaph might read: "He, like

everyone else, had his price. Few even came close to bidding high enough" (Schaerfl and Preston 1989).

As one of the early pioneers in the organizational development (OD) field, Golembiewski's work emphasized the dynamics of organizational change and the need to expand our views of human relations within organizational life. Throughout his life, he had strong ties to the Catholic Church. Bob once said that in order to remain a faithful Catholic and respect the Church's positive underpinnings, he also had to accept the flaws of his religion. He applied that same philosophy to the Academy of Management (AOM) and to his beloved field of OD and change.

His work was a forerunner of the emerging focus on actionable knowledge. Although he wholeheartedly supported academia in general and the Academy of Management in particular, he felt that academic leadership was not truly committed to building a "bridge" between the academic and the practitioner. In his view, there was a critical void between OD theory and practice. One of his underlying desires was to bring together scholarly practitioners and practical scholars – whom he affectionately referred to as "acapracs" and "pracademics." As a way of drawing theory and practice closer together, he emphasized the need to empower organizational members through enhancing their analytic, communication, and decision-making skills, attempting to identify and ultimately resolve underlying challenges by aligning OD principles with transformative societal values.

He was a strong believer that whatever academics discovered, their findings needed to be grounded in usefulness to the practitioner. In his view, AOM continued to fall short, and Bob would say, "We have to keep trying and they will eventually come around!" He applied this same sentiment to OD, noting that most academics did not appreciate the reality that in order to be "faithful to the core ethics and values of OD," theory had to be applicable to the world of practice. Although many people in the field appear to give lip service to these ideals, Golembiewski internalized them to the point that he established a personal scholarship with his own money. His pledge was that he would support any OD practitioner for 1 year if they were fired from a client because they could not continue an intervention when asked by the client to do something they felt was unethical or went against OD's underlying values. While it is not clear that he actually provided such income support, he did make the offer to the first author of this chapter (which was turned down since additional income was available), and he created a separate bank account for the fund.

Over the course of his career, he held research, teaching, and administrative positions at Princeton, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Yale, and the University of Georgia, where he ended his career as a research professor. He served on both business and public administration faculties because his research and teaching interests spanned both areas. He also had numerous visiting professorships, including ten semesters at the University of Calgary where he was able to follow his passion for fly fishing. Early in his career, he was awarded a Ford Fellowship in mathematical applications intended to facilitate empirical research in the field – which he did with a lifelong passion. He was also honored with a number of major

awards during his career, including being named Outstanding OD Consultant of the Year by the Organization Development Institute (1989), chosen as a charter member of the American Management Association's Hall of Fame, and given the Exceptional Lifetime Achievement Award (2006) at the International Conference on Advances in Management held in Lisbon, Portugal.

Reflecting on those who had inspired him, Golembiewski was clearly taken with Mother Theresa's dedication to alleviate human suffering and her commitment to enhance the lives of others, depicting her as "one hell of a change agent" (Schaerfl and Preston 1989, p. 25) – traits that he appeared to admire in himself. Drawing on a published interview the first author had with Golembiewski (Schaerfl and Preston 1989), he also noted the he was inspired by Chris Argyris, whose work "has done much for the OD field"; Goodwin Watson, for his "attractive qualities"; and Stanford Professor Lee Bradford, who Golembiewski saw as "an absolute whizzer in getting an institution started" and his attempts to "reinvent" OD. Aware of his own accomplishments, Golembiewski saw his own work as "OK too."

One of the drivers in his life was the issue of responsible freedom, noting his amazement about the number of organizations that he viewed as having "neither been free nor responsible" (Schaerfl and Preston 1989). Drawing on political science with an emphasis on philosophy, theory, and practice, he continually explored the gap between "what is" and "what can and should be." Reflecting his commitment to the interplay between theory and practice, he was often frustrated by his view that our realities continue to fall short of our potential – one of the factors that led him into consulting.

As a consultant, he worked with many types of organizations, including SmithKline Allergan (precursor of GlaxoSmithKline), General Foods, DuPont, Martin Marietta, NASA, Mobil Oil, Procter & Gamble, and US federal and state government as well as international organizations such as the United Nations and the government of Taiwan. His work with MARTA – the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority, which will be discussed in detail in the next section – was one of his major accomplishments. Working in a consultation role, he helped name a popular breakfast cereal, launched a major drug, and determined the width of subway seats in the MARTA system, whose riders can still appreciate the wide, comfortable seats influenced by his football player girth. Known for his commitment to positive organizational change, he was affectionately remembered by a business client when he addressed the company's top executive team during one of his consulting engagements, "Gentlemen, we are not here to uphold the status quo" (Schaerfl and Preston 1989).

Throughout his career, Golembiewski was continually demanding of himself and his mentees. Although we were not his students per se, he was a true mentor to one of us and a valued colleague to both. We cannot think of anyone who was more direct than Bob. He gave feedback truthfully and succinctly, to the point that it could be painful, and it was the brave sole who asked him to serve as their dissertation chair. Only those with a strong drive, resilient ego, and desire for perfection would take on his demanding leadership. Yet many did seek him out from all over the world. He would shower his advice freely but would not suffer fools. He typically had a sly

laugh that would follow some of his sharpest comments, which only those who knew him well could truly appreciate. There were a couple of times that come to mind when he was a guest scholar, presenting his work to doctoral students when he managed to send one man and one woman crying from the room. During a class at Pepperdine University, responding to his morning lecture, the students erected a throne and created a scepter, crown, and purple robe that they presented to him for the afternoon. As a reflection of his humor and affability, he gave the rest of his lecture in that attire, noting on more than one occasion how much he "loved the experience" (Schaerfl and Preston 1989).

Perfection was a theme in his life. He strove to do everything to the best of his ability – through his writing, teaching, and consulting. He not only gave his best but always did what he thought was right at the time with enthusiasm. Another anecdote, which took place during a consulting trip in rural India, can further illuminate the man (Schaerfl and Preston 1989). After completing his day's work, Bob was walking back to his abode, planning to spend the evening alone thinking about the next steps he needed to take in his project with the villagers. On the way back, a wild dog approached him, growled, and began to attack. Bob quickly turned the cane that he was carrying into a weapon and dispatched the animal. Knowing that killing anything was against the villagers' beliefs, he was concerned. Yet, the next morning, he was greeted with cheers from the entire village. The leader explained that this dog had attacked several domestic animals and even some of the small children. The villagers could not kill it, tolerating the horrible animal and saw Bob as a hero for eliminating what the entire village felt was a serious problem. Reflecting on the experience, he noted that it served as a metaphor for what consultants really do – they move people toward their goals, sometimes by intention and sometimes by "happy accident." The essence of OD, as he reminds us, is that one cannot predict whether our results will come from luck, timing, or skill. Regardless, the consultant's job is to eliminate the "elephant" in the room that no one wants to acknowledge. The consultant's job, as he would say, is to "Kill the wild dog!"

## Key Contributions: A Prolific Scholar

The word "prolific" is synonymous with "Bob G" (Schaerfl and Preston 1989). He is clearly among the most published people in the ODC field, with a 99-page curriculum vita that includes 75 books and 1,000 peer-reviewed articles. His work has had a significant, lasting impact on theory building and the way in which we conceptualize and measure change. In constructing theory, he differentiated *empirical theory* (examining how different phenomena are related to each other under different conditions) from *goal-based empirical theory* (how specific goals or values can be achieved through the insights from empirical theory) and *action theory* (involving active participation in moving from a present state to a more desirable one) (Golembiewski 2002b). He also challenged our views of change – which he referred to as "Trinitarian change" – distinguishing *alpha* change (variations along a stable set of intervals related to a stable dimension of reality), *beta* change (variations on a

set of intervals that have experienced shifts), and *gamma* change (involving a basic reconceptualization or redefinition of a domain) (Golembiewski 1989a). He once said that he would continue to publish 2 years after his death, which unfortunately did not become a reality because, according to Sandy Daniel, his longtime secretary throughout his time at the University of Georgia, he stopped writing around 2006.

He hated computers. He argued that computers (as word processors) were invented so academics could produce manuscripts on their own instead of using secretaries. He was not going to bow to what he saw as the latest administrative ploy to get faculty to do more work and spend less money. Throughout his career, he wrote his work by hand on the back side of old articles and chapters. He had at least 40 projects going at the same time, and every morning he let his wife, Peggy, who he affectionately referred to as his "Muse," tell him what project he should focus on that day. His handwritten material would then go to Sandy, who would put it into the appropriate format to send to a coauthor, editor, or publisher.

His research covered many topics in ODC, including small groups, operations, ethics, patterns of behavior in line-staff models, sensitivity training, and stress and burnout in organizational life as well as many others. As noted above, throughout his work, he emphasized mathematical approaches in his study of organizational change, focusing on measurable outcomes of change. This section and the ones that follow will highlight this work, encouraging readers to delve further into his other writings. We chose to describe his underlying ideas and issues about the OD field and his work on the dynamics involved in OD-related intervention, the Metropolitan Atlanta Transit Authority project, and his final contribution to our understanding of stress and burnout at work.

## Organization Development: Ideas, Issues, and Intervention

Golembiewski can be thought of as a "gadfly" of OD's early period. The reference dates back to Socrates, who described himself as a "gadfly," a stinging insect who would harass and "sting" the citizens of Athens out of their ignorance and intellectual complacency. That was Bob's role within academia.

One of his major contributions to OD practice was his "Process Observer" column in the *Organization Development Journal* during the 1980s. His column, a series of concise but poignant essays that ultimately became areas that others began to address, focused on the challenges faced by academics and consultants involved in OD interventions. These essays, along with a number of new reflections, were turned into the book, *Organization Development: Ideas and Issues* (Golembiewski 1989a). The issues raised in the volume, which was published over a quarter century ago, are still highly relevant, focusing on what OD is, compared to what it aspires to be, what OD could become, and how we should attempt to move from "from here to there."

The premise that OD has either fallen well short of aspirations or outlived its usefulness has been around for decades (e.g., Jelinek and Litterer 1988). Golembiewski felt that the field was sufficiently strong to not only accept such

criticism but, more importantly, to use it to guide the transition from, what he referred to as adolescence to adulthood. He pushed for an active dialogue in and about the field to encourage this intellectual and pragmatic growth.

Looking at the state of OD during the late 1980s, he continued to push for change, working to move the field closer to what he felt it "should be," drawing on its unique fabric, and reflecting on its underlying challenges. One of his criticisms about OD was what he depicted as a tendency for theorists to suggest that their own work – frameworks, processes, and/or ideas – represented something new and more effective, even though he thought these "new" ideas were very similar to each other and what was already in existence. Many of his concerns about fragmentation within the field, our tendency to lose sight of or downplay the contributions of early pioneers, and our propensity to "plow our own furrows, as it were, even though we often harvested the same or similar crops" (Golembiewski and Varney 2000, p. vii) are still very relevant today.

Drawing on the richness and insight of OD's early days, Golembiewski felt strongly that the field had significant depth and energy, to the point where it was up to the next generation of "ODers" to draw on this history in creating positive interventions. Although he struggled with the question as to whether the field would remain committed to or move away from its initial values base, his work contributed to the positive organizational scholarship movement in the early 2000s.

His assessments of OD's effectiveness were typically colored with restrained enthusiasm. Pointing to evaluative studies of OD projects, many of which he felt either underappreciated its potential or were pessimistic about that underlying potential, Golembiewski emphasized that OD and its practitioners should show constraint. Examining specific applications and the use of OD technologies, for example, he characterized some of these interventions as "Judas goats" – the animals that led other animals to the slaughterhouse while they themselves remained healthy (Golembiewski 1989a). As part of his exploration of the interaction between the consultant's and client's values during an OD intervention, he pointed to the tensions that the field had to cope with to have a bright future – the complex interaction between professionalism, performance, and protectionism. As he suggested, true professionalism (i.e., passion for continuous testing, commitment to continuous renewal, and deep concern for standards for practice) had the potential to determine the critical balance between performance (i.e., ensuring good and prudent practice) and protectionism (i.e., the tendency to erect barriers to entry to outsiders while stifling innovation and competition between insiders).

As a way of ensuring a bright future for OD, he envisioned a National Institute of Planned and Peaceful Change (NIPPC), an organization that would deal with the field's strategic planning and positioning. Drawing on the National Institute of Health (NIH) as a guiding model, he pictured a type of matrix structure that would integrate foci on (1) different levels of organization (e.g., individuals, dyads, small groups, and groups of groups), (2) different classes of designs to induce change (e.g., attention to attitudes and behaviors, policies and procedures, and structures for relating people), and (3) temporal modes of intervention (e.g., preventative or anticipative, immediately reactive, and delayed intervention). As he suggested,

reflecting on the possibilities raised by the interaction of these factors underscores the "richness of targeted detail" that might be included in such a venture (Golembiewski 1989a, p. 132). Rather than a vast bureaucracy, Golembiewski (1989a, p. 134) saw NIPCC as a lean entity of elite administrators, interveners, and researchers who could energize a "vast network of public and private actors over whom they exercised little or no hierarchical control." The idea, which never came to fruition, was to create a living laboratory that would mobilize resources and conduct experiments that others would learn and benefit from.

Above all, Golembiewski was committed to protecting the core values inherent in OD, with an underlying hope to extend the field's reach and grasp of organizational life and intervention, raising its possibilities to higher levels. He can be seen as a harbinger of the values crisis in OD as well as a reminder that its roots lie in human systems' development. As he reflected, we often see a true test of our core values when there is a conflict between confidentiality and money and power. He continually pondered whether a certification process would truly make sense for OD practitioners (the performance-protectionism nexus). As a way of ensuring that practitioners, especially new consultants, were grounded in the field's core values and theories, he focused on education and socialization processes, often lamenting about the lack of opportunities they had to "practice" and learn – without doing do damage to clients (his NIPPC solution).

## The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA)

The intervention in MARTA was one of his greatest accomplishments and contributions, to both the public sector and the OD field itself. This project was funded by a 1971 referendum to produce a mass transit system within a decade with a budget of $1.3 billion (Golembiewski and Kiepper 1976), a regional project that was one of the largest since the days of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The goals of MARTA were to manage and enlarge an existing bus system, construct 69 miles of rapid speed rail transit and its support systems with tenuous funding through grants, develop "strong" central leadership, and respond to the demands of multiple constituencies with a broad range of local input by 1978 without delays and within budget, while positively influencing the development of the Metro-Atlanta area.

The OD component of the project centered on three major learning design tasks (Golembiewski and Kiepper 1976): (1) a team building experience for key leadership, (2) interface experience between the senior staff and third tier management, and (3) interface experience between the senior staff and the MARTA board. The interventions in these three areas centered on confronting and contracting, and a key element that guided the entire project was to ensure that the individual chosen for the general manager role was someone who modeled OD principles and values.

Looking back on this work in an article entitled "MARTA in the 1990s: The Challenge Continues" (1994), he thoughtfully critiqued the long-term outcomes of the project, focusing on what had lasted and what had decayed over time. The MARTA project was successfully completed within time and budget constraints,

and it continues to stand as a worldwide model for project management planning and execution. From an OD perspective, the project manifested high levels of openness with a strong sense of ownership and trust, with relatively low levels of conflict and undue risk-taking among the groups and individuals involved. He noted that a number of factors contributed to the project's success. First, funding was available throughout the project, instead of having to deal with predicted scarcity. Second, Ken Gregor, the general manager (GM) who replaced the original GM, played a major role in the project's success due to a management style that was grounded in OD values and ethic. He instilled a sense of flexibility throughout the organization and attracted a cadre of team-oriented individuals who had also ingrained OD values into their behavior. Reflecting a shared aversion to bureaucracy, which had existed from the early days into the 1990s, people in key positions at all levels in MARTA remembered the frustrations from that earlier period and served as role models for the new culture. The board, which was generally supportive of and helpful to the venture, also had good relationships with the management team. Finally, all of this was supported, according to Golembiewski, by the political and metropolitan environment that called for flexible and relationship-oriented behavior by leadership.

Looking back, Golembiewski (1994) underscored that the policies and practices embraced by MARTA employees maintained a deep, ongoing commitment to OD principles and values. As he noted, "The advantage still remains with MARTA" (Golembiewski 1994, p. 171). Yet, in true Golembiewski form, he was not satisfied with what had been accomplished, pointing out that that MARTA was ready for a new leap forward. He saw the earlier organization as more inwardly focused, while the future would demand a greater emphasis on external factors, particularly expanding the initiative's service – and, in his view, the embedded values and organic view that MARTA had embraced made it well suited for its next phase of strategic planning.

The MARTA project was clearly a critical success – both operationally and culturally – and was a credit to Golembiewski and his colleague Allen Kiepper, who codesigned and carried out this enormous OD intervention. We can continue to learn a great deal by studying the design and evaluation processes of this project.

## Burnout and Stress

A significant aspect of his research, especially during the latter stage of his career, explored the role of stress and burnout in organizational life, emphasizing the implications for intervention and prevention. His efforts, in essence, focused increasingly on how to create healthy organizations. This interest was directly influenced by his work on the MARTA project, where he felt the high price of success was paid for in human costs that, on the surface, seemed to be unavoidable. Working under intense pressure with limited resources, even if guided by a commitment to openness, participation, and helping, had significant negative consequences for the individuals involved.

His experience with this high cost of success led to further research and a series of publications that focused on stress and burnout. Building on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson 1982), which identified the core phases of burnout as initial depersonalization, diminished personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion, Golembiewski and his colleagues created an eight-phase model of burnout that delved deeper into the differences that existed in both state and degree across those three basic factors (Golembiewski et al. 1983). The model, which is illustrative below, posited that these three factors varied in malignancy, with distinctions between high and low outcomes on each. Thus, individuals at different times might experience high depersonalization but still relatively low diminished accomplishment and exhaustion and at other times feel high emotional exhaustion combined with either high or low depersonalization and diminished accomplishment. When all three factors were high, the individual would be in "full-bloom burnout." He argued that individuals would not necessarily progress through each of the eight stages in the model, a progression he referred to as "psychologically awkward." Rather, there were chronic and acute pathways. A chronic pathway reflected deteriorating conditions at work, typically beginning with failing personal relationships. Acute pathways, in contrast, triggered, for example, by the loss of a loved one, could quickly translate into high levels of the three factors as part of a difficult grieving process. Each of these phases, with certain physical and psychological symptoms, suggested possible interventions, an emphasis that he and his colleagues increasingly focused on (Golembiewski 1986; Golembiewski and Munzebrider 1988).

Phase model of job burnout

| Maslach burnout | Phases of burnout | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inventory (MBI) subdomains | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII |
| Depersonalization | Low | High | Low | High | Low | High | Low | High |
| Personal accomplishment (reversed) | Low | Low | High | High | Low | Low | High | High |
| Emotional exhaustion | Low | Low | Low | Low | High | High | High | High |

His work in this area covered a wide variety of work contexts, from healthcare professionals (Golembiewski and Boudreau 1991) and public agencies (Golembiewski et al. 1998b) to the military (Golembiewski et al. 1998a) and cross-cultural comparisons (Golembiewski et al. 1993) to the point where he saw stress and burnout as a "global pandemic" (Golembiewski 1996).

## New Insights: Novel Ways of Looking at Stress and Change

Golembiewski acknowledged that stress in organizational life could be quite functional – energizing and motivating organizational members to increase their performance. Yet, the body of research that he and his colleagues amassed suggested that roughly 20% of working adults – one in every five workers – experienced the highest

levels of job-related burnout. The underlying challenge that he continued to pursue was to better understand the critical point beyond which "stress herniates rather than motivates" (as cited in Hart 1995). He noted that even in healthy organizations, almost one-quarter of employees reported being in the highest three levels of burnout.

Rather than attempting to create stress-free environments, Golembiewski pushed us to think about ways to manage that stress in productive ways. He saw OD as crucial in this process, generating positive, creative cultures with healthy leadership and an intention to build trust by ensuring respect, authority, and meaningful feedback. As he pointed out, however, many of the high-energy interventions cherished by OD practitioners – from participative management and efforts to enhance collaboration to interpersonal confrontation and even stress management workshops themselves – can further overburden individuals already experiencing high levels of burnout (Golembiewski 2000).

His analysis of the relationship between stress and burnout also pushed our thinking beyond individual factors, delving into the role that the work environment played in either exacerbating or ameliorating the probability of stressful experiences. He saw chronic burnout as a group-rooted phenomenon, underscoring that members of the same work group were likely to experience similar phases of burnout. His work emphasized burnout as a process in which depersonalization over time contributes to decreased personal accomplishment, which further interact to produce higher levels of emotional exhaustion. Arguing that much of the prior work on stress and burnout was anecdotal and lacking in objective measures, he called for large-scale empirical research to more fully understand the underlying phenomena. In order to do this as systematically as possible, he sought to examine the burnout experience through the lens of different types of change – alpha change (variation in the degree of an existential state, measured by a reliably calibrated instrument), beta change (further complicated by a recalibration of the measurement continuum), and gamma change (involving a basic reconceptualization of a situation, involving differences in state as well as degree) (Golembiewski et al. 1976).

Although this perspective emphasized different measurable outcomes of change, his work also pushed our thinking about the different types of change we create through our interventions, reflected in changes in cognition. The notion of alpha change reflects a perceived change in the context of objective circumstances, while beta change is associated with changing standards of an individual's interpretation of those circumstances. Going one step further, gamma change reflects a radical shift in an individual's assumptions about causal relationships (Porras and Silver 1991). In essence, he pushed our thinking about how such cognitive changes influence our behaviors.

Golembiewski pushed both OD scholars and practitioners to become more sophisticated in all they did, from conceptualization and research to study design and methodology to intervention and practice. Early on, the field was basically grounded in action research, case studies, and intervention studies, but over the years, through the influence of people like Golembiewski, it evolved to include techniques that rival the rigor of experimental psychology. He also underscored the

need for longitudinal work, as captured by his major interventions with MARTA, illustrating the ways in which an intervention could have impacts that lasted well beyond initial implementation, changing human behavior in desired ways. His work on stress and burnout also showed how incremental studies across a wide variety of contexts – including cross-societal multinational data collection – could lend insight into the pervasive nature of such phenomena. His work involved mass data sets and advanced statistical procedures, with an incremental project-based orientation through hypothesis building and rigorous testing to build a well-grounded research theory. His methodology, analysis, and replication of data helped bring ODC into its maturity as a science and an art.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: The Rigor-Relevance Quagmire

One of his main emphases with practitioners was the need to get back to the original values and ethics of OD (Golembiewski 1993). He took it as a personal mission to make sure that entrants to the field fully understood OD's core – its underlying knowledge, skills, and attitudes – as well as an underlying commitment to rigorous research and practical application. Although this call reverberated through the field on a general level, Bob G had a profound impact on many practical scholars and scholarly practitioners. As an example, he felt that such training was clearly lacking in the university education system. He felt so strongly about this challenge that, working with colleagues (which included the first author of this chapter), the Organization Change Alliance (Preston 1993) was formed. The Alliance was intended as a very different type of professional group, focused on the training and development of the next generation of change agents. Reflecting his earlier thoughts about the need for a NIPPC-type organization, its focus was on mentoring and involvement in team-based OD projects and skills-building workshops.

His call to embrace basic values and core skills not only influenced the founding of that professional group but had a lasting impact on the way in which we designed or redesigned a program or initiative. As an example, focusing on his emphasis on the lack of skills among new entrants to the field, in her role as director of masters and doctoral programs at Pepperdine University, Preston built in key experiences such as faculty-supervised large group interventions in other countries. These projects provided the students the opportunity to not only practice what they were learning but also experience how ethics, values, and basic OD skills interact. This commitment was continued at Colorado Technical University, which had an online and residency format. Golembiewski's words about the critical role of core skills guided the design team's requirement that the organization development and change, global leadership and environment, and social sustainability tracks would incorporate an intervention for advanced action research out of the country – one of the few online hybrid programs at that time that focused on building core skills (Preston 2014).

His last contributions to the field were in the area of burnout and stress, and he most likely would have continued his incremental study of this phenomena. As stated earlier, he studied burnout and stress in the United States and later investigated these effects in many other countries of the world. The contributions in this area changed the way in which we viewed the stress-to-burnout process, and his realization of the powerful effect that burnout could have on individuals underscored his commitment to the "power of positive purpose" (Golembiewski 2002a) as a way of managing that experience.

An area of "unfinished business" in his work is captured by the world of computers and the Internet – a world which he was loathe to enter. Yet, despite this aversion, if he continued his incremental work in this area, he would ultimately have been drawn into our postindustrial world, exploring how computer-mediated work influenced the level of stress and burnout in our lives. The workday, for an increasing number of young people, is filled with virtual teams from various companies, countries, and time zones, working on complex projects that are expected to be done yesterday. The constant barrage of email and instant messaging, texting and twitter, and Skype and GoToMeeting conferences, among many other technology-driven forms of communication, demand our attention 24/7. This new world of technology weighs heavily on today's employees, exacerbated by the fast-paced demands placed on them by their employers to get ahead of – or even keep pace with – the competition. The stress and burnout that was such a central focus of his work seems that much more intense today.

In addition to the technology challenge per se, the increasing role of virtuality, with new teams constituted on a daily basis, composed of ambiguous, remote relationships as organizations partner on projects and draw on resources dispersed around the globe, would likely have become a part of his focus on stress and burnout. Increasingly, no one person seemingly has control over any other person. Pressures and expectations abound for creating high-performance teams when incentives lie in other units or organizations rather than within a given team – a new opportunity to explore and better understand a host of new stresses and burnout potential. In today's increasingly complex working world, there are significant opportunities to follow in his footsteps, rigorously studying how technology and amorphous team relationships contribute to our experience in the workplace – and, in Golembiewski fashion, thinking how OD could help to create healthier organizations and environments.

Perhaps his greatest legacy is reflected in his lasting impact on the work of those who knew him. He influenced us to ensure that core OD values and skills were an inherent part of our teaching. He also helped us become better scholars, pushing us to reflect and build on those challenging, unanticipated situations where we struggled to think of what to do next – such as when a consulting client dies during an intervention (Buono 2000) or faced with the ramifications of confronting apartheid in South Africa (Preston and Armstrong 1991). The challenge to be able to draw on such highly personal experiences and capture that learning so that others could benefit was one of "Bob G's" lifelong commitments.

Reflecting on the future of the OD field, he offered the following, concise depiction (Schaerfl and Preston 1989, p. 28):

> This is a period of ferment and fragmentations [for OD], as people leap from a common base to establish new turfs. The outcome is dicey, and I see three possible scenarios: 1) OD in the dumper; 2) OD [remaining] about as is; 3) OD and a great leap forward. I doubt that #1 will occur, whatever our failures of wit and will. I see a reasonable chance for #3. And if #3 occurs, Robert Golembiewski will be one of the leaders.

Unfortunately the ongoing evolution of OD will have to go on without one of its great leaders, but those of us who remember him know that he is watching from above, making sure that we do it right.

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# Larry E. Greiner: Actionable Knowledge in Action

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Flemming Poulfelt and Anthony F. Buono

### Abstract

As a significant contributor to the field of organizational intervention and change, Larry E. Greiner was one of those unique individuals who personified a mixture of insight and intelligence with a fun-filled spirit, a warm and welcoming presence, and, in general, a guiding sense of commitment and generosity. Over the years, his work reflected the essence of *actionable knowledge*, taking an applied route to knowledge creation, generation, and dissemination. He had a compelling presence that literally drew people to him, bringing a smile to their faces while lending his insights and expertise to all those who entered his orbit. This chapter captures the influences and motivations that led him to the organization development (OD) field, his key contributions – the stages of evolution and revolution that organizations experience, the role and nature of management consulting and intervention, power and OD, and dynamic strategy – and how that work has influenced others. As close colleagues and friends, we were privileged to know and work with him, and his ideas, support, and presence have had a lasting effect on our lives.

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## Influences and Motivations: The Theory and Practice Interface

A native of Akron, Ohio, Larry Greiner (1933–2013) began his scholarly journey at the University of Kansas where he received a B.S. degree and became affiliated as an instructor in its College of Business Administration. He then moved to Massachusetts, earning an MBA from Harvard Business School (HBS) in 1960. As he became increasingly fascinated with the study of organizational life, he continued his studies at Harvard, working on his DBA with an emphasis on organization change and development. Early on, his work captured the essence of *actionable knowledge*, and that focus guided his career. After completing his doctoral studies, he continued on the faculty at HBS until he accepted a full professorship in the Management and Organization Department at the University of Southern California's (USC) Marshall School of Business, where he stayed for the remainder of his career. He also taught at Oxford University and INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France.

It is not an exaggeration to underscore that the match between the Southern California lifestyle and Larry had a symbiotic quality. He simply fed off the coastline and beaches, the warm weather, and the myriad golf courses in the area – and he excelled as a scholar and colleague at USC. In addition to his teaching and research responsibilities, in 1988, he was appointed Academic Director of the Executive MBA Program, and in 2003 he served as the Academic Director of the Global Executive MBA Program based in Shanghai, China. He is credited with leading the creation and design of both those programs, which were forerunners of the type of theme-based, integrative educational programs in business schools today. Reflecting his personality and professional orientation, Larry drew together his activities, playing in both the theoretical and practice camps with comparable ease.

The interplay between practice and theory became the core focus of Larry's research. As his colleagues at USC have emphasized, he was not the traditional scholar who defined hypotheses to test, methods to describe, and results to confirm and discuss. Instead he spent much of his energy conceptualizing the phenomenon he observed, in essence taking an applied route to knowledge creation, knowledge generation, and knowledge dissemination. As such it can be argued that Larry was on the forefront, envisioning Mode 2 research before Mode 2 was coined and articulated by Michael Gibbons and his colleagues in their 1994 book, *The New Production of Knowledge*. The book captured the difference between research

according to Mode 1 (the traditional way of producing discipline-based knowledge for its own sake) and Mode 2 (where multidisciplinary insight is applied to specific problems in the real world as a way of producing new knowledge). Larry's work, throughout his career, was dominated by a Mode 2 approach to developing relevant and actionable knowledge.

Another characteristic of Larry's career was his focus on internationalization. As described by his colleagues at the University of Southern California where he spent the majority of his career, Larry was "global before global was global... integrative before integrative was integrative..." (MCD Newsletter 2013 p. 10), always willing to draw on his extensive network of friends and connections to help others. He held a number of positions abroad during his career, helping him to establish a wide-ranging international network. In 1971 he was a visiting scholar at the Swedish Institute for Administrative Research in Stockholm, and in 1981–1982, he was a visiting professor at INSEAD, in Fontainebleau, France. Later in his career, he was the founding executive director of USC's Global Executive MBA (GEMBA) in Shanghai, China (2004), a program that garnered significant attention, representing a microcosm of the new global economy. The first graduating class (referred to as "GEMBA1"), for example, had students from China, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Germany, and the UK and Canada and the US. Over the years, as his network grew, one only had to mention a country, and Larry would suggest local colleagues or contacts who could help you fulfill your objectives, sending a letter or email as a way of introduction. He was tremendously generous beyond belief, always supportive and helpful both professionally and personally.

As a long-time member of the Academy of Management (AoM), Larry undertook a number of positions at both the divisional and academy level. He served as chair of both the Organization Development and Change Division and Management Consulting Division and served as a strategy consultant to the AoM president and Board of Governors in 2008, working with them to create the first strategic plan of the Academy. He also received significant professional recognition, including his 1999 McKinsey Best Paper Prize for "New CEOs and Strategic Change Across Industries" presented at the Strategic Management Conference in Berlin. In 2005 he received the Management Consulting (MC) Division's Robert Wright Founder's Award, the Division's highest award given for sustained and exemplary leadership contributions to the MC Division.

In addition to Larry's academic career, he also spent significant time as a management consultant and board member. His consulting clients included such well-known private and public companies such as KinderCare, Kohlberg, Kravis & Roberts, Red Lion Hotels and Inns, Cadence Design Systems, American Golf Corporation, Intuit-ChipSoft, Marketplace Production (national public radio), Coca Cola Foods, Microsoft, Cymer, Chevron, and Merck. He also served on several boards over his career, including the MAC Group, Inc. in Cambridge, Massachusetts (a consulting firm) in the early to mid-1980s, Cast Management Consultant in Milan, Italy (1984–1993), and the HF Group in Carson, California (2001–2005). Larry was the consummate academic practitioner, skillfully blending theory and practice throughout his career and equally comfortable in the classroom and boardroom.

## Key Contributions: Extending Our Insight into Strategic Change

From a research perspective, Larry focused on three major areas: (1) the ways in which organizations changed from a strategic growth perspective, (2) change and growth from a consulting perspective, and finally (3) the role of power and politics within the context of organizational development (OD). His career followed that evolutionary track, initially focusing on organizational growth and change, moving toward the consulting area, and a critical look at power from a change and process view. His work challenged our thinking about the ways in which organizations change and can be changed.

## Organizational Evolution and Revolution

One of his classic *Harvard Business Review* (1972) articles – "Evolution and Revolution as Organizations Grow" – focused on the ways in which management practices that worked well in one stage of development often created crises in subsequent phases of maturation. As he suggested, organizational problems are often rooted in past decisions and policies more than present market conditions and events. As illustrated by Fig. 1, his framework illustrated how stages of organizational growth (referred to as evolution) typically triggered organizational turmoil and change at latter stages (referred to as revolution) – for instance, when centralized practices eventually lead to pressures for decentralization. His framework pointed to five core
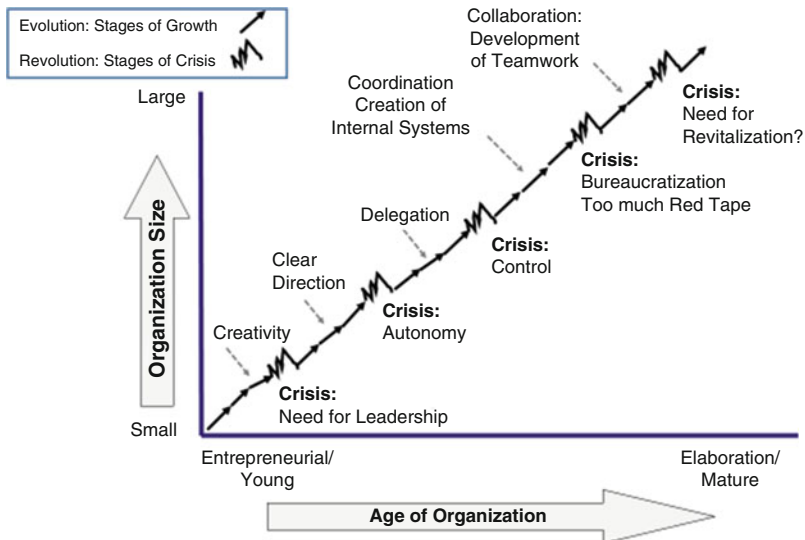


**Fig. 1** The five phases of organizational growth (Adapted from Greiner (1998, p. 58))

dimensions that capture such development: the age and size of the organization, its stages of evolution and revolution, and the growth rate of its industry.

His insight into the ways in which organizations grow and develop pushed our thinking about how organizational problems and the management practices that attempt to resolve them are rooted in time. He observed that organizations go through five basic stages of growth – creativity, direction, delegation, coordination, and collaboration. As problems emerge during a particular phase, policies and practices that are introduced typically resolve the issue – for a limited period of time – creating the basis for the next revolutionary change. Thus, according to Greiner's model, each phase is essentially the result of the previous phase and the cause of the next.

Beginning with the creative spark that launches a company, for example, attention is typically focused on developing the product and its market. Company founders tend to be technically or entrepreneurially oriented, driven by their commitment to make and sell the product they developed – with a basic disdain for managerial activities. Although this focus helps to "get the company off the ground," over time, this emphasis and its related individualistic activities become the problem. As production runs become larger and the number of employees grows, the firm can no longer rely on informal processes, and the founders find themselves burdened with administrative responsibilities – leading to a crisis of leadership. This first revolution in the organization's development is characterized by the search for a strong business manager who can pull the company together and is acceptable to the founder(s).

As Greiner argued, companies that survive this first crisis by installing and following an experienced business leader typically experience a period of sustained growth, creating a clear direction for the firm through functional differentiation with increasingly specialized roles and activities. Over time, however, as the organization grows, these specialized activities – and the centralized hierarchy that encompasses them – lead to the next crisis as they become too cumbersome and less effective in controlling a more complex and diverse company. The firm is then faced with a crisis of autonomy, typically leading to increased delegation; though in many firms, managers resist giving up their decision-making power, making it a tension-filled, and often unsuccessful, transition. Although firms that successfully adopt a decentralized structure – with greater responsibility given to lower-level managers – experience another period of sustained growth, once again, over time, such decentralization leads to a crisis of control. Firms then create internal systems that formalize organizational policies and practices, which work for a while before they lead to an overly bureaucratized system. And on it goes – as frustration with "red tape" leads to attempts to develop a collaborative team atmosphere, which ultimately leads to a crisis of revitalization, where the firm is faced with the challenge of creating new structures and processes.

Reflecting on this perspective roughly a quarter of a century later – "Revolution is Still Inevitable" – he argued that many of his initial observations were still quite valid. He predicted that we will continue to see major phases of development in growing companies, but that growth will not occur naturally or go smoothly – "regardless of the

strength of top management" (Greiner 1998, p. 64). A basic aspect of the underlying revolutionary turmoil and upheaval that organizations experience during the transition periods between these growth stages is the fact that managers have a difficult time understanding that a successful organizational solution they introduced in one growth phase "eventually sows the seeds of revolution" (Greiner 1998, p. 64). Thus, many senior-level executives leave – even those who have been successful – because they no longer fit the direction of the firm.

Thinking about the increased turbulence in the business environment, he underscored that one of the differences from when he initially created this framework is that there is much more organizational "death" than in the past. In essence, fewer organizations go through all phases of growth – either failing outright or being acquired by another firm. He also argued that the different phases were not as cleanly depicted as he initially envisioned, as vestiges of one phase often linger into the next stage of growth. As he argued, the "eve and rev" model (as he liked to refer to it) is best viewed as "simple outline" of the broad managerial challenges that companies face as they grow and that effective leadership and management still constitute the foundation for long-term organizational success.

## Intervention Through Consulting

His interest in the field of consulting and the dynamics of the consulting process drew from his commitment to change through actionable knowledge – a dual focus that integrated his research on consulting with his role as a practicing consultant. The consulting industry captured his attention in the 1970s as it was rapidly becoming a growth industry. Strategic planning studies were spurred by intensified competition, newly emerging industries, worldwide markets, and inflationary pressures. Rapid advances in computer technology also made it possible to go beyond rudimentary inventory and accounting systems to introduce sophisticated information systems for assessing performance on a real-time basis. Government regulation and pressures from social interest groups further precipitated environmental planning, product liability assessments, and affirmative opportunity compliance. The birth of service industries, from fast-food chains to packaged vacations, required entirely new marketing strategies, personnel policies, and organizational structures. At the same time, OD was also evolving, requiring new ways of intervening as a consultant/change agent compared with the classic expert model – all of which captured Larry's attention.

The growth of consulting was also drawing many newly graduated MBAs to an industry where the insights about any particular business were typically fairly limited. Thus, an emerging focus within business schools emphasized the development of general consulting competence. At the forefront of this change, in 1978, Greiner created a new MBA course elective on management consulting at USC. His decision to launch the course was based on growing requests by second year MBA students for more information about management consulting as a career as well as needs expressed by consulting firms for MBAs to be better educated in consulting

skills. The course utilized a combination of guest consultants, lectures, readings and cases, and a live consulting project. After a few years, the course became one of USC's most popular MBA electives, requiring a waiting list for admission each semester.

The focus on consulting triggered Larry to turn his research, writing, and conceptualization on this emerging profession – which led to a groundbreaking book, *Consulting to Management* (1983), coauthored with Robert Metzger, a certified management consultant (CMC) and a principal of Metzger & Associates. The book was very well received, and among its many endorsements were contributions from well-recognized management consultants such as Bruce Henderson, Chairman of the Board of the Boston Consulting Group, Inc., who wrote (book jacket of Consulting to Management, 1983):

> They (the authors) focus on the important things. This book should be required reading for anyone who is considering entering a career as a consultant. It should also be well worth reading by the seasoned consultant who wishes to retain his perspective on his company and his career.

Karl Sloane, CEO of Temple, Barker & Sloane, was even more positive (book jacket of Consulting to Management, 1983):

> Greiner and Metzger are to be congratulated for having written an exceptionally comprehensive, relevant, practical, and insightful work on management consulting and the management consulting firms. *Consulting to Management* belongs in every consultant's library – preferably on a lower shelf where it can be referred to easily and often.

The book, as well as the course he created, served as important stepping stones for Larry's further engagement in consulting – as a researcher, an acting consultant, Chair of the MC Division of Academy of Management, and as board member in a number of consulting firms.

In 1985 he coauthored another influential article, "Seeing Behind the Look-Alike Management Consultants" based on a comprehensive study of the consulting industry that categorized five types of management consulting firms: the (1) strategic navigator, (2) system architect, (3) mental adventurer, (4) management physicians, and (5) friendly copilot. Each type varies according to its underlying character – shaped by the type of individuals who are hired as consultants, the values they bring to their clients, and the manner in which they carry out their assignments. The analysis emphasized the importance of ensuring a fit between client and consultant, as misdiagnoses of company problems are less likely to occur if there is a good match between the styles and expectations of the client and consultant. The classification scheme distilled from their study can therefore be used by clients to discern different types of management consulting firms, helping the client make a more informed decision. As Larry envisioned, a knowledgeable client will tend to select the type of consulting firm that best matches his or her company's need and preferred working style. A naive client, in contrast, is more likely to struggle with disappointment brought on by a mismatch.

Larry's passion for consulting continued to grow, and in 2005 he coedited a volume (together with one of the authors of this chapter) with a literal "Who's Who" of the consulting arena on a number of wide-ranging topics: from assessing the industry as a whole, to critical examinations of major practice areas and alternative intervention approaches and change concepts, to new developments in knowledge management, the leadership and management of consulting firms, and research into and the future of consulting. Realizing that no single author could possibly write a book of such breadth and depth, he turned to leading experts from around the world who he felt possessed the knowledge and experience to contribute in the envisioned areas.

The process of conceptualizing and editing the volume reflected Larry's style and approach to research and intervention. All contributors were invited to a 2-day conference at USC where they presented and discussed outlines of their proposed chapters. The other authors comprised the audience, reacting to and critiquing the ideas with valuable feedback and, perhaps even more importantly, learning from each other. Following the conference, the authors drafted their chapters and embarked on an intense review and revision process – often involving three to four iterations of their work. The result was the *Handbook of Management Consulting*: *The Contemporary Consultant – Insights from World Experts*. As noted in the volume's preface (2005, p. v):

> . . . this is not a 'how to do it' book. . . the goal . . . is to provide both breadth and depth about today's rapidly changing face of management consulting. . . [a] profession [that is] rich, complex, and changing and needs understanding from many angles. . . twenty-five authors, all leading experts and highly experienced in consulting. . . provide the reader with heightened awareness and deeper knowledge needed to prepare for success in the changing consulting environment.

Larry and his colleagues followed the volume with a casebook, focused on "educating today's consultants."

These books not only captured Larry's engagement in the world of management consulting and his passion for researching and conceptualizing the field; they also reflected his preferred approach to scholarly activity, engaging with colleagues in a demanding but fun-filled environment, challenging others in a constructive and thoughtful manner, and capturing that learning and insight to share with others.

## Organization Development and Power

Greiner, with his coauthor Virginia Schein, also pushed our thinking about the ways in which power and organizational politics influenced and shaped organizational life, focusing on how traditional tensions between power and OD could be reconciled and integrated into change initiatives. Since humanistic ideals dominated OD's early development, the emphasis on collegial values and collaborative interactions was viewed in stark contrast to the self-interested approach that was associated with political activity in organizations. Greiner and Schein (1988) challenged this

conventional wisdom, advocating the need to combine open and transparent power-based strategies with OD to facilitate the change process, further transforming organizational power structures to enhance the probability that the change would endure. As they suggested, aboveboard uses of power could be used to encourage organizational members in positive ways, enabling them to work together in making decisions that affected their destiny.

Their work examined how OD could build its own power base, giving it access to those holding power in organizations, influencing these power holders to use it in open and responsible ways. Within this context, Greiner and Schein explored ways that change agents could acquire and utilize power in their engagements, from initially getting one's "foot in the door" and selling expertise to engaging clients in the change process. They also pushed our thinking about power abuses in an OD context – both in terms of change agents abusing power and also getting abused by those in power.

## New Insights: "Eve and Rev" in New Contexts

Larry's "eve and rev" conceptualization illustrated how management practices that were instituted to solve problems at one point in time lead to different problems during latter stages of development. In essence, his work prompted our thinking about how basic management practices that worked well during one stage of development eventually create crises at later phases.

Much of this initial work focused on industrial and consumer goods companies rather than the type of knowledge-based, service businesses that dominate the present day landscape – which were only in their ascendancy at that time. As Larry's interest in professional services firms (PSFs) – consulting, law, and investment firms – grew, roughly a quarter century after he developed his initial growth model, he examined the extent to which these firms also passed through discernable stages of growth. Based on his follow-up study, he suggested that most surviving PSFs grew through a life cycle of four distinct stages – (1) the initial entrepreneurial phase, (2) followed by tension between a desire to focus on the initial service offering or expansion, (3) eventual geographic or service expansion, and (4) institutionalization of the firm's name, reputation, and standard operating procedures – with each stage requiring a different strategic approach to its marketplace and a unique set of management practices. Similar to his original model, each stage was followed by a crisis that needed to be resolved for the firm to advance into the next stage of growth. As David Maister (1993), one of the leading authorities on PSFs, once articulated, "professional service firms have been managed in one or two ways: badly or not at all." Larry viewed this observation as an opportunity, focusing on the role of leadership and the importance of personal adaptation and change that was required for continued development.

His research underscored that PSFs begin by initially testing a variety of markets, leading to internal arguments about whether to stay together or concentrate on one partner's vision. In the second phase, the PSF typically focuses on a particular service, ultimately leading to additional debate about whether to continue the current

practice or expand by opening another office or taking on additional services. The third phase of growth, through either geographic or service expansion, ends with a power struggle over ownership and equity-sharing arrangements between original and newer partners. If it continues, the PSF becomes institutionalized, cementing the firm's name, reputation, and practices, ultimately leading to a "crisis of cultural conformity" in which the firm's members are faced with the need for innovation and renewed flexibility.

As in the original model, each growth stage in PSFs is followed by a crisis that needed to be resolved for the firm to advance into the next evolutionary growth stage. Larry took this opportunity to call for a greater focus on strong leadership, as he felt that farsighted acts of leadership and personal change were necessary for PSF transformation. His insights into the complex realities of the consulting world and the myriad ways in which power and organizational politics influence the change process also pushed our thinking about how to successfully intervene in organizations. Combined with his thoughts about the various stages a company typically goes through as part of its development, his work provided further understanding into the requisite interventions needed for successful change.

## Dynamic Strategy

Building on his work on organizational growth, late in his career, he moved into the strategy area. Although strategy had been an implicit focus in much of his research, it became an explicit emphasis in his work with his close USC colleague Tom Cummings in their book *Dynamic Strategy-Making*: *A Real-Time Approach for the 21st Century Leader* (2009). The volume emphasized that traditional strategic planning was ill-suited for today's 24/7 world, and Larry was highly critical of efforts to substitute what he referred to as "pseudo approaches." As he suggested, when faced with strategic planning, many executives were puzzled and confused about how to proceed. Greiner and Cummings argued that new dynamic approaches to strategy making were needed, so companies could respond coherently and rapidly to the challenges and opportunities posed by fast-paced environments. In their view, coherence meant that strategy had to be enacted in a uniform way by everyone in the firm – not just limited to top management. All organizational members must know and understand the strategy, so they can respond on the spot, in essence being part of the "glue" that holds the company and business together. As such their message was about meaningfulness, strategy should make sense to employees to ensure that execution would be as flawless as possible. To be truly meaningful, the strategy must also be timely and flexible, constantly adjusting to changing conditions as a continuous process of translation into immediate and relevant actions.

Once again Larry demonstrated how his work reflected the essence of *actionable knowledge*, providing the reader with a fresh perspective on strategy as an organizational process of learning and development, reframing the traditional lenses of how strategy should be conceptualized and exercised in a fast-paced, changing world.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Looking at Processes in New Organizational Forms

As new organizational forms – from global, network-based forms to virtual organizations and holocracies to hybrid organizational forms – are becoming increasingly influential in our postindustrial world, Larry's work would have undoubtedly delved further into their growth dynamics. Within this context, a further revised "eve and rev" model could continue to serve as a road map for the next generation of researchers interested in exploring how these new forms develop over time. Questions, for example, linger about the type of change involved in the different phases in these new and emerging organizational forms, from the types of incremental changes that have been associated with the evolutionary growth stages to the punctuated equilibrium that appears to be related to the revolutionary periods. How would firms attempt to capture dynamic capabilities – in essence, balancing exploitation (benefitting from existing products and competencies) and exploration (looking ahead, preparing for creative destruction) – challenges that could vary considerably in a global, transnational organization, a virtual organization, or a holocracy.

Building on his other contributions, as the management consulting world continues to go through groundbreaking change, there are also many unknowns to explore, from the role that technology will play in the consulting process as new methods and models emerge, to changing client needs and consultancy's value proposition, to knowledge creation and transfer, to the governance of consulting firms and what professionalism will ultimately look like in the twenty-first century. Similarly, his insights into power and political dynamics in organizational life requires further examination in a postindustrial context, as the nature of work, the workplace, and interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup interactions continue to evolve.

One of his enduring legacies is the impact that he had on those who worked with him. His guiding insight and expertise provided the opportunity for an author to fully engage with the subject at hand. As an example, reflecting on the process of writing a chapter for his *Contemporary Consultant* handbook (Buono 2005), Larry was the consummate editor, mixing it with insightful direction and critique, helping authors to fulfill the potential he (and his coeditor) envisioned for the volume. After reviewing an early draft of the volume's chapter, he quickly responded, "great first sentence; the rest of the chapter needs work. . . You are writing like a consultant, you're not reflecting as one. . ." (personal communication). He then proceeded to point to gaps and voids, where personal reflection would enhance the material and the direction the chapter should take to fully meet its intended goal.

Larry personified the "engaged scholar," whether working with clients, colleagues, or students, in his pursuit of practical scholarship that could resolve pressing problems and in his commitment to contribute to the public good. He had a hands-on, experiential approach to education and scholarship, transformative in its impact, fostering mutually beneficial collaborations with all those he worked with. Larry's generosity – both professionally and personally – was literally boundless, and his life encompassed the ideal of true engagement. His insights and spirit continue to shape

our approach to research and writing to this day. His commitment to collaboration between management scholars and practitioners, with the goal of producing actionable knowledge that is of interest and use to both parties, continues to have the potential to lead to not only higher-quality organizational results but the possibility of significant theoretical breakthroughs as well.

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# Björn Gustavsen: Democratic Dialogue and Development

<span style="font-size:2em">**34**</span>

Richard Ennals

**Abstract**

Björn Gustavsen, with an original professional background as a lawyer and judge in his native Norway, has had a formative role in organizational development processes in Norway, Sweden, Scandinavia, and the European Union over four decades. Following in the tradition of Norwegian working life research by Trist and Thorsrud, he has provided the conceptual framework and practical case studies which have driven major national and international programs. He has learned from different experience of organizational change in, for example, the USA and Japan, but he has identified a distinctive way forward for the European Union, where he has acted as a senior adviser. In contrast to conventional Taylorist top-down management and reliance on expert consultants, his approach has been bottom-up and concept driven, with a focus on empowering workers. With a commitment to long-term sustainable processes, he has emphasized the importance of capacity building and succession planning, highlighting development organizations. His approach to partnership and coalition building has enabled collaboration across sectors, in the cause of creating collaborative advantage. He has a distinctive fluent academic writing style, but spends most of his time engaged in the design and practice of development, and editing the work of younger colleagues. He has seen the role of academic journals and edited books in the development process, so has encouraged new publications, but without seeking to dominate. He took ideas of action research and case studies and

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applied them to national enterprise development programs, working with the labor market parties. This has resulted in a distinctive research and development culture.

## Contents

## Introduction

Björn Gustavsen has long been a prominent contributor to international research literature, writing frequently at the policy level in Norway, Scandinavia, and Europe. His writing has a consistent purpose and is targeted to particular audiences. The focus of his work and writing is not academic theory but engagement in practice in working life.

For Björn Gustavsen, thought and action are closely linked: publications are actions, and research can have a political dimension. Because this approach diverges from North American orthodoxy, he is not easily compartmentalized in conventional academic terms. Accordingly, he may be unfamiliar to many readers. Drawing on Gustavsen's writing and practical interventions, we present his consistent approach to organizational change, illustrated with accessible quotations from his publications. His core themes are democracy, dialogue, and development. We will highlight in particular the themes of *development organizations* and *development coalitions*.

## Influences and Motivations: Democratic Dialogue

Björn Gustavsen began his career as a lawyer in his home country, Norway. At the time, Norway was seeking to find a sustainable way forward after the Second World War. Gustavsen's thought has maintained a consistent political direction. He saw democracy as relevant to the workplace and to the political process. This perspective stemmed from his cultural context: Norway held a preference for consensus, rather than conflict. Accordingly, there was a tradition of national agreements involving government and the labor market parties: employers and trade unions. That tradition has continued but has weakened in recent years. After decades of consensus, the extent of engagement by the labor market parties declined.

## Protection and Participation

Gustavsen saw his work on drafting the Norwegian 1977 Work Environment Act as an important action research intervention (Gustavsen and Hunnius 1981). Socio-technical ideas from the Tavistock Institute were put into practice through an intervention in the legislative process. To what extent could legislation bring about sustainable change? Could the rules within which decisions were made be changed? What would be the impact on citizens? These issues were important for a trained lawyer. In pursuing them, he helped to frame the legal dimensions of Norwegian life. He introduced the use of democratic dialogue to solve environmental and safety problems and other challenges in the workplace. This represented a transformation in approach from worker protection to active participation for change. He saw the need to look at work environmental issues as a whole, combining technical and organizational factors. Even now, this notion still needs to be more widely understood by the labor market parties and the Norwegian tripartite system of government, employers, and trade unions.

## The View from Scandinavia

Organizations are culturally situated. The world can look different from Scandinavia. It is unlike North America. Indeed, "comparing Scandinavian societies to liberal capitalist ones, such as the UK and the US, may be like comparing a football and a pyramid" (Gustavsen in Ekman et al. 2011a, p. 8).

The differences are certainly profound. Some of these differences have been captured in discussions of the Scandinavian Model of Business and Society, in which Gustavsen has participated (e.g., Ekman et al. 2011) where there is a focus on respect for work, social equity, a tripartite approach to the workplace, linking government, employers and trade unions, and consensus. This, in turn, has given rise to discussion about varieties of capitalism, in which Scandinavia has developed

differently from the Liberal Capitalist economies of the USA and UK, and differently from the European Union as a whole. In this context, Gustavsen's account of *development coalitions* has provided a language in which differences can be explored.

Although the USA and Japan have dominated management literature, Gustavsen's focus has been Norway. He has built on Norwegian experience to address international contexts, particularly in Europe. He also saw the Japanese approach to quality, with an emphasis on empowerment of workers through approaches such as Quality Circles, as providing a focus for workplace dialogue. Building on the work of the quality movement, he did not emphasize compliance and control, but instead saw it in terms of dialogue and empowerment.

> Quality has been misconstrued as a means of providing quantitatively testable measures, frequently imposed externally. It is rather a matter of language, whereby those who share concerns regarding quality find that they are engaged in ongoing communication, based on common understandings. (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 82)

Gustavsen's influence extends far beyond his native Norway. He has contributed to debates under many headings, crossing borders of countries, disciplines, and economic sectors. His positions and practical contributions are consistent and distinctive.

## Understanding Gustavsen

Gustavsen drives theory from practice (Toulmin and Gustavsen 1996). He rejects a reliance on "expert-led change," which gives power to consultants and tends to be imposed top-down. Rather, he favors "concept-driven" processes of change (Gustavsen et al. 1996): bottom-up, based on democratic principles. This theoretical objective is made practical through live cases with an emphasis on active participation. He does not offer single, dogmatic solutions or one best way. His work is intended to help people learn from differences, because differences represent a vital resource. He argues that we are best able to learn from the experiences of others when we ourselves are engaged in processes of change.

Gustavsen's Norwegian background is vital for understanding his work. Born in April 1938, he received a law degree from the University of Oslo in 1964. He was an assistant judge in the years 1965–1966. He joined the Norwegian Work Research Institute (AFI) in 1970, becoming its director from 1972 to 1983. He was then Professor at the Swedish National Institute for Working Life (NIWL) from 1986 to 1999. His focus throughout has been on working life. He is not an ivory tower academic or a commercial consultant. Even prior to Gustavsen's affiliation with them, both AFI and NIWL (until its closure in 2007) hosted strong traditions of Scandinavian research on working life. AFI is now largely funded from contract work with industry sponsors. NIWL researchers were dispersed to universities and research institutes across Sweden.

Subsequent generations of researchers have not always understood Gustavsen's work and methods, especially researchers relying solely on academic literature. For example, they have sometimes suggested that Gustavsen has disregarded issues of power. To the contrary, his tacit knowledge of such issues informs his actions, rather than being spelled out in text. He has brokered deals with those in power, namely, the Norwegian government, employers, and trade unions.

Gustavsen must be understood in context. He was the architect of a series of major, government-supported development programs in Scandinavia, whereas other international scholars have preferred to work only in academia or as consultants in the private sector. Unlike a generation of innovative pioneers who made generalizations based on reducing their differences, Gustavsen has instead seen differences as a valuable resource for collaborative learning.

In contrast with many American management gurus, Gustavsen has not offered ready-made solutions based on celebrated cases. He has opposed Taylorism, top-down management practice, and, like Japanese quality experts, has preferred to focus on empowering the workforce. This means emphasizing participation, engagement, and in particular, dialogue. Gustavsen states, "Dialogue refers to conversations, or discussions, between equal partners, characterized by openness, willingness to listen to each other, to accept good arguments and generally to learn from each other" (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 81).

Gustavsen does not, however, offer neat and definite conclusions after the process of dialogue. If a process of dialogue is to be sustainable, he would argue, it cannot be brought to an end with final agreements. There must be room for additional participants if development is to continue. This principle is fundamental for organizations. Thus, it may be a mistake to seek single answers. Democratic dialogue is a priority for Gustavsen, throughout his work.

Like the philosopher Wittgenstein, whose work he uses (Wittgenstein 1953; Ennals 2016), Gustavsen tends to set his own agenda rather than be driven by the academic literature. He does not start by thinking in terms of individual firms in a capitalist economic system. He has chosen different units of analysis, at the meso level, between individual firms and regions. Language and dialogue are important as participants are engaged. His perspective is bottom-up and strategic.

Rather than relying simply on developments in the USA, he has tried to learn from changes in locations such as Japan and the European Union and to apply them in particular to Scandinavia. His focus is on development, rather than management. He has deep personal roots in Norway, but he has been able to maintain professional careers in both Sweden and Norway. This has provided opportunities for comparisons and benchmarking.

## Action Research and Organizational Change

Gustavsen's practical engagement provided the basis for his theoretical contributions. He has been a major figure in the *action research* academic literature (Gustavsen 2001a, 2003, 2004, 2007; Gustavsen et al. 2008), but he has pursued

his own pragmatic line of argument while based at AFI. Although action research has often centered on individuals, Gustavsen has been primarily concerned with organizational change. He has developed contexts for regional development and national enterprise development and has incorporated action research into major programs. Action researchers have become instruments of policy and actors in the processes of organizational change (Gustavsen et al. 2001; Levin 2002).

Gustavsen has long worked closely with Norway's labor market partners: trade unions and employers. Behind the scenes he has maintained engagement in the collaborative culture and designed a succession of major programs. He has also been active in European projects, seeking to develop ongoing European networks. He has held senior professorial posts at the University of Oslo (1985–1999), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim (from 2000), and the University of Vestfold.

From that set of academic bases, Gustavsen has led work on enterprise development and regional development. For Gustavsen, evaluation is a key part of any development program, which is a process that requires engagement. He states, "Evaluations emerge as active, constructive processes in which those who perform the evaluation put a lot of their own ideas into the process" (Gustavsen in Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996, p. 26). He has designed, led, and evaluated a series of programs in Sweden, including Leadership Co-ordination and Co-operation (LOM) and The Working Life Fund (ALF) (Gustavsen et al. 2006), and Norway, including Enterprise Development 2000 (Gustavsen et al. 2001) and Value Creation 2010 (Johnsen and Ennals 2012). Each has involved government, employers, and trade unions.

## Development

Organizational development requires effective collaboration. Gustavsen argues that individuals can achieve relatively little by working alone. We find partners with whom we can engage productively and develop a sustained relationship. We build a network of contacts on which to draw in particular circumstances. We create collaborative advantage. When a new challenge arises, we build a coalition of the willing from our partners and network contacts with different backgrounds, and we seek to bring about change. We refer to this as a development coalition. It may cross previous borders, facilitating change and offering a context in which action research can bring results.

Development can take place in many contexts. It involves a move from the known to the unknown. People work together, creating social capital, when they trust their coworkers and feel a common sense of direction or shared value. They engage in "pre-competitive collaboration," creating collaborative advantage (Johnsen and Ennals 2012).

## Development Coalitions

Gustavsen's concept of development coalitions (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999; Ennals 2014) has been applied at local, regional, national, and European levels. It provides a unifying theme for his work on organizational change.

A development coalition is a structure in which different partners come together to pursue a shared objective or create collaborative advantage. Regional and national development programs, particularly in Norway, have at times recommended the creation of development coalitions, bringing together large and small enterprises, public sector organizations, and universities or research organizations. Sometimes a new legal entity has been created, with implications both for business and for democratic accountability.

Action research is encountered at the level of individual actors, such as reflective professionals, in accordance with the *Action Research Journal* tradition, and through the *International Journal of Action Research* tradition of organizational change and renewal. These traditions are different, with diverse philosophical reference points and few common references, but Gustavsen wanted to demonstrate that they can be complementary. The integrative but often temporary role of a development coalition can be a link because it facilitates collaboration. It can even be seen as a form of action research in itself, creating a structure that enables new possibilities.

Development coalitions are not a distinct and separate category of organization; they do not provide consistent contexts for individual action research or for analysis by economic geographers. In some cases, where Gustavsen has been influential in program design and management, researchers are employed to follow the policy of the program, but in other cases action research is used to develop and implement strategy.

There have been historic cases of collaborative activity that we might now consider as action research, for example, the creation of NGOs (nongovernmental organizations formed as development coalitions) to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. We can build on past experience and provide foundations for others to use. This tradition has continued in Latin America in emancipatory action research. So, the similarities between work in action research in Brazil and Norway can now be recognized.

## Dialogue and Development

Discussion of development coalitions arises from a context of dialogue, particularly in Scandinavia, where dialogue seminars and dialogue conferences play prominent roles. Within dialogue, individuals can reflect on their own professional experience. They do not necessarily reach agreement, but they are able to move on in their understanding, often working with new groups of people.

Gustavsen articulated principles of "democratic dialogue" which are widely shared, especially in Scandinavia:

1. The dialogue is a process of exchange: ideas and arguments move to and fro between the participants.
2. It must be possible for all concerned to participate.
3. This possibility for participation is, however, not enough. Everybody should also be active. Consequently, each participant has an obligation not only to put forward his or her own ideas but also to help others to contribute their ideas.
4. All participants are equal.
5. Work experience is the basis for participation. This is the only type of experience which, by definition, all participants have.
6. At least some of the experience which each participant has when entering the dialogue must be considered legitimate.
7. It must be possible for everybody to develop an understanding of the issues at stake.
8. All arguments which pertain to the issues under discussion are legitimate. No argument should be rejected on the ground that it emerges from an illegitimate source.
9. The points, arguments, etc. which are to enter the dialogue must be made by a participating actor. Nobody can participate "on paper" alone.
10. Each participant must accept that other participants can have better arguments.
11. The work role, authority, etc. of all the participants can be made subject to discussion: no participant is exempt in this respect.
12. The participants should be able to tolerate an increasing degree of difference of opinion.
13. The dialogue must continually produce agreements which can provide platforms for practical action (Gustavsen 1992, pp. 3–4).

When we consider enterprise and regional levels, work organization can be regarded as a missing link both within and between organizations. In *concept-driven development*, the lead comes from workforce participation. A pivotal role is played by the development organization, which is a temporary and transitional structure allowing participants to explore new ways of thinking and working. The participants may alternate between work organization and development organization, taking ideas and experience with them. The European Union can be regarded as an arena in which development organizations are facilitated, both at the national level and through networks supported by framework programs.

## Regional Development Coalitions

In Norway, with its enthusiasm for regional policies, there is a continuing focus on regional development coalitions, which have been a central component of nationally funded programs of enterprise development (Gustavsen et al. 1997, 2001; Levin

2002). Regional development coalitions provide a means of advancing shared aspirations. They have sometimes been misunderstood as precise descriptions of particular organizational forms, rather than as the outcomes of collective efforts. After an informal start, Norwegian regional development coalitions have become government-funded policy instruments. Researchers were not autonomous but rather were employees in such programs. As a result, there was debate on the democratic credentials of a structure that represented a set of interest groups and could not claim to be detached.

Even in Norway, no two regions are the same in their economic activities, leading institutions, or distinctive cultural histories. New patterns of collaboration were required. Discussion of the issue occurred at a level of analysis above the single enterprise and below the national government. Geographical regions are located at this intermediate (meso) level.

In Europe, regions vary in size, having in common only the fact that they are regions. They host distinctive patterns of innovation. Gustavsen's networking projects have compared experience in many countries: Sweden, Norway, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and the UK (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999). Gustavsen has suggested the concept of *regions of meaning* (Gustavsen 2004), thus escaping the constraints of geography.

Gustavsen led international collaborative research that brought education and training together in coalitions with regional development. His approach was to use European regional learning cases from participating countries such as Germany, Norway, Portugal, Greece, Sweden, the UK, and Lithuania (Gustavsen et al. 2007). He anticipated that lessons could then be learned from the differences among them. Over a series of workshops, researchers described cases in which they were personally involved against the background of other cases. This procedure linked discourses on vocational education and training with regional development.

## The Dialogue Conference

Gustavsen's influence can be seen in the continued impact of the Norwegian Model, which includes an emphasis on democracy, social partnership, social equity, and consensus. He designed and managed national programs of enterprise development made possible by Norway's government income from oil and gas. He developed a research methodology for projects with working life, making extensive use of dialogue conferences (Gustavsen and Engelstad 1986). This method of using dialogue conferences has been widely adopted by his followers.

> Throughout the 1980s, by far the most important measure within the framework of the Norwegian agreement was a kind of conference, initially called a Mapping Conference, later a Dialogue Conference, With participation from all levels of the formal organisation, the purpose of the conference was to create local discussions around issues like work organisation, in the light of the challenges facing each enterprise. The point was the conversation as such. (Gustavsen in Johnsen and Ennals 2012, p. 30)

## Influence

Gustavsen was influenced by the work of the Tavistock Institute in Great Britain on sociotechnical systems and organizational change, where he worked. In turn, his work has influenced Great Britain's Work Organization Network and network partners across the European Union. He has shown himself capable of understanding issues in Great Britain thanks to the common ancestry of the research. Gustavsen has operated in many contexts and often at several levels at once, some of them behind the scenes. At times he is like Alfred Hitchcock, a writer and director who also plays a modest role on stage.

Gustavsen does not generally base himself in academia, but rather at AFI, with active engagement in projects and advisory roles within government. He does not favor grandstanding and Powerpoint presentations but prefers active, engaged dialogue. His contributions appear spontaneous, rather than prepackaged, as he uses the language of his interlocutors. He joins debates and follows the rules of their language games. He operates inside the debate, rather than as a detached observer, and he seeks to encourage concept-driven development rather than expert-led development. This means using the language of the dialogue as a starting point.

> A concept driven process is not only a process which is organised around a specific idea: it also implies that the idea has been developed through broad dialogues within the organisation, where the concept emerges as an expression of contributions from a broad range of organisational members. (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 41)

Gustavsen has been interested in ideas of a third way, between capitalism and socialism, but in practice rather than just rhetoric. This approach has enabled him to explore development coalitions in both public and private sectors. Even when his projects take place in private-sector, capitalist contexts, Gustavsen's focus continues to be on partnership, dialogue, collaboration, and collaborative advantage. He looks at work organization, both within and between organizations.

## Diffusion

It is all very well to develop individual successful cases. Yet how can case studies be applied to specific situations to bring about change? The answer is not obvious. Gustavsen asks whether "it [is] reasonable to believe that experimental changes, star cases, or other examples of 'outstanding systems' could really be diffused or disseminated to other workplaces" (Gustavsen in Toulmin and Gustavsen 1996, p. 18). The way change occurs, according to Gustavsen, is by being diffused through interactions between organizations. As formulated by Gustavsen (Gustavsen in Toulmin and Gustavsen 1996, p. 20):

- Changes are broadly defined efforts which seek to cover all major issues, organizational levels and interest groups within the enterprise.

- Many enterprises are involved.
- In a pattern which encourages cooperation between the participants.
- Based on a pattern of mutual contributions rather than leader-follower.
- Researchers and other professional resources play a role which is complementary rather than leading.
- The efforts are not steered by one single theory of good organization.
- Theories or views on optimum organizational structures are kept open in the early phases of the process.
- General theory, general views, and general assumptions pertain to the process of how to create local understanding and change.
- Continuous interaction between the enterprises themselves is the primary channel of diffusion.

Gustavsen can be seen as Norwegian, Scandinavian, and European. His influence can be seen in each arena. He talks and writes from the experience of practice and suggests an approach to learning from different cases.

> Toulmin in "Cosmopolis" (Toulmin 1990) argues that a discursive comparison of experiences has to be the foundation for whatever can be extracted from each case for use in other cases. In a process of discursive comparison the point is not primarily to decide "who is best" or what "universal truths" can be derived from all the cases taken together, but to use cases in alternating figure-ground relationships which enable each participant to gain a better understanding of his or her practices when seen in the light of what others do, what options they see, and so on. The goal is not to lay down universally applicable laws, but to move ahead through a discourse on experience that can enrich all participants. (Gustavsen in Toulmin and Gustavsen 1996, p. 13)

At the same time, he uses theory to frame practice, for example, when developing international seminars of researchers and practitioners with the objective of creating connectedness rather than pursuing predetermined agendas. As he states: "Innovation is connectedness. Only by being connected is it possible to know what others do and to use this as the raw materials for one's own innovative acts" (Gustavsen in Gustavsen et al. 2001b, p. 245).

Gustavsen presents connectedness in terms of development coalitions, a central concept in his account of organizational change. In one representative passage, he states: "To form learning organisations or development coalitions, we need to learn together. . . .. This is not so much a question of methods as it is of good will" (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 16).

## Key Contributions: Concept-Driven Development

Gustavsen introduced a consistent language for discussing organizational change and development. This enabled others to follow him. Of course at times his followers were not familiar with the background. The key focus was on work organization,

within and between organizations, building the picture from the bottom-up through productive partnerships, alliances, and development coalitions.

> As an expression of the idea of learning organisations, development coalitions are fluid, transitional, continuously reshaping themselves to meet new challenges. Essentially they are made up of horizontal relationships, constituting channels through which information flows, experiences are compared and new solutions are worked out, through extracting the best out of a broad range of experience and ideas. (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 57)

Gustavsen does not see work organization as a separate and distinct area of study. Instead he argues that work organization is a reflexive characteristic of organizations undergoing change. We must recognize that we are involved in such organizations.

> It seems that where much research and thinking on work organisation has gone wrong has been in assuming that a phenomenon that is linked to a whole series of other issues and topics, where each and every one exhibits a substantial dynamic, can be made subject to an autonomous formation of theory. Rather, work organisation seems to demand a reflexive thinking. (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 53)

Younger generations of researchers have adopted methods like his dialogue conferences as a result of his focus on building critical mass.

Gustavsen has also contributed to theory and practice in action research, thus keeping abreast of debates in the field. For some academics his work was outside the mainstream because he emphasized managed research. He considered regions, nations, and continents, rather than individuals. This raised questions about a limited focus on individuals such as chief executives. For Gustavsen, action research and politics are hard to separate.

> We see the role of the researcher as a partner in development coalitions. In a development coalition, the point is not for all participants to become alike but to pool resources, supplement each other, help each other, provide complementary resources.
>
> Within such a context, research has a number of contributions to make, based on its specific competences in conceptual development, in interpreting events, in developing methodologies, and even, provided that the necessary care and caution is shown, to create theory. (Gustavsen 1997, p. 199)

Researchers cannot simply claim objective detachment: they are engaged, part of the subject under study.

Gustavsen created the basis for a family of major programs for organizational change on national and international levels: Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, and the European Union. On the basis of the Swedish LOM and ALF programs, he advanced the development of critical frameworks and a benchmarking methodology. He emphasized that we can learn from our experience of change by describing it against a background of other cases. He introduced assumptions about dialogue and collaboration, rather than simply competition.

As a professor at NIWL, Gustavsen advised Allan Larsson, then Director-General of DG Employment and Social Affairs in the European Commission, on the 1997 Green

Paper, "Partnership for a New Organisation of Work," which expressed many of Gustavsen's ideas. This initiative was less successful than at first appeared, when it provided a focus for international networks. Larsson had been a Swedish minister, and the Green Paper was recommending that the EU should follow a Swedish lead, shortly after Sweden had joined the EU. Others in DG Employment and Social Affairs, for example, from France, took a different view. Gustavsen had a vision of development coalitions, a European network, and a network of networks, with Europe constituting a development coalition. He stated: "It is when we approach the idea of comparisons in settings made up of a large number of actors and enterprises that the idea of 'Europe' as a development coalition starts to gain credibility" (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 9).

Gustavsen led two collaborative projects that focused on Europe as a development coalition: Both followed his approach of dialogue and learning from differences. From his standpoint, "the European Union is itself a development coalition structure which has the objective of supporting development, both at a continental level, and in the terms required by the individual member states, themselves increasingly operating as development coalitions" (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 75). But other policy perspectives prevailed. As a result, Larsson resigned from the European Commission.

Gustavsen chose different units of analysis, rather than the single firm. In particular, he wrote about the meso level, existing between the levels of the firm and the region, which could be highlighted by dialogue conferences. He developed an account of work organization dealing with relations between organizations. He introduced productive partnerships, development organizations, development coalitions, and regional development coalitions. He envisioned "a movement towards network co-operation between enterprises, even a movement towards whole regions becoming 'units of change'" (Ennals and Gustavsen 1999, p. 29).

Gustavsen built academic relationships with American organizational-change theorists, while working in a Scandinavian context. His American audiences did not always understand the context in which he worked, for example, the roles of labor market parties. He enabled the formation of new journals (*CAT, IJAR*) without seeking to dominate them.

He has not sought a high personal profile or sold consultancy services, preferring to orchestrate and to facilitate participation. He could be seen as a modern Machiavelli, working behind the scenes while being sensitive to the needs of the major actors. He has tailored his advice to the needs of actors, enabling them to take ownership. He has empowered others to develop and to present challenges. His personal interventions have been practical, making the complex seem simple. He drew on experience and tacit knowledge, which of course could not be fully documented. His actions expressed what needed to be said.

## New Insights: Development Coalitions

I first met Björn Gustavsen in 1988 after my own experience of managing national research programs in Advanced IT in Great Britain and the European Union. His ideas resonated, and they contrasted with conventional research management. He

referred to a different philosophical framework from the technocentric positivism which then dominated Great Britain. For Gustavsen, collaborative research, even when the apparent focus was on new technology, was primarily about work organization as a reflexive dimension of the organization, the use of language, and the need for developing dialogue.

Gustavsen gave practical reality to philosophical theory in a way I had not previously encountered in Great Britain. He made confident use of philosophers and developed new ways of working. He and Bo Göranzon (Göranzon 1988–1995, 2006) at NIWL were both influenced by Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein 1953; Ennals 2016) and worked with Stephen Toulmin (Toulmin 1990, 2001), John Shotter (Shotter 2006), and Oyvind Pålshaugen (Pålshaugen 2006).

Gustavsen developed what has been called the communicative turn, developing dialogue in organizations and taking up ideas from Jurgen Habermas (Habermas 1984). Live action research case studies provided a starting point for comparisons and further cases. He used discussion of case studies as "an apparatus for linking research to actors in working life, in such a way that research can contribute to practical development" (Gustavsen 2007, p. 97).

Having taken a distinctive approach to action research, Gustavsen set it in a wider context:

> The difference between action research and other forms of research is not that somewhere along the line of arguments values emerge, but that action research explicitly faces the challenges associated with a commitment to values, rather than keep on under the pretence that the challenges do not exist. (Gustavsen 2007, p. 103)

The philosopher Wittgenstein spent much time in Norway. In consultation with Toulmin and Shotter, Gustavsen developed Wittgenstein's work on family resemblances, language games, and forms of life. Typically, practice went ahead of theoretical argument.

> It is this element of "family resemblance" between organisations that, in combination with the ability to conduct dialogues across as many boundaries as possible, constitutes the collaborative advantage of the Scandinavian societies. Numerous different alliances are possible, and the potential for innovation systems correspondingly large. (Gustavsen in Johnsen and Ennals 2012, p. 37)

Gustavsen has always taken an interest in power. He has advised governments and the European Commission. Perhaps more radically, he has seen research and power as closely associated. In his national programs, political and research agendas are often fused into a version of action research. This has not necessarily been recognized as part of mainstream action research.

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: Enabling Processes of Change

If we apply Gustavsen's lessons to our own work, several broad points emerge. There is no one best way. We need to secure the active participation of everyone in an organization if it is to develop; it is a matter of democracy in the workplace and in

society. We need to be able to learn from differences. We must expect our successors to see things differently. Organizations will continue to change.

Gustavsen has linked work organization and policy debate, research and politics. Gustavsen's work continues, with an associated literature. He has always given priority to publication and dissemination. He has worked on the borders between policy and research, with a focus on practical development.

> All concepts applied in social research have two sources of meaning: other words and practical experience. Making knowledge more actionable implies increasing the emphasis on the practical. . ... The shift demands a process consisting of several steps, ranging from establishing dialogic relationships with other people to the development of "regions of meaning", where theory and practice can interact in new ways. (Gustavsen 2004, p. 147)

Could the next generation match his breadth and depth? Alternatively, would they bring fresh ideas and inspiration? He helped establish the doctoral program in Enterprise Development and Working Life (EDWOR), based at NTNU in Trondheim, which brought together researchers from projects around Norway to build a national research culture based on action research. The successful graduates are now leading research institutes.

Gustavsen set out the core ideas for a strong European tradition in work organization. He helped to develop a common language and conceptual approach for participants coming from diverse backgrounds across Europe. He has influenced those who work in the AFI tradition, such as Oyvind Pålshaugen, Olav Eikeland, Morten Levin, and Hans Christian Garmann Johnsen. He continued to maintain links with Swedish colleagues such as Goran Brulin after the closure of NIWL.

Because of his work, the EU Green Paper, "Partnership for a New Organisation of Work" (1997), was Swedish or Scandinavian in tone and assumptions. There has been a continual, active network at national and international levels, such as Peter Totterdill at the UK Work Organisation Network (UKWON) and Steven Dhondt, Frank Pot, and Peter Totterdill of the European Workplace Innovation Network (EUWIN).

Perhaps Gustavsen's most lasting legacy is in Norway, where he has spent the last years of his career. Gustavsen's ideas, some tested in Sweden, underpinned a remarkable series of Norwegian national programs: Enterprise Development 2000, Value Creation 2010, and the VRI program of regional initiatives. It is unusual to have consistent national programs over so many years. Diversity in local and regional programs continued: there is no single common pattern.

Recent academic researchers have discussed issues of power. Gustavsen entered into partnerships with power because he saw dialogue with the labor market parties as underpinning projects on enterprise development. Gustavsen developed the theory and practice of regional development coalitions, which were seen as ways of building collaboration and taking forward change processes. In an era when there was obsession with creating competitive advantage, he laid the foundations for work on creating *collaborative* advantage.

There has been considerable debate about how lessons can be derived from cases. Gustavsen opposed a mechanistic approach to project evaluation. By designing and implementing large-scale programs, he brought cases into contact with each other.

He pioneered Nordic benchmarking and what he called the *figure-ground approach* of describing one case against the background of another. Going one step further and drawing on action research, he has shown what can be learned from a single case.

> When something new enters a map of knowledge, it will not be much noted if the new element is exactly like one or more of those that were already there. It is only when it stands out that it is able to attract attention and trigger new thinking. The notion of learning from differences opens up, for example, forms of collaboration that cut across technologies, branches and the distinction between the public and the private. (Gustavsen in Johnsen and Ennals 2012, p. 34)

## Succession Planning

Björn Gustavsen continues to be active. He is not simply a detached academic observer. We can identify his concern for the future through his active succession planning, in which he has tried to ensure that there are strong candidates for key posts, taking the work forward. This applies to Norway and Sweden. Gustavsen has continued to influence other research leaders in fields such as action research (Greenwood and Levin 1997; Levin 2002; Reason and Bradbury 2001, 2008) and economic geography (Asheim in Gustavsen et al. 2007; and Cooke in Gustavsen et al. 2007). He has been eager to develop mechanisms for dissemination and diffusion, such as the EDWOR doctoral program, and new academic journals (*Concepts and Transformation, International Journal of Action Research*, and the *European Journal of Workplace Innovation*).

Gustavsen has developed an agenda of continuing program themes, which can drive new projects. As he has emphasized, it is the conversation and the process of dialogue that are most important. We cannot expect to agree on final conclusions. We hope to continue to learn. Gustavsen has tackled some big issues, which we continue to explore: regional development, productivity, and innovation. He has challenged over easy assumptions and emphasized the importance of the workplace in innovation. He has laid the foundations for ongoing development. He has focused on empowering practitioners, trade unionists, and employers, and on working with labor market parties. He has seen beyond individual firms, with experience of program learning from national programs (Sweden, Norway, Germany, Finland). He has worked with economic geographers, but he has gone beyond their vision, as he defines regions in terms of dialogue as regions of meaning. He has made a fundamental contribution to the new debate on workplace innovation (Gustavsen 2015).

## A New Project

As this profile was being prepared, Björn Gustavsen marked his 78th birthday. He was also launching a new project (Hansen, 2016, personal communication). As Norway was struggling to deal with the collapse in the prices of oil and gas, it has also accepted unprecedented numbers of refugees. It is a matter of concern to

Gustavsen that this comes when the framework of collaboration between the labor market parties and the wider tripartite dialogue needs to be strengthened. There need to be new ways of organizing cooperation, based on Gustavsen's ideas of development coalitions and creating connectedness. He is now exploring *open cooperation*, where nobody owns the process, but everyone contributes on his or her own premises to create future patterns of cooperation rather than defining the final result in a tribal language. As so often before, Gustavsen is personally engaged. The work is unfinished.

## Conclusion

Bjorn Gustavsen has lived his professional life in a manner consistent with his stated principles. He does not believe in "grandstanding," giving preprepared presentations supported by Powerpoint. Instead of expert-led development, he has always favored a bottom-up-concept-driven approach. As his own health has become less reliable with age, he has worked with younger colleagues to ensure that the work can continue: this is practical succession planning. Today his legacy is again important in his native Norway, and he is one of the key sources for new policy development in the European Union. Rather than acting as a detached guru, Gustavsen has continued to be actively engaged. He is more likely to be found behind the scenes than on a platform. His writing continues to be fluent and insightful, providing practical ideas that others can take forward, and contributing to debates in a number of international journals. He epitomises action research, in that his publications are also actions. Dialogue has been a way of life, and his methods have been taken up by the next generation of organization researchers.

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As seen above, Gustavsen has contributed to the development of a rich supporting literature. This final section includes a short list of reference books that enables readers to further their interests.

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# Armand Hatchuel and the Refoundation of Management Research: Design Theory and the Epistemology of Collective Action

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## Blanche Segrestin, Franck Aggeri, Albert David, and Pascal Le Masson

**Abstract**

Armand Hatchuel's work marks a turning point in management research and paves the way for a refoundation of management science. Hatchuel's research deals with organizational *metabolism* rather than organizational change, as he is concerned with the drivers of change and with the organization of innovative collective action. Several theoretical milestones can be put forward. First, Hatchuel offers a theory of the cognitive processes of generativity: while decision theory targets optimization by supporting the selection of a solution, "C-K theory" is a design theory. It accounts for the generation of new alternatives by expanding what is known, this process being driven by desirable unknowns. This theory has provided the theoretical cornerstone characterizing the rationality and organization of innovative or design-oriented collective action. Second, in Hatchuel's view, learning and organizational dynamics are tightly bound. Learning processes are hosted and supported by social relationships, which, in turn, are shaped by the distribution of knowledge. Hatchuel proposes a theory of collective action whereby knowledge and relationships are involved in a dynamic interplay: this theory shows that both markets and hierarchies are special and highly unstable forms of organization, because they imply that either knowledge or relationships are frozen. Management scholars contribute to the study of *generative forms of collective action*: Hatchuel argues that management science, far from being applied economics or applied sociology, is a basic science devoted to

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the design and study of new models of collective action. He therefore opens up promising avenues for programs on post-decision paradigms and creative institutions.

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**Keywords**

Collective action • Management sciences • Innovation • Innovation management • Design theory • Generativity

## Contents

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## Influences and Motivations: Beyond Management as Optimization (Capturing the Hidden Trajectories of Rationalization Waves Through Intervention Research)

Armand Hatchuel's work marks a turning point in management research, with his theory of creative and responsible collective action. A full professor at MINES ParisTech, he has been the scientific director of the Center for Management Science since the 1980s. He is also a fellow of the Design Society and a member of the French Academy of Technology. He began his research at Ecole des Mines in 1973 in the newly created Center for Management Research. In the 1980s, he benefited from the French intellectual landscape and from debates about management research. The National Foundation for Management Education played a major role by supporting annual workshops on epistemological issues where doctoral students and senior researchers could meet to discuss the epistemology and academic identity of management science (Moisdon 1984; Martinet 1990). They addressed questions such as: What is the object of management research? Why is it different from older established disciplines like economics or sociology? What is a managerial situation? Is management science a social science? Or an engineering science? Hatchuel was

eventually able to make landmark contributions to these debates by elaborating a new foundational perspective on management (Hatchuel 2001a).

Drawing on his background in engineering, he started working on operations research (OR) and its industrial applications. Later, the general concepts of instrumentation, rationalization, or formalization of collective change were always central to his research. However, Hatchuel draws on diverse fields and disciplines, from mathematics (see, for instance, Hatchuel 2008; Hatchuel et al. 2013) to philosophy, via arts (cf. his admiration for Duchamp) or rhetoric (Hatchuel 2006, 2013). His research involves extremely in-depth empirical studies. For instance, Hatchuel has led longitudinal studies on a metalworking company, on public transport, and later on industrial design offices and research units. But his research also focuses on mega-transformations of organizations or what Hatchuel called "waves of rationalization" (Hatchuel and Weil 1995; see also Hatchuel's historical view of the firm through an analysis of the successive forms of management: Hatchuel 2004).

In this diversity of references and methods, there are some clear unifying concerns in Hatchuel's research. First, in our view, Hatchuel has always focused on new phenomena that push our theoretical frameworks to their limits and call both for new ways of observing them and for renewed theories. He has always advised younger scholars to study what was not covered by existing theories, either new practices or phenomena, or problems that revealed that the theories were no longer matching the empirical facts (Hatchuel 2001c; Hatchuel and David 2007). In this sense, quantum mechanics has always been a fundamental reference point for Hatchuel because to capture an unobservable phenomenon, a researcher needs to develop new ways to describe it, to interact with it, and to discuss its theoretical implications. To be able to capture what is new and unable to be described within traditional frameworks, Hatchuel willingly calls up various fields of science and models, including mathematics and physics, of course, but also law and psychology, to make visible some generic templates or relational schemas that need to be either complemented or contradicted.

Second, and perhaps more critically, the governing principle in Hatchuel's research has been to study not the new phenomena themselves but rather the mechanisms that generated them. For instance, OR interested him as an example of the process of "rational modeling" that underlies any organizational change (Hatchuel and Molet 1986). This also explains why Hatchuel has followed "waves of rationalization" (Hatchuel and Weil 1995) throughout his career. From manufacturing systems to design offices and "design-oriented organizations" (Hatchuel and Weil 1999; Hatchuel et al. 2006), he was tracking not only new words or new organizations but also the transformative drivers behind them. In this respect, he has paid thorough attention to the way in which new pieces of knowledge can transform social relationships and also to how relationships condition the possibility of knowledge creation. Here, the influence of the philosophy of Michel Foucault should be emphasized (Hatchuel 1999b). As a management scholar, Hatchuel took Foucault's thoughts one step further (Hatchuel et al. 2005): how could these drivers be created and amplified, that is to say, *organized*? These

questions may explain the attachment that Hatchuel has with some institutions, such as Ecole des Mines and the Cultural Center of Cerisy la Salle. Ecole des Mines (today MINES ParisTech – PSL Research University) is one of the oldest institutions for engineering research and education, and it is clearly no mere coincidence that Hatchuel's research takes place in an environment of engineering sciences: engineers develop what he called "actionable" knowledge or knowledge for the sake of collective action. More particularly, compared with researchers, engineers not only model observable phenomena but also tend to generate new phenomena (e.g., the electric car, 3D printing, and antibiotics without resistance). As a result, these phenomena can invalidate existing theories and call for renewed ones. As for Cerisy's International Cultural Center, many "colloques de Cerisy" (1 week of intensive meetings) have punctuated the intellectual path of Hatchuel. This is a symbolic place where researchers, public actors, and industrial practitioners have met for more than a century to undertake collective intensive reflection and develop genuinely new thoughts in an interdisciplinary and truly progressive way (Hatchuel 2011).

## Key Contributions: Integrating Organizational and Technical Changes: Expandable Rationality and Generative Collective Action

While he has definitely contributed to the field of organizational change, Hatchuel has also coined broader terms to characterize various research issues. For instance, instead of organizational change, he refers to the "metabolism" of the organization, which he defines as the factors that enable an organization to renew itself. Here, the term "metabolism" does not refer to a kind of natural transformation. Hatchuel uses it to point to the mechanisms that drive the change more than to the change itself, be it planned or emergent. He is indeed more interested in the "*organizing of the change*," i.e., the activities that lead to the possibility of change, including the extension of the range of conceivable changes and the definition of its objectives, scope, and actors.

Here, we do not pretend to cover all the work Hatchuel has done or influenced. On the contrary, we deliberately focus on three major contributions, namely, the modeling of prescribing relationships as the core of the organizing action, the modeling of post-decisional logic with the C-K theory, and the theorization of collective action.

### Organization and Knowledge as Interrelated Dynamics: Multiple Forms of Expertise and "Prescribing Relationships"

Organizational change, especially in its rationalized form, is classically associated with a conscious attempt to modify an organization in accordance with some form of expertise and preestablished models. However, it is clear that no change happens without learning processes. Even the implementation of a technique, be it managerial

(e.g., planning, kanban, or a roadmap) or otherwise, implies that some knowledge must be learnt and then implemented collectively in a certain way. The dynamics of organizational learning have proved to be decisive in any organizational change. Working on the way in which OR can change an organization, Hatchuel observed that the final state of the change was itself a matter of learning: rational models of OR were conceived as "rational myths," i.e., formalizations, within a given state of knowledge, of the possible desirable organizational forms, and as a way to engage a reflective learning process within the organization (Hatchuel and Molet 1986).

To gain a thorough understanding of the way in which knowledge was produced and used in concrete organizational settings, Hatchuel analyzed the role of experts in organizations. For instance, he studied in a reflective way the intervention processes of management scholars. In the 1990s, in conjunction with Weil, he studied experts extensively, focusing on expert systems in organizations. Together, they modeled the nature of expertise in connection with the actions it enables (Hatchuel and Weil 1995). They showed that the way knowledge was produced conditioned its possible uses and that the coordination of learning dynamics appears to be critical in the act of organizing. This approach served to denaturalize organizations. An organization necessarily results from a genealogical process, wherein the structures and organizational relationships shape the learning processes, but they are reciprocally transformed by the knowledge that is produced.

In this way, Hatchuel invites us to consider not only the organizational change itself but also the "*organizational metabolism*" through the interplay between knowledge and relationships. For instance, instead of focusing on job division, we need to account for learning division, because the ways in which knowledge is produced necessarily shapes the definition of the jobs itself. First and foremost, *organizing* involves defining the appropriate conditions for learning processes. It could be said that Hatchuel has moved beyond the field of organization theory to usher in a new theory regarding of *changing processes* or *organizing* itself.

This led Hatchuel to revisit the legacy of F.W. Taylor and offer a completely new reading of Taylor's contribution to organizational theories (Hatchuel 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999a, 2004; Hatchuel and Ponssard 1996). Taylorism is often seen as the distinction between conception and execution of workflows, but Hatchuel observed that this interpretation neglects the diversity of knowledge required in modern organizations and the conditions necessary to produce it. On the contrary, Taylor recognized that independent workers could not develop the tools and methods required to manufacture more complex and changing products. The organization needed people to specialize in the production of these new products and methods. This explained the birth of a new category of actors (namely, the planning department) as well as a new epistemic community, which would later lead to scientific management and more broadly to the field of management science.

Hatchuel introduced the key notion of "prescribing relationships," without which it is impossible to understand organizational dynamics. The term "prescription" refers to the notion of recommendation by an expert, typically a physician. Hatchuel uses it to designate all statements that impact the knowledge, actions, and judgment of other people, while being neither orders nor hierarchical commandments

(Hatchuel 1998). This takes into account prescriptions that may be imprecise, "weak," or "open", as well as reciprocal prescriptions.

This was a drastic turnaround. Not only does the notion of "prescribing relationships" shed new light on Taylorism, but it also revisits the classic notions of markets and hierarchies, which appear as extreme cases. Although they are oversimplified constructs, both markets and hierarchies imply that their members share knowledge about both the role of each stakeholder and what they do together or exchange. This can happen in extreme configurations, but in general, knowledge is always missing, e.g., knowledge about the functionality of a product or its quality or knowledge about stakeholders and their respective roles. To work effectively, both markets and hierarchies need prescribing relationships.

In Hatchuel's research, the notion of *prescribing relationships* was decisive because it provided a key to interpreting the crisis of industrial organizations in the 1990s. The more intensive the regime of innovation became, the more complex but also unstable and fragile prescriptions appeared. It became necessary to study the possibility of organizing prescriptions in the *unknown*.

## Beyond Bounded Rationality and Decision Theory: Expandable Rationality and a New Design Theory (C-K Theory)

In the 1990s, a whole series of new organizations emerged designed for innovation. The literature introduced new notions such as new product development, project management, absorptive capacity, and alliances. Clearly, organizations needed to change to be able to innovate in a more systematic but also a more disruptive way. In our view, Hatchuel's team took a radical step forward by suggesting that organization theory first supposes a theory of the ways of reasoning and that these ways of reasoning could themselves be managed and made more innovative.

A posteriori, we can understand the scientific path that led to that breakthrough. In a situation of intensive innovation, very few prescriptions are stable and robust: the designers have to develop a product, despite the fact that they know very little, or nothing, about the demands of consumers, the possible technologies, and the business models that are available. Under these conditions, the various models provided by the literature are insufficient: they still address situations where designers have prescriptions and need to improve their products and processes to better fulfill the requirements. But what if the requirements are no longer known? How should the learning processes be organized when the required knowledge has not yet been identified?

Hatchuel and Le Masson showed that research activity organizes a specific type of learning process, namely, one aimed at maximizing the controllability of the knowledge produced (Hatchuel et al. 2001). However, other types of learning processes are possible. How should we characterize a process whose aim is to identify what knowledge is missing or which learning process is needed? Beyond organization theory, what

was at stake was decision theory. Hatchuel criticized the "unfinished" program of Herbert Simon (Hatchuel 2001b), because Simon still saw design through the lens of "problem solving." However, knowledge is not necessarily produced to solve a problem; it can be produced with the ultimate goal of opening up new and unexpected perspectives. For Hatchuel, these open-ended learning processes need to be understood and organized if we are to speak about innovation management. The design theory developed by Hatchuel and Weil expands upon decision theory (Hatchuel and Weil 2002, 2009): it models the reasoning process that, instead of selecting a solution from among a given set of solutions (regardless of how large and ill-defined the set is), allows for the expansion of the set of solutions. To do that, they show that it is necessary to introduce "undecidable propositions": a design task does not start with a "problem" but with an *unknown*, i.e., an undecidable proposition (for instance, "a computer with no energy" or a "magic light"), which can be neither validated nor invalidated using existing knowledge.

The design theory developed by Hatchuel, Weil, and Le Masson is called the "C-K theory." This is a formal model of the generative reasoning that building upon set theory accounts for the creation of new objects. Starting from an unknown, referred to as a "concept," the C-K theory accounts for the dual transformation of the knowledge (K) space (where the concept stimulates new learning processes) and the concept (C) space (where knowledge leads to the specification of the properties of the concepts). The creative process is a result of this dual expansion. The authors claim that the C-K theory is not only an interpretative framework for generative processes but enables innovation, as the formalism reveals, to be structured and controlled in a rigorous way.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the implications of C-K theory in detail, but it has led to a series of important results in relation to organizational change. Several of the theoretical methods used to evaluate the innovative capacities of either projects or organizations have been developed using C-K theory. The KCP (Knowledge-Concept-Proposals) method has also been derived from C-K theory to support creative processes involving numerous heterogeneous participants. Today, our understanding of generative logic has opened up many perspectives on the analysis and conduct of change in various organizational contexts (e.g., firms or ecosystems).

## New Foundations for a Theory of Collective Action: The Knowledge/Relationships Axiomatic

The third, but probably most significant contribution of Hatchuel to the field of organizational change, is his theory of collective action. Hatchuel argues that collective action can and must be designed, because neither its goals nor its forms are known a priori. Hatchuel has always paid close attention to avoiding this fallacy, which consists of considering things/circumstances as given. This is especially true

for the enterprise, as it is neither a natural social phenomenon nor an anthropological fact. The enterprise is probably one the most "artefactual" forms of collective action, because it constantly redefines what it does and how it does it (Hatchuel 2001a). Because it is the locus of *designed* collective action, the enterprise is (or could be?) the very transformational place in our society.

Collective action is hardly describable in the classical language of the social sciences. As soon as one wants to institute unprecedented forms of action, new language also needs to be deployed. A collective action has the specific property that it cannot be realized unless a model has previously been formulated. Probably the simplest example of collective action is a meeting. For a meeting to take place, the parties have to agree on what is an appointment, using related maps and clocks. Similarly, when we refer to companies, joint ventures, and matrix organizations, we always refer to designed *models of action*. A company cannot innovate without formalizing how it can explore unknown spaces. For instance, it cannot develop a new eco-friendly range of products without formulating not only the properties of the products themselves but also a way to explore these properties and their feasibility. Obviously, innovative collective action cannot occur without new models of collective action.

This perspective has had a great impact on organizational change because instead of focusing on the organization, Hatchuel focuses on the coordination of the learning processes. Instead of adopting a contingency perspective, he speaks of the genealogy of collective entities. Instead of considering the rationality of a change, he invites us to think in terms of *rationalization* to emphasize the possibility of generating new rationality frames. Finally, instead of assessing a company's performance, he suggests that we study the epistemology within which its performance criteria have possibly emerged (Hatchuel 2001a).

Hatchuel's formulation of an a*xiomatic theory of collective action* (Hatchuel 2001a) is both generic and ambitious. Combining his former work on rational modeling and prescribing relationships, he rejects what he calls the "metaphysics" of action that reduce the total forms of possible action to a unique principle (e.g., utilitarianism). Collective action must be studied to the extent that it *transforms* relationships and utility functions. The only invariant in the theory of collective action lies in what Hatchuel calls "a principle of inseparability between knowledge and relationships" ("*Le principe fondamental d'une théorie de l'action collective est l'inséparabilité des savoirs et des relations*") (Hatchuel 2001a, p. 28). This principle refuses to consider that knowledge is independent of relationships. It also refuses (and this may be more original) to view relationships as independent of the knowledge and the organization of learning processes in which they take place (Hatchuel 2005, 2007). This gives a theory based on what Hatchuel coined in French "*l'axiomatique savoirs/relations*" (the knowledge/relationships axiomatic). This focus on collective action as a matter of design and organization is central, because it paves the way for new definitions of management and management science.

## New Insights: Management Science as a Basic Science

For Hatchuel, the purpose of management lies in the design of models of collective action. Management science "is a basic field of research devoted to the study and design of *theories, models and tools of collective action*" (Hatchuel 2002, 2005). As Hatchuel and David noted, "*Likewise, physics is not the study of "reality," but the study and revision of physical models. Consequently, the dialectics between established management theory-in-use and contextual management theory-in-use can be assessed as an important main driver of management theory and history*" (Hatchuel and David 2007). This offers a new perspective on management science: instead of viewing management as lying at the crossroads of economics, law, and sociology, Hatchuel contends that management has a distinctive objective in the modeling and design of new models of collective action. In this way, he also makes some rather radical criticisms of economics and sociology. In his view, economics and sociology have been built on restrictive forms of collective action. Having assumed several behavioral models of economic actors, economists have stabilized an underlying utility function, and in so doing, they have become blind to the possibility that collective action transforms utility functions. Similarly, sociologists often posit various special forms of relationship or social status, thereby preventing themselves from conceptualizing how new actors appear or how new forms of relationships are built. However, both history and practice offer numerous examples in which efficiency criteria, as well as societal values, are substantially modified.

In a famous article referred to in France as laying the groundwork for a "foundationist perspective" for management science (Hatchuel 2001a), Hatchuel called for a revised view of the management sciences, arguing that:

> management sciences are neither applied economics or sociology, nor a project for educating future managers with a series of practical tools (accounting, marking, strategy. . .). Management sciences are better characterized by the need of our contemporary society to make emerging forms of collective actions more intelligible and to allow the design of unprecedented organizations. (our translation, Hatchuel 2001a)

Retrospectively, Hatchuel has found that the management science project was probably at the core of the work of the famous pioneers of management. Building upon classical as well as forgotten seminal texts of Fayol (1917, 1918), Hatchuel recently offered a new interpretation of Fayol. A chief executive, natural scientist, and organization theorist, Fayol was a particularly innovative manager who actively supported a scientific approach and achieved major industrial success. Hatchuel showed that Fayol had a visionary understanding of management. In the late nineteenth century, he was confronted by a surge in scientific research in industry. In this context, businesses called for a new function, which Fayol conceptualized as the administrative function. The mission of this business administration function was

to organize a controlled and responsible venture into the unknown. It was to hold the organization together *despite the unknown it generated by its exploratory action* (Hatchuel 2016). Hatchuel showed that Fayol had pioneered subsequent research on "creative" organizations, dynamic capabilities, and alternative rationalities based on design and discovery. With this historical detour, Hatchuel once again offered new insights in relation to integrating the dynamics of change and innovation into the foundations of management theory.

## Legacies and Ongoing Programs: Toward a Theory of Creative Rationalities and Institutions

Among the various impacts of Hatchuel's research are several ongoing programs in which the authors are participating in conjunction with Hatchuel.

### A Post-Decisional Paradigm of Collective Action

A program has been launched on design theory, with the support of a number of industrial partners: the Chair "Design theory and Methods for Innovation." This program explores the so-called post-decisional paradigm, i.e., forms of collective action that are unable to be modeled using classical decision-making models (such as problem solving, optimization, and planning) because the level of unknowns and the generativity of action play a critical role (e.g., innovation management and creation in art or science). This follows Hatchuel's research logic: first, explore the models of thought and rationality, and then, relying on these models, explore and model all facets of collective action. In this program, the models of rationality are derived from design theory. In recent years, these works have contributed to the development of a basic science of design theory, which is comparable in terms of its structure, foundations and impact to decision theory, optimization, and game theory. They have reconstructed the historical roots and evolution of design theory, unified the field at a high level of generality, and uncovered theoretical foundations, in particular the logic of generativity, in "design-oriented" structures.

These results have contributed to a paradigm shift in relation to the organization of R&D departments, supporting the development of new methods and processes in innovation centers. They are also at the root of many works on innovative organizations (see Agogué and Kazakçi 2014) and have helped to better characterize their logic and performance. Following the paradigmatic pattern of decision theory, which articulates models of decision theory with experimental study of decision-making behavior, design theory was also discussed from a cognitive perspective: just as decision theory helped to diagnose individual and group behaviors that depart from decision-making models, design theory helps to conduct "theory-driven experiments" on biases in the ideation process and helps to diagnose fixations in individuals, groups, or professions (e.g., Agogué et al. 2014). The program also studies the so-called design regimes at the level of industrial ecosystems, identifying new forms

of lock-in based on collective fixations or, conversely, describing forms of "unlocking rules" and generative institutions, i.e., situations where the institutional logic does not impede but rather supports a collective venture into the unknown (Le Masson et al. 2012). It also helps to provide firm ground for a critical perspective on creation and design.

## A Theory of the Firm as a Locus of Collective Creation

A second program focuses on the theory of enterprise, which mainly proposes that modern companies with professional management emerged at the end of the nineteenth century because of the need to organize the development of new collective capabilities (technologies, functions, methods, competencies) that would not otherwise be available. This breakthrough in relation to the history of collective action has deeply transformed our societies. However, despite the tremendous expansion of companies throughout the twentieth century, this process has not been sufficiently conceptualized and has continued to be overlooked, both by the economic theories of the firm and by corporate law.

This has led Hatchuel and Segrestin to explore within an interdisciplinary project at College des Bernardins a new theory of the firm and to question the existing models of corporate governance and corporate law. The transaction cost approach views the firm as a means of reducing transaction costs and controlling opportunism. However, the alternative perspective developed by Hatchuel and Segrestin builds upon the historical development of management as a distinctive function. It conceptualizes the enterprise as an entity dedicated to *collective creation* as opposed to production. In other words, this perspective views the firm as a means of creating the potential for action that does not currently exist and for which there is not yet a market (Segrestin and Hatchuel 2012). In doing so, they build on the stakeholder theory of the firm, which emphasizes that there is great interdependence among firms as a result of co-specialized investment. However, they go beyond the stakeholder theory of the firm by offering a very specific conceptualization of the role of management as the key to developing the collective competence of the firm in pursuit of an innovative strategy. Then, considering that the law of (public) corporations was already established prior to the birth of modern management, they question the implications of this gap and investigate possible management-based (or innovation-driven) principles of governance, such as mission-driven corporations (Levillain et al. 2014; Segrestin and Hatchuel 2011).

## Conclusion

Beyond these programs, it is worth noting more generally the opening up of the field of epistemology by Hatchuel. By focusing on collective action, Hatchuel often combines traditionally distant academic fields, for example, innovation management and design theory are combined with business history and law. However, more

fundamentally, his work questions the constituent hypotheses of disciplines such as economics and sociology because they often posit given models of action. A good example is the field of law, which management scholars have often considered to be a given starting point when studying forms of collective action. However, law, like other managerial tools, merely formalizes historical and contextual models of responsible action. Modeling the renewal dynamics of collective action necessarily leads to a change in perspective: instead of considering law as a starting point, management science needs to provide lawyers and scholars in law with new models of action, including generative ones.

To conclude, following Hatchuel, we can only speculate on the future of management science. Do we need to reorder the discipline, similar to what happened in relation to physics at the end of the nineteenth century? Or, rather, should we consider that the key impacts of Hatchuel's work also relate to other fields and that the notions he has shaped are useful for various disciplines? Hatchuel has searched for solid and rigorous foundations for management science with such deep theoretical bases that they likely constitute a common ground for the social sciences and perhaps even more distant fields. Maybe it is the mark of genuinely critical research that it springs from within a single discipline but is eventually more broadly diffused among many disciplines.

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# Loizos Heracleous: Uncovering the Underlying Processes of Change

Angeliki Papachroni

**Abstract**

Loizos Heracleous holds a Chair in Strategy and Organization at Warwick Business School and is also an Associate Fellow of Green Templeton College and the Saïd Business School at Oxford University. His work over the years aims to uncover how organizations change, adapt, and evolve overtime, with particular reference to how individuals interpret and frame strategic issues. One of his most prominent contributions is linking organizational change and development with a number of perspectives and themes in strategy and organization, such as organizational discourse and ambidexterity. Heracleous' body of work contributes to fundamental questions around organizations, such as what elements influence organizational change and development processes? What is the role of organizational discourse, metaphor, dialogue, culture, and learning? How can organizations implement dual strategies that contain elements that are in mutual tension? In order to answer these questions, Heracleous brings forward an interpretive hermeneutic approach to theory and methodology and uncovers underlying aspects of organizational change and development through different theoretical lenses: discourse theory, structuration theory, paradox theory, institutional theory, and strategy as practice.

**Keywords**

Dual strategies • Organizational change • Organizational discourse • Structuration theory

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# Influences and Motivations: Philosophy, Sociology and Organization Theory

In addition to his birthplace of Cyprus, Heracleous has lived and worked in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Singapore, resulting in a deep appreciation of the different social and cultural elements that influence the study and practice of strategy and organization theory. At the same time, this experience – together with an innate curiosity of how people and organizations work – has contributed to his effort to identify the common threads that transcend differences. A pattern in Heracleous' work has been his focus on key issues of organizational change and development, as well as their location in broader strategic and social contexts.

Heracleous studied for his undergraduate degree at Lancaster University between 1989 and 1992. At that time, the business school at Lancaster was home to prominent scholars of organization theory such as Karen Legge, Stephen Ackroyd, Mike Reed, and Gibson Burrell (all of these scholars are still associated with Lancaster University as emeritus or visiting professors). From them, Heracleous received an appreciation of the subtlety of social and political processes in organizations and an understanding of how formal structures do not really represent what takes place in organizations. In particular, he was most intrigued by those processes that are often emergent and implicit and interact in complex ways with what is planned and explicit. During those early years of scholarship, Heracleous learned to look for the multiple and often contradictory meanings and motivations underlying actors' decisions and actions.

He was also able to indulge in a variety of topics at Lancaster. He studied management, law, and philosophy during his first year and later continued to pursue learning on a variety of areas of interest. Heracleous' undergraduate dissertation – which was based on the interrelationship between Asian meaning systems (Confucianism and Buddhism) and martial arts of Japan – reflected this pluralism of intellectual pursuits. Overall, his experience at Lancaster was instrumental in his appreciating the value of reading widely and bringing together concepts that may not at face value appear connected. It was during these early years of study that Heracleous also realized that these interconnections could be a source of conceptual innovation, an insight that characterizes his work throughout the years.

Following his undergraduate degree, Heracleous continued his studies (MPhil, PhD) at the Judge Institute of Management Studies, University of Cambridge. While at Cambridge, he was fortunate to be supervised by scholars with similarly broad interests who allowed him to follow his intuitions and forge his own path in his dissertation work. Heracleous' MPhil dissertation, titled *Language as Symbolic Activity in the Context of Strategic Change Processes* was supervised by Charles Hampden-Turner, philosopher of management and society. His PhD dissertation, *Strategic Change, Culture and Discourse*: *Conceptualizations and Interconnections*, was supervised by John Hendry – who has a background in the history and philosophy of science. During his years at Cambridge (1993–1997), Heracleous began looking at the broadly defined area of discourse. He was interested in reading more about rhetoric, hermeneutics, and metaphor and how these shape both people's ways of thinking as well as the culture and change processes of particular communities. Before the time of online databases, he spent many hours in the university library, unearthing titles in anthropology, linguistics, and philosophy. This area of study would later become an important and central part of his academic contribution to organizational theory and change.

After the conclusion of his PhD, Heracleous moved to Singapore, where he focused on issues of corporate strategy, first as assistant professor in corporate strategy at the National University of Singapore (1996–1999) and then as associate professor (2000–2004) at the same university. As he shifted his focus to a new cultural environment, his research focused on corporate strategy in Asia, leading to a number of publications (Heracleous 1999a, 2000, 2001a, b). He served as director of the Strategic Management Executive Program at the National University of Singapore from 2001 to 2003 and trained company directors on best practices in corporate governance from 1999 to 2004, as part of the Singapore Institute of Directors' accreditation program. At the same time, a series of publications helped to inform his pedagogy of board directors and executives (Heracleous 1999b, 2001b; Heracleous and Lan 2002; Lan and Heracleous 2007).

In 2004, Heracleous became an official fellow at Templeton College and, in 2006, a reader in strategy at the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford. He has held the positions of professor of strategy and organization at Warwick Business School, University of Warwick and Associate Fellow of Green Templeton College and Saïd Business School at Oxford since 2007. During recent years, he extended his work on corporate governance, strategy, discourse theory, and organizational change.

A strong advocate of bridging theory and practice, Heracleous has developed and delivered several executive development programs in leading corporations around the world, in areas such as strategic thinking and planning, leading transformational change, fostering strategic innovation, developing core competencies and strategic alignment, dealing with dilemmas of corporate governance, developing corporate social responsibility, diagnosing and managing organizational culture, and organizing for the future.

A central pedagogic vehicle for linking concepts and practice has been the case study method, which Heracleous has been engaged in through his career. Examples

are the cases reported in his books *Business Strategy in Asia* (Singh et al. 2013) and *Practicing Strategy* (Paroutis et al. 2016), as well as cases published by the Case Centre. His book *Flying High in a Competitive Industry* (Heracleous et al. 2009) as well as various articles on Singapore Airlines (Heracleous et al. 2004, 2005; Heracleous and Wirtz 2006) helped apply concepts to practical situations during several years of training MBA students and senior managers. From this work also came a "breakthrough idea" published in Harvard Business Review's annual list of such ideas, on applying biometrics to services (Wirtz and Heracleous 2005).

Over the years, Heracleous focused his research on three distinct yet interrelated domains: organization change and development, strategic management from an organizational perspective, and organizational discourse.

## Key Contributions: Organization Change, Discourse Theory, and Strategy Implementation

A central element of Heracleous' contribution has been the study of organization change and development in relation to a variety of challenges and themes, such as strategy implementation, discourse, and organizational ambidexterity.

*Organizational change and discourse*. One of Heracleous' most prominent contributions is the study of discourse and organizational change. Following the linguistic turn in social sciences – which saw language not only as instrumental for communication but also constructive of social and organizational reality (Dandridge et al. 1980; Pondy and Mitroff 1979) – Heracleous became interested in the role of discourse within the inherent complexity and fluidity of organizational life. His focus on the constructive role of language draws from seminal works in organization theory (Weick 1979; Pondy and Mitroff 1979), sociology of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Ortony 1979; Moscovici 1981), and linguistics (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; de Saussure 1983).

Heracleous initially focused on the interrelationship between discourse, culture, and change through his MPhil and PhD research at the Cambridge Judge Business School. His doctoral research was based at the UK offices of a global human resources management consulting firm. Through a series of cultural and communication audits with the senior management team (involving in-depth interviews, group sessions, observation and historical analysis), Heracleous studied the impact of organizational culture in the strategic redirection of the organization and provided feedback to senior executives that helped to inform their management of the change process (Heracleous 1995). The methodology was an integration of ethnography with a clinical, action research component (Heracleous 2001c; Schein 1987), indicating Heracleous' early interest in knowledge development that is close to practice. In undertaking this study, it was accepted that the organizational paradigm was enshrined within a "cultural web" (Johnson 1992) of artifacts: the behavioral manifestations and the institutionalization of the accepted beliefs and assumptions (Heracleous 2001c). The implications of this approach for organizational change is that "it is seen as especially difficult to achieve because of the influence of cultural

beliefs and assumptions on individuals' interpretations and actions, their taken-for-granted nature which effectively precludes them from open debate, their close link with the power centers of the organization, and the internal consistency, self-legitimacy and self-sustenance of the cultural web" (Heracleous and Langham 1996, p. 487). In order to contribute to the company's knowledge base, Heracleous also researched and prepared two reports that focused on issues of integrated consulting that took into consideration interconnected elements, as well as a compilation of state-of-the-art knowledge of leadership (Heracleous 1996, 1998).

Bringing sociological concepts such as structuration theory into the area of organization change and integrating discourse theory and structuration theory is another significant contribution of Heracleous' work (Heracleous and Hendry 2000; Heracleous and Barrett 2001; Heracleous 2002, 2006a, b, 2013a). The concept of "duality of structure," central to Anthony Giddens' theoretical scheme, suggests that "social structure is both constituted *by* human agency and yet is at the same time the very *medium* of this constitution" (Giddens 1993, pp. 128–129, emphasis in original). Giddens also referred to the nature of language (grammatical rules in relation to spoken or written language) as an example of the duality of structure (Giddens 1984). According to Heracleous and Hendry (2000), Giddens' work aims to transcend the structure–agency dualism and to reconcile interpretive and functionalist sociological views, in common with the work of such theorists as Bourdieu (1977) and Silverman (1970).

The discourse in this perspective, via its framing effects, is central to individuals' interpretation and action and thus shapes organization change processes. Discourse "itself becomes action that can either aid or hinder change processes" (Heracleous 2002, p. 257). Drawing from the works of Giddens (1979, 1984, 1987, 1993) and Ricoeur (1991) in hermeneutics, as well as Aristotle (1991) in rhetoric, Heracleous developed a conceptualization in which discourse is viewed as a duality of communicative actions (utterances) and deep structures (such as root metaphors, central themes, or fundamental assumptions), interacting through the modality of actors' interpretive schemes (Heracleous 1994; Heracleous and Barrett 2001; Heracleous and Hendry 2000). This conceptualization of discourse allows the studying and understanding of both the functional aspects of organizational communication and the deeper structural properties of discursive practices within organizational contexts. The structural elements in particular are intimately connected with aspects of the organizational paradigm and are therefore important to appreciate and influence in processes of change. As a result, "the study of change processes emerges … as a hermeneutic investigation into the dynamics of discursive interpenetrations and clashes, the deeper structures that guide agents' interpretations and actions and how these shape change outcomes" (Heracleous and Barrett 2001, p. 775). This research introduced a novel perspective on the dynamics of change processes through a discursive analytical approach that is sensitive to the inherent complexity of organizational life.

Focusing on the constructive and symbolic aspects of discourse, Heracleous and Marshak searched for deeper symbolic meanings and discursive constructions that could shed light on what is observed and its context (Heracleous and Marshak 2004).

The work on this topic led to a conceptualization of discourse as "situated symbolic action." This view of discourse proposes three interrelated analytical levels relating to discursive action, situation, and symbolism. Although these layers are presented sequentially, they provide a nested, complementary, and additive analysis of progressively increasing complexity (Heracleous and Marshak 2004).

Heracleous' subsequent work showed that organizations can host different "modes of discourse" simultaneously; these discourses are not autonomous but are linked with other discourses in cooperative or antagonistic ways. A discourse analysis of an organization change process revealed a complex picture of the rule of a dominant discourse that is relatively stable at the structural level but flexible at the communicative action level, where situational exigencies can be addressed and debated in the "approved" way (Heracleous 2006a, b). This research led to some key propositions regarding the role and nature of different modes of discourse: first, that those modes of discourse can be usefully conceptualized as rhetorical enthymemes (argumentations in practice) constituted of relatively stable, normative structures and flexible, action-oriented structures. Second, that those modes of discourse can interrelate through their deeper structural features and can have mutually co-optive or antagonistic relationships. Third, that the constructive potential of discourse is based primarily on its deeper structures and on the consonance of surface (communicative) actions with these structures (Heracleous 2006b).

*Organizational change and embodied metaphors*. Another area of interest for Heracleous are studies of "embodied metaphors," these being collaboratively constructed physical analogs of organizational issues as interpreted by groups of actors, as described in the book *Crafting Strategy*: *Embodied Metaphors in Practice* (Heracleous and Jacobs 2011). Together with Jacobs, Heracleous presented the use of embodied metaphors as a novel metaphorical approach to organization development (Heracleous and Jacobs 2008a, b; Jacobs and Heracleous 2006). The role of metaphors as cognitive and semantic devices in the discursive construction of meaning had been recognized in the organizational change and development literature (e.g., Cleary and Packard 1992; Marshak 1993; Sackmann 1989). The influence of metaphorical reasoning in organization theory over the years draws from the work of Morgan (1980, 1983, 1986), who challenged the dominant mechanistic and organic metaphors that had guided theorizing within a functionalist paradigm, through a conscious understanding of the impact of such taken-for-granted metaphors on organizational theorizing.

Jacobs and Heracleous extended these understandings and uses of metaphor in organization development by going beyond the dominant semantic–cognitive dimension to address the spatial and embodied dimensions (Jacobs and Heracleous 2006). The authors suggested that embodied metaphors can enable politically contentious issues to arise and be decoded and debated, foster creative thinking, and facilitate organizational change by being occasions for collective sensemaking where important issues can be addressed (Jacobs and Heracleous 2006). Crafting embodied metaphors is thus proposed as a technique for strategizing through playful design (Jacobs and Heracleous 2007). In essence, this process enables managers to explore their strategic issues through a facilitated group process of sensemaking.

This method offers participants the opportunity to challenge their mindsets and paradigms through the interaction of individual perspectives and the symbolic building of group perspectives, enhancing their readiness for organization change.

*Organizational change and corporate governance*. In an influential stream of work, Lan and Heracleous examined the intersection of management theory and law to uncover the myth of shareholder supremacy in corporate governance and to propose redefinitions of key precepts of agency theory, as well as the nature and role of the board of directors (Heracleous and Lan 2010, 2012; Lan and Heracleous 2010). Based on a systematic analysis of a century's worth of legal theory and precedent, Heracleous and Lan suggested that according to law and contrary to agency theory assumptions, shareholders do not own the corporation, which is itself a legal person with the right to own property. Further, in cases in which directors go against shareholders' wishes, courts historically side with directors, given the business judgment rule and the legal role of directors as autonomous fiduciaries rather than representatives of shareholders (Heracleous and Lan 2010; Lan and Heracleous 2010). Based on these findings, Lan and Heracleous critically reexamined agency theory as the basis of corporate governance literature and proposed reformulations that have begun to inform theorization and empirical research in new directions. Through this work, Heracleous and Lan redefined the principal in the agent–principal relationship from shareholders to the corporation, the status of the board from shareholders' agents to autonomous fiduciaries, and the role of the board from monitors of management to mediating hierarchs among competing stakeholder demands. This reformulated agency theory exhibits institutional sensitivity, as it recognizes various stakeholders as team members, rather than just adding particular institutional features as variables to the dominant conception of agency theory (Heracleous and Lan 2012; Lan and Heracleous 2010).

*Dual strategies and organizational ambidexterity*. A more recent area of interest for Heracleous has been the implementation of dual strategies and organizational ambidexterity. Research in this domain stems from the need for organizations to respond to multiple and often conflicting goals simultaneously, in order to ensure both efficiency as well as growth (Duncan 1976; March 1991; Raisch et al. 2009). Through the lens of paradox theory, organizational ambidexterity is conceptualized as a dynamic system of nested tensions that may be managed differently across organizational levels, based on how actors interpret those tensions and react to them (Papachroni et al. 2015, 2016).

Organization change and development programs often aim to accomplish ambidexterity or deal with conflicting tensions. Heracleous' work on leading organizations that have accomplished ambidexterity includes Apple Inc. (Heracleous 2013b), Singapore Airlines (Heracleous et al. 2009; Heracleous et al. 2004), and Toyota (Heracleous and Papachroni 2013). Heracleous' ongoing work includes in-depth case research at the Johnson Space Center at NASA that focuses on organization change, culture, and ambidexterity (Heracleous and Gonzalez 2014; Terrier et al. 2017). This research investigates how an established paradigm of a venerable organization in the public sector can change in response to environmental pressures

in a way that does not disrupt its current programs and balances a variety of stakeholder objectives.

This and other work (Heracleous 2003) demonstrate Heracleous' conviction that we can better understand the subtleties of strategy and change by investigating qualitatively and in some depth, how various types of organizations deal in practice with such challenges.

## New Insights: Underlying Processes of Organization Change

Heracleous' work has helped advance the employment of discursive and practice-oriented approaches to organizational change and strategy research. His contributions to prominent collections over the years (e.g., Heracleous 2004, 2011, 2017) have helped to summarize and lay out the main contours of discursive analysis for early career scholars and students of organizations.

His work has also contributed to a more sociologically and philosophically informed approach to the study of organizations. He has followed a rich theoretical tradition concerned with explicating actors' meanings (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and bridging the gap between action and structure in social life (Giddens 1984), based on the recognition that in the study of social systems, understanding individual actors' meaning is of paramount importance. In this context, meaning and therefore social reality is constructed, sustained, and changed through social interaction (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984; Silverman 1970), lending a processual perspective to Heracleous' methodological approach. Moving beyond the "what" to the "how" and "why," Heracleous' work brings forward the complexity of organizational life by focusing on underlying and implicit processes shaping organizational change, as well as organizational life more broadly. Seeking to uncover actors' first-order understandings, as they manifest in their actions, discourses, and material expressions, and to develop frameworks that take account of these understandings, Heracleous' work has spurred new developments in theory and research that have led us to view change in new and surprising ways.

For example, Paroutis and Heracleous (2013) investigated what strategists mean when they use the term "strategy." They tracked discursive patterns over time and linked those to institutional features. Inspired by structuration theory, the authors uncovered enduring central themes of first-order strategy discourse employed by strategists (identity, functional, contextual, and metaphorical) and treated them as structural features shaping communicative actions and constraining and enabling strategic practices. The authors found that there was differential emphasis in strategists' first-order strategy discourse on these themes, at different phases of institutionalization (shaping, settling, selling) of a new strategy practice.

This work paves the way for further research, not only at a micro level of discursive practices and their links with organization change or institutionalization processes but also at a more macro level, drawing further from structuration theory. For example, such research could examine the links between discourses and what Giddens (1984, p. 244) referred to as "episodic characterizations" in the context of "world time," that

is, the analysis of episodes as shaped by historical events and conditions (including prevalent discourses). Such an analysis would proceed on at least three interconnected levels: discursive practices at the micro level, broader discourses at the meso and macro level, and institutional change at the macro level. Heracleous proposed that this type of work – combined with the concept of "time–space distanciation," or the spread of interconnected social systems across space and time – would give a fruitful means of analyzing important issues of social change, pertaining, for example, to globalization and its challenges (Heracleous 2013a).

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Understanding the Complexities and Subtleties of Organizational Life

To speak about the legacy of Heracleous' work while he is 47 (at the time of this writing) and considering himself mid-career would perhaps be premature. If all goes well, he has at least two more decades of further contributions to make. Understanding the complexities and subtleties of organizational life – a goal of Heracleous' from the very beginning – is a never-ending, multifaceted endeavor. His current work includes in-depth case research at NASA's Johnson Space Center, historical research on barriers to structural ambidexterity at Xerox PARC, processual research examining the separation and reintegration of a subsidiary in the context of structural ambidexterity, research on the links between evolutionary lock-in and organization change, research on the micro-practices of strategy presentations, books on implementing ambidextrous strategy and accomplishing strategic agility, and ongoing work on several other themes, including discourse, informal organization and agency theory.

As the field of organization change and development continues to be one of the most complex and intriguing within social sciences, Heracleous' past and forthcoming work will be of continuing resonance in a vibrant and growing field. Based on qualitative, clinical, discursive, and ethnographic approaches, his work illuminates key underlying processes of change and leads the way for further work along these lines. Combining both a flexible and focused way of thinking that draws from insightful observation, traveling, and reading widely, Heracleous' work is an inspiration to scholars and practitioners who value a holistic, practice-oriented, and cutting-edge understanding of strategy and organizational change processes.

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Timo O. Vuori

## Abstract

Strategy execution is a challenging organizational process that intertwines structural, economic, and social processes. Quy Huy's work has increased our understanding of the social dynamics in this context. In particular, his work has described how managers in various different roles perceive organizational events differently, feel different emotions, and take various kinds of actions to promote organizational change. Their emotional reactions, subsequent behaviors, and the feedback loops between various people's emotions and actions ultimately influence organizational outcomes in ways that Quy's research has explicated. He has thus increased our understanding of change processes and also provided practical advice on how executives can better lead the execution of their strategies.

## Keywords

Strategy execution • Emotion • Collective emotion • Qualitative research • Social psychology of change

## Contents

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## Introduction

Quy Huy is professor of strategy at INSEAD. He is most known for his work on the social-psychological dynamics of strategy execution. He has integrated emotions to the understanding of organizational processes, showing how micro-level factors can contribute to collective outcomes. He has been publishing actively for nearly 2 decades and continues to produce high-quality research.

## Influences and Motivations: Financial Guru Meets Henry Mintzberg

For a scholar who is known for highlighting the human side of strategy execution, Quy Huy started from a "hard" place. He received an MBA degree in 1983 and worked as a financial middle manager in a large North American organization for nearly 2 decades. He was doing what financial managers do – analyzing expenses, revenue, and profitability and presenting results and making investment recommendations to top executives while also communicating with peers to obtain validated information.

Although he was performing his job successfully and was known as a "financial guru," he was reflecting more about what was going on in the organizations he worked in. As he continuously faced various seeming less rational aspects of a larger organization such as emotions, politics, and resistance to change, he started wondering how these messy processes influence the success of organizational change and strategy realization more generally.

Working on important business transactions with top executives allowed him to witness firsthand how many strategic plans that seemed beautifully crafted by executives and external consultants underperformed in the harsh reality of execution. Being himself a middle manager, he could empathize deeply with his counterparts through close interactions with them. This allowed him to understand deeply how middle managers can work as both enablers and barriers to strategic change.

He started pursuing a PhD in 1994. Analyzing a major organizational transformation from both middle and top managers' perspective came naturally to him. And it did not harm that his supervisor was Henry Mintzberg, who had defined the difference between planned and realized strategies and discussed how patterns of

actions emerge through daily choices. Henry and Quy formed a perfect match with Quy's interest in middle managers' role in strategy execution and Henry's extensive knowledge and experience in studying strategy emergence.

Quy's work benefitted greatly from the various lessons that Henry taught him. Like Henry's and Quy's research, these lessons related more to the process of doing something than the substance of the doing. That is, Henry taught Quy how to do good research, while Quy applied these process lessons to the study of strategy execution.

The first lesson was the importance of being close to the phenomenon one wishes to study and to understand it deeply. Henry encouraged Quy to do extensive, systematic data collection. Quy's dissertation had over 200 interviews over 3 years. Quy's existing network and practical credibility enabled him to gain access to a rich set of people, enabling greater depth and insight. (The field study started 3 months after Quy began his doctoral studies, with Henry's blessing, enabling Quy to defend his dissertation after 4 years.)

Despite both Henry and Quy being trained as engineers (MIT and McGill, respectively), they displayed skepticism about the growing legitimacy and emphasis on quantitative techniques in the 1990s to study complex management phenomena. They worried that much useful insights might be lost in this overemphasis, hence the qualitative approach, which made Quy's research highly insightful.

Another important lesson Henry taught to Quy was precision in language. When they were working together in Henry's office, Henry would pick up a dictionary several times per day to find a word that would match his intended meaning. At first, Quy was wondering, "Why do you use a dictionary, you write so beautifully already?" Of course, the beautiful writing did not happen through magic but through hard work and continuous attention to precision. The use of a dictionary is a lesson that Quy continues to follow. It has also been more than once that he has commented his students' and coauthors' work with "Unclear sentence. Please rewrite for clearer English."

The third important theme Quy learned from Henry is humility. Quy got a book contract from a famous publisher 3 years after his PhD – when he had already published in *Academy of Management Review*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *Administrative Science Quarterly*. He mentioned to Henry that he was awarded a book contract with a highly prestigious book publisher on his research 4 years after his PhD as a single author. Henry's reaction was fast and surprising to him: "Write a few more academic articles first. You don't know enough to write a book. It is too early for you." Henry told his doctoral students "Do not take yourself too seriously. But do take your work very seriously."

Hard work follows from humility. Quy remembers how he was sitting in his small room in the university (he used to have a large of office and secretarial staff in his former corporate life) and learning to type as a PhD student, while others were out having beers on a Friday night. It is still not uncommon to see that the lights are on in his office during strange hours. As he once advised an aspirational student, "you should spend most of your waking hours reading the literature or collecting rich data."

Quy perceives Henry also as a role model of producing academic research that is both rigorous and managerially relevant. A litmus test for this approach is whether the same research can be published in both top academic journals and top practitioner journals and books. It is fair to say that Quy has been able to emulate his mentor.

## Key Contributions: Emotions and Strategy Execution

Quy's scholarly work centers on strategy execution. He uses a social-psychological approach to understand how initial plans are transformed into actions more or less successfully. Most importantly, he has increased our understanding of the role of emotions and middle managers in this process.

### Emotional Capability, Emotional Intelligence, and Radical Change (1999)

Quy's first hit as an academic was his article "Emotional capability, emotional intelligence, and radical change" in the *Academy of Management Review* in 1999 (Huy 1999). In this article, he rooted the foundation for the work of various scholars interested in the role of emotions during radical organizational changes. The article presents a multilevel theory, describing how individual-level emotional intelligence and organizational-level emotional capability contribute to the success of organizational change.

One of the key insights in the article was that individual-level emotions and emotional intelligence might contribute to organization-level attributes. In particular, Quy theorized how emotional factors influence three important aspects of organizational change: receptivity, mobilization, and learning. Receptivity refers to "organization members' willingness to consider – individually and collectively – proposed changes and to recognize the legitimacy of such proposals" (Huy 1999, p. 238). Mobilization refers to "the process of rallying and propelling different segments of the organization to undertake joint action and to realize common change goals" (Huy 1999, p. 330). Learning refers to the organization's increased repertoire of potential behaviors. These three processes, Quy suggested, would contribute to the success of radical change in organizations. And as emotions were a key antecedent to these processes, emotions could substantially influence change outcomes.

The emotional factors included organizational practices that are analogical to individual-level emotional intelligence. For example, at the individual level, empathy refers to person's ability to understand others' feelings and reexperience them. At the organizational level, an analogical term is emotional experiencing which refers to "the quality of an organization's efforts to identify the variety of emotions aroused during radical change, to accept and internalize them, and to act on a deep level of

understanding" (Huy 1999, p. 335). He proposed that such emotional receptivity would increase the receptivity of the organization to a proposed change.

Other propositions dealt with the impacts of reconciliation (which is the organizational analogy of sympathy), identification (love), encouragement (hope), playfulness (fun), and display freedom (authentic). Quy thus outlined, quite comprehensively, how various different emotions and associated dynamics could each influence organizational processes and outcomes in unique and substantial ways.

## Emotional Balancing (2002)

Even though the conceptual model was what Quy published first, empirical work drove his thinking. A key part of his dissertation came out as a publication in the *Administrative Science Quarterly* in 2002 (Huy 2002). In this article, he described how middle managers' emotional balancing contributed to strategy implementation.

As Quy was interviewing middle managers, he found that some of them were rather assertive and pushing employees to act according to the new strategy. These managers did not pay much attention to the employees' anxieties, but wanted them to focus on the new job requirements.

Simultaneously, other middle managers were empathic. They were not so obsessed with the new goals (even if they did their job), but were more focused on attending to the employees' worries. They listened to them, providing comfort, and sought to help them cope in tangible ways.

The surprising thing in the study was that neither group of managers was successful alone. Neither approach – assertive nor empathic – worked. Units where managers were dominantly assertive failed to implement the change successfully. Rather, units where managers were overly aggressive suffered from chaos. Units where managers were dominantly empathic suffered from inertia.

The change was implemented successfully only in those units that had both types of managers. Emotional balancing was an interpersonal process of two middle managers acting in different roles: one was pushing for the change, while the other was providing comfort and empathy to deal with the personal strain of changing. No one had planned this process, but some units had been lucky to have both kinds of managers.

This study was significant in at least two key aspects. First, it showed how "soft" factors like emotions can indeed contribute to major change outcomes. It also elaborated on the underlying mechanisms with vivid field data.

Second, the study showed how emotional dynamics in organizations could not be fully reduced to the individual level. Emotional balancing was not something that an individual did alone. It required an organization and different roles for different groups of individuals. Hence, while management scholars can and do draw much insight from psychology, Quy's work showed how organizational scholars can provide a unique perspective on understanding social-psychological forces in organizations and their consequences.

## Emotional Aperture (2009) and a Validation Measure (2016)

Having noted empirically that managers varied in their ability to consider their organization's emotions, Quy started wondering, with Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks from the University of Michigan, how managers read others' emotions. They developed the concept "emotional aperture," which refers to "the ability to recognize the composition of diverse emotions in a collective (e.g., group or business unit)" (Sanchez-Burks and Huy 2009, p. 22).

The key insight they conceptualized in this article was that collectives of people do not all feel the same emotions, but there can be subsets of different emotions. Successful leaders, they argued, would recognize the differences of the emotions experienced by various groups in their organization and make use of this diversity. In contrast, less successful leaders might only recognize the emotions displayed by the majority or dominant individuals and therefore fail to influence emotions as effectively to facilitate organizational change.

An illustration that Sanchez-Burks and Huy give relates to the ability to detect shifts in the composition of collective emotions during organizational change. It might be that the majority of the organizational members are still relatively positive about an ongoing change, but the proportion of people who feel contempt toward the top management is increasing. Even though still a minority, such a response from the organization might signal severe problems. Leaders with higher emotional aperture would be faster to recognize such shifts and thus have the possibility of taking corrective actions before the problem becomes too severe.

In 2016, with other colleagues they published a follow-up empirical article that shows how emotional aperture as a personal ability can be measured and why it matters (Sanchez-Burks et al. 2016). This study shows that a leader's ability to recognize accurately the distribution of positive, negative, and neutral emotional displays in a group is more strongly associated with perceived transformational leadership than recognition of individual emotions, which has been typically used in measuring emotional intelligence.

Again, Quy successfully moved from an individual to the collective level. The articles built on the basic ideas relating to emotional intelligence and emotion recognition, but considered their applicability in the larger and more complex organizational context rather than interpersonal interactions.

## How Middle Managers' Group-Focus Emotions Influence Strategy Implementation (2011)

Another empirical breakthrough in describing the effects of supra-individual emotions on collective outcomes occurred in 2011 with a case study published in the *Strategic Management Journal*. In this case study, Quy showed how middle manager groups' group-focus emotions influenced strategy execution.

Group-focus emotions refer to emotions that people feel on behalf of a group with which they identify. When there is strong identification, people experience

emotions when the group's situation changes, even if those changes actually had no implications for them. For example, a person can feel happy after a football game if his team wins, even though that does not make the person's life better in any objective terms.

In work organizations, people also identify with various groups, and these identifications, along with the group-focus emotions they produce, can substantially shape how middle managers react to top-down changes. Quy found how some top managers' task-focused, affect-neutral approach inadvertently made some middle managers feel group-focus emotions that related to their social identities. The particular social identities included the length of time working for the company (newcomers vs. veterans) and the language spoken by senior executives (English vs. French). When managers perceived that their social group was disfavored in strategy execution, they experienced negative group-focus emotions, which made them resist the change, even when the changes would have favored them personally. The consequent resistance slowed down change implementation.

A crucial observation in this study was that many middle managers acted according to their group-focus emotions rather than personal emotions. This suggests that the collective level can be stronger than the individual level for important organizational processes. Even though we often think that individuals are primarily considering what is beneficial for them personally and that management systems should therefore motivate people at the individual level, Quy's findings suggest nuance. Individual-level systems may not be sufficient if the collective ones are not working properly.

## From Support to Mutiny (2014)

Emotion and cognition are related in reciprocal ways. In 2014, Quy described, with Kevin Corley and Matthew Kraatz, the interplay of emotional reactions and legitimacy judgments during radical organizational change (Huy et al. 2014). They showed how middle managers' emotional reactions influenced the outcome of the change process that unfolded over 3 years.

Things started well. The company had a new CEO and he had a plan. The CEO made important promises such as involving middle managers in defining the content of the upcoming radical change and removing work processes before laying off people. The CEO also set a 3-year deadline for the change, which seemed to him as a reasonable time frame.

The organization accepted the CEO's plan and was excited to have a savior. They saw that he was not attached to the old guard and knew how to plan and lead radical change. Their emotional reactions toward him were positive or neutral. They supported the change projects and were involved in them.

However, as the change moved from formulation to implementation, perceptions changed. The CEO shifted his focus to external pressures and devoted less time in supporting the internal implementation of the change projects. He also failed to follow through some of his early promises because of changing circumstances. The

concrete consequences included larger than expected turnover, decline in customer service, and change fatigue.

Middle managers, who initially supported the change, got increasingly frustrated. They reacted with negative emotions. They inferred that the top managers' lacked operational knowledge and engagement and blamed them for project underperformance and change fatigue. They started covertly resisting the change.

Things only got worse. Weak performance triggered the CEO to initiate additional layoffs to achieve his financial promises to shareholders. He also reduced the scope and resources for implementing the change projects. Customer service continued declining, and many of the change projects championed by middle managers underperformed.

Middle managers grew increasingly dissatisfied with the top management. They perceived that top managers were not keeping their promises and that they were short-term oriented mercenaries. They felt increasingly negative emotions and ultimately disobeyed top managers. Devoid of legitimacy, the CEO had to resign.

Theoretically, this study was important in linking middle managers' collective emotional reactions to their cognitive perceptions of the CEO's legitimacy and associated leadership effectiveness and strategic change outcomes. While Quy's previous studies had explained differences between the change performances of some units – such that those units whose middle managers conducted emotional balancing performed better – this study focused on explaining an organization level outcome.

## Distributed Attention and Shared Emotions in the Innovation Process (2016)

Another study that linked emotions to organizational outcomes described Nokia's fast decline in the smartphone industry after the introduction of the iPhone. Quy showed, with Timo Vuori, how Nokia's top and middle managers' experienced various kinds of fear that influenced the quality of information exchange between them and harmed the development of the operating system software for smartphones (Vuori and Huy 2016).

Structurally distributed attention was a key factor causing differences between the groups' emotions. As typical for large organizations, Nokia's top managers had a better view of the overall situation of the organization and an external focus, whereas middle managers were more focused on matters in their own domain and the directives coming from the top of the organization (rather than outside). It is therefore natural that the strongest emotions experienced by top managers related to external entities, whereas the strongest emotions experienced by middle managers related to internal entities. In addition, some top managers' aggressive behavior and Nokia's privileged position in Finland amplified middle managers' fears of losing personal status.

Top managers showed fear toward external entities, mainly competitors and investors. Their fear was particularly strong after Apple (iPhone) and Google

(android operating system) entered the smartphone market. Nokia's top managers realized that their company was under severe threat. They therefore commanded the organization to develop competing products as fast as possible and thus exerted an intense pressure on the organization.

At the same time, middle managers were less worried about the external threats. Rather, they feared the top managers inside the company. They therefore agreed verbally with the increasing demands of top managers, even though they privately doubted their feasibility. They also reported embellished data to top managers because they feared top managers might punish them for reporting bad news.

The consequence was that the top managers continued making increasingly demanding requests, which forced product development groups to take shortcuts that harmed longer-term development of the operating software. This allowed the company to maintain superior performance for a few more years, but problems started accumulating, leading to lower phone quality. Ultimately, the CEO was replaced.

This study was insightful in that it showed mechanisms that linked organizational emotions to information flows during the innovation process, which then influenced the fate of the organization, that is, this paper moved away from overt resistance during strategy execution to more nuanced mechanisms of how emotions can influence organizational outcomes through indirect mechanisms such as managers' daily choices, communication, and other processes.

In addition, this study advanced our understanding of organizational structures by linking them to the emotions experienced by different organizational groups. It thus shows how the interactions between the "hard" and "soft" dimensions of organizational design can impact organizational behaviors and strategic outcomes.

## In Sum: Connecting Micro Emotion with Macro Strategy Execution

The cumulative body of Quy's emotion-related works has shown how seemingly micro, intangible emotions – which have been much ignored in the strategy literature – could produce significant effects on corporate performance.

Many strategy scholars deal with the conceptual and empirical challenge of linking individual cognition (or emotion) with collective behavior by assuming that an organization thinks and acts like a single person (e.g., CEO) or a think-alike group (e.g., top management team or TMT). However, assuming that the firm has the psychology of one person, who chooses for the collective, or that many individual choices add up to a collective one does not always fit the real world of organizations. Only in the specific cases of small firms and autocratic managers would collective actions be likely to reflect the choices of a CEO. Firms are really coalitions of diverse groups with varied interests. Quy's research has shown, for example, that middle managers can collectively disobey the CEO in carrying out strategic change or mislead their CEO through embellished communication.

Quy's novel contribution involves multilevel theorizing that links micro-level emotions with organization-level processes such as strategic change, organizational

innovation, and the building of new organizations. Quy has brought fresh thinking into this field in at least two major ways. First, his research supplements a dominantly cognitive view of strategy with an emotional one. He focuses not on emotions per se but on the interaction between cognition and emotion and how this interaction influences collective action. Until very recently, emotions were usually avoided in strategic management research. If treated at all, emotion tended to be associated with harmful outcomes such as cognitive biases, rigidity threat, or escalating commitment. Instead, Quy's research relies on a more complex understanding of emotion and its effects. Positive emotions do not always help or negative emotions do not always hurt. All depends on the specific context and how these emotions are perceived and managed.

Quy's second major contribution is the articulation of new mechanisms that link emotion with organizational processes and outcomes. One distinctive feature of strategic management is its emphasis on collective action. It is thus important to articulate the mechanisms by which social-psychological processes – and in particular, emotion – influence collective action. Quy has proposed two new linking mechanisms: emotion-based organizational routines and collective emotions.

The first linking mechanism is emotion-based organizational routine, drawing on the well-accepted concept of routine in strategy, and thus inspired by evolutionary theory (Nelson and Winter 1982). This mechanism underlies Quy's early publications. Through this linking mechanism, Quy advanced the novel theories of organization-level emotional capability and emotional balancing.

The second linking mechanism is collective emotion, which builds on group identification theory. As individuals, people can experience similar emotions because they identify themselves strongly with a group – even if their direct personal interests are not at stake. Many of Quy's more recent projects continue to explore collective emotions while deepening research on emotion-based organizational routines.

Note that these two linking mechanisms – emotion-based organizational routines and collective emotions through group identification – complement each other and enable the exploration of their effects in strategic contexts such as post-merger integration, entrepreneurship, top management teams, and organizational innovation.

## New Insights: From Emotions to Emerging Economies and Digitalization

Quy continues to expand the understanding of the social-psychological dynamics of management in less traditional contexts. Two particularly important domains are emerging economies and digitalization. Both are areas that are likely to lead to major global changes, for both companies and societies. Hence, in addition to helping us understand how established organizations and societies react to the radical changes (as discussed above), Quy's work might just enable progress elsewhere.

For emerging economies, Quy has studied, with Yidi Guo and Zhixing Xiao (Guo et al. 2016), how Chinese middle managers manage the political environment to achieve market-related goals. This study, again, shows how middle managers have a

central role in enabling organizational effectiveness. It also elaborates on the practices that successful middle managers use.

For digitalization, Quy, with Andrew Shipilov (Huy and Shipilov 2012), found that companies that are successfully using social media internally to important objectives take actions that build emotional capital. Social media can lead to various reactions and the building of emotional capital seems to foster productive reactions. Social capital refers to the aggregate feelings of goodwill toward a company and the way it operates. They also discuss ways through which executives can build such capital.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Practical Impact and New Change Contexts

Quy's work has caused strategy scholars to start taking emotions more seriously. While developments in experimental psychology (e.g., Lerner et al. 2015) and neuroscience (e.g., Phelps et al. 2014) have done their part – mainly through lab experiments – Quy's work has shown how emotions operate in the real-world context at the collective level and can indeed shape strategic outcomes. It has now become more accepted that the psychological micro-foundations of strategy do not only include cold cognitive processes, but hot emotional processes are at least equally important. Quy has not only shown that emotions can influence companies' success but has explicated the mechanisms in detail. The detailed case studies and insightful theorizing on them have inspired many scholars to think how emotional and other social-psychological factors play out in organizations.

The emotional side of strategy execution complements, in a sense, Simon's idea of bounded rationality. Bounded rationality provided a fundamental insight for our understanding of and theorizing about organizations. Yet, as Simon himself noted (1983, p. 29), we can fully understand human rationality only if we also take into account emotions. While psychological research on emotions and their influence has advanced greatly during the past decades, Quy has been among the first scholars to describe and theorize the implications for organizational processes.

The latest sign of the increasing acceptance of the emotion-based view of organizing is the special issue in the *Academy of Management Review* in 2016. In this issue, coedited by Quy, various scholars theorize how emotional factors influence important organizational processes.

Despite the theoretical advances, the challenge of translating good research into skilled practice remains. Quy's long-standing research on organizations shows that most executives know "intellectually" that it is important to pay attention to stakeholders' collective emotions and perform emotion management to energize collective action. But in practice, few firms actually energize collective action consistently and effectively. To date, few have been able to develop systematically a set of emotional capability routines; many consider this capability too difficult to develop and implement.

An important future development to address the knowing-doing gap relates to measurement, in addition to popularizing the research and disseminating it through education. Quy's work has mainly been theory building, but also quantitative large-sample tests are needed for validating the ideas. Even though some progress has been made (Sanchez-Burks et al. 2016), scholars will hopefully develop various advanced ways of measuring collective emotions and link them to strategic outcomes. Such advancement of will not only benefit practice by working as a second foundation for developing effective tools for organization to make collective emotions more tangible.

Another area where much progress can still be made relates to contexts other than organizational change. Quy has noted that emotions can be particularly influential in contexts such as post-merger integration (see also Vuori et al. 2016) and interorganizational collaboration (see also Vuori and Huy 2016b). In such contexts, traditional mechanisms that influence people's behaviors in organizations can be less powerful as hierarchical relations are vaguer. There is thus more room for emotional influences.

## Conclusion

Quy Huy's work has helped us see organizational change and strategy execution as a combination of traditional "hard" processes such as financial management and "soft" factors such as emotional reactions and empathy. This has led to a collective effort by various scholars, which has helped various managers to transcend their naïve understandings of organizations and lead strategy execution more effectively.

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# Elliott Jaques: Father Time and Requisite Organizations

<span style="float:right">**38**</span>

Margaret Gorman

**Abstract**

Elliot Jaques' body of work spans over five decades and profoundly shaped the discourse in organizational development and change through his demand for precise definitions and scientific research to advance our ideas of human behavior and social institutions. He authored twenty books and published across a wide range of discipline journals but more notably constantly remained engaged in consultancy research with organizations from a developmental perspective seeking to help build their capacity to be more effective. His cross-discipline training in medicine, psychology, sociology, economics, psychoanalysis, and social sciences shaped his perspective and contribution to the field of organizational development. The primary puzzle of practice he sought to resolve focused on organizational design and the extent to which organizations are stratified to match the level of work commensurate with cognitive capabilities of the managers accountable for the work out of that level. A Canadian-born psychoanalyst, Elliott Jaques started his educational training with a BA from the University of Toronto in 1937, then an MD from Johns Hopkins Medical School in 1941, and a PhD in Social Relations from Harvard University in 1952. He held several positions within research and higher education institutes, starting as the first project leader for Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatry, founder and head of the School of Social Sciences at Brunel University and research center, emeritus research professor in Management Sciences at George Washington University, honorary professor of Buenos Aires University, emeritus professor at Brunel University, and founder of Cason Hall Publishing with his wife Kathryn. He was honored with several awards, to include Consulting Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association, Joint Chief of Staff of the US Armed

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Services, and General Colin Powell recognition for "outstanding contribution in the field of military leadership." Jaques cited as one of the most undeservedly ignored management researchers of the Modern era. Elliot Jaques died March 8, 2003 in Gloucester, Massachusetts, USA – still productively engaged in his consultancy research and in developing useful concepts for organizations.

**Keywords**

Requisite Organizations • Midlife Crisis • Felt Fair Pay • Time Span Horizon • Managerial Accountability

## Contents

*No amount of alchemy doth scientific chemistry make – nor did the alchemists develop scientific chemistry. Like old soldiers who never die, the alchemists just faded away.*

*E. Jaques.*

## Introduction

Elliot Jaques is part of the first generation of scholars who shaped the field of organizational change, to include other key contributors such as Kurt Lewin, Wilfred Bion, Melanie Klein, Eric Trist. Elliot's career as social consultancy researcher parallels the evolution of the field of organizational change. Early career Jaques arrived at Tavistock Institute during time when the field was in its infancy and Tavistock sought to bring together interdisciplinary teams of scholars to solve organizational problems. Elliot served as Tavistock's first consultant to lead a 3-year project with Glazier Metal Company. Elliot's major contribution was his development of Stratified Systems Theory and Requisite Organization which he had then spent the rest of his career working directly with organizations to implement. Elliot was both a cultivator of the value of action-research using credible research practices and useful theory to inform organizational design; and he was a provocateur of management consultants who did not use scientific methods nor precise concepts. The following chapter provides the Elliot's professional background, key ideas, and major legacies to the field of organizational change.

## Influences and Motivations: Cross-Discipline Training and Practice

Elliot John Jaques was born January 18, 1917, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Jaques' education training began with his undergraduate studies in the natural sciences and biology at the University of Toronto. Thirsting for a more comprehensive approach to understanding personality development, Jaques continued his education with a medical degree at Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore, Maryland, USA. The integration of the biological and cognitive science perspective enhanced Jaques's perspective on the dynamics of human development and the factors affecting personality development. Jaques spent the following years as a Rantoul fellow in psychology at Harvard University and eventually received his PhD in social relations in 1952. These were exciting years at Harvard for Jaques where studied with H.A. Murray and the research staff, along with exposure to sociology via Talcott Parsons and anthropology via Clyde Kluckhohn.

Jaques's training made him an important thought leader, trainer, and evaluator for the Canadian Army during WWII. During WWII, Jaques had the opportunity work with a group of psychiatrist and social scientist in the British Army, many of whom he went on to work with at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Jaques served as the liaison between psychiatric units of British and Canadian armies working primarily on officer selection methods.

Jaques remained in Britain after WWII as a psychoanalyst at the British Psychoanalyst Society. Under the mentoring of Melanie Klein, Jaques became qualified as a psychoanalyst and became a founding member of Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. In his initial years, Jaques spent mornings as a psychoanalyst with clients and then his afternoon at engineering firm the Glacier Metal Company – shaping his

interest around how people and organizations interact and development. Jaques considered Melanie Klein the most creative analyst after Sigmund Freud.

It was at Tavistock where Jaques started his career in social consultancy research. Jaques was exposed to an extraordinary group at talent at Tavistock, to include Wilfred Bion, Eric Trist, Thomas Wilson, Ronald Hargreaves, and John Bowlby. Jaques was also exposed to the work of Kurt Lewin and his research center for Group Dynamics at the University of Michigan, although later Jaques' work would make a departure from the groups dynamic approach that he had been so involved in at Tavistock.

One of Jaques's most influential work experiences stemmed from his role as the first project leaders for a 3-year grant with Tavistock and the Glacier Metal Company. Jaques was the primary consultant on this project, and his role as a social analyst brought him in direct contact with Wilfred Bion. Jaques also had the opportunity to work with and learn from Bion's subordinates to explore issues around managerial accountability and decision-making which later informed Jaques own writings. Numerous papers by Jaques and Bion were produced based on their work at the Glacier Metal Company, two include two books they collaborated on. For 17 years, the Glacier Metal Company maintained a continuous analysis of all aspects of its organization as an integral part of sound management as introduced by Jaques and colleagues from the Tavistock Institute.

Jaques next set of influencers were scholars he worked with at Brunel University. Jaques was recruited to head a new school of social sciences and would spend 6 years to include creating a new social search institute. The institute served as base for wide range of consulting projects in the National Health Service, the Church of England, the British Civil Service, and various industrial and commercial organizations. While at Brunel, Jaques conversations and collaborations continued with more cross-discipline scholars such as Daniel Miller (psychology) and John Vaizey (economics) and key members of Brunel Institute of Organization and Social Studies (BIOSS).

In the 1980s, Jaques became involved with another long-term engagement with an Australian mining company (CRA), along with the US Mary Research Institute for Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI). These long-term engagements enable Jaques to closely partner with managers/leaders to co-create understanding about how to design organizations based on the principals Jaques was trained in. Jaques considered these practioners key influencers for refining his thinking using credible methods to ensure the conceptual ideas are useful for practice. Jaques' commitment to remaining engaged through an action research approach with the client is a value still held strongly today by organization development consultants.

In 1999, Jaques founded the Requisite Organization Institute (ROI) in Massachusetts. Like his Tavistock and Brunel creations, the ROI was an educational and research group who engaged in consultancy research, training, and publications (Cason Hall).

Jaques' work was shaped by his educational training in human relations, along with practioner training at the Tavistock Institute. His approach to understanding human cognition and action in the context of social systems was developed through

an interdisciplinary perspective. Jaques's conceptual approach to organizational dynamics was grounded in the ideas from Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis, Melanie Klein's theoretical foundations in psychodynamics, and group relations work of Wilfred Bion and John Rickman. Jaques' medical training in cognitive and social therapy shaped his contributions within Tavistock around the use of social systems as a defense against anxiety and establishing methods of helping organizational members deal with disturbing emotional experiences. Jaques' interdisciplinary approach matched the approach of those scholars involved in the formative years of Tavistock. Tavistock was comprised of an interdisciplinary collection of scholar's whose work bridge the practice of psychoanalysis, the theories and methods of group relations, and the open systems perspective. This setting had an enormous influence on Jaques' approach to human and organizational phenomenon.

Jaques was motivated to resolved unsolved puzzles around psychological-social aspects of human motivation and the dynamic tension between individual needs and organizational needs. "My concern became how to develop social institutions that can enhance morality, human effectiveness, and human creativity." This concern was Jaques' motivator for his evolving body of work. In addition, Jaques' commitment to being engaged in the field in collaboration with the client site using credible theories guided his consultancy research over his life-span. Jaques was very critical of management consultants who did not use sound concepts or approach interventions without using credible action research methods. Jaques was highly motivated to train those practicing in organizations to focus scientific rigor and well-defined concepts in their interventions. Jaques' human development focus brought forth a term he invented "midlife crisis," and his organization development focus brought forth his theory of stratified systems which are discussed in the following subsection.

## Key Contributions: Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, Midlife Crisis, Stratified Social Systems

Jaques' career contributions span over 50 years – from his pre-WWII psychoanalysis contributions through his active engagements with organizations up until 2003. He felt strongly that no one science alone can tell the complete story of man (Bellak and Jaques 1942) and thus pursued an interdisciplinary approach to his own education and to his work in organizations. Jaques' early work focused mostly at the individual level, integrating psychology, biology, and cognitive sciences – he knew of the importance to consider the contextual factors that shape personality development.

Jaques' work centered on the inherent tensions between individuals and organizations in pursuit of its goals, along with the inherent tensions between the social and technical aspects of social systems as a whole as the system interacted with its external environment. The following section provides a brief discussion on some of his key contributions, including his human development concept of "midlife crisis," his theories on level of work requisite of cognitive capability, his theory of stratified systems which evolved into "requisite organizations," and his final moral imperative for living systems around time, science, and freedom.

## Adult Development: Midlife Crisis and Developmental Approach to Organizational Development

Jaques was intrigued by observed patterns in mid-career adults around changes in their creative capacity. Jaques coined the term "midlife crisis" to reflect his observations of adults in mid-thirties who experienced a decisive change in the quality and content of creativeness. Jaques noticed the propensity in artist to commit suicide in their late 30s, a point at which artist experienced a major shift in their creativeness. Jaques' term refers to a time when adults reckon with their own mortality and their remaining years of productivity. Jaques approach to the development of individuals was from a stage-phase perspective, highlighting the unique adjustments that occur at critical phase, change points, and process of transitions. These ideas were integrated into his requisite organization theory to highlight the need to create conditions to foster ongoing development of the individual who would be progressing along a trajectory of change and development. Thus, his concept of the midlife crisis and his developmental approach to organizational development also makes him considered an early contributor to positive adult development.

## Tavistock Institute of Human Relations: Innovation through Interdisciplinary Discovery

Jaques was among the original social scientists at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. The Tavistock institute was an interdisciplinary collection of social scientists that came together at the end of WWII evolving from the Tavistock Institute of Medical Psychology and the Tavistock Clinic. The organization was established as results of lessons learned during WWI around the importance for training psychiatrist and allied professionals. After WWII, Tavistock integrated the group relations work of Wilfred Bion and others who shifted the perspectives to an "outsider within," marking a transition away from traditional individual-psychoanalytic view to a view of the importance of working with whole group. This broader perspective is foundational to ideas of organization development.

The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations evolved into an interdisciplinary action-oriented research organization found in London, England, in 1946 with the aid of a grant from the Rockefeller Center. The founders include Henry Dicks, Mary Luff, Tommy Wilson, Isabel Menzies Lyth, John Rawlings Rees, Wilfred Bion, Leonard Brown, Ronald Hargreaves, and Elliot Jaques. Jaques and his founding colleagues were soon joined by Kurt Lewin. Lewin brought forth insight about adult learning and advocated for experiential learning environments, touting that they were more effective than traditional lecturers. The tolerance for different points of view due to the uncertainty of the times and infancy of the professional field cultivated conditions for Tavistock to be the incubator and the clearing house for these multi-paradigmatic developments. Jaques and this talented collection of social scientists became known as the "Tavistock group." Tavistock Institute became a human laboratory through the development of many groundbreaking

ideas many of which came from various projects and group relations conferences that brought together all the great minds in the field. Their style of research linked theory and practice in new modes and subsequent publications such as *The Social Engagement of Social Science* which included three perspectives: the sociopsychological, the socio-technical, and the socio-ecological. These perspectives were interdependent and centered on the ideas of societal change. The Institutes' contributions to theory, research, and practice of organization development and change is invaluable and resulting in an international network of scholars that exist today. Members of the founding generation of Tavistock, including Jaques, created so many sustainable groundbreaking insights into human and organization development that many argue we've yet to match such a talented interdisciplinary collection of thought leaders.

Jaques was the project head for the first project out of Tavistock, which was a 3-year grant to work inside one of London's factories (Glacier Metal Company). The managing director at Glacier had a keen interest in the social sciences, and the efforts of Jaques' work would ultimately lead to comprehensive changes in the organization and in the culture of the firm. In 1948, the British economy was in trouble having a devalued currency, low productivity, and scarcity of capital for investing in new technology. Through this 3-year grant award from the Human Factors Panel within the Industrial Productivity Committee at Tavistock, Jaques functioned in a novel role that enabled process consultation to take place across many areas of conflict within Glacier. Jaques' book (1951), *The Changing Culture of a Factory*, was the first major publication of the Institute, which reported on some of the new concepts formulated such as the use of social structure as a defense against anxiety. The group phenomenon observed was that members of a group unconsciously place inner lives into the emotional life of the group, how individual members use their institutional structures as a defense mechanism often as expression of their own paranoia.

Another development during the formative years of Tavistock group was an equivalent form of sensitivity training pioneered by the National Training Laboratories for Group Development in the USA. The aim of the Tavistock founders was to build social science capabilities into organizations so that they could develop for themselves. Specifically, the Tavistock founders wanted to shift away from dependency of external expertise toward the normative reeducative perspective of building the ability of the organizational members to develop their own organizations that is a central value held today by many organization development scholars. Through the client projects of the Institute, the group sought to leverage their network of individual relationships developed during their work during WWII and seek out organizations that were struggling with meta-problems. Their approach was to use an interdisciplinary team who would join with internal groups in the client organization to actively collaborate for creative solutions. Jaques' leveraged his training to develop "social analysis" method, which would help groups working through conflict. Despite the brilliant breakthroughs discovered by these collaborative engagements, many scholars and practitioners outside of Tavistock were unaware due to the lack of publications and/or unwillingness by clients to disclose due to the sensitive nature of the issues explored.

The international network of the Tavistock institute has had far-reaching impact on the field of organizational development and has inspired the creation of new research centers and university departments in this domain. There were many prominent scholars that at one point resided at Tavistock or who were frequent visitors – whose work dispersed around the World – Canada, Australia, India, the USA, and throughout Europe. From Wharton's Center for Applied Research to Ontario's Quality of Working Life Center, it is clear that the Jaques and the other founding members from Tavistock made an impact.

## Organizational Design: Work Levels and Felt Fair Pay

Jaques' developed theories to address issues in organizational design. Specifically, his work centered on the need to align levels of work with fair compensation for task responsibilities and accountability. Jaques' work provided an empirically based explanation for inherent tensions between organization's need to accomplish goals and individuals working at levels of work commensurate with cognitive abilities, developmental needs, and aspirations. One of Jaques' key focus was the empirical examination of "felt fair pay." Jaques was specifically interested in how individuals within a role can satisfy the expression of their own capability. Critical in Jaques' model of the hierarchy was the need to match the level of work, level of felt fair pair, and the cognitive capabilities of those function at that level of work. Jaques based his theories on his empirical discovers for the Glacier Project which he conducted while he was at the Tavistock Institute. While working with and observing trade union leaders, Jaques observed the challenges with defining equitable pay that was aligned with fair standards and the organizational layers of work and management. Seven levels of work were identified, along with the time span of the task and the nature of the role required for goal-directed activities of the organization.

Jaques' work integrated the ideas of cognitive complexity with the notions of time horizons with a system of managerial accountability. Jaques' observed requisite patterns of organizational strata based on the time horizons needed at each level within the organization.

Jaques' requisite pattern of organizational strata

| Stratum | Time horizon | Typical titles |
|---------|--------------|----------------|
| **VII** | 20–50 years | Corporation CEOs and CODs |
| **VI** | 10–20 years | EVPs of Groups of Bus; BD EVPs |
| **V** | 5–10 years | BU Presidents; Specialist VPs |
| **IV** | 2–5 years | General Managers |
| **III** | 1–2 years | Unit Manager; Unit Specialists |
| **II** | 3–12 months | First Line Mangers; First Line Specialists |
| **I** | 1 day–3 months | Operators; Associates |

The questions for organizations should focus on the nature of their work and the needed requirements for each level of their managerial hierarchy. Jaques believed that the understanding of the mental processing capabilities of managers should be matched with the managerial practices expected for that level of the work required. In other words, different levels of the organizational hierarchy have different task requirements, and thus an effective managerial system aligns a manger's mental process capability and the requisite responsibility of that level. These ideas were critiques for being deterministically rigid and prohibitive of performance of people within organizations.

## Socio-Technical Perspective

The "socio-technical perspective" was a key development that emerged out of the Tavistock members such as Jaques, Rice, Miller, Trist, Bridger, and Lyth. Socio-technical systems integrated the view of both the technological imperatives within organizations and the ways to optimize the human elements. This dynamic tension between individual and organization has carried forward in the OD field, providing understating of the organization's internal dynamics as well as its interactions with the external environment. Jaques' particular focus evolved into the notions of stratified systems, which integrated the ideas of cognitive capabilities and decision-making time horizons. Jaques embraced the inherent tension between the technical and social aspects of organizations as open systems and explored possible reconciliation through organizational design. The work of his Tavistock colleagues such as Emery and Trist would impact scholars such Katz and Kahn and later on OD scholars such as Passmore and Cummings, who expanded on these ideas for designing effective organizations using socio-technical systems perspectives. Jaques viewed his own work as compatible with Kurt Lewin yet moving beyond with a more dynamic behavioral theory that integrates ideas starting with individual intentionality and capability integrated into dynamic living systems.

## Social Systems: Stratified Systems Theory and Requisite Organization

Jaques theory of stratified systems argues that each layer of management has a unique contribution to the overall organization, and while the responsibilities of each layer is different based on the time frame for its accountability, the layers are interdependent. Critical to the systems' design is that the level of the role and its relative complexity in terms of the time horizon to complete the task is aligned with the cognitive capacity of individuals placed within those roles.

Jaques applied his requisite organization concepts in CRS Limited, a major Australian industrial company that diversified its business and evolved into a

$6 billion global company with 25,000 employees at the time Jaques was working with them. During a long-term 15-year engagement with CRS starting in the 1980s, Jaques worked closely with the leadership team in the major organizational redesign based on the principals of requisite organization. Through his systematic application of RO concepts, Jaques contributed to a new way of organizing human resources in a global company.

Jaques' work was highly criticized, and in turn Jaques became very critical of field of management sciences. Jaques expressed concerns about trend toward extreme reliance on group process only at the neglect of function of effective managerial leadership. Jaques believed strongly in the need for precise definitions and evidence-based approaches using credible research designs grounded in organizational practices.

## Father Time: Conceptualization of Two-Dimensional Time and Time Horizons for Requisite Organizations

One of Jaques prime propositions surrounded the dominant notions of "time." Jaques argued that time should be understood by organizational researchers on two dimensions: (1) the measure for how long it takes for an event to occur and (2) by when someone intends to achieve certain results. This two-dimensional conceptualization of time articulated by Jaques was grounded in Greek ideas of Chronos and Kairos and is indicative of Jaques multi-perspective approach to understanding complex human phenomenon. Along with his nickname as "Father Time," Jaques was known for his somewhat combative passion for the management sciences to have precise terms and measures.

Jaques argued that jobs should be defined in terms of their time horizon, in other words how long it would take to complete the assigned task, and subsequently the levels of the organizational hierarchy should reflect the overall time span for which those functions need to occur. Jaques also argued that individuals should be assigned to a job and/or level of the hierarchy based on the cognitive complexity which was comprised of both type of cognitive processing and the capability to achieve the required result in the requisite time.

Jaques contended that a person's time horizon could change over a career, which was consistent with his adult development approach. He developed a process to test a person's cognitive capabilities based on their mental processing strategies. Jaques cognitive processing model articulated the likelihood for progress especially if given opportunities to advance mental processing capacity. This projected progression was controversial for many. Jaques model was predicated on the idea that organizations could plot and predict the growth of human, which was highly controversial. While one's cognitive development evolves overtime and may be enhanced, Jaques' ideas were grounded in notion that one's cognitive processing mode had predetermined trajectory overtime.

There's a management blog "Who The Hell is Elliott Jaques." Overtime, Elliott Jaques became close friends with Professor Jerry Harvey at George Washington University. The two of them were known for the musing about organizational paradoxes and management traps.

## Brunel Research Institute and Beyond: Social Consultancy and Engagement in Organizational Settings

Elliot Jaques's experiences at Harvard University, Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, and Glacier Metal Project helped connect him to another adventure at Brunel University where he once again was involved in an effort that brought human laboratory into organizational settings through the application of an interdisciplinary approach. Jaques was invited to Brunel in 1964 where he remained until 1970. During his time at Brunel, Jaques founded the interdisciplinary Department of Social Sciences and created a consultancy unit that engaged in projects like his Tavistock experience. Brunel invited Jaques to create these entities to increase its status because, at the time, Brunel did not have a teaching hospital and needed a platform for training and conducting applied research. Thus, Jaques could convert his experiences with an action research approach to field problems to help add that aspect. Along with becoming a professor and head of the school, Jaques also created a research and consulting unit to continue science-based action research with organizations. The Brunel Institute of Organization and Social Studies (BIOSS) still serves as a model for how universities can bridge their work with practice to engage in useful research to advance organizational development today. There are a couple examples of similar arrangements in which research centers are embedded within a university context yet focused on external partnerships with organizations. My specific experience with George Washington University's Center for the Study of Learning (CSL) which was founded by Dr. David Schwandt as a applied research consultancy unit in which faculty could partner with organizations in long- and short-term engagements. Over two+ decades, CSL was involved in various OD interventions and projects with a range of organizations from health insurance, financial services, energy, school districts, nonprofits, and US government agencies.

## New Insights: Cross-Level Cognitive Capacity and Transdisciplinary Concepts

Jaques' footprint in the theory, research, and practice of organizational development is extensive. His cross-discipline perspective enabled his theoretical developments to be reflective of the cross-level changes our field faces today. His unique training in medicine, sociology, psychology, and economics positioned him to understand the cognitive processing capabilities of an individual set within a dynamic social system.

Jaques' work provided a frame for how organizations should be designed to max-imize both organizational health and individual development. This dual perspective is embedded in the underlining principles and practice of organization development.
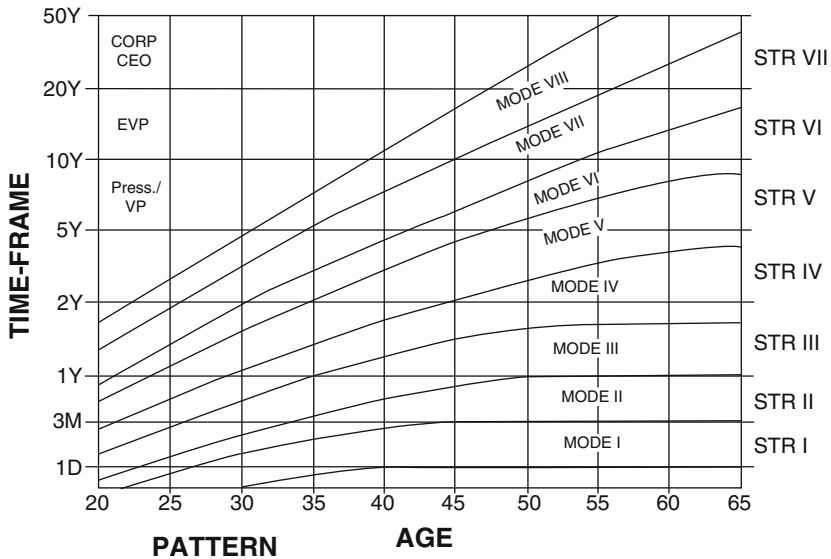


The field of organizational change has been affected by Jaques' work. His contri-bution with the socio-technical perspective influenced predominant models of orga-nizational diagnosis, which were grounded in the notions of systems, yet accounted for interacting systems with feedback loops. Inherent in Jaques seven levels of work theory is a vocation of creating conditions to maximize individual cognitive development and can be seen to influence in models within career path, succession planning, and workforce talent development. Additionally, Jaques levels of work and stratified systems theory promote an employee relations and organizational wellness through the alignment of felt-fair-pay commensurate with work role and aspirations. Jaques' levels of work have been applied specifically to organizational change intentions and outcomes.

The field of organizational consultancy and action research has been shaped by Jaques approach to his own work. Jaques' experiences at Harvard, Tavistock, and Brunel all demonstrated the value of bringing together groups of scholars from different disciplines to be engaged in action research in collaboration with the client organizations. Jaques and his colleagues strove for creating the internal capacity of their hosting organizations to both understand but also carrying the work after their departure. Jaques sought to collaboratively co-create effective managerial hierar-chies in which highly motivated employees experience felt fair pay and are capable of learning, and in turn employees incorporate their learnings into the procedures and practices of the organization. These notions are similar to the ideas of knowledge-creating companies and/or organizational learning systems in which performance

and learning actions enhance the overall capacity of the organization to adapt to its' changing environment.

On personal note, I had the pleasure of knowing Elliott Jaques over a 15-year period starting in the 1990s through his passing in 2004. I had the joy of observing his dazzling performances in the classroom and then warmth of his conversation during meals with several of us colleagues from George Washington University. Jaques was a regular lecturer in our graduate program at George Washington University, both in the management department at our Washington DC campus and in our executive doctoral program in Ashburn VA. Each year he'd bemuse graduate students about their role as alchemist and then pester them about the criticality of utilizing social science methods and concepts in ethical manner when engaging in organizational design and interventions. Jaques would cleverly bait one of our audacious executives to share a management strategy they felt was effective in their organizations and often evoking an infuriated response about the fads that were ruining our organizations. And then during our meal time, Elliott would share his recent adventures on the ski slopes and move onto a client engagement he was involved in. He would remind us that you reach your cognitive peak at age 70, and thus he felt more invigorated than ever about the impact of his work in organizations. I remain astonished that he was actively planning upcoming engagements with a law enforcement agency and sharing ideas about collaborative research projects. I would be particularly humored when Professor Jerry Harvey would arrange for Jaques to visit his classroom filled with arrogant MBA students who would naively try to engage with Jaques.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Bridging Work to Complexity Perspective

Jaques' final two books focused on the social power and offered a new general theory of living organisms. The former book was written for CEOs and examines the major misconceptions about people and managerial systems (work, compensation, incentives, structure, values, selection, talent pool development). The latter book brings together a half century of findings from Jaques' consultancy research on work, complexity, and capability and putting forth a science-based art of social ordering. The book covers a wide range from systems theory, linguistic, emergence, and necessary conditions for the development of a healthy free democracy. I feel his unfinished business is reflected in the promising areas of complex adaptive systems.

Elliot Jaques spent his entire career seeking to advance developmental practices within organizations that were grounded in credible research and theory. His consultancy research in organizational design and development spanned from his early years at Tavistock with the Glacier Metal Company up through his ongoing work the year he passed in 2004. His interdisciplinary training and action research approach enabled Jaques to bring together cross-discipline concepts from a developmental perspective for both adults and organizations. The concepts that emerged

from his field studies included the idea of felt fair pay, managerial accountability, and time span of discretion (judgment). His overall body of work culminates in his stratified systems theory and requisite organization. In his final publication, just a year prior to his passing, Jaques was still actively engaged in the field and in his conceptualizing as he worked on emerging ideas around complexity and capability in living systems.

Jaques is often criticized for managerial hierarchy and his stance on natural human cognitive predisposition. In fact, Jaques was a huge proponent of creating conditions that foster human development and provide individuals opportunities to function in a role, which both meet their aspirations and maximizes the cognitive development. Additionally, Jaques advocated strongly for employment relations and ethical standards to ensure individuals are treated respectfully and awarded with felt fair pay. Jaques criticized the label of "human resources," claiming that leaders have a responsibility to foster trust-inducing organizational arrangements. Jaques organizational model which explicates responsibilities and accountabilities at different levels has influenced the field of organizational design, to include the practice of job task analysis and other HRM protocols.

Jaques's combined an interdisciplinary approach with his action research orientation, which was reflected in his project-lead experience at Tavistock and his founding of Brunel Institute of Organization and Social Studies, both which had a profound effect on the field. This model was replicated in numerous forms throughout US higher education institutes in the 1990s through today, e.g., Edward Lawler's Center for Effective Organizations at the University of Southern California and University of Michigan. And this author had the privilege of spending two decades working for David Schwandt's Center for the Study of Learning and Executive Leadership Development Program, which emerged out of Jaques's seminal contributions to our field.

## The Global Organization Design Society

One of the primary evidence of Jaques's legacy is the Global Organization Design Society which still exists today. Like Tavistock, this society is an international network of scholars that seeks "to support the organizing work in a responsible, fair, and healthy way people are well led and free to exercise their capabilities." This society's foundational principals are grounded in the sound practices and concepts from Jaques' work in the Glacier Project, Jaques's stratified systems theory, and requisite organization. The society embraces the concepts of work complexity, levels of human capability, and effective managerial leadership practices. There's a host of professional associations and universities that support or co-market the society's efforts, including IBM International, the European Organization Design Form, Queen's University Institute for the Advance Human Resource Professional Development, Human Resource Planning Society, Organization Design Form, Organizational Design Community – University of Denmark, and Toronto's Society for Strategy Management's Strategic Leadership Forum.

## Conclusion

Jaques strove for science-based theoretical propositions that could enhance organizational efficiencies and the human experience. His human development approach made him a key contributor to organizational development. He could also be considered an early contributor to positive adult development. A signature approach of Jaques was the combined approach of interdiscipline and action research engagements with organizations. Jaques was the first project lead for 3-year action research with Glacier Metal and then went onto to Brunel University where he founded an interdisciplinary school of social research and a Center for Social Research using a blended consultancy and research approach to solve organizational puzzles. Jaques argued that time should be understood in terms of the measure for how long it takes for an event to occur and by when someone intends to achieve certain results, resulting in his nickname as "Father Time." The notions of time horizon and time span were integral in his ideas for managerial accountability and requisite organizations. There are several advancements that were central to Jaques' body of work, starting first with his role within the Tavistock institution through his general theory of bureaucracy to culmination of his final general theory of life and behavior of living organizations.

Jaques was tenacious about the need for the management sciences to have precise terms, measures, and to leverage empirical insights based on scientific rigor drawn from field studies. "I'm referring to the absence of sounds concepts and the use of badly defined ideas that lead inevitably to formulations that can neither be systematically nor uniformly applied." His passionate rants about management consultants who chased the latest "fad" were often observed in his graduate school seminars at George Washington University, many of which I was privilege to experience during the 1990s through to his passing in 2004. Jaques' passionate pleas to managers who were enrolled in our executive doctoral program at GWU were one reason why a classroom was named after him and why this author dedicated their dissertation to him. Jaques believed strongly in the potential contribution of organizational development if it stayed grounded in scholarship using scientific precision while remaining relevant to practice through ongoing action research collaborative engagements inside organizations. And he was compassionately motivated to train adults as scholar practitioners by insisting they use well-defined concepts and rigorous scientific methods while engaged in collaborative action research.

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# Kaleel Jamison: Being Big in the World

# 39

Frederick A. Miller and Judith H. Katz

**Abstract**

As a key contributor to the field of organization development and diversity, the legacy of Kaleel Jamison continues on in her writing, through her impact on her colleagues, clients, and friends and the work of the Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group. Kaleel spent much of her working life as "one of the first" and "one of the few" in many areas. During the early 1970s, she became one of the first to address differences of color and race in the workplace, consulting with such organizations as Procter and Gamble, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company, and Digital Equipment Company. Kaleel was a pioneer in applying organization development technology to affirmative action and issues of differences; she outlined her thinking in the article "Affirmative Action Program: Springboard for a Total Organizational Change Effort" for *OD Practitioner*. In 1983, her "Managing Sexual Attraction in the Workplace" appeared in the August issue of *Personnel Administrator*, making her among the first management consultants to address attraction as a workplace issue. Kaleel expanded the scope of this work beyond the classroom to position it as a system-wide issue, rooted not just in individual skills and attitudes but in organizational policies, practices, and managerial methods. In addition to being a pioneer on issues of gender, race, affirmative action, and differences, she was also one of the first and few women to work as a management consultant. Shortly before dying of cancer in 1985, Kaleel published a book, *The Nibble Theory and the Kernel of Power*, which summarized many of her views on human relations and personal development.

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## Contents

## Influences and Motivations: Courage and Grace

Courageous, beautiful, passionate, special, and caring are just some of the words colleagues and friends use to describe Kaleel Jamison. These words are a testament to the woman she was and her legacy that remains today. Kaleel believed she came to this world for a mission, which manifested in her ability to touch people on Earth in her lifetime. She focused on growing personally in such a way that affected both herself and others. She knew she was worthwhile and believed everyone else was as well (Jamison 1989). She was a true pioneer – not just in the field of differences – but in management consulting, organization development, human relations, and personal growth. She was raised at a time when women in positions of power were a rarity in business and when people's roles and expectations were defined by gender and race.

Edna Corey Jamison was one of a kind. She was one of the first women organization development consultants, starting her practice in the late 1960s in her church and beginning her corporate consulting practice at Procter & Gamble in 1970 in Cincinnati. Her early exposure and experiences with organization development came from her visits to the National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Bethel, Maine. She would accompany her husband, Bill Jamison, a well-regarded corporate leader, to NTL where he attended President's workshops. The structure of the workshops provided for the men to bring their wives to NTL, and while the men were attending the sessions, the women would go shopping; however, in 1968, NTL created a "spouses' training program" that accompanied Bill's executive training sessions.

That was the beginning of her journey of achieving her mission of changing the world.

In an NTL session early in her career facilitated by John and Joyce Weir, she and all the participants took on new names to help them work through issues, which would help them develop as a person during the lab. She took her father's name, Kaleel. After that lab was over, she kept the name, considering it as a gift that had helped her grow, honoring that experience and her father. It was then she transitioned from Edna Corey Jamison to Kaleel Jamison.

Kaleel was a Lebanese woman born in the coal mountains of Beckley, West Virginia, in 1931, and growing up she had many obstacles to overcome. Her father came to the United States as a Lebanese immigrant from a poor village where he was an orphan and responsible for raising his siblings. When he arrived in the United States, he had no money and he did not speak English. He made his way to Minnesota where he worked as a farmhand, and he finally arrived in a settlement of Lebanese people in West Virginia where he founded a small confectionary business that supported his family. The courage and risk-taking Kaleel witnessed in her father and her upbringing helped to shape her into a very strong and powerful person.

Kaleel's formal education consisted of high school and secretarial school; however, her true education was life, NTL, church, her community in Cincinnati, and being a consultant. As a Lebanese woman from Beckley, West Virginia, she could bridge many different cultures. She connected with white women and black women through her own cultural experience. Her focus was on how to take complicated psychological concepts and make them as simple as possible and still be impactful. She took what she observed in society and gave frameworks to people on how to move and be different. She challenged people to be better and bigger, and she was motivated by her sense that people could be more, both individually and systemically.

When Kaleel was first exposed to NTL, organization development and the field of human potential were still in their infancy. The emergence of organization development can be traced back to the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1930s with his work on democratic participation and his research at the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation. Lewin's work produced many of the tools and techniques that influenced Kaleel's work and are still used today. His seminal workshops with the Connecticut Interracial Commission led to the emergence of T-groups and the National Training Laboratories (NTL), which still provide training to organization development and change practitioners today (Burnes 2007, p. 227). Organization development continued to grow in the 1960s with the emergence of the T-group approach to group development and Lewin's action research model, which was a key foundation of Kaleel's work.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the most socially active groups were the churches. Kaleel's church began doing work related to human potential, and it was at this time she started working with the groups. In the late 1960s, she began running workshops on the differences between women and men at her local church in

Cincinnati. She was especially vocal in challenging the notion that women should make themselves appear smaller and less significant so men could feel larger and more significant. Kaleel was a staunch believer in self-empowerment and the empowerment of others. "By being more of myself," she would say, "I am able to share more of me with you" (K. Jamison, personal communication). As a result of her work with the church, a member of the congregation asked her to facilitate organization development work with their company, Procter & Gamble. This was Kaleel's first client. It was considered a progressive company, and many of the early organization development pioneers came out of or consulted with Procter & Gamble.

Kaleel's second client became a lifelong friend and colleague. Fred Miller met Kaleel at a Living School Women-Men Working Together lab in Cincinnati in 1973. Fred brought Kaleel into the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company (now CIGNA) in 1973. Fred joined with Kaleel in her consulting practice in 1979 because, in addition to her tremendous courage, she brought something different to the organizations with which they worked. It was not a set of answers, but, instead, questions. Kaleel Jamison (1989) asked questions such as:

- "What kind of environment supports everyone's bringing their fullest self to this organization?"
- "Can you create that kind of environment?"
- "Will you be brave enough to try?" (p. v)

Kaleel was one of the first women to enter management consulting in 1970. A woman on the road and away from her children and husband was a very rare occurrence at that time. In this role, she experienced remarks like: "Why are you here?" and "What would a woman know?" Others commented, "Hey, you are pretty cute to be doing this kind of work." She also faced questions challenging her role as a mother, such as "So who is watching your children?" (Jamison 1989, p. v). Yet these attacks on her self-confidence, including all the demeaning and sometimes harassing comments and actions, only served to convince Kaleel that she was doing the right thing by entering into these environments.

The sheer number of diminishing behaviors she experienced made it clear how significant and unusual her presence in the workplace was and how much work lay ahead to create workplaces more inclusive and respectful of everyone. To Kaleel, this was work that had to be accomplished if the United States, her parents' adopted home, was ever to achieve its promise of opportunity for all (Jamison 1989). None of this stopped Kaleel from doing the work she loved, which changed many lives. She loved her husband, Bill, her three children, and her work, and even if the world did not think a woman could love her family and be on the road to live her passion, Kaleel knew she could and was a pioneer. She made the phrase "one of a kind" so true in many ways.

Her first strategy to neutralize these behaviors, or as she called them, "nibbles," was to be competent and extraordinarily insightful about the work of organizations. Her second strategy was to shake hands. In the 1960s and 1970s, this was a radical act. Men and women generally didn't shake hands with each other – women were

considered too unequal, too dainty, and too ladylike. Being one of the first woman consultants (along with Billie Alban, Edie Seashore, and Barbara Bunker), she often had to deal with men not wanting to shake her hand because in those days a man did not shake hands with the "weaker" sex. Kaleel entered every room with her hand extended and challenged men to deny her a handshake. Most of these men had never shaken a woman's hand and they didn't know what to do. Instead of a traditional handshake we think of today, she often received a man taking two of her fingers and shaking them lightly. In those days most women worked at home or had a secretarial position or some form of assistant's role. Men in the workforce struggled to make sense of her. Kaleel's bravery in asserting her personal and professional self through simple gestures changed people's lives in every room she entered (Jamison 1975).

While the field of organization development was emerging, Kaleel had many friends, colleagues, and mentors who influenced her work. Kaleel and her husband Bill had a summerhouse in Maine, and their next-door neighbor was Dick Beckhard. Dick Beckhard was a founder and pioneer in the field of organization development and change. Beckhard defined organization development as "an effort, planned, organization-wide, and managed from the top, to increase organization effectiveness and health through planned interventions in the organization's process, using behavioral-science knowledge" (Brisson-Banks 2010, p. 245); he developed a four-step model for organization change and popularized a formula for readiness for organization change. The four steps of Beckhard's model are defining the change problem, determining the readiness and capability for change, identifying the consultant's own resources and motivations for the change, and determining the intermediate change strategy and goals (Beckhard 1975).While Beckhard's model is simple in its approach, it is complex in its implementation. The processes of engendering dissatisfaction with the status quo, having people clearly understand the desired state, and taking steps toward the desired state are a complicated endeavor. Kaleel understood this complexity and developed her own methodology for total systems change in an organization through addressing affirmative action goals. There is an interconnection between her work and the work of her friend, neighbor, and colleague, Dick Beckhard. Both models are simple in process, but complex in implementation and sustainability, and both models demand total systems change.

## Key Contributions: Powerful Connections

Kaleel's work advanced the field of human potential, organization development, race, and gender. Her work was informed by what she saw happening to people around her throughout her life, especially those people who were different from the dominant group (Jamison 1989). She possessed the ability to look at people in a way that they felt she could see inside of them and made them feel like they were the most important person to her in that moment. People connected with this and often told her what they were thinking and feeling in a profound way. This enabled her to

connect with people on a deep level and for her to coach people in ways that changed their lives. Her ability to create a powerful connection was key to her approach.

As a practitioner, Kaleel understood the importance of translating the theory of organizational change into accessible tools such as affirmative action, sexual attraction in the workplace, sexism as rank language, straight talk, and man and woman style differences, which are described in detail later in this chapter. The foundation of her work was to determine how to have people treat each other better, make organizations more democratic, and end racism and sexism so organizations could be better places for all people. When people interacted with Kaleel, they knew they had a friend and ally who cared about them as a person, not their role or job. It was a human-to-human connection and interaction. She wanted to connect core self to core self and not ego to ego. She wanted to give people a voice and create a work environment where they felt heard and valued for who they were as human beings. This was the mindset that fueled her passion and drove her work. Kaleel had a true sense of experiential learning, the ability to keep it simple and create theory out of experience.

Kaleel rendered theory into practice with her work on translating the theory of transactional analysis into her concept of the nibble theory and the kernel of power. She was able to take the complex dynamic of adult-to-adult interactions and make it simple and relatable for people (Jamison 1989). Kaleel was also able to broach the challenging topic of relationships in the workplace. Her article on "Managing Sexual Attraction in the Workplace" shed light on a topic most organizations preferred to pretend was an issue that was not there (Jamison 1983). Her work in this area showed the impact of these relationships not only on the individuals involved but also on the bottom line of the business.

Kaleel wanted the work to be simple so everyone could participate, contribute, and benefit. It could not be as complicated as psychology had been in the past. It needed to be clear and practical for the people. She believed the people in the organization had untapped wisdom, and if she was able to tap into it, she knew the right organization environment would be able to tap into it. To help organizations connect to wisdom of their people, she spoke to the people to figure out how to resolve the issues.

## Action Research

Kaleel was one of the pioneers using action research as the foundation of her work. Action research is a term that was first used by Kurt Lewin and John Collier in the mid-twentieth century and refers to planning change, acting, and then observing the outcomes (Robson 2002). This approach was developed to influence a system, solve social problems, and create social change. Action research has evolved to be more focused on participative problem solving; however, at its inception, it utilized a more directive approach to influence behavior (Bentz and Shapiro 1998).

Action research has roots in the epistemological philosophy of pragmatism. Pragmatism evolved as an American philosophy and is focused on action and

practical consequences; it espoused knowledge and action as both part of the same process – unable to be separated. This approach yields research, which results in action. Early examples of action research studies include Lewin's work with influencing homemakers to use less meat during wartime and Coch and French's work on increasing productivity in a pajama factory. Neither of these early studies provided participants with a sense of empowerment but did give them an opportunity to understand why the change was important (Bentz and Shapiro 1998). Action research places the application of the findings of the study at the forefront of the methodology (Busza 2004). Kaleel's work with action research was focused on helping people feel empowered.

The researcher's role in this method is facilitative, and they are actively involved in the work, which is exactly what Kaleel did. Kaleel took an active role by facilitating the collection of information to help the system understand the need for change, plan for the change, and ultimately provide a sustainable system for the participants to apply the methods on their own to other issues within the organization. Action research contains a strong element of learning and knowledge transfer, and the role of the researcher as the facilitator is to drive the learning to the research participants. The researcher must be action oriented, concerned with social and organizational issues, have a strong set of values that reflect humanization of communities and organizations, and be able to play a facilitative versus directive role (Bentz and Shapiro 1998).

The researcher is actively involved in all elements of the study including planning, introducing the change, and monitoring the sustainability and impact (Ragsdell 2009). Action research can be either qualitative, quantitative or both, implementing a mixed-methods approach. The tools utilized will vary based on the needs of the research study; however, typical research instruments include interviews, focus groups, observations, and document reviews. The end results of an action research study are solutions to immediate problems and the potential for contributions to knowledge and theory (Bentz and Shapiro 1998). Action research was used in the field of organization development and contributes more to immediate problem solving versus the development of theories. Based on Kaleel's work, action research was evidently foundational to her work. She used this approach to address many issues in the workplace. In every client system Kaleel entered, she started her work by conducting an organization diagnosis and collecting data through conversations. She then provided as feedback and identified recommendations for the clients using the total systems approach.

Not only was Kaleel one of the first consultants to address gender differences in the workplace, but in the early 1970s, she became one of the first to address differences of color and race in the workplace. Her work in this area was conducted in partnership with Fred Miller during consulting engagements with such organizations as Procter & Gamble, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company, Cummins Engine Company, and Digital Equipment Company.

Kaleel produced a tremendous body of published work based on her experiences with people and organizations. Her seminal articles about affirmative action, sexual

attraction in the workplace, sexism as rank language, straight talk, and man and woman style differences moved the field of organization development forward and offered significant benefits to both organizations and employees. Kaleel was the first to write that these issues were systems change issues.

Kaleel was a pioneer in applying organization development technology to affirmative action policies and issues of differences. Jamison outlined her thinking in the article "Affirmative Action Program: Springboard for a Total Organizational Change Effort" for the OD Practitioner (1978). This was the first article and thinking that affirmative action was not only about recruitment, but for that person, different from the dominant group in the organization, to be successful, the organization had to change. The culture had to change. How people interacted with the "new" and "different" people had to be different. It had to be a total systems change if organizations were going to create environments where these "new" people would be successful (Jamison 1978). Until that point in history and within the organization development practice, no one had suggested that affirmative action required an organization development systems change intervention. Affirmative action was seen as a legal issue as well as creating interpersonal challenges in interactions and group dynamics as people of color and women were coming into organizations.

Her article, "Affirmative Action Program: Springboard for a Total Organizational Change Effort," laid out the methodology and process she advised other consultants and practitioners to use (Jamison 1978). The article represents classic thinking in which her theory about cultural diversity and total systems change is positioned for implementation. Kaleel believed lasting change could be achieved only by the organization willingly approaching its affirmative action program as a total systems change effort to update management practices, change the culture, and expand the ways people are treated in the organization. Both organizations and employees experienced the value of a total systems change approach. The result of this approach was creating a work environment that was open to and embraced the talents of every person. It was also an opportunity for executives to understand and experience the importance of valuing differences. Through this work and the use of the total systems methodology, companies became more multicultural, multiracial, and bi-gender and had an organization chart that showed a variety of people holding positions of power (Jamison 1978).

There are seven steps in her methodology for a multidimensional organization intervention. A multidimensional intervention involves a consideration of everything that makes up the organization's environment (Jamison 1978, p. 3). Each step requires sensitive interpretation and organization on the part of the consultant to be effective. The steps are (1) entry and diagnosis; (2) procedural planning and presentation; (3) critical mass development and education of resource persons, of top-level groups, and of operating heads; (4) research and study; (5) goal setting; (6) implementation; and (7) monitoring and evaluation of the plan (Jamison 1978, p. 4). Often these steps can overlap and are not always as straightforward as they may seem. She believed this was a 4–5-year process and required total commitment and accountability from senior leadership in order to bring about the desired change in the organization (Jamison 1978). While the model she used was not new to the field, her brilliance was in how she applied it to diversity. Much of the work on diversity at the

time was focused on training and workshops. Instead, Kaleel focused on addressing diversity by changing the entire system of the organization through the seven steps of her methodology for multidimensional organization interventions. This had never been done before.

Kaleel brought the cultural context of the feminist movement into the organization. The environment in the organization at the top was white men with few or no women. When she was doing her work on gender, it was a different time. The prevailing belief in the organizations was that of the "Adam's rib" mindset. People cited this belief as fundamental proof that women were inferior to men, and their place was second to men. It generated and perpetuated extremely harmful assumptions about women. Entire workshops would be devoted to trying to shift this thinking and breaking down those assumptions. These assumptions added up to the belief that women didn't belong in the workplace as a peer or a leader. These beliefs were not only prevalent in the workplace, but were reinforced by society through media, television, and stereotypes. She was trying to assist everyone in the organization to grow into a different kind of partnership; however, organizations did not have any frameworks for this.

Before she was able to get to the work of changing a corporate system, Kaleel had to deal with the process of being acceptable to conduct the intervention. She facilitated honest conversations and transformed the biases she experienced in the workplace and those relationships. Kaleel saw and understood that organizations were undergoing a tremendous change that was not being addressed as more women were coming into the workplace. She developed models and frameworks to help individuals and organizations shift the ways in which people interacted such as the nibble theory and the kernel of power (Jamison 1989), sexual attraction in the workplace (Jamison 1983), sexism as rank language (Jamison 1975), and man and woman style differences (Jamison and Miller 1985).

## Model of Transactional Analysis

Kaleel's work on sexism as rank language was based on the model of transactional analysis. She believed language is symptomatic of attitudes, and in any encounter with people, the language we use with people (especially what we call them when we tell a story) reflects our attitude toward a person and influences our behavior with them (Jamison 1975). Kaleel's work focused on the common practice of sexist terminology she observed in which men referred to a woman as a girl. She adapted the model of transactional analysis to demonstrate the ways male and female terminology can be used and the rank and power in the choices. She documented her experience in her 1975 article titled "Sexism as Rank Language" for the social change journal (1975). The model explores the relationships between terms used to identify males (father/man/boy) and females (mother/woman/girl) as parents, adults, and children (Jamison 1975).

According to the model, when a man refers to a woman as a girl, he places his association with her as either a father or a boy. To establish a relationship that

**Fig. 1** Transactional
analysis. Potential
relationship interactions
(Berne 1959)
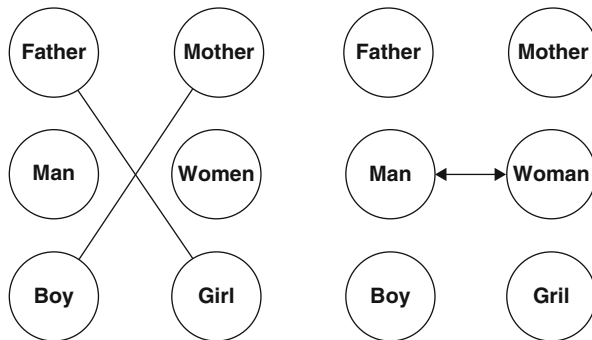


positions all people on an adult level, the man must consider a relationship that
would be on an equal basis, such as man to woman. At the root of this model is the
distribution of power and how this impacts interactions in an organization. A girl is
dependent; a woman is a fully functioning, independent, working partner. Kaleel's
work in this area shed light on the criticality of men and women engaging with each
other as peers, but also the loss of power and productivity of work transactions
between men and women when this rank language exists as the norm (Jamison
1975). Kaleel's work looked at the organization as a total system and the equal or
unequal power dynamics between co-workers could have a tremendous impact on an
organization making this work critical to helping an organization be successful
(Fig. 1).

## Sexism in the Workplace

Kaleel was passionate about empowering women, which was demonstrated in her
work with sexism as rank language (Jamison 1975). Her message of "saying yes to
me is not saying no to you" was about being able to say yes to ourselves as women.
When she was assisting women to be empowered, she had to position them to be
successful not only in the workplace, but in the home. She wanted women to be
successful colleagues at work and partners at home.

Kaleel's work with Procter & Gamble on bias resulted in her article, "Our
Baggage" (Jamison 1982). Throughout her life she would learn from colleagues
and then add her experience and adapt her understanding to her client situations; the
"our baggage" model is an example of her ability to synthesize her experience with
the lessons learned. The work contains a two-part model. The first part of the model
is titled "page 1" and describes "Our Current Baggage." Page 1 described how
people bring their prejudices, stereotypes, filters, and categorizations to their inter-
actions. When people feel fearful, tense, or stressed, they go on "automatic" and
generalize negative perceptions of people who are different. She felt that by working
with "Our Baggage" on page 1, we could ultimately reduce the effect of the baggage.
The second part of the model is titled "page 2" and describes "The Exceptions that

We Experience to that Baggage." In the second half of the model, Kaleel provided steps to assist people to see and take in the experiences they have had that are exceptions to their page 1 baggage (Jamison 1982, p. 1). The page 2 work involved three key steps: developing awareness, ownership, and taking action. These included building relationships with people different from yourself, confronting personal biases, being curious, and consciously creating new mental models and experiences (Jamison 1982, p. 2). The model indicates that to change those negative biases on page 1, we have to develop new experiences, learn to work through bias more quickly, and recognize similarities as well as differences. This work was the foundation for work today on microinequities, unconscious bias, and self as instrument (Jamison 1982).

Kaleel submitted an article to *Harvard Business Review* on "Sexual Attraction in the Workplace" being a bigger and more challenging issue in organizations than sexual harassment before the groundbreaking and world-changing article about the same subject was published by another author in the *Harvard Business Review*. In 1983, her "Managing Sexual Attraction in the Workplace" appeared in the August issue of *Personnel Administrator*, making her among the first management consultants to address the issue of attraction in the workplace.

Kaleel highlighted the connection between sex and the workplace and risk to profit, because of the impact on productivity and adverse public relations. As a basis of her work, she utilized the acquaintance intimacy spectrum, which demonstrates the progression from acquaintance to intimacy in stages along a spectrum. Kaleel felt business relationships should not go beyond the fourth stage of affection. Kaleel believed that sexual attraction is a personal and systemic issue. Workplace romance requires secrecy, which takes energy and attention away from the organization (Fig. 2). The resolution of these situations involves personal choice by the people involved to diffuse the situation early and, if not, a manager who handles the situation tactfully without stress to the organization (Jamison 1983).

**Fig. 2** Acquaintance intimacy spectrum. Evolution from acquaintance to intimacy (Jamison 1983)
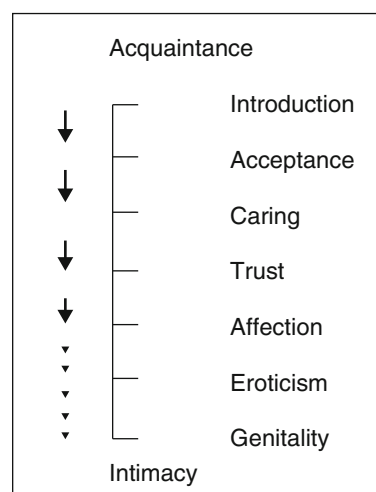
## Straight Talk

Kaleel believed one of the most helpful interventions that could be made in an organization was to change its norms of verbal communications and utilize "straight talk." The model of straight talk is the practice of speaking clearly, directly, and honestly. The foundations include the following: respecting others enough to be honest with them, sharing information in a way that produces an efficient, effective organizational environment, committing to the development of individuals, and utilizing differences (Jamison 1985). The practice of straight talk also presumes that conflicting views, values, cultures, and styles are best addressed openly and that those differences, when properly resolved, will enhance, rather than detract from, the organization and its success (Jamison 1985).

The theory behind the model was based in the belief that, in many organizations, conflict was avoided resulting in misleading and confusing communication. Straight talk, restructuring people's language, provided a major part of the solution. This work also impacts the bottom line of a company. Efficient communication is essential to efficient operation and the performance of the organization. Kaleel believed that disconnecting language often shows up when full respect is missing from the relationship.

She described the best approach for implementing straight talk as a top-down intervention. How a person in authority communicates affects and reflects the management style of the entire organization (Jamison 1985). If the leadership is talking "straight" (i.e., clearly and directly), the whole organization will move toward this mode of communication. Indirect language shows up in the form of sugarcoating, one up questions, tentative statements and qualifying words, diminishing language (self and others), intensifiers or words for emphasis, use of "you" versus "I," and avoiding saying no (Jamison 1985). The result of implementing straight talk is the respect it fosters for individual leads to individual growth, which benefits the organization (Fig. 3). This level of respect leads to a stronger, more diverse organization with a wider range of views and skills to draw upon (Jamison 1985).

Kaleel continued her work on gender with Fred Miller. In June of 1985, they presented a NTL sunrise seminar on woman-man style differences. Rank language was only one part of the equation; the style clashes between men and women that existed as traditional work norms were actually male work norms (Jamison and Miller 1985). In the presentation, they identified seven style differences based on 15 years of work with organizations. The purpose of identifying the style differences was to help organizations identify the issues, to recognize the impact the style differences have on individuals, and to develop new ways to integrate differences into their workforce. The seven basic woman-man style differences are categorized as (1) expressing affection, (2) expressing intense emotions, (3) response to failure, (4) problem solving, (5) apologies, (6) sexual attraction, and (7) fitting in (Jamison and Miller 1985, p. 1). When these style differences are understood, it allows people to be fully powerful and make full contributions to the organization. Kaleel believed

**Fig. 3** Straight talk model.
Impact of straight talk on
organizational effectiveness
(Jamison 1985)
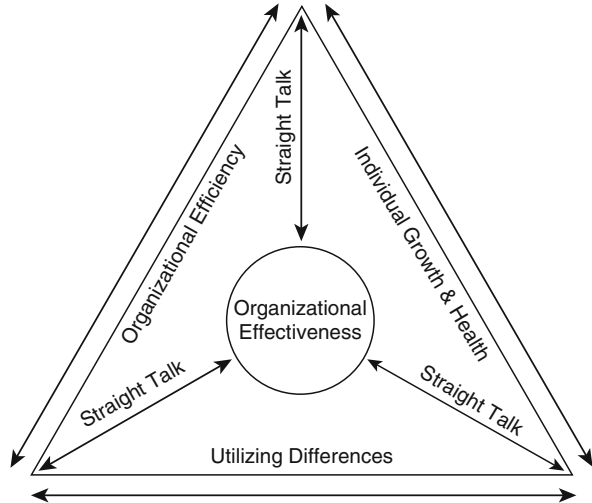


that once a person is aware of their own frame of reference, it creates the opportunity
for people to look at other people's styles and realize that our differences bring about
more creativity, productivity, and enjoyment (Jamison and Miller 1985).

## The Nibble Theory and the Kernel of Power

In 1984, a year before her death, Kaleel published a book, *The Nibble Theory and the
Kernel of Power* (Jamison 1989), which summarized many of her views on human
relations and personal development. Her book, which has sold over 180,000 copies,
was enduring in so many ways because of how simple she articulated the concepts of
growth and empowerment. More than just a theory, Kaleel provided practical and
simple ways to live in the world that focused on self-empowerment, growth, and the
celebration of self and the joy of contributing to the growth of others. She described
this way of living as a candle, "When you give away some of the light from your
candle, by lighting another person's candle, there isn't less light because you've
given some away, there's more. When everybody grows, there isn't less of anybody;
there's more of – and for – everybody" (Jamison 1989, p. 3).

Kaleel felt people were usually doing the best they could and that everything
people do is being done out of his or her own experience. She believed that people
always had to be willing to risk to grow, even knowing there would be growing pains
and that there would be times when saying yes to yourself and your need to grow
may include saying no to what someone else has in mind for you. She told people to
be brave and believed that every time you were brave and took a risk, it would get
easier (Jamison 1989). The book combines theory, storytelling, practical examples,
and insightful wisdom about leadership, self-empowerment, and growth.

## New Insights: Sharing Knowledge as the Key to Growth

Kaleel not only changed our lives (and those of countless people with whom she interacted) but she also set the course of our work and our careers. Her emphasis was always to keep the process simple and to provide complex models and concepts in accessible ways. She also strongly held the belief that she should share as much as she knew with others and worried little about others "stealing" her material. She challenged the notion that if we teach others what we know, we won't have anything new to give them. Instead, she saw teaching others as creating the motivation to continuously learn and invent and to continually be advancing our thinking and our practice. Kaleel believed in sharing everything in front and behind the curtain; she had no "secret sauce" to hide. She believed sharing knowledge made us, as consultants, smarter and pushed us to always be on the learning edge. Kaleel was always on the learning edge, looking at what was occurring, how it was hurting people, and what intervention could occur to address that situation. She focused on keeping it simple, made sure her clients understood the process or intervention, and assisted them to replicate it. This goes back to the roots of the field of organization development.

Kaleel provided us with insight on how to work with clients. She spoke of the time when Procter & Gamble executives came to her house and realized she was not using any Procter & Gamble products. After this incident, she always bought the clients products and assumed their stock would go up based on them taking on the work of change – a simple but important lesson to consider. Invest in the people within the companies and the companies would benefit.

Kaleel changed the way men viewed women, and she helped women be empowered and to "be big." Her work around sexual harassment (Jamison 1975), communicating clearly and directly (Jamison 1985), and relationships between men and women in the workplace (Jamison 1983; Jamison and Miller 1985) are still relevant, and The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group continues her work today.

Kaleel's work served as a bridge between organization development and diversity, and she was a thought leader in merging these two critical bodies of work within organizations through her total systems theory approach. She was one of the first people to view diversity as a total systems change effort (Jamison 1978). Kaleel's work on differences occurred at a time when organization development was just beginning to integrate and incorporate the thinking of people of color and women.

Judith Katz met Kaleel through NTL in 1976 and then worked briefly with her before she died. She was struck by her presence, her sense of power as a woman, and her ability to lean into discomfort and deal with difficult situations and the range of emotions in a full and powerful way. One of the most impactful elements of interacting with Kaleel was her ability to cry and talk through her tears, her ability to challenge Judith as a woman to own her power and voice, and her ability to not shy away from tough situations or interactions.

In addition, one of Kaleel's models talked about how women would cry when they were angry and men would get angry when they were vulnerable. That was incredibly helpful in terms of understanding style differences. Her work on woman-

man interactions (the transactional analysis adaptation of the model) also was transformational for Judith personally in rethinking how she was interacting with men – often in a girl or mother stance – and helped her in her own life practice move to more authentic peer-to-peer relationships (instead of expecting men to take care of me or me feeling like I had to take care of them in order to be valued).

Judith Katz joined The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. in 1985 and partnered with Fred Miller to continue the work of Kaleel. Kaleel had a significant influence on Judith and was instrumental in helping Judith claim her power. Judith has continued this work through her personal commitment to partnering with all people so they can step fully into their own personal power.

Both Judith and Fred continue to build on her theories and models with their work at the Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group on whole systems theory, inclusion, bias, empowerment, and the use of self as a change agent. Fred worked closely with her and upon her death and, in tribute to her, felt a responsibility to carry on her work and her mission of changing the world, leading him to keep her name for the firm he has led as CEO since her death in 1985.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Be Big

Although Kaleel died in 1985 at age 53, she continues to affect people profoundly, just as she did throughout her life through her articles, books, and the Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group. Through her presence and work, Kaleel dedicated her life to assisting people be their best selves and making organizations places in which people mattered and could contribute. Kaleel's seminal thinking regarding the connections between woman and man, people of color and white differences, and the need for total systems change continues to influence our work in organizations today. It has been instrumental in challenging many of us who are working in the area of cultural differences. We continue to turn to the original premises laid out here by Kaleel to draw strength from her vision and continue her work in the field of inclusion with our foundational framework, inclusion as the how, which is used to enable clients to achieve higher performance and accelerate results.

*The Nibble Theory*, her powerful book written during her struggle with breast cancer, stands as another one of her many legacies. Hundreds of people have described this book as life changing, and there can be no larger tribute (Jamison 1989). Kaleel gave us thousands of gifts and a key one is an important principle: be true to your core self versus your ego self, and sometimes things will be hard, you will not always be appreciated, but that is the best self for you to be (Jamison 1989). The book focused on leadership, self-empowerment, and personal growth – all enduring concepts equally important today.

Kaleel described herself as persistent, energetic, and a risk-taker. She wanted to grow herself as much as she could, but she believed she was here to assist others to fall in love with themselves so they would want to grow themselves as much as they could. She was talking about self-acceptance. A person needs to put aside self-criticism long enough to find the strength at their core. Then once that is found, they

will be able to grow other parts of themselves with newfound energy and vitality. She could walk into any situation, and people could feel her excitement about living. They felt her joy. She knew what was at her core was her intense joy in living. Her joy in life was her kernel of power (Jamison 1989).

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## Further Reading

Kaleel's work served both public and private sector organizations. Through such publications as Fortune, Wall Street Journal, Money Magazine, and Savvy, Kaleel Jamison received national recognition for her views on a variety of human relations subjects. She was a frequent guest on radio and television programs, and her articles have appeared in The Executive Female, Personnel Journal, Personnel Administrator, OD Practitioner, T + D Magazine, Social Change, Fair Employment Practices, and Training News. Her seminal work can be found in the list of resources below:

Reddy, W. B., & Jamison, K. (Eds.). (1988). *Team building: Blueprints for productivity and satisfaction*. Alexandria: NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science.

# Rosabeth Moss Kanter: A Kaleidoscopic Vision of Change

Matthew Bird

**Abstract**

At first glance, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's approach to change appears as eclectic, ranging from the study of utopian communities to corporations, non-profits, and governments to ecosystems. But look closer and there is a deeper coherence. Behind the witty turns of phrase, digestible frameworks, and punchy action lists lay theoretical subtlety and complexity. Kanter is a trained sociologist, who seeks to understand the structural determinants of individual behavior. She melds the sensibility of symbolic interactionism, and its emphasis on fieldwork, with attention to how structural relations, especially power, constitute social systems. Her mode and method are evident in her early work and, though later made less explicit, remain throughout. As such, she may be best understood, to borrow one of her phrases, as a kaleidoscopic thinker. She seeks to identify patterns and understand how people and elements relate, combine, and recombine in multiple ways and in multiple contexts to form new patterns. She then shares with leaders and citizens the emerging possibilities and suggests how to get there. Kanter thus does not study change for change's sake – she links it to a utopian search for perfectibility.

**Keywords**

Commitment • Collaboration • Empowerment • Opportunity structure • Values

## Contents

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## Introduction: Hedgehogs, Foxes, and Kaleidoscopes

The British philosopher, Isaiah Berlin (1994), famously argued that thinkers fall into one of two categories. Some are like foxes. They know many things and pursue many ends and ideas, all equally insightful but not necessarily connected. Others are like hedgehogs. They know one big thing and seek to link all to one central principal or system.

At first glance, Rosabeth Moss Kanter's work appears fox-like – cunning, astute, and wide-ranging. She has written about commitment in nineteenth-century utopian communities (Kanter 1968, 1972a); homosocial reproduction, tokenism, and relative proportions in groups (1977a); and the quality of work life and its influence on the family (1977b). Later, she asked how to make companies more innovative and entrepreneurial (Kanter 1983, 1989) and then examined how corporations and communities can, together, make the most out of globalization (Kanter 1995a). Afterward, she offered her take on the digital revolution (Kanter 2001), provided frameworks for instilling the confidence needed to turn around firms (and sports teams) (Kanter 2006a), and gave guidelines for how values-led companies do well by doing good (Kanter 1999a, 2009a). She has also advocated for public policy solutions at opportune times prior to elections in the United States (Dukakis and Kanter 1988; Kanter 2007), including a foray into transportation infrastructure (Kanter 2015), and she and colleagues have sought to create a new stage of higher education by redeveloping experienced leaders to enter the social sector and solve the globe's most pressing problems (Kanter et al. 2005; Kanter 2011a). Kanter's work seems eclectic and subject to the changing times. Surely the work of a fox.

Or not. Kanter writes well – and clear writing is clear thinking. But in Kanter's case, her clarity veils a sophisticated sociological imagination or, paraphrasing C. Wright Mills (1959), the attentiveness to the relationship between the individual and the larger society. Behind Kanter's witty turns of phrase, digestible frameworks, and punchy action lists lay theoretical subtlety and complexity – pierced with a clear purpose. Kanter is a trained sociologist, who seeks to understand the structural determinants of individual behavior. She melds the sensibility of symbolic interactionism, and its emphasis on fieldwork, with attention to how structural relations, especially power, constitute social systems. Her mode and method are

evident in her early work and, though later made less explicit, remain throughout. But more than theory and method, Kanter is a hedgehog in theme. She does not study change for change's sake; she links it to a utopian search for perfectibility in society. Kanter may be a fox in practice (she knows many things), but she is a hedgehog in principle (she wants one big thing). Berlin's analogy breaks down.

But Kanter often thinks in "threes" and maybe, for her, there is a third, more suitable possibility. To borrow one of her concepts, she is a kaleidoscopic thinker with a kaleidoscopic vision (Kanter 2000). "A kaleidoscope is a device for seeing patterns. They're made up of a set of fragments, but it's a flexible set of fragments, so that if you twist it or look at it from a different angle you can see a different pattern," Kanter explains. "Leaders have to shake people out of their orthodoxy and get them to see that a new pattern is possible" (Kanter 2006b, paragraph 37). As a thought leader, Kanter sees patterns, and over time she has studied how people and elements relate, combine, and recombine in multiple ways and in multiple contexts to form new patterns. She then seeks to share with leaders and citizens the new possibilities and how to get there.

## Influences and Motivations: Be More than Yourself

Rosabeth Moss Kanter wrote early and often, drafting mystery novels and entering essay contests during her childhood in Cleveland, Ohio. She was also ambitious, printing business cards proclaiming herself as a "child psychologist." She majored in sociology and English at Bryn Mawr College, having spent her Junior year at the University of Chicago. After graduating in 1964, she considered working in advertising or as a journalist but instead enrolled in the doctoral program in sociology at the University of Michigan. (While in college, Kanter met and married Stuart Kanter, a psychology major from the University of Pennsylvania. She moved with him first to the University of Michigan and then to Boston in 1967. She accepted a job at Brandeis University, while he took position in Organizational Behavior at Harvard. Tragically, he died in 1969. She maintained his name after his passing.)

Ann Arbor proved an apt place for Kanter to explore her interests in sociology and psychology. Several decades earlier Charles Cooley (1962) began to formulate his utopian-tinged version of symbolic interactionism, a social psychological perspective that views individuals as socially constituted agents emergent from meaningful social interactions. By the time Kanter arrived to Ann Arbor in the 1960s, the department had further integrated major postwar structural, functionalist, and conflict theory perspectives popular in postwar American sociology. Two early mentors included the political sociologists, Leon Mayhew and William Gamson.

Kanter's dissertation developed a theory of commitment to explain the survival rates of nineteenth-century American utopian communities (Kanter 1968), and it

helped her gain an academic position in 1967 in the sociology department at Brandeis University. Years earlier Everett Hughes (1958) had moved from the University of Chicago to found the graduate program and create a "Chicago School" extension, emphasizing fieldwork and micro-interactionist perspectives. Kanter's emerging sociological imagination fit well there as she, in the company of Hughes, Lewis Coser, Kurt Wolff, Philip Slater, and others, worked through her own theoretical understanding of how social systems and internal relations condition individual experience and behavior, a framework articulated most explicitly in her early work.

Her first book, *Commitment and Community*, was published in 1972. It proposed a theory of commitment, positing that the ability of communes (or any organization) to attend to cognitive, affective, and normative needs of individuals via multiple social mechanisms aligns individual and collective interest, thus explaining commune survival rates. The theory contributed founding insights on the concept of organizational commitment (e.g., Meyer and Allen 1991). Her second book, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, came out in 1977. It offered a gender-neutral critique of gender (or any majority-minority) relations in organizations, asserting that differences in behavior and even personality were attributable to one's role and position, rather than inherent characteristics. The job makes the person or, more specifically, the opportunity structure, the distribution of power, and the relative composition of groups explain the experience, behavior, and career prospects of individuals. This gender-neutral analysis gave birth to literatures on homosocial reproduction in organizations and tokenism in the workplace. The latter analysis reflects Kanter's deeper integration of the relational thinking of Georg Simmel (1950), as it focused on the relative composition of minorities and majorities in groups and was communicated through the relational use of "Xs" and "Os" (Kanter 1979a).

But couple Kanter's first two books and a framework of analysis emerges, the faint outlines of which appear in a lesser-known paper, "Symbolic Interactionism and Politics in Systemic Perspective" (Kanter 1972b). Like Gamson (1968), she identifies two core perspectives in sociology. A behavioral or influence view represented best by symbolic interactionism and a social control or system perspective found in structural and functionalist approaches. Both have merits and biases – and they need one another, she claims. Symbolic interactionism recognizes the role of symbol in human interaction and how people in relation to one another create new forms of action. Systems approaches see how the parts fit together, theorize the distribution of power, and account for collective interests. "The important question is not which paradigm is best under all circumstances, since all of them capture some elements of 'the truth'," Kanter wrote in kaleidoscopic fashion. "The task for the future is to confront perspectives with one another and from this confrontation develop ever more sensitive tools for understanding social and political life" (1972b, p. 91).

As Kanter solidified her sociological imagination, in the strict sense defined by Mills, her research began to engage more deeply in practice. In 1972, she married Barry Stein, who received a Ph.D. in community economics from the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology, and he helped introduce her to the world of consulting. A fecund and curious mind, Stein coauthored several works with her on quality of work life (Kanter and Stein 1979), parallel organizations (Stein and Kanter 1980), and a treatise on organizational change (Kanter et al. 1992). A critical moment in Kanter's career came when she opted to publish her second book, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, with a more trade-oriented rather than a pure academic press. Doing so gave her a wider readership and more engagement with practice. Following her penultimate chapter about the study's theoretical contributions, in which she detailed a framework for understanding the structural determinants of behavior in organizations, she tackled in a concluding chapter the issues of organizational change, affirmative action, and quality of work life. The same year as publication – 1977 – she and Stein founded Goodmeasure, a consulting firm, and Kanter accepted a position at Yale University.

Thereafter, Kanter proceeded to articulate in systematic fashion her kaleidoscopic vision of organizational change. The core of her work focuses on the transition from the bureaucratic firm (as represented in *Men and Women of the Corporation*) to post-bureaucratic organizational forms: the entrepreneurial corporation (1983), the post-entrepreneurial corporation (1989), the global corporation (1993), digital transformation (2001), corporate turnarounds (2006a), and the values-led global enterprise (2009a). (Toward the beginning of this period, in 1986, Kanter moved to Harvard Business School, as only the second tenured female faculty member, and she served as the last academic editor of the *Harvard Business Review* between 1989 and 1992.)

Yet as a multivalent, systemic thinker, Kanter never abandoned her original utopian dream: an infectious optimism felt in the tone of her writing, a contagious desire to make the world a better place, made even more apparent during her speaking engagements. Not only should we, but we can, she repeats, before suggesting how. As she continued to theorize the flattened (nonhierarchical), connected (non-siloed), and flexible (agile decision-making) organization in which opportunity and power are more evenly distributed and within which people at all levels of the organization can realize themselves not as workers but as human beings, she also remained sensitive to the organization's relationship to the environment. Kanter adopts a contingency theory of organizations and ascribes to a natural, open systems view (e.g., Thompson 1967; Lawrence and Lorsch 1967; Weick 1979). There are also echoes of the human relations school in her approach, including Mary Parker Follett (Kanter 1995b) and Chris Argyris (1964, 1973), among other influences.

Between the 1980s and 2000s, Kanter structured her corporate change books in a similar fashion. They begin by specifying the environmental conditions faced by the corporation, the organizational challenges produced, and how leaders and workers can reorganize themselves to confront them – similar in spirit to her original work on communes. Her long-standing concern for how business affects society, articulated most explicitly in her prefaces, introductions, and conclusions, lurks beneath throughout the late 1970s and 1980s and is largely expressed via her analysis of the company and the employee, via such concepts as "employability security" and

the self-realization of people in organizations as they align their values and interests with that of the group – once again echoing her insights on commitment in utopian communities. But by the 1990s, she integrates community more explicitly, and it becomes clear, at least to her immediate business audience, that her approach to change does not apply solely to corporations or even organizations but to society as a whole (Kanter 1995a, 1999a).

Corporations operating in globalizing contexts not only must flatten themselves to become more entrepreneurial and innovative, but they must also turn themselves *inside out*, developing alliances and partnerships with suppliers, buyers, governments, and civic organizations. Businesses are members of society. They employ citizens and sell to citizens, and they may create positive or negative impact not in the market but the community. To compete globally, companies must thrive locally, Kanter says. And to do so businesses and communities need to find common ground and articulate a shared strategy. Later, with the dot-com boom and bust at the turn of the century and subsequent deepening of globalization in the first decade of the 2000s, Kanter further developed her frameworks for how to enact organizational transformation and turnarounds (2006a) and lead with values in order to continue realizing innovation, profits, growth, and social good (2009a). These same principles apply to political leadership (Kanter 2007), leadership in the social sector (Kanter 2005c, 2011c), and even in the concrete policy case of transportation infrastructure (Kanter 2015).

Kanter articulated a system of understanding, and as such her work could be viewed as one would that of a self-referential film auteur or novelist. More narrowly, Kanter is an ethnographer of corporate transformation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century who interprets the organizational evolution with her concepts, her frameworks, and her vision. But with each publication, she extended her system, from person and organization to community and society. Her systemic self-referentiality does not mean that Kanter does not integrate new evidence and literatures. To the contrary, her footnotes detail the wide-ranging literatures she draws from. Rather, Kanter integrates them, such as the case of network theory, into her larger framework for understanding change (Kanter 1992). In this sense, Kanter is a hedgehog – albeit a kaleidoscopic one – focused on changing business and society for the better.

## Key Contributions: A Skeleton Key

Kanter has made multiple contributions to multiple disciplines. But what holds her insights together? Is there a *skeleton key* for understanding her *key* contributions to the theory of organizational change? In Kanter's case, a skeleton key is especially critical since she, as a kaleidoscopic systems thinker, does not examine organizations and people apart from one another. Nor does she view society or community apart from organizations and people. What, then, are the core elements she works with and how does she understand their relationships?

## People

People work in and interact in organizations, and they, as humans, have needs – instrumental/cognitive, affective/emotional, and normative/evaluative. For people to commit, the organization or group needs to fulfill these needs. The former supports continuance of membership in the group, the second generates a sense of cohesion, and the third enables social control. People also think, feel, want, and evaluate with symbols. They need meaning, and it is values that guide choices, serve as control systems, forge shared identity, and create aspirations and ideals (Kanter 2009a, 2011c; Kanter et al. 2015). But meaning and values are not static; they are dynamic and social. To either persist or evolve they must be enacted – made and remade via dialogue and interaction.

Yet behavior in organizations cannot be understood with sole reference to the person's instrumental, affective, and normative needs and the mediating importance of symbols, values, and meaning. These are socially constituted. As Kanter stated early on, a systems perspective should complement social psychological frameworks.

## Organizations

Consider first the internal structure of an organization. Three determinants include opportunity, power, and relative number (Kanter 1977a). People occupy positions, which condition whether someone has more or less expectations and prospects. These opportunity pathways – into or out of the job – condition employee attitudes and behavior, i.e., aspirations, self-esteem, satisfaction, motivations, and interaction styles. Organizations also exist as distributions of power – the ability to mobilize resources, information, or support and then garner the cooperation to get something done (Kanter 1979b, 1983). The organization's design can *empower* all members of the organization and enable better flow of resources, information, or support – and in so doing improve group morale as well as the individual sense of security and propensity to participate. Finally, the relative number of majorities and minorities matters. Skewed (i.e., token) and minority (i.e., tilted) groups create intense visibility, conformity, and performance pressures for those below a certain threshold of representation, which in turn influence the opportunity and power available to them.

Externally, just as Kanter sees organizations as a structural determinant of behavior, she recognizes that the environment is a structural determinant of organizations. They are natural and open systems. But she goes deeper, offering more textured accounts of how the natural, open systems function. They consist of thinking, feeling, wanting, and valuing people who, as collectivities, adapt to changing environmental influences in order to survive as an organization or group (Kanter 1983, 1989, 1995a, 2001, 2006a, 2009a). The forces unleashed by globalization – in sum, increased flows and connectivity, which led to increased competition, volatility, diversity, uncertainty, and complexity (Kanter

2010) – pressured companies to develop the post-bureaucratic forms needed to survive and thrive. Not only must firms engage differently with their workforce, as Kanter began to observe in the 1970s and 1980s, but they must interact differently with other organizations and the larger community, especially after the Cold War.

## Communities

As part of an ecosystem remade by expanding and densifying networks spanning geographies and sectors, organizations merge, ally, or partner with other organizations as well as the larger community (Kanter 1995a, 2012a). The organization's boundary becomes porous, and the ability to manage relationships becomes critical for organizational survival and success (Kanter et al. 1992, 1999b). Those that succeed create "collaborative advantage" (Kanter 1994, 1995a). Kanter's analysis of how this is achieved builds off of her core focus on social relations. Collaboration is not exchange. The former is an ongoing relationship in which partners build value together. The latter is giving and taking. And successful collaboration is regulated not by a formal but an informal system of control. Integration – be it an alliance, a joint venture, or a full-blown partnership – is like marriages. Integration comes at several levels – strategic, tactical, operational, interpersonal, and cultural (Kanter 1994, 1995a). Although the interaction is occurring at the organization level, the problem of commitment (of the "I") to the new entity (the "we") remains the same. "Only relationships with full commitment on all sides endure long enough to create value for the partners," Kanter wrote nearly three decades after her studies on communes (1994, p. 100), before specifying mechanisms for sustaining collaborative (as opposed to organizational) commitment.

Finally, organizations must interact with communities. On the one hand, communities benefit from building an infrastructure of collaboration or "the pathways by which people and organizations come together to exchange ideas, solve problems, or form partnerships" (Kanter 1995, p. 363). While Kanter's unit of analysis has shifted from the organization to the community, her insight is similar to that observed in organizations. (She has even proclaimed that businesses should be treated as communities (Kanter 2001)). Create the structural conditions and the actors – people and organizations in the community – are more likely to work together to find solutions. But an infrastructure for collaboration is a necessary, though not sufficient condition.

People and organizations also need to be called to action and motivated to create change – and in steps the importance of values, which permeate all levels of interaction: Between people and people, people and organizations, organizations and organizations, and organizations and communities, all of which are, in essence, made up of individuals interacting under structural conditions. At the organizational level, values guide decisions, spur intrinsic motivation with positive emotions, act as an organizational control system, forge organizational identity which fosters a

longer-term perspective and widens the organization's scope, and enables ecosystem creation (Kanter 2009a, 2011c, 2015; Kanter et al. 2015). Furthermore, values may also be used to create common ground across multiple stakeholders, thus reducing intergroup conflict by establishing an overarching goal and shared values, which instill aspiration and future orientation among community members (Kanter 2009b).

Kanter's kaleidoscopic vision is layered and systemic. But this does not mean that it is deterministic. Things can change if one changes the structural conditions – or turn the kaleidoscope. And this is the role of the leader – be it of a small group, a large company, an entire nation, or beyond.

## New Insights: A Grammar of Change for Leaders

Kanter's insights may be best captured in what could be called a grammar of change. Languages, like kaleidoscopes, consist of elements. Jumble up the words, or shake the kaleidoscope, and the elements can combine and recombine in an infinite number of ways. But there are rules – a grammar – for how they may fit together and in what sequence. For Kanter, even though the only constant is change itself, there are principles for how change comes about. If leaders understand the grammar of change, then they can better lead it.

## Change Projects

In Simmelian fashion, Kanter has observed that "all leadership is intergroup leadership, because the potential for differentiation exists in any social unit larger than two" (Kanter 2009a, p. 83; see also Kanter and Khurana 2009). In this sense, a cellular basis for change for Kanter is the relationship between and leader and the team or small group, with the potential for these core relational dynamics to be reproduced at higher levels or units of analysis.

Leading a change initiative, whether from below, in the middle, or at the top, involves the exercise of seven core skills: (i) sensing needs and opportunities, (ii) stimulating breakthrough ideas, (iii) communicating inspiring visions, (iv) getting buy-in or building coalitions, (v) nurturing the work team, (vi) persisting and persevering, and (vii) celebrating accomplishments (Kanter 1983, 2001). Although structural conditions may enable better exercise of these skills – for example, the distribution of power in the form of information, resources, and support (Kanter 1979b, 1983) or the cultural existence of values-led organizational guidance system (Kanter 2009a; Kanter et al. 2015) – the leader and the team have the agency to carve out space and create the in situ conditions for initiating change, however minor. Writ small, the change agent must deal from the beginning with the challenge of overcoming "intergroup" conflict, finding common ground, and forging group commitment, for it is only through and with people, starting somewhere and often starting small, that change begins.

Extending Simmelian insights, Kanter proposes a "change agent rule of three." While leading an initiative, the agent encounters three types of people, allies, opponents, and undecideds, each of which ranges from active to passive. For allies, the agent must maintain their commitment, increase their numbers, and avoid faction creation. For opponents, the agent may eliminate them, neutralize them, or divide them. For undecideds, the agent's task is to win them over by increasing credibility, demonstrating benefits, or advancing group interests. Importantly, these cellular insights also apply to larger units of analysis such as teams, organizations, communities, or even nations.

## Alliances

Not only must change leaders form coalitions, as described above, but if they are organizational representatives, they may also need to form interorganizational alliances such as joint ventures, consortia, or value-chain partnerships. The change challenge remains that of overcoming intergroup conflict (this time without the quotes), finding common ground, and forging group commitment, but with the goal of generating and maintaining value-creating collaboration. For Kanter, there are eight "Is" that make "We": (i) individual excellence, (ii) importance, (iii) interdependence, (iv) investment, (v) information, (vi) integration, (vii) institutionalization, and (viii) integrity (Kanter 1995a). The more "Is" attended to in an alliance, the more commitment binding the two groups or parties. Although senior leaders may initiate the alliance, senior and middle managers also execute it. Alliances are a marriage of organizations at multiple levels.

## Mergers and Acquisitions

Sometimes, alliances are not enough, and full organizational integration is needed. Such processes can be traumatic for people because change of any kind, but especially in merger and acquisition contexts, may generate a loss of control, excess uncertainty, surprise, difference effects, loss of face, concerns about future competence, ripple effects, resentments, and, often, very real threats such as the loss of a job or livelihood (Kanter 1985). While there may be a technical or financial logic for bringing two organizations together, they are still made of people with values-mediated instrumental, affective, and normative needs. Organizational integration is human integration, and once again a core challenge is how to overcome intergroup conflict, find common ground, and forge group commitment.

Unlike middle managers, who lead from the middle and thus may have to carve out structural and cultural space for change, senior executives have the power to pull macro-organizational levers – to turn the kaleidoscope. Whether the motive is the turnaround of an acquired firm or leveraging a merger to catalyze change, the human integration may be thought of as three sets of activities: dual companies (run the old and the new side by side), one company (find common human bonds and encourage

relationships beyond tasks), and new company (quickly start envisioning and building the future) (Kanter 2009a, c). Kanter's earlier insights for how to overcome intergroup conflict, find common ground, and forge group commitment reappear, but once again she applies them to a higher organizational level. And this application is not limited just to mergers and acquisitions.

## Turnarounds

It is natural for people and organizations to have their ups and downs or winning streaks and losing streaks (Kanter 2006a; Kanter and Fox 2016). Missteps happen, especially in rapidly changing environments, and just as people lose confidence – the expectation of future success – so do organizations. In Kanter's sociological, kaleidoscopic imagination, however, confidence does not reside inside people's heads but emerges from a system of structural relations. And because of this, agents – from athletics coaches to business executives – can instill confidence and lead turnarounds, a form of organizational change.

The process is threefold (see the appendix in Kanter 2006a for a theoretical diagram of the complex feedback loops). First, people – and it begins with people as members of a group – will need to face facts and take personal responsibility. Second, the establishment of responsibility opens the way for collaboration, in which people learn how to count on one another again, instead of finger pointing. With collaboration, respect and trust grow among group members and an upward cycle begins, thus opening the way for leaders to lay a third cornerstone: initiative. Leaders then provide the permission and encouragement for people to act and to feel like what they do can make a positive difference. If they do not feel this efficacy, then they may respect and trust others and they may even help other people out, but they will not necessarily give the best of themselves, which is needed to better stimulate innovation and change.

## Systemic Transformation

Kanter conceptualizes systemic transformation – of which change projects, alliances, mergers and acquisitions, and turnarounds may be a part – as a "change wheel" (Kanter 2001, 2005b). Her description further highlights her kaleidoscopic thinking. She arrays around a wheel ten organizational elements, which contribute to organizational change. The change goal sits in the center. But the elements are not isolated. They are spokes on a wheel. When any two elements are combined, the change wheel begins to roll. Yet the spokes are presented with a logic in mind:

> Theme/vision, symbols/signals, and governance structures make sense at the very beginning. Next educational events can help identify and groom champions and sponsors, and quick/ wins/local innovations can then more easily follow. The activities at the grass roots then trigger the next three elements: lessons to communicate; clarity about what needs to change

in rules and procedures to support the kinds of innovations and activities that are emerging as the change idea becomes actualized; and measures of progress. Rewards help lock the whole thing into place. The elements overlap, because the same action can have multiple ramifications – for example, identifying change champions to lead local innovations and communicate with other groups to exchange best practices puts many of the spokes into gear. (Kanter 2005b, pp. 5–6)

Kanter presents a grammar of change. The wheel is based on core elements and principles, which enable multiple – kaleidoscopic – possibilities and combinations (see Fig. 1). Though not stated explicitly, the theoretical ground upon which the change wheel rolls is Kanter's kaleidoscopic understanding of the systemic, relational determination of individual and group behavior.

## Social Change

The largest and most complex social organizational form is society – be it a community, a nation, or the world, each of which consist of social, political, and economic systems. Kanter likes to quote the anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never



**Fig. 1** Change wheel (Source: Kanter 2005b)

doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" (quoted in Kanter 2005c, p. 1). But, one cannot help but see the anthropologist's words filtered through Kanter's kaleido-scopic, sociological lens. The cellular, relational basis for change remains the leader and the group. Whether in the form of an individual or organization acting in society, both have the ability to transform society, beginning with convincing the "other" to commit and contribute to the change.

The challenge is that societies consist of a dizzying array of institutions, organizations, groups, subgroups, and individuals all with their own distinct but overlapping values and instrumental, affective, and normative concerns. Leadership in the social sector is thus more complex than leading in an established organization (Kanter 2011a). Authority is more diffuse, resources are more dispersed, stakeholders are more varied, goals are more conflicting, and there are no existing institutional path-ways. Leading positive change in society requires *advanced* leadership.

A critical task for *advanced* leaders is identification of the target of change and the action vehicle (Kanter 2005c). Three types of targets (policy/advocacy, programs/modeling, and people/mobilization) may be addressed via five basic action vehicles: an existing organization, a new organization, a coalition of organizations, an ad hoc convening of organizations, or individual action (see Fig. 2). A leader may start in any one cell, e.g., a celebrity generating awareness in order to mobilize people. But later the celebrity could found a new organization to create a service or product innovation addressing the issue, after which a coalition of organizations may be engaged to advocate for a change in policy. The bigger the change becomes, the more the leader brings other people and organizations on board working in multiple cells of the matrix at once – overcoming potential intergroup conflict, finding common ground, and forging group commitment. Change agent skills are needed

**Action Vehicle**

| | | Use of existing organization | Create new organization | Work through coalition of organizations | Ad hoc convening of organizations | Individual Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Target** | Policy (advocacy)<br><br>Rules<br><br>Resources | | | | | |
| | Programs (delivery/modeling)<br><br>Services<br><br>Innovation | | | | | |
| | People & Culture (mobilization/empowerment)<br><br>Awareness<br><br>Tools for Action | | | | | |

**Fig. 2** Even bigger change matrix (Source: Kanter 2005c)

to start the transformation; the change wheel is necessary to get change rolling and values matter – but the "even bigger change" matrix helps to chart the course. Following Mead, change can begin with a leader and committed citizens (indeed, all and any change does), and Kanter suggests how to navigate the process.

## Conclusion: Kanter's Critical Utopianism

Yet how much change has Kanter made, both theoretically and practically? It is impossible to specify much less summarize the contributions of someone who coined such terms as "empowerment" and "employability security"; provided founding insights about organizational commitment; sparked new literatures on homosocial reproduction and tokenism; inspired new diversity policy and an industry of diversity training, with arguably the best-selling training video of all time; altered company quality of work life policy, with an award later created in her name for excellence in Work-Family research (given by Purdue University and Boston College); helped include "service" as a national policy in the United States; has counseled political leaders, scores of Fortune 500 companies, and thousands of firms and nonprofits; and has taught multiples more in classrooms, via videos and talks, and through print publications.

But the work of change is never done. Although Kanter admits that there are no organizational utopias, she embraces the aspiration for perfectibility or the search for ideals, as she observed in her first publications on utopian communities. After all, she knew that all the social experiments she studied for her dissertation eventually failed. Instead, Kanter focused on explaining why and how some survived longer. The ideal is never realized, but it is what keeps her moving forward. There are times when Kanter's law applies – everything looks like failure in the middle. But in the middle is when one must persist, drawing from the only energy that is infinitely renewable – one's own. It is in the difficult middles of change – big or small – that one realizes the wisdom in another of Kanter's phrases – change is not a decision; it is a campaign. Likewise, Kanter's work on change has also been a lifetime campaign. There were moments when her work resembled that of a cunning fox, moving from subject to subject, but through it all she built and maintained a kaleidoscopic vision of change with one larger hedgehog-like goal. If the perfect society cannot be achieved, at the very least the world can always become a better place. Some utopian communities did last longer than others. Rather, people and organizations – you – just need to get started and go from there, for there is always more good to create. And Kanter's hope is that her kaleidoscopic vision can help some lead the way.

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## Further Reading

Rosabeth Moss Kanter has distilled her frameworks in books, articles, blogs, videos, and inter-
views. To understand her influential view of majority-minority relations within organizations,
read Men and Women of the Corporation (1977a) and then watch the classic diversity training
video The Tale of "O": On Being Different. To delve deeper into her work on change, begin with
The Change Masters (1983), considered one of the most influential business books in the
twentieth century. To round out understanding of her core vision of corporate change, follow
up with When Giants Learn to Dance (1989), Evolve! (2001), and Confidence (2006a). To
explore her understanding of the relationship between business and society, read World Class
(1995a) and SuperCorp (2009a), both of which develop her full vision of the twenty-first century
global enterprise. Move (2015), on the other hand, is unique in that it offers a book-length focus
on how to tackle a single social change issue. Finally, Rosabeth Moss Kanter on the Frontiers of
Management (1997) collects many of her classic Harvard Business Review articles. And if you
want to understand the notion of perfectibility, return to where her system and vision began,
Commitment and Community (1972).

# The Legacy of Judith H. Katz: Organizational Change and Justice

# 41

Beth Applegate

**Abstract**

This chapter is based on the pioneering work of Judith H. Katz, Ed.D. in systems change to address issues of racism and social justice and infuse organization development with these concepts to build inclusive organizations. The author describes Katz's research, methodology, models, teaching, and client consultations in the field of applied behavioral science (ABS). The author reflects on implications and impact of Katz's legacy, on future organization development practitioners, and the discourse on the role of organization development as a catalyst for racial and social justice.

**Keywords**

Racial justice • Social justice • Social change • White privilege • White awareness • White culture • Polarity thinking • Organizational equity and inclusion • Organizational change • Racism • Inclusion • Diversity • Cultural capacity building theory • Organization development • Covert processes • Feminist psychology • Human relations theory • Social identity • Multicultural organization development model • Intersectionality theory • Racial identity theory • Systems thinking • Implicit bias • Counseling psychology

## Contents

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*When we try to bring about change in our societies, we are treated first with indifference, then with ridicule, then with abuse and then with oppression. And finally, the greatest challenge is thrown at us: We are treated with respect. This is the most dangerous stage.*

*-A.T. Ariyarante*

## Introduction

Dr. Judith H. Katz has devoted her professional life to the principles of organizational change, equity, and inclusion. Judith was first influenced by her parents Ilse and Bill Katz who instilled a set of values, vision, and passion about addressing injustice in the world. Her parents fled Germany to escape being incarcerated in Hitler's death camps; while many of her relatives perished in those camps. She came to understand the price that anti-Semitism paid in her parents' experience in fleeing Germany and being immigrants in the United States. She grew up with a strong set of values regarding justice and the pain and impact of oppression. And through that experience, she developed a deep understanding that as a white, Jewish woman, she *must* play a role for positive change. Judith was also named after an aunt and uncle who died in concentration camps which deeply rooted the legacy of addressing oppression into her DNA. Judith often talked about how she did not choose her profession as a change agent but rather felt that the work chose her!

## Influences and Motivations

In 1969 at Queens College NY, Judith participated in her first T-group. An element of the T-group, given the nature of what was happening in the late 1960s, was on race and racism. This experience sparked her interest in learning more about T-groups, societal and organizational change, and what was then termed "human relations" training. She was fortunate to attend classes led by individuals who had attended NTL and participated in several workshops facilitated by Jack Gibbs addressing issues of interpersonal dynamics and trust. In addition to learning about herself, Judith also began to learn about the process of group dynamics and the challenges of developing trust across racial lines. These experiences opened Judith's eyes to the need for change on individual, group, and organizational levels as she observed how the larger societal forces impacted interpersonal and group dynamics. Experiential education had begun to open the door to understanding that the need for change had to go beyond interpersonal awareness and trust as she engaged in groups that were diverse in terms of whites and African Americans. What became clear in many of those groups was that even if people could develop closer connections and understanding across differences, that the fundamental organizational and societal systems would still remain the same. And although Judith developed many close connections with people of color at Queens College, Pam Palanque North, Richard Orange, and Carl Jennings (all of whom would become OD practitioners in their own careers), it was clear that just caring about each other and working together were not sufficient. Institutional racism needed to be addressed and systems needed to be changed.

Judith's next experience which deepened her interest in group dynamics and the impact of racism resulted from her participation in a summer workshop facilitated by the National Conference of Christians and Jews in 1970. As part of the opening session, each staff member was asked to make a statement framing the conference. An African American woman facilitator said, "I don't care about you white people – I am here for People of Color – and if you are going to take action go do it in your own communities... because racism is a WHITE PROBLEM." That was a transformational moment for Judith, which opened the door for her to begin to understand and address racism as a white problem which was not how racism was being framed 1970. This was a worldview and life-changing awareness. From that point forward and for the next decade, Judith focused her work examining racism from a white perspective.

In 1972 Judith went on to study at UMass, Amherst, for her doctoral work. Many of the UMass faculty were NTL members. The values of NTL – founded on bringing theory, research, and practice to make individuals, groups, and organizations healthier – had a tremendous impact on Judith's growth. Judith developed strong lifelong professional and personal partnerships through NTL. Through her program, she was exposed to and influenced by the classic OD theorists not only in her research and studies but was fortunate enough to participate in a year-long intensive "experience" led by Edie Seashore, Herb Shepard, Orian Worden, and Wally Sykes. Edie Seashore became Judith's mentor and remained her mentor and dear friend until her death in 2013.

At the same time, Judith was learning about OD theory and practice, counseling psychology, and social change. Judith was working with other students and faculty who were examining social justice issues and race, racism, gender, and sexism in new ways. For example, Bailey Jackson (also a student) was building on Cross' (1971) work and studying how black identity theory could be applied to creating multicultural organizations –and a multicultural OD model. Alice Sargent was breaking new ground in her doctoral work in identifying the *Androgynous Manager* (1983). Judith was also influenced by some of the seminal writings and works of blacks (and other people of color) in awakening her awareness of the need to rethink and be reeducated about history through the lens of people of color (POC) critical race theorists; Dee Brown (1970), John Hope Franklin (1947), Frances Cress Welsing (1974), Schwartz and Disch (1970), and many others. Simultaneously, Pat Bidol (1971), Eric Goldman, William Ryan (1971), Bob Terry (1970), and others also were identifying new approaches to more systematically address racism from a white perspective. Judith's experience at UMass brought together foundational OD theory and practice, along with principles of counseling psychology, which enabled her to base her work in addressing issues of oppression and social change through a systems approach at the individual, group, and organizational levels.

In addition, while at UMass, Judith experienced her second most important learning when Maurianne Adams confronted her about her own internalized oppression as a woman. Before that encounter, Judith had previously seen one oppression as "more important than another" (i.e., race vs. gender). However, Maurianne's

confrontation helped Judith realize that oppression is oppression and that by ranking which "ism" was more important than others, she was still operating out of the same "one-up/one-down" mindset. Judith began to see the intersectionality – and multidimensionality of oppression – i.e., being white and a woman means that an individual can experience being *one-up* and *one-down* at the same time. Understanding of intersectionality was critical as she later applied that learning in her practice and systems change work.

During this same period (1972–76), Judith worked every summer in Bethel Maine as the head of NTL's children and teen program. The program was created as a "camp" for the children aging 5–12 of participants and staff at NTL programs as well as providing a teen T-group program for 13–18-year-olds. During those summers in Bethel, Judith participated as a staff member in weekly meetings and gained greater exposure to the many NTL staff members conducting programs and sunrise seminars that highlighted their current and developing theory and practice. The list of contributors is too long to fully honor and includes John Adams, Billie Alban, Dick Beckhardt, David Bradford, Barbara Bunker, John Carter, Bob Chin, Elsie Cross, Kaleel Jamison, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Hal Kellner, Sherm Kingsbury, Don Klein, Ron Lippert, Joe Luft, Judith Palmer, Carol Pierce, Mickey Ritvo, John Scherer, Eva Rainman Schindler, Edie Seashore, Charlie Seashore, Bob Tannenbaum, Peter Vail, Gwen Wade, John and Joyce Weir, and Orian Worden.

During this time a group of women NTL members began to question the underpinnings and theoretical foundations of T-groups and other methodologies and how the predominant theory and practice largely reflected and were primarily based in white men's experiences. During one summer, prior to the start of the weekly workshops, NTL staff members spent a day exploring how biases about women were impacting theory and practice. These sessions were facilitated by NTL members: Billie Alban, Barbara Bunker, Judith Palmer, Carol Pierce, Edie Seashore, and others. It was so powerful to be among these women – who were demonstrating both a level of strength and compassion in their work and who were opening Judith's eyes to see how bias was baked into organizational development theory and practice. These experiences reinforced Judith's exploration of how OD theory and practice needed to change to better reflect the perspectives and experiences of people of color and white women. Being exposed to and participating in these conversations were vital to Judith's later work in challenging and enhancing OD theory and ensuring the integration of experiences and perspectives beyond the founders. In 1976, Judith completed her doctorate from UMass, became an NTL member, and began to work side by side with many of the leading thinkers and practitioners including Lee Bolman, Bob Chin, Chuck Hamilton, and Judith Palmer. While working with Bolman (both within NTL and in outside consulting), Judith learned more about Chris Agyris' (Argyris and Schon 1974) espoused theory and theory in use (as Lee Bolman was a protégée of Chris Agyris) and gained a deeper understanding of organizational culture. Agyris' theory became central in Judith's examination of issues of discrepancy between intent and impact in working across race and other elements of difference. Upon receiving her doctorate, Judith went on to teach at the University of Oklahoma – in a Master's degree program in human relations where

she was tenured – and then taught at San Diego State University in the community-based block nontraditional counseling psychology program. In 1985 she left her full-time position in higher education, because she found that higher education was too intractable to change, and devoted herself full time to working in organizations around the globe for change.

## Key Contributions

Judith Katz has distinguished herself as a thought leader, practitioner, educator, strategist, and compassionate human being. Her writings have broken new ground transforming the concept of how diversity and inclusion integrate into OD. Through her work (and her long-standing partnership with Fred Miller), they have put addressing issues of diversity as a lever for organizational change on the OD agenda as an integral part of OD theory and practice (Bob Marshak, 2016 interview). And she has worked diligently to address oppression in organizations across the globe working with clients such as Allstate, Cisco, Mobil, DuPont, Digital Equipment Corporation, Ecolab, Eileen Fisher, United Airlines, Merck, Telecoms of Singapore, Croydon Council (UK), the City of San Diego, and institutions of higher education. Judith has been recognized by the Organization Development Network with the Lifetime Achievement Award (2014), Outstanding Global Work (2012), and Communicating OD Knowledge in honor of Larry Porter (2009) and has been named as a Diversity Legacy Leader (2015) by the Forum on Workplace Inclusion and one of 40 Pioneers of Diversity (2007) by Profiles in Diversity Journal. She has served on the boards of NTL for the Applied Behavioral Sciences, Social Venture Network, and Fielding Graduate University.

Judith's journey and contribution began with an understanding about race and racism and the role that white people play in maintaining and perpetuating the system, as well as the accountability whites have for addressing racism through self-awareness and in their spheres of influence. Early on she heard from people of color about the frustrations and challenges of having to always educate white people and then whites often either denying or dismissing people of color's experiences. Her work on white awareness (Katz 1978) was in direct response to that concern, lessons learned on her journey, and the recognition that in addition to having power and privilege, it was important for whites to have mechanisms to do their own work about racism so that their learning was not at the expense of people of color. While teaching at the University of Oklahoma, she also consulted with educational institutions such as Trenton State College, The University of Pennsylvania, Indiana State, University of Delaware, and many others on addressing racism, and her book was seen as a resource for many educators and facilitators addressing racism from a white perspective.

In 1985 Judith was asked by Frederick A. Miller of the Kaleel Jamison Consulting group to join the firm when Kaleel Jamison died of cancer at the age of 53. The firm's name continues to honor Kaleel's legacy and contribution as a pioneer who understood that to really create a multicultural organization necessitated a systems

level change intervention (Jamison 1978). Together, Judith and Fred have partnered and cocreated new models and have been thought leaders in the field of OD with a focus on strategic culture change to create more inclusive organizations that leverage differences. Their partnership is one of the few that have lasted over three decades, and they have built upon their differences as a white woman and African American man to model how working across differences creates and strengthens performance, productivity, and innovation. (Note: Fred Miller and Kaleel Jamison are both included in this handbook.)

Over the years, Judith's work has continued to weave together what is happening in the larger society related to issues of oppression and social change, along with the application and adoption of OD methodologies and practices to create change within organizations through the development of new frameworks and approaches for change.

One of the things that Judith learned from her NTL experiences was how to take "experience" and make that accessible for others in both theoretical and practical ways. Katz identifies as a change agent – with both the theoretical knowledge of individual, group, and organizational (and societal change) rooted in OD and counseling psychology theory as well as a practitioner – involved with making large-scale change in organizations.

The outcome of all of Judith's seminal experiences was to use her power and privilege to speak and give voice to the impact of white privilege on individuals and organizations. Katz developed "white awareness" – a systematic training program that incorporated a white-on-white approach to begin to address racism from a white perspective. This training program was the basis of Katz's research for her dissertation and was later published as a book in 1978 and revised in 2003. The training and book were landmarks and provided a step-by-step approach that focused on whites taking responsibility for both learning about racism, understanding how racism functioned on a cultural (understanding and explicating white culture), institutional, group, and individual level, and identifying specific actions that whites could take to address racism at each level of the system. A part of the contribution and breakthrough of her work was also in identifying self-interest – i.e., "What is in it for white people to be willing to address racism?" The understanding of self-interest has become a key element underlying much of Judith's later work as she works with organizations to link their overarching business strategy and identifying opportunities for change, i.e., the self-interest of the organization at various levels for change.

Although others identified and talked about the role of whites in addressing racism (Pat Bidol (1971) in her writing on "The Rightness of Whiteness," Bob Terry (1970) in *For White's Only*; and others), Judith's work provided a systematic approach to understand the role of whites at an individual, group (cultural racism), and systems (institutional) level. The white-on-white approach was adopted by the Race Relations Institute at Patrick Air Force Base. The assumption underlying the white-on-white approach was to enable whites to do "their" use of self-work so that they could engage across differences in a way that did not exploit or expect people of color to educate them.

Some of her major contributions are represented in her work with individuals and culture change. She embodies a lifetime commitment to answering the question, "How do I know what I don't know?" and "How do I share my lived experience?" A seminal example of her use of self is the publication of *No Fairy Godmothers* (Katz 1984), a book based on her experience as a rape survivor. A key tenet underlying this book was using her voice to make the unspoken spoken and to help others in their personal journeys. Judith was one of the first to write about rape at a time when many people suffered in silence and blamed themselves rather than understand the courage they have to survive such an ordeal. Her use of self extends not only in her writings but also in her interactions and practice. As a woman, she has continually worked to support other women in their journey of finding and using their voice and discovering the often unseen strength and courage they possess.

Another one of Judith's contributions in partnership with Fred Miller is to continue to build the body of knowledge of OD and multicultural change theory and practice.

Building on the work of Bailey Jackson and Evangelino Holvino's multicultural OD model (Jackson and Holvino 1988), Judith and Fred Miller have adapted the model naming it the *path from monocultural club to inclusion* (Katz and Miller 1995) which became a seminal tool for diagnosing and intervening in organizations for culture change (Fig. 1).

The model identifies six developmental stages (exclusive club, passive club, symbolic difference, critical mass, welcoming, and a joining mindset ) to achieve the enriching benefits of differences and to create an inclusive culture. This seminal model provides the framework for not only diagnosing an organization but also



**Fig. 1** The Path to Inclusion

identifying the key interventions needed at each stage to transform the organization. Katz notes that "inclusion is a process, not an endpoint. It is a way of being, a way of doing business." Rather than focusing on representation as an outcome, the model focuses on creating a culture in which people can do their best work and feel joined with and fully included. The path model provides the road map and the understanding that achieving a successful, inclusive, diverse organization requires fundamental changes: new styles of leadership, mindsets, engagement, problem solving, and strategic planning. It requires new organizational structures, policies, practices, behaviors, values, goals, and accountabilities – in short, a complete systemic culture change.

One of the breakthrough values of this model is in identifying the need for different strategies at different stages. Culture change interventions that might be effective at one stage along the path might be ineffective at other stages. To create an inclusive organization means addressing many of the aspects of the culture that was once taken as the norm and cannot be accomplished without a major shift in mindsets and processes. Issues of power and privilege that were rooted deeply in societal culture and replicated in the very fabric of many organizational structures must also change in organizations to create a more inclusive culture. To achieve sustainability and become a beacon for other organizations to follow, Katz states that "an Inclusive Organization (and its people) must continually "walk toward its talk" (Katz 1994).

A discussion of Judith's work would be incomplete without highlighting her long-term collaboration with Fred Miller. Since 1985 they have worked together – leveraging and modeling their own differences – of style, race, gender, and background to break new ground in the field of OD. They have been instrumental in shifting language and methodologies – moving from multiculturalism to an understanding of differences, to creating a vision of what an inclusive organization looks like and how its members interact. Their book *The Inclusion Breakthrough* (Miller and Katz 2002) provided a comprehensive approach to obtaining that breakthrough through OD methodologies. And their work on inclusion as the HOW (Katz and Miller 2010) and conscious actions for inclusion (Miller and Katz 2002; Katz and Miller 2013) has assisted organizations and individuals to develop the capabilities and interactions needed to overcome the systemic barriers based on unconscious bias – providing a road map to enable people to learn what TO DO rather than what not to do (aligned with emerging diagnostic OD methodologies.) Together they continue to identify and define what is on the edge and bring both a theoretical and practical application from which others can learn and create change.

Judith has pushed the envelope of OD on many fronts. She codeveloped with Bob Marshak the covert processes model. Together Judith and Bob wrote a number of articles based on the model (Marshak and Katz 1992, 1997, 2001; Katz and Marshak 1996) and facilitated the covert processes lab for 14 years. The covert processes model brought together a cross section of areas (social anthropology, Tavistock, group dynamics, organizational change models, the unconscious, paradigms, prisms, mindsets and behaviors, and visioning). The model and its application moved from rational thought to incorporate both the unconscious and the unspoken and provided a powerful framework through which to understand why even the best designed

change efforts often fail. It gave OD practitioners a way to understand the hidden dynamics (covert processes) both within organization and the change agents themselves that were needed to be addressed and faced to effectively make change. Through the process of conducting the covert process lab, Judith and Bob were able to create new facilitation processes. Bob remarked that in working with Judith that "together we were both able to feel safe to explore their own covert and overt processes in a way deepened our own learning and effectiveness. There was never a competitive dynamic – we were different and valued each other." Their work in covert process was the bases for Bob's book *Covert Processes* (Marshak 2006). To learn more about Bob Marshak, please see his chapter in this anthology.

## New Insights

Judith is instrumental in me claiming my power and has helped me frame the ***answer*** to the ***question*** – to what end do I practice organizational change work in the world? The answer is "justice." Judith is a living legacy who continues to inspire organizational change in service of justice.

Judith is figural in me as I work with whites taking responsibility for learning about racism and white self-interest and developing their use of self-skills. I lean into her white awareness systemic approach, understanding how racism functions on a cultural, institutional, group, and individual level, and focus my interventions on the action whites can take to address racism at each level of the system. Judith's commitment to a use of self and skillfully modeling the ability to provide and receive feedback; openness to learning from colleagues and others; and the ability to adjust thoughts, emotions, and behaviors based on context. She strives to live into her espoused values. She is not afraid of seeing or pushing herself or speaking truth about herself in order to be better tomorrow than she was yesterday or in service to others' learning. Judith uses her own grist for the mill and offers up *how* her personal struggles, worries, activism, and heartbreaks have informed her practice and scholarship weaving the dialectical relationship between personal, consulting teams, organizational lives, and the sociopolitical context. Judith is gifted and wise as she translates intrapersonal use of self and interpersonal giving and receiving feedback skills into mentoring, networking, organizations, and networks, offering a road map for the individual-, group-, and system-level aspirations and goals.

Katz not only has had a profound influence on my career; she has changed the lives of countless colleagues and clients with whom she interacts. The impact of Judith's body of work on white culture, white privilege, systems thinking, and organizational change continues to shape and motivate continuous learning and provides accessible concepts and models that underpin the next generation of organization development practitioner's organizational equity and inclusion (OEI) efforts. Building on Judith's white awareness approach, more and more OD practitioners are using polarity thinking to work with white people in organizations and social change networks to help them understand what polarities are, how they work, and how they can support our ability to reimagine equity and justice in the United

States and interrupt white privilege so we all thrive. The "so we can all thrive" is an acknowledgment of Judith's understanding that it is whites self-interest to address and end racism and her understanding of interdependency from systems thinking.

Judith changed the way OD practitioners viewed diversity, and she developed the models and pioneered the interventions to engage meaningful and sustainable equity and inclusion initiatives, guided by a set of principles, and inclusion strategies that are closely connected to the organization's goals, where the connection is explicit in all communications. Katz body of interventions reminds OD practitioners that both *systemic and individualistic* approaches are necessary for successful, sustainable change. The systemic or "outside-in" approach starts with *environmental scanning* that identifies the diversity-related trends that will affect the organizational operations; next, it develops stakeholder relations, recruiting, marketing, and service, etc., *strategies* that will address these external trends; and finally, it assesses all of the organization's *human management systems* to ensure that policies, programs, and management practices encourage and support inclusivity. This approach builds upon understanding covert process energy in the system and the systemic approach from the path model. The individualistic or "inside-out" approach focuses on different educational, behavioral, and attitudinal change efforts to increase the *self-awareness*, *sensitivity levels,* and *interpersonal skills* of all organization members for engaging in respectful and valuing cross-cultural relationships with all internal and external organization stakeholders. In addition to the formal policies, programs, and practices, the organization's cultural norms need to foster an appreciation and respect for diversity and create a welcoming, inclusive work environment that enables the organization to recruit, retain, and better leverage a diverse staff to achieve the organization's mission. People must understand the relationships between structural racialization, social identities, and individual diversity-related interactions.

There are prolific examples of our country's racism and the systemic racial and economic inequalities in our government, economy, justice system, education, and the institutions most important to our daily lives. In the sociopolitical context of post-Ferguson and MO and in the midst of Trump's presidential candidacy, more than ever, there is a continued need to continue Judith's white-on-white approach which enables whites to do their use of self-work so that they can engage across differences in ways that do not exploit or expect people of color to calmly and rationally educate white people.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business

One of the central implications to organizational change agents and racial inclusion and equity initiatives in the twenty-first century is that white people continue to struggle with awareness of a racialized society and articulating their feelings about internalized superiority. People of color are aware of and about to articulate their feelings about the racialized system and their role in it. People of color feel rage about racism often and struggle with whether they can honestly share their rage with whites for fear of their response. As Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor has

observed, "The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to speak openly and candidly on the subject of race." In an increasingly polarized nation where whites can still remain unaware and maintain their privilege while centering ourselves in all matters deemed good, normal, and universal, it is critical to our organizations and all of humanity that we address racism in all of its manifestations in our society and organizations. Therefore there is a responsibility for those of us who identify as organizational "change agents" to continue Judith's (and others) work of addressing justice in the clients we serve and to continue to apply the theoretical, methodical, inspirational wisdom to confront collective denial about racism and other oppressions while at the same time advancing new and creative processes.

As white OD change agents, we must continue to center white awareness and diversity and inclusion as an unequivocal part of organizational change theory and proudly stand on the shoulders of our foremothers and continue to link current racial equity and inclusion work to United States history and the legacy of the founders of NTL. Building on the path model, we need to find ways to accelerate change in organizations so that they can more quickly and effectively address remove the barriers of injustice and create more inclusive environments. We must continue to have the crucial conversations within and across race to create more equitable systems. And as OD practitioner-scholars, we must continue to deepen our own understanding of current social change issues and movements and the implications for how they are manifesting inside of our organizations. We must be prepared to appropriately include all social identities represented in the systems in which we enter, and demonstrate we've done our own use of self, and emotional intelligence work among and with our fellow consultants prior to engaging the client system, and take that knowledge and apply it to OD approaches to organizational change so that no one is left behind or ONE DOWN.

As OD scholar-practitioners, we need to continue to work toward intentionally building bridges to and from racial advocacy and racial healing-focused organizations, social justice educators, and (ABS) organizational change scholar-practitioners. Racial justice activist and racial healing organizations as well as social justice educators can benefit from increased knowledge of self-awareness and use of self, group dynamics, organizational change, and societal change in service learning about process facilitation and systems theory in relationship to encouraging social change. ABS organizational change scholar-practitioners can benefit from increased knowledge about the current sociopolitical context, contemporary definitions of social group membership, gender identity, and increased exposure and sensitivity to understanding the current intersectionality of race/ethnicity, gender, religion, class, etc., and the implications to OD change agent work in the twenty-first century. To accomplish this, we must increase our interdisciplinary relationships and must intentionally build relationships and cocreative collaborative win/win opportunities to cocreate social change.

More than ever it is time to utilize time-tested application of applied behavioral science knowledge of self-awareness and use of self, group dynamics, organizational change, and societal change in service of healing the most egregious, complicated, and important social upheavals that impact and haunt our collective unconscious.

More than ever as change agents, we need to rededicate ourselves to understanding and developing solutions for productive change in every facet of personal, organizational, and social life as our forefathers and foremothers have done. As organizational change scholar-practitioners, Judith inspires us to work toward extending the values and ideals of democracy and positioning social science in its service. Judith embodies and honors the distinctive role and the legacy of ABS practitioners to steward the potential of humanity for good and its commitment to human development. In the Jewish tradition, it is said, "Never forget." We can all continue the work of the founders in the field, continued by Katz and other change agents to consciously and intentionally choose to work for a just, humane, and sustainable society in which people are responsible for themselves, their communities, and the global environment, working together to build a just, caring, and peaceful world.

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# Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries: Playing the Morosoph

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Elizabeth Florent-Treacy, Konstantin Korotov, and Caroline Rook

**Abstract**

Manfred Kets de Vries has brought a unique form of humanistic and scientific thinking to the forces of organizational change. Early in his career, Prof. Kets de Vries argued that in order to survive and change, people in organizations must uncover and deal with human dynamics such as the anxiety or resistance of individuals, combined with such organizational forces as cultural code, embedded response patterns, and unhealthy adaptations to external pressures. In the early 1970s, this was an unorthodox point of view. Fast forward to a new century, and we see that thanks in part to Kets de Vries' contribution, we have experienced a paradigm shift. Bringing human beings, with all their inherent messiness, into the organizational change equation is no longer heretical. If such thinking has become more acceptable today, it is because pioneering academics were able to challenge the limits of the rational, management science approach to organizational change.

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This chapter addresses the early experiences and later influences that shaped the career of Manfred Kets de Vries, by putting him, metaphorically, on the psychoanalyst's couch.

## Contents

## Influences and Motivations: The Vicissitudes of War and Clues from Freud

To use some phrases that he might apply himself, what makes Manfred Kets de Vries "tick?" What "red threads" run through his life? How has his way of thinking contributed to the world? To explore these questions we will use one of his own methodologies and put him, metaphorically, on the psychoanalyst's couch. (Although he would say, "Please don't overdo the psychoanalysis part. Look at me from some other perspectives as well.") What significant events have occurred or recurred throughout his life to make him the person he is? Can we see patterns of behavior and sources of influence? What leitmotifs can we identify?

One of the red threads that runs through the tapestry of Manfred Kets de Vries' personal and professional life is "Everything is connected." He brings a unique form of humanistic and scientific thinking to the world of organizations and leadership. The message he champions is that explanations can be found for why leaders and organizations go astray and that there are preventative and remedial ways to treat dysfunctional organizations and restore them to health. Building on this, he has written extensively about sustainably healthy and creative organizations. Why have these particular themes been so important for him? Therein lies a tale.

## The Morosoph: A Fairy Tale

*Once upon a time, there was a rebellious young Dutch boy, full of life and curiosity. He loved the natural world and spent a great deal of time exploring, fishing, and observing the life of insects, birds, and animals. Unlike other children, he was not afraid of angry bulls or of climbing to the tops of tall trees. When he was tired or worried, or needed anything a child cannot find for himself, he could go to his grandmother, who was a pillar of strength in his life. The boy lived in a small village in a small country. But his personal "kingdom" extended only past the garden into the nearby meadows, heathland, and woods, and it was inhabited by only three characters: himself, a large bearlike creature – a charismatic individual who could be warm and inviting but could also be aloof – and a badger-like individual, who was dependable, determined, watchful, protective, and at times, hardheaded. When the boy's questions and actions tested her patience, the badger would send him down the road to visit the local carpenter, his grandfather. He was a kind man who would give the shirt off his back to anyone in need. But he was also wise in the ways of the world.*

*One day the boy arrived at the carpenter's shop to find that he was not at his usual place, and some of his tools were missing from the shelves. The boy sat down to wait for his return. It grew dark, and the boy was hungry. He considered leaving to see if his grandmother had supper laid out for him, but something held him back. He curled up in a corner and was soon asleep.*

*He woke up, startled by the sound of the carpenter whispering. His grandfather seemed disheveled, and the boy realized that he was afraid. The carpenter was telling the boy's grandmother a terrible tale. "The evil king from the East has invaded our lands and occupied the country. Now, the invaders are going house to house, to take away and kill anyone with a yellow star. I must use my tools to create hiding places for as many people as I can." As the boy heard these words, he noticed a little mouse, its eyes glinting in the shadows. As the mouse raised a paw to clean its face, the boy understood that he had a powerful gift: the ability to be still and listen and observe in silence. It was an epiphany, and although this was a word he would not hear until much later in his life, the boy immediately recognized the truth that could be learned through silence.*

Manfred Kets de Vries writes that fairy tales give us a window into our evolutionary history. They unfold as archetypical journeys and give us insights into our passage through the different phases of our life. They are the metaphoric reflection of significant developmental events.

It is not so difficult to create a kind of fairy tale about Manfred Kets de Vries. Place him in history during a period when Nazi forces were not only occupying Holland but were also terrorizing his village. Let the young boy – with his gift for silence – help his parents and grandparents harbor *onderduikers*: people who must be hidden and protected.

*Soon, the Grüne Polizei (the green-uniformed Nazi police force) surrounded the village. The people around the boy were behaving as though they wore too many layers of clothing. On the outside, the villagers had their normal appearance. But underneath they all wore that heavy extra layer of silence – never, ever look toward the secret places where the* onderduikers *held their breath. At the center of each villager, there were strata of fear and anger.*

*It was not long before the Nazi police captured the bear – his father. The bear was taken away to a transit camp to be sent to the East. But his mother the badger, a fiercely determined creature, used all her tricks and wiles to get the bear released. She came alive during these terrible times, and her great purpose in life was to help others survive. After the war, however, the bear and the badger went their separate ways.*

*Morosoph* means wise fool, someone who speaks the truth despite danger, but in a playful and witty fashion, like the Fool in Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Make Manfred the child of a Jewish father and a gentile mother who divorced after the war. Notice how his mother and his grandparents became "Righteous Gentiles" and see them listed on the Wall of Honor in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. Give him a grandfather (who once held communist-like ideals), with a strong sense of fairness and justice bred deep in his bones. And give him a younger brother who became part of his emotional support system to help them cope with a complex family situation.

> *The war ended. Many people celebrated, but the boy could not escape the images that were everywhere as many of the perpetrators were tried and some even executed. Also, there were books in his house that showed the evil that had been committed – books that contained highly disturbing images: the ravaged bodies of those less fortunate than the bear – people who had died in concentration camps. The boy knew that many of his family members had also perished in these places. Although the bear had left the badger, trailing behind him was a long, dark cloud of guilt at abandoning the creature that had saved his life. The badger's unhappiness about the separation dulled her bright eyes and very much affected the boy. To add to his unhappiness, when the boy was eight, his beloved grandmother died of pneumonia.*

Give him also a family full of entrepreneurs and a wealthy and successful father who said, "Son, you will never be a businessman." And make him a boy who saw that as a dare.

> *The years rolled by, and the routines of life settled in again. The boy was an excellent student and was accepted into a better school than his parents could have ever imagined. The bear would visit occasionally. He would appear at odd moments to take the boy and his brother on short excursions. Sometimes, he would take them to the factories he was in charge of – places where everybody paid homage to him. His visits would stir up the dust of the boy's and his brother's life, and then he would leave again. The bear would send postcards from exotic places with the terse message "Greetings from your father." These postcards caught the boy's imagination. He would think, "I must work hard to please the bear. I should try to become as important as him."*
>
> *Spending time outdoors had always been essential to the boy. Discovering new things in the natural world made him feel truly alive. It created an oceanic feeling; it gave him a sense of limitlessness and oneness. In the outdoors, he felt connected to the forces of a collective unconscious. He spent as much time as possible outside the house, exploring the woods, streams, and fields.*
>
> *When he was indoors, the boy read fairy tales and also comics about Tintin, the young journalist-explorer, or Eric the Norseman, a Viking explorer. He often said he would like to be an explorer himself. Like Tintin, the boy was a hardworking, very persistent student, but not wise in the ways of the world. He was deceptively simple, but very ambitious, with a mother who had very little money. He knew he would never be a nobleman. So how could he please the bear?*
>
> *All through his life, the carpenter (who had been almost beaten to death by Nazi sympathizers before the war) would repeat like the ticking of a clock that measured the time until a new adventure would begin: My boy, you must read; you must study; you must*

*educate yourself; only through education will you have influence; only education will enable you to create a better world. The badger often talked about the terrible times that must never, ever, be repeated. Tick tock, tick tock. "Fairness, valor, strength, courage, persistence, resilience, danger, and fighting the arbitrary actions of powerful, evil people. Make the bear proud of you." All these themes played out in the boy's mind.*

*The carpenter, who had risked his life for the* onderduikers*, presented a challenge to the boy: there is good, and there is evil. The difference is very clear. A righteous man will defend what is fair and do what's right, without hesitation. This was the second gift the boy received. And the boy gradually realized that the carpenter had foretold the path he must follow: study, learn, and work your way through education to attain a position where you can have some influence.*

*But this was not to be found in the little village. First of all, the boy would have to discover what it was that he should seek. No one in the village could tell him what he should look for, or who might help him with the challenge, or even in which direction to start out.*

*And so the boy set off with an empty sack on his shoulder on his quest for redemption. Some of the monsters had been slayed – for now. But the monsters were multiheaded. New ones could always emerge. Did the quest have something to do with destroying the nests where these monsters were hatched? He knew from his observations of anthills that even the most orderly, efficient, and mercenary societies could be stirred up and altered. He also knew that not much was needed for evil to return. There were so many questions in his world and so few answers. He needed to find out more.*

*Trying to please the bear, he went to a technical university to become an engineer, but it was not the right choice for him. Instead (after a short period of confusion), he decided to take a degree in economics. He knew that it was a negative choice, but it left his options open. Still he did not know what he was seeking, only that he had not yet found it.*

*He took to the sea on a ship bound for America. Looking into the mirror, he saw a young man with the shadowy outline of a lone wolf.*

In 1966, young Manfred went to America with a half-heartedly earned economics degree in his pocket and a growing sense that economics didn't have all the answers. Place him at Harvard and introduce him to the works of Freud and a somewhat contrarian academic: Abraham Zaleznik, a business school professor who wanted to bring psychoanalytic concepts to the world of work. Let our explorer discover Freud's royal road to the unconscious: his own dreams.

Weave through the tale another leitmotif: "One of the small pleasures in life is doing things that people say you will (or can) never do." Another dare.

Bring him to France, where he is invited to teach at INSEAD, a new type of a business school, originally created to bring greater mutual understanding between the countries in Europe (the guiding motive being never to have war again) and begin his psychoanalytic training in Paris. Then have INSEAD fire him. Subsequently, after a short sojourn at Harvard, have him find like-minded colleagues in Canada, where Henry Mintzberg (another iconoclastic academic) was looking for faculty members who didn't fit the standard business school organizational behavior mold. Give our budding thinker the great good fortune to have found his wife Elisabet, an intelligent, patient, and wise companion.

In 1985, an older Manfred returns to INSEAD, first to teach the core course of organizational behavior in the MBA program and then to go on to create INSEAD's

Challenge of Leadership: Creating Reflective Leaders program. One of the first business school seminars in the world for top executives, COL combined a business context and orientation with a framework for deep, prolonged self-reflection and renewal, both personal and professional.

To bring this personal fairy tale full circle, Manfred Kets de Vries is also a writer of fairy tales. In his book *Telling Fairy Tales in the Boardroom: How to Make Sure Your Organization Lives Happily Ever After*, he included a tale called *The Four Brothers or how to build an effective team*. This tale, and the others in the book, touches on elements of Kets de Vries' own life and personality.

Manfred Kets de Vries' education and early career path seem to parallel many of the tales he has spun. As he put it himself, "Confronted by several alternatives, I chose all of them." He returned from his adventures in North America, having followed multiple paths of study. His vision was sharpened, and he was ready to use his new abilities to create and build programs and help people and organizations. His skills as a hunter and fisherman – patience, observation, and respect for his quarry – had been honed. When asked, "If your life were like a fairy tale, what would the monsters represent?" he replied: "Destructive, hubristic leaders who make other people's lives miserable."

Kets de Vries summed up a description of his early career: "I thought clinical work was interesting, but there were so many psychoanalysts about. Although they excel at helping people, very few of them understand the world of work. But organizations play an enormous role in people's lives. I saw that many people were suffering at work, employed in organizations that operated like gulags. I wondered how people knowledgeable in the helping profession and management scholars could combine their forces."

Being a "prophet," however, can make for a very lonely life. In a way, Kets de Vries in his early career was like the prophet Jeremiah, because at first, no matter how hard he tried to tell people about the importance of taking a more in-depth look at organizations to understand the darker side, very few would listen to him. At times, he said, it felt like he was talking to a brick wall. And like every "innovator," Kets de Vries admits he was subject to feelings of rejection, depression, and discouragement. What saved him was his sense of humor – his sense of the absurd. But the challenge he took on to deliver unpopular messages to traditional academics and leaders of organizations caused him mental anguish and made him sometimes laughable and annoying in the eyes of many people. But because Kets de Vries cared about the quality of life in organizations, he kept going, repeating the same message:

> To help sharpen my ideas, I was intrigued by what the interface of psychoanalysis and management science could offer. Working on the boundaries – this transitional, creative space – can help you to see what other people can't see. No wonder that in my work I often need to play the role of the morosoph – the wise fool – to get people to look at life from different perspectives. Like in the allegory of Plato's cave, I want people to have a three-dimensional outlook on life. I want them to use different lenses. I wanted them to stop being strangers to themselves. And I think I have made a small contribution at the interface of these two disciplines.

## Curriculum Vitae

Manfred F. R. Kets de Vries is a seminal thinker in the clinical study of organizational life. His specific areas of interest are leadership, career dynamics, executive stress, entrepreneurship, family business, succession planning, cross-cultural management, building high-performance teams, executive coaching, and the facilitation of organizational transformation and change. In his work, he goes beyond the surface-level challenges of business, government, and non-for-profit organizations and calls for investigation of the deeper sources of energy and motivational forces that drive human actions.

In addition to his work as a chaired business school professor and practicing psychoanalyst, Manfred Kets de Vries was the founder of the INSEAD Global Leadership Centre (IGLC). In 2003, at its inception, IGLC was based on Kets de Vries' research findings and experiences with executives. Soon after, IGLC became one of the first leadership development centers in the world to address the link between self-awareness and effectiveness in the workplace. The work of setting up this center also created a tipping point in Kets de Vries' career. Before, he focused more on the darker side of leadership and organizations; as the founding director of IGLC, his interest became more focused on the question of how to make talented people even better.

To enable people transformation, IGLC became also one of the first centers to introduce a group coaching methodology to personal and organizational change. Since its inception, tens of thousands of INSEAD participants have experienced IGLC group coaching sessions. Moreover, Kets de Vries' conceptualizations about the darker and brighter side of leadership spread throughout the school. He has also supported the development of the Center for Leadership Development Research at ESMT, Berlin, a fast-growing business school that was ready to recognize the power of group coaching in executive development and change.

More recently, the independent Kets de Vries Institute (KDVI) was founded to continue Manfred Kets de Vries' educational and research activities. After stepping down from the leadership of IGLC, Manfred Kets de Vries (with partners Elisabet Engellau, Oriane Kets de Vries, and many associates) formed this unusual boutique-consulting firm to focus on organizational research, leadership issues, teaching, consulting, and executive coaching.

*The Financial Times*, *Le Capital*, *Wirtschaftswoche*, and *The Economist* have rated Kets de Vries among the world's top fifty leading management thinkers and one of the most influential contributors to human resource management. He has been given many honors, including Lifetime Achievement Awards for his contributions to leadership development in the United States and Germany. He also became the first Fellow of the Academy of Management at INSEAD. In addition, he received two honorary doctorates. Kets de Vries is also a Distinguished Affiliate Professor at the ESMT, Berlin. He is author, coauthor, or editor of over 40 books and 400 articles and blogs that have been translated into 31 languages. Furthermore, he is the author of more than a hundred case studies of which six have received the Best Case of the Year Award. The Dutch Government has honored him by making him an Officer in the Order of Oranje Nassau.

But when asked which of his accomplishments he is most proud of, Kets de Vries said, "My children all seem to like each other. They get along extremely well. It's something special as this is not the case in many families."

## Bringing the "Right Side of the Brain" Back into Organizations

The influences of psychological, emotional, and social factors have become hot topics that generate great interest in the fields of behavioral economics and behavioral finance. "Soft" topics such as organizational behavior and authentic leadership are gaining increasing respect and interest. However, in the mid-1960s when Kets de Vries embarked on his intellectual journey, the integration of two different paradigms – management science (the neoclassical economic view of organizations with its emphasis on human rationality) and the psychoanalytic study of human behavior in all its variations (the clinical orientation) – was a new and very controversial approach. Serendipity is the word Kets de Vries uses to explain how he came to combine economics, John Maynard Keynes's "dismal science," with psychoanalysis, Freud's "impossible profession."

After his short and not very productive stint studying chemical and mechanical engineering, Kets de Vries earned an advanced degree in economics in the Netherlands in 1966, but he was not fully convinced that economic theories provided all the answers to organizational dilemmas. During his childhood, he had seen with his own eyes that people in organizations are not always acting rationally. The received wisdom that people consistently try to obtain optimal outcomes seemed, to him, to be frequently contradicted. Unexplained motivational drivers could, on occasion, lead to counterproductive or dangerous outcomes. But what were those motivational drivers, and how did they work?

As an "explorer" (something that had come naturally to Kets de Vries since childhood), in his search for further understanding, he turned to the disciplines of management science and organizational behavior. However, he again ended up puzzled – but as he would say later in life, "If you aren't confused, you don't know what's going on." Traditional organizational behavior studies at the time focused mainly on structures and systems – how to control people in a rational way – rather than paying attention to the dynamic psychological forces that underlie human behavior in organizations. On the rare occasions when a consideration of the human element was added to the equation, the emphasis seemed to be on a few "universal" parsimonious patterns in the behavior of individuals, rather than looking at people in organizations as not only unique but also simultaneously embedded in extremely complex and diverse social networks. As Kets de Vries put it, "I wanted to bring the person back into the organization."

With his economics degree in his pocket, and a wish to put off looking for a corporate job, he talked himself into the International Teachers Program at the Harvard Business School, a great opportunity to spend a year in the United States. (He had been at Harvard many years before as a Summer School student, an

experience that had stayed with him during his years of study in Holland.) He booked himself a berth on a Norwegian freighter and was off on another adventure.

The International Teachers Program focused on spreading the gospel of the case study method to educators from around the world and included traditional business school courses such as business policy, international economics, comparative marketing, and so on. But one course in particular caught Kets de Vries' eye: Abraham Zaleznik's "Psychoanalytic Psychology and Organizational Theory." He signed up for the course, a decision that would change his life. It might have had something to do with the very different subject matter he was asked to read; but perhaps it also had something to do with Zaleznik, who reminded him of his father. Both men were "bearlike" extremely charismatic individuals.

Bears have always had a special place in Kets de Vries' imagination. "I can't remember a time when I wasn't intrigued by bears," he writes in *Talking to the Shaman Within: Musings on Hunting*. "To me, they are the arch symbol of the wilderness. They inspire awe and dread; but they also have regenerative powers. They take life, and they give life. They can be endearing or menacing. They attract and repel. In many ways the sacredness of the bear still occupies our unconscious. They resonate with a wild, more primitive, primeval part of the human animal. In tribal rituals, the death of a bear is not truly death, but the beginning of a transformative experience. They disappear in the winter, to return in the spring. Bears are a symbol of a transitional world."

In the seminar taught by Professor Zaleznik, Kets de Vries was introduced to the works of Sigmund Freud. Although he later questioned the validity of some of Freud's interpretations and theories, at the time Freud's case histories such as *The Wolf Man* and *The Rat Man* opened a completely new way of looking at human behavior. For Kets de Vries, this meant moving from a two-dimensional to a more three-dimensional world. In addition, living a transitional life in a foreign country created considerable mental turmoil that provoked learning far beyond his Harvard coursework. In particular, he started paying attention to dreams and fantasies, his own and other people's.

Kets de Vries completed a combined ITP, MBA, and doctoral program (DBA), with Zaleznik as his doctoral supervisor, at the Harvard Business School in record time. At last, he was better equipped to understand not only the business side – issues, symbols, language, and culture in organizations – but also to decipher some of the less visible undercurrents in people and organizations. After returning to INSEAD, he worked hard to make known what he had learned. He was given INSEAD's Distinguished Teaching award five times (and is considered witty and wise according to some). He wanted young people who aspired to become business practitioners to understand that they might be somewhat "unbalanced," with the left side of their brain overdeveloped – business life is more than the simple application of financial, operations research, and marketing tools. And his central theme remained: bringing the person back into the organization and creating better places to work.

His doctoral thesis focused on entrepreneurs, which is not surprising given his father and brothers' entrepreneurial careers. His interest in entrepreneurs and the

psychodynamics of family businesses has continued throughout his career, as these are domains where his "clinical approach" can be especially effective. Zaleznik also involved him in a very large study on organizational stress. Kets de Vries realized that these topics were interrelated; the stress research highlighted the effects of cultural socialization on the manifestation, overt or covert, of stress at the individual and organizational level. This dual research focus would put a lasting stamp on his research interests and would become a key aspect of his research on leadership and other organizational phenomena.

This early postgraduate research project on stress influenced Kets de Vries' research methodology. He had observed that quantitative experiments in psychology, often conducted in behavioral "laboratories" far removed from daily life, gave only limited insight into a person's way of functioning. So as well as using standard personality tests in his stress study, he included a qualitative, narrative approach – attentive, lengthy, deep, and open-ended interviews, with rich descriptions of context and history – that provided much more data for further analysis. Although he later developed several multiparty leadership behavior survey instruments (e.g., Kets de Vries et al. 2004; Kets de Vries et al. 2006) that have been used for quantitative research purposes (e.g., Ibarra and Obodaru 2009; Guillen et al. 2015), he has always been a keen advocate for a qualitative or mixed-methods approach. In addition, his increasing interest in the application of a psychodynamic orientation to exploring organizational issues meant that he was able to put into practice what he had always sensed: objectivity is an illusion. He was also beginning to understand why very ordinary people could do very evil things. These insights stimulated him much later in his career to write a book on the subject, *Lessons on Leadership by Terror: Finding a Shaka Zulu in the Attic* (2005). In this psychohistorical study he makes it clear that it doesn't take much to make the human animal regress to very primitive, destructive behavior.

The stress study and further work with Zaleznik, including a coauthored book, *Power and the Corporate Mind* (1975), motivated Kets de Vries to undergo his own psychoanalytic training. At that time, the early 1970s, Kets de Vries' background in economics made him an atypical candidate for psychoanalytical studies. But he was fortunate in that, while working with Zaleznik, he received an offer from INSEAD to become part of the growing faculty at the new institution. Once he had returned to France, where the psychoanalytic community has always been far more open to candidates with unconventional backgrounds, he was able to begin psychoanalytic training in Paris. He started psychoanalysis with Joyce McDougall, whose seminal work on the "inner theater" of significant figures inside each one of us (McDougall 1980, 1989) would become an influential framework for his own thinking on the psychological processes that influence people's behavior in organizations. Joyce MacDougall was to be his clinical supervisor until her death in 2011.

After 2 years in France (1971–1973), Kets de Vries began to miss the dynamic North American culture. He was also fired from INSEAD at that time, the reason being – according to Kets de Vries – that he was too vocal about ways the school could be run better. He returned to the Harvard Business School as a research fellow,

having just married Elisabet, who already had two young children. As the Boston Psychoanalytic Institute was interested in broadening its entry policy to extend beyond psychiatrists, he was offered training at that institution. There was only one catch: he needed to have a more permanent job to pay for his education, which a temporary research fellowship at Harvard would not stretch to cover. But due to a history of conflict between Abraham Zaleznik and the members of the OB department at the Harvard Business School, he did not receive an offer. It's likely that, as a disciple of the somewhat troublesome Zaleznik, he was viewed as being "contaminated." At the time, one of the more prominent OB faculty members expressed his opinion that Kets de Vries would never amount to much and would never write anything of significance. Yet another dare.

However, McGill University in Montreal, Canada, was interested in new faculty members from diverse backgrounds. Henry Mintzberg, known for his unorthodox views on management education, was far more open-minded than the OB faculty at the Harvard Business School at the time. He offered Kets de Vries a faculty position. Ironically, at the same time, Kets de Vries also received an offer from INSEAD, which he declined. He accepted Mintzberg's offer, which was made especially attractive due to the existence of an active psychoanalytic society in Montreal that worked closely with the university. While working at McGill, his second psychoanalyst, Maurice Dongier, Head of Psychiatry at McGill University and director of the Allan Memorial Institute, a major mental health hospital and think tank, encouraged Kets de Vries to research the more creative and clinical aspects of work and then quite contrary to the existing mainstream academic management agenda. Again, Kets de Vries' thirst for the real-life relevance of research attracted him to psychiatric interventions, such as "patient of the week" seminars where clinicians from the entire institution came together to discuss difficult cases and reflect on the best treatment of choice. While working with his own patients, and presenting his patients' case histories to his supervisors, he became more immersed in the clinical approach: "I learned how to listen and observe empathetically. I came to understand how human lives are played out in recurring patterns, and how those patterns influence behavior."

Particularly influential in Kets de Vries' worldview – in addition to his doctoral advisor Abraham Zaleznik and his psychoanalysts, Joyce McDougall, and Maurice Dongier – were the psychologists he encountered at Harvard and McGill. The contributions of Lester Luborsky, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, on core conflictual relationship themes (Luborsky and Crits-Cristophe 1998) also provided useful insight into how behavior is influenced by the way people believe others will react to them. The ideas of Joseph Lichtenberg, founder of the Institute of Contemporary Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, about emotional need systems shed more light for Kets de Vries on the attachment/affiliatory and exploratory needs of people in organizations. Erik Erikson, who had taught Kets de Vries at Harvard, introduced him to life cycles and identity development. Other well-known psychoanalysts/psychiatrists such as Carl Jung, Donald Winnicott, and Wilfred Bion enriched his insights into human behavior. His lifelong intellectual sparring partner and friend, Sudhir Kakar, psychoanalyst, cultural anthropologist, novelist,

and long-time collaborator on INSEAD's The Challenge of Leadership program, helped him to broaden his view of humanity.

Kets de Vries' career eventually took him back to INSEAD. For many years he was a Clinical Chaired Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change. From September 1992 until March 2013, when he semiretired as required by French law, he held the Raoul de Vitry d'Avaucourt Chair of Leadership Development at INSEAD. Subsequently, he became the Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and Organizational Change at INSEAD.

## Key Contributions and Insights: The Clinical Paradigm and What People Really Care About

Manfred Kets de Vries is one of a second-generation cohort of scholars such as Elliott Jaques, Abraham Zaleznik, and Harry Levinson who pioneered a clinical orientation in the world of work.

Kets de Vries' two objectives – integrating management science and psychodynamic-systemic analysis and making management scholars more attuned to applied research – stem from his wish to improve the performance of organizations and the quality of life of their people. As he puts it himself, "Creating meaning is very important to me." The search for meaning has guided his contribution to a deeply humanistic and highly pragmatic approach to management science and business education.

### The Clinical Paradigm and the Real World of Work

Kets de Vries' work is influenced by many other disciplines besides psychoanalysis. Although he is a member of the International Psychoanalytic Association, The Canadian Psychoanalytic Society, and the French Psychoanalytic Society, he is anything but a traditional psychoanalyst. In his work (apart from concepts taken from management science), he incorporates ideas from family systems theory, infant observation, strategic psychotherapy, neuroscience, dynamic psychiatry, cognitive theory, social psychology, anthropology, and ethology. For example, Kets de Vries took an anthropological approach to studying teams by observing pygmies in the African rain forest (Kets de Vries 1999). Essentially, he is eclectic in his scholarly work and interventions. The clinical orientation, however, stands central. "Simply put," he explains, "the term 'clinical' originally meant 'by the bedside.' I use this term to highlight the fact that rather than relying on pre-written case studies about executives you may never have met or know only superficially, I prefer to work with the real, current stories and challenges of people in organizations." He was one of the first to move away from the standard case study teaching method based on somewhat simplified (and usually sanitized) published accounts (although he wrote more than

100 traditional case studies himself), to focus instead on the work and lives of the actual people in his classrooms or seminars.

Kets de Vries presents the clinical paradigm as based on four premises:

- There is a logical explanation for the way people act – even for actions that seem irrational. But to make sense of this – to find the red threads – you have to be something of an organizational detective.
- A great deal of mental life – feelings, fears, and motives – lies outside our conscious awareness. Though hidden from rational thought, the human unconscious affects (and in some cases even dictates) our conscious reality and even our physical well-being.
- Nothing is more central to whom a person is than the way he or she regulates and expresses emotions. Emotions color experiences with positive and negative connotations, creating preference in the choices we make and the way we deal with the world.
- Human development is a complex inter- and intrapersonal process; we are all products of our past experiences, and those experiences, including the developmental experiences given by our caretakers, continue to influence us throughout life.

In one of his earliest, seminal contributions to the organizational literature, *The Neurotic Organization* (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984), Kets de Vries argues that it is important to understand the inner world of individuals in order to determine what is really going on in organizations. In this book he points out the extent to which personality, leadership style, decision-making, and corporate culture are interconnected. He explains that the boundary between normality and pathology is sometimes hard to determine, even in organizations.

This real-world "clinical" approach to the study of organizations later became one of the key methodological pillars in Kets de Vries' pedagogical philosophy. The starting point would become the individual – his or her concerns, hopes, fears, fantasies, and regrets – and the respective reactions from observers within the individual's context. Much of Kets de Vries' research and teaching would draw on real-life cases of people working with issues important to them. Likewise, his organizational interventions would become arenas for practice (helping a specific person with leadership challenges) as well as further thinking and exploration.

## Universal Motivational Drivers

The second key pillar of Kets de Vries' work is a deep attention to the fundamental and universal factors that motivate all human beings. He emphasizes the need for exploration and learning, or *fun*; the need for affiliation and community, or *love*; and the need for a sense of purpose, or *meaning*. When these need systems are met in organizations – in a way that is appropriate for a professional setting – people

feel comfortable, trusted, engaged, and creative. As Kets de Vries points out in *Sex, Money, Happiness, and Death* (second edition, 2015) and other writings, we all struggle with the inability to accept the end of our personal existence. People turn to what he termed "the drugs against existential fear of death": fame, lust, power, and, on the more positive side, spirituality, ecology, and procreation (whether through children or creative pursuits). But there is a high price attached to our fear of death – our lingering "stealth motivator," as he calls it. He says: "It leaves unfulfilled a basic need for making meaning and achieving closure." In essence, people are paradoxically driven by a fear of death and a desire to deny their mortality. As glum as this may sound, he argues that organizations that foster affiliation, playfulness, and meaning help people deal with this existential dilemma in a positive way.

## Clinical Approaches to Leadership Development

In practical terms, Kets de Vries has argued that confrontation with the reasons for suboptimal behaviors in business settings typically involves investigation of fundamental, existential issues. This proposition, like the lamentations of the prophet Jeremiah, has made many people – faculty and executive participants alike – uncomfortable. But unlike many of his executive education and business school faculty colleagues, Kets de Vries never shied away from the challenge.

By the early 2000s, business schools were catching up with the demand for off-site opportunities for leader development combined with reflective space. They began to realize that executives feel a need to stop running around and give themselves the space to think about the past and the future. Business school programs increasingly became laboratories where executives could experiment with change (Kets de Vries and Korotov 2007, 2012, 2016; Korotov 2016).

In the first period of his academic career, Kets de Vries spent a considerable amount of time studying the darker side of leadership and organizations. He warned of the dangers of narcissistic behavior, the pitfall of hubris, and the covert forces that could contribute to organizational derailment. But then in 1991, well ahead of trends to come, he established a senior leadership executive education program – The Challenge of Leadership – designed to be a learning laboratory in which executives could experiment with personal and professional change and development. COL was one of the first and most successful programs to integrate a psychodynamic-systemic orientation to change people and organizations. Kets de Vries was also among the first to develop and deploy a peer coaching method where participants become "live" case studies, as they present their own organizational challenges and their personal struggles directly or indirectly connected to them. They are encouraged to think outside the box and discover new ways to look at knotty issues. They also experience the power of group coaching and learn to be effective peer coaches. The participants provide one another with an exceedingly rare and precious opportunity to break the syndrome of isolation at the top.

## New Insights: Exploring the Rationale Beneath the Irrational

In 2000, after the success of the COL, Kets de Vries (with Erik van de Loo and Roger Lehman), developed the Consulting and Coaching for Change (CCC) program at INSEAD. This program helped its participants understand that "soft" skills are actually the "hardest" skills to learn. The program, which offers a Master's degree and is given on two continents, has become a beacon of excellence, differentiating INSEAD from other business schools. These two programs alone now have more than 1000 alumni throughout the world.

## Group Coaching and Psychodynamic-Systemic Feedback Surveys

In group coaching, a method described explicitly in his book *The Hedgehog Effect: The Secrets of Building High Performance Teams*, he describes his intervention technique as "not therapy but therapeutic." Four to six participants harness the power of the group as they explore the connections between each other's personal and professional challenges. Guided by an executive coach, participants use a Socratic approach, asking open questions and building a collective interpretation. Through the interpretation of the messages found in 360° feedback, the opportunity to tell their personal stories in a respectful atmosphere, deeper understanding of their own behavioral patterns, and mental experimentation, cathartic experiences, role modeling, and the support of the peer group, participants are able to identify areas where they want to focus their change efforts. The facilitator contains the emotional tension, creates a safe transitional space, and observes or describes the group dynamics, again, using all the available information to deepen insights. Kets de Vries says, "Repetition of the same message from different people in different forms is a good way to create tipping points, and to help people make lasting changes. Many of my change efforts start with people's narratives. And at heart, everyone responds to stories. As humans, we are tuned to listening to stories, and to applying them to make sense of our experiences. This allows people to explore and rewrite their own life stories."

Kets de Vries developed one of the first suites of 360° feedback tools to integrate the clinical paradigm in a holistic approach to exploring participants' inner worlds in relation to their professional or career questions and challenges. This approach includes colleagues, clients, superiors, friends, and family members in the feedback process. He calls this "720° feedback." As he points out, "I have seen some people look at less than positive feedback from colleagues and try to rationalize it by saying, 'My boss is an idiot, my colleagues are idiots, and my subordinates are idiots.' But if a person's daughter reports, 'Papa is an idiot' then he has to admit that there may some truth to it. It could turn into a tipping point for change." To date, tens of thousands of executives have gone through this process at INSEAD.

As well as being one of the first (if not the first) on the market for group coaching in a business school context, Kets de Vries has also trained major service providers

including the well-known strategic consulting firm McKinsey in the group coaching method and is on McKinsey's Board for Leadership Development. The interest that consulting powerhouses show in Kets de Vries' approach is not accidental. Change researchers and practitioners alike are quite clear about the power of human resistance to change. The more rational approaches to planning and implementing change fail to take into account the developments in people's inner theater that can take very dramatic forms during times of change, often associated with perceived threats to their well-being and inner view of self.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Creating Authentizotic Organizations

Manfred Kets de Vries' legacy is particularly significant in the light of recent criticisms of the leadership development, executive coaching, and consulting industry (Kellerman 2012; Pfeffer 2015). All too often, when participating in such interventions for a hefty fee, executives hear inspirational advice and ideological wishful thinking in a one-size-fits-all approach. Attendees of leadership programs might feel good about themselves for a short while, but they quickly lose their motivation – and their good intentions – when they return to their office. Kets de Vries constantly warns participants, faculty, and coaches about the risks of the temporary "high" associated with the feel-good factor of hearing inspirational stories while relaxing in the Fontainebleau forest or elsewhere. He constantly reiterates that change is hard work, that most change efforts fail, that much perceived change is illusionary, and that people have ingrained habits. Instead, he encourages a more realistic view of executive tasks and an honest evaluation of the costs associated with leading people and organizations and implementing organizational change.

Kets de Vries and his associates have drawn attention to the need for higher levels of psychological awareness for all those involved in executive education and development, including the need to also work on coaches and academics' unresolved personal issues, which may affect their own ability to support their target audiences of students and executives. He calls for critical reflection on teaching, coaching, and consulting practice and encourages people to do for themselves what they encourage their students, participants, and clients to do: taking time and space for self-reflection and getting feedback from others.

Throughout his career, Kets de Vries has pushed the boundaries in management science and leadership development practice with a single-minded focus. As a result, he has been criticized for repeating the same philosophical message in his various publications. He has contributed from a very early period to more practitioner-oriented research. He jokes that too many articles in academic journals focus on white, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic, organized – *WEIRDO* – executives, are read by no one, and don't change the world. Some academic colleagues consider his later, more pragmatic approach to be less of a contribution. Although his earlier articles appeared in top academic journals, he later decided to try to communicate directly with people in organizations through more accessible types of publications –

like blogs, video clips, and mini-articles for the *Harvard Business Review* and *INSEAD Knowledge* (collected and developed in *Riding the Leadership Roller Coaster: An Observer's Guide*, Palgrave, 2016).

He has frequently been told that his psychodynamic-systemic orientation is not relevant or appropriate for what is considered to be serious management science research. He has also been criticized for focusing too frequently on the darker side of leadership and human behavior. Indeed, the themes of sex, money, (un)happiness, and death are often present in his work. The morosoph continues to tap leaders on the shoulder and remind them to be vigilant and remember what lies beneath.

Kets de Vries has often been described as an iconoclast. For many years at INSEAD, his work and methodology were discounted as not being rigorous or scientific. PhD candidates were strongly discouraged by the organizational behavior area from working with him, as it was seen as potential career suicide. (Kets de Vries is a member of INSEAD's entrepreneurship area). Most of his PhD students have come to him from other institutions and all have done very well in their careers.

There have been times when Kets de Vries has looked at his life's work and felt that it could be summed up as a "sideshow" to what people view as important in business schools and organizations. However, when considered over a lifetime, it is clear that he has been at the forefront in creating a significant paradigm shift in the way business schools think about and teach topics associated with human behavior in organizations. Leadership development with a component of personal reflection is now a sine qua non for virtually all executive programs, including those delivered at top schools such as Harvard, INSEAD, IMD, ESMT, and the London Business School. Kets de Vries was also one of the first to spread his ideas globally, working in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, South America, and Russia. He is considered to be the "patriarch" of a Master's degree program, Psychoanalytic Psychology, and Management Consulting, at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, the country's most prestigious research university in the field. Directors of top consulting firms such as McKinsey and Bain have worked with Kets de Vries and are now integrating a psychodynamic-systemic component in their strategy development interventions. Even the way MBAs are taught – a supertanker-like pedagogy that is very slow to change course – has been influenced by the live case study approach and Kets de Vries' group coaching methodology.

Last but not least, business school research, particularly in organizational behavior departments, has increasingly integrated qualitative methods such as theory building from case studies, narrative analysis, and interpretive phenomenological analysis. Moving away from reliance on the laboratory-based quantitative methods long favored by psychologists, qualitative methods are now better established as being rich and rigorous in many top academic journals. The end result is more real-world and relevant research findings that are useful to people in organizations. Established academics in the field of management science have begun to see the powerful potential in bringing the clinical paradigm to an exploration of organizational phenomena and combining quantitative methods with a deeper look at the reality of human and social systems (e.g., Loch 2010). Dozens of participants in INSEAD's CCC executive Master's program have gone on to pursue PhDs or practitioner-oriented doctoral work in related fields. Here again, Kets de Vries was

ahead of his time. In October 2015, he was the first beneficiary of the INSEAD Dominique Héau Award for Inspiring Educational Excellence.

Most importantly, Kets de Vries' legacy is to have broken out of the old paradigm of "the man in the gray flannel suit," the machinelike worker completely devoid of any humanity, and the rational calculator of pleasure and pain. Kets de Vries has always argued that it is possible to create thriving organizations with healthy individuals, organizations that he calls *authentizotic* (Kets de Vries 2001; Kets de Vries and Balazs 1999). The term describes places where people are invigorated by their work and is derived from two Greek words: *authenteekos*, which means to behave authentically, and *zoteekos*, which means "vital to life."

Authentizotic organizations are the antidote to the dehumanizing daily life most people experience at work. Without fanfare and prepackaged "vision statements," authentizotic workplaces have a culture of "love, fun, and meaning." They are places in which, rather than "leading lives of quiet desperation," people feel at their best and as a result are more creative and engaged.

## Conclusion: What Next?

Never quite satisfied, Kets de Vries constantly asks, "What's next?"

The leitmotif, once again, is exploring connections. Bringing management science and psychodynamic-systemic concepts together created a powerful connection that allows people to understand the development of their own identity. Bringing the likes of Erik Erikson, Carl Jung, Wilfred Bion, and Donald Winnicott into the business school classroom, Kets de Vries was one of the very first to show people how to think about the connections between their personal experiences and their professional role.

Kets de Vries has an intense interest in identity formation, which relates to his focus on authenticity. He has always emphasized that our identity does not only emerge from conscious contemplation of what we want to do with our life but that many out-of-awareness processes also affect this process and may stand in our way. This makes for a constant oscillation between a true and false self, so that identity is multifaceted and loaded with both positive and negative imagery. Explaining this dilemma, he says, "All too often, children are sent on a 'mission impossible,' to fulfill their parents' wishes for them – the things that the parents would have liked to do but were never able to do. At the same time, what may be forgotten is, what does the child (and the later adult) really want to do? An exploration of one's true and false selves, and an acceptance of one's own desires, becomes an essential step toward authenticity in the workplace. The other challenge is to break generational dysfunctional processes – not to get stuck in vicious circles and repeating the mistakes of previous generations. We should always keep in mind that when you realize you are riding a dead horse, it is time to dismount."

It is probably fair to say that our collective fear of exploring human nature and integrating this kind of introspective journey into the workplace is receding. The current trend is toward ever more general managers, line managers, and employees

actively thinking about the patterns that may link their personal and professional experiences, leading to healthier, more informed choices about what already works, and what they would like to work on. The next frontier – the next boundary to be crossed – is to truly, deeply integrate this new paradigm into the fabric of organizations. Here Manfred Kets de Vries is still at the forefront with his organization-wide interventions: "Leaders of organizations, in particular the CEOs and boards of directors, must have the kinds of courageous conversations that allow and promote diversity, humanity, trust, and mutual respect. They must accept their own vulnerability. To be effective leaders, humility, humanity, and courage become essential characteristics. They must set the example by refusing to promulgate elements of culture that underlie such issues as stress, burnout, and gender bias. It is the people in organizations themselves who must refuse to follow destructive leaders. We need more morosophs at places of work, to create organizations whose members have a healthy disrespect for their boss and where people have voice."

Manfred Kets de Vries' daughter Oriane says: "In many instances, my father's insights have mirrored his life events. The ebb and flow of his life – including periods of feeling low – have made him think about the nature of happiness, and being unhappy. Preoccupied with tragic transience of life, he keeps churning out books and articles. My mother, and many other significant people in his life have been his often unrecognized teachers of the softer sides of human nature. They have helped him to reconcile and forgive. Very observant and continuously motivated to learn – being remarkably perceptive, witty, and also very single minded – he has always applied his life's insights directly to his work."

Forty odd years after he set off on his adventure to North America, Manfred Kets de Vries still asks himself whether his life is driven by a quest for redemption. What made him the morosoph of organizations? Why has he been such a Jeremiah, a lamenting "tragic man?" As a psychoanalyst, he knows, of course, that his early role models have affected him deeply. Asked whether he has found what he has been looking for, he says, "Of course not! Will I ever? I hope not. I like to keep on exploring and learning. If you stop learning, you're dead. The older I become, the more I realize how little I know. I was much more sure of myself when I was younger. At my stage in life – now I'm beyond my expiry date – the thought of what to leave behind for the next generation has become increasingly important. We always need to ask ourselves, what are we doing for others? What impact have we had on other people's lives? To me, that responsibility is more than ever relevant. My hope is to end up with not too many regrets. At the same time, I think, like Hans Christian Andersen, that 'life itself is the most wonderful fairy tale'."

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# John Kotter: A Pragmatic Observer of Managers' Life Worlds

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Brett Clay

### Abstract

Studies of organizational change and leadership often include, if not begin with, the works of John Kotter, Ph.D., professor emeritus of Harvard Business School. Kotter focuses almost exclusively on management practitioners, rather than scholars, and uses parables, stories, and case studies to teach the learnings he has gained through observing what successful managers actually do, rather than what they should do. Kotter's Harvard Business Review article, *Leading Change, Why Transformation Efforts Fail* (1995), is widely considered to be a seminal work and precursor of the change management domain. The eight mistakes which Kotter postulated came to be known as the eight-step model for implementing organizational changes. Kotter's large body of work on the eight-steps is bookended by his work differentiating management and leadership. Kotter argues managers rely on hierarchy to produce consistency and order, whereas leaders utilize networks of relationships to produce change. In summary, those readers who are interested in pursuing excellence, rather than convention, and in learning from stories and real-world examples, rather than theories, may benefit most from Kotter's work.

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## Introduction

Studies of organizational change and leadership often include, if not begin with, the works of John Kotter, Ph.D., professor emeritus of Harvard Business School. It can be argued that the stream of work resulting in Kotter's *The General Managers* (1982), alongside Mintzberg's *The Nature of Managerial Work* (Mintzberg 1973), led into the stream of academic literature on organizational change that followed. Among the practitioner community, Kotter's Harvard Business Review article, *Leading Change, Why Transformation Efforts Fail* (Kotter 1995a), is widely considered to be a seminal work and precursor of the *change management* domain.

Kotter's approach is to focus almost exclusively on management practitioners, rather than scholars. While the curricula vitae of distinguished scholars in the Academy of Management often contain hundreds of published academic articles, Kotter has essentially not published in peer-reviewed academic journals. While many of those same distinguished scholars have not published trade publications for audiences outside of the academy, Kotter has published, as of this writing, 16 trade books aimed at practicing managers. In addition, he has arguably reached more management practitioners than any other scholar through his many Harvard Business Review (HBR) articles, which have sold more reprints than any other HBR author during the last 30 years.

## Influences and Motivations: Experiencing Leadership as an Undergraduate

Kotter's earliest memory of being interested in leadership and change is reading one of Edgar Schein's books when Kotter was president of his college fraternity. He was fascinated that, "there was some science, so to speak, behind what I was seeing and trying to influence. I tried to make a major change (eliminating a long tradition of "hell weeks"), which was successful in the short term, but didn't fully sustain itself in the long term. Many lessons there," remembers Kotter. Richard Boyatzis, Ph.D., professor at Case Western Reserve University, tells the story.

We were in Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity at MIT. We pledged and joined in 1964 (MIT needed at least 1/3rd of all incoming freshmen to live in fraternities in those days). We were actually roommates for the last year or so and then shared houses for a few years after that with a few of the others who were staying in the Cambridge area. While John's degree was in electrical engineering and mine in aeronautics and astronautics, we both were appreciative of the benefits the fraternity offered in terms of mentors and time to grow as people – geeks becoming somewhat social. It was a 60's version of Big Bang Theory! John moved into the presidency of our house. We had 72 undergraduates, two buildings on Beacon Street, a couple of kitchen employees and we ran it all. I happened to be the treasurer. But the example of leadership was that by early in our senior year, it was clear to both of us that we were moving into the social sciences. We had both experienced and learned about T-groups [Lewin 1947]. We thought our freshmen needed something more mature to develop during Hell Week than a week of physical labor and hazing. So we kept the physical labor—polishing floors, painting and rehanging window sashes, etc.—but replaced the several hazing days with a T-group to encourage them to talk openly about their feelings, their relationships to each other, their sense of what the future might bring and the meaning of being in the fraternity. In January of 1968, that was different! The brothers approved our proposal and we went ahead and did it. It was our passion and commitment that resulted in us doing something so odd at the time and a bit risky (we had a little training but not much).

These early experiences and guidance from teachers such as Edgar Schein and Paul Lawrence developed Kotter's attitude toward collaboration, which again seems highly consistent with his focus on the real-world, lived experiences of practicing managers. He involves many practitioners and scholars in his work, soliciting and synthesizing their contributions into highly refined, organic wholes. In the days before electronic documents and email, colleagues remember the department secretary making and mailing book manuscript copies to hundreds of executives. He hated superficial feedback and courageously and earnestly wanted to know specific ways to make things better. More recently, I remember Kotter asking me to review a draft of *Buy-In* (Kotter and Whitehead 2010), saying, "The book draft. What should I do next to make it better and better and better?" A former doctoral student recalls the relationship between him and Kotter was not a typical faculty-student, master-apprentice relationship. The student felt Kotter treated him as a full colleague and gave the student recognition as full-author on the Harvard case study they wrote together. This experience profoundly shaped the student's view of being a faculty mentor to doctoral students.

How does one become a thinker that has arguably reached the most practitioners? It is all about accessibility, reports Kotter and his students. "No matter how powerful your ideas are, you have to communicate them in a meaningful way that people 'get it' and walk out the room to do something different on Monday morning," observes former Kotter Ph.D. student and Harvard Business School professor, Scott Snook, Ph.D. The accessibility achieved by Kotter appears to begin with a deeply ingrained mindset of clarity. Colleagues report Kotter hated clutter, keeping nothing on his desk. When working on a book, he wanted to stay focused and would only agree to one or two appointments per day. "He had strong needs for clarity and simplicity, distilling messages to their simplest form," continues Snook. Indeed, while the draft of *Buy-In* (2010) that I had reviewed read very well, the final published version was edited down significantly.

Another mindset that accrues to accessibility is Kotter's focus on lived experience. Kotter reports, "My inclination was to get out and see things with my own eyes and talk to real people even if it required exhausting travel and work days. I learned more from seeing and listening and talking than any other source, and in that sense, am somewhat like an old-fashioned social anthropologist." While not a philosopher, he exemplifies the pragmatism of Schön (1983), Lindblom and Cohen (1979), and the phenomenology of Husserl (1913). Many scholars and practitioners would argue that is the mark of true genius. After all, does the study of organizational change and leadership not begin and end in the lived experiences of managers? Kotter's writing and teaching are inherently accessible because they are situated in the stories of his audience and make use of case studies, videos, short-stories, and parables about their lives.

With such a focus on lived experiences, it comes as no surprise that another characteristic of Kotter's work is his use of qualitative research methods. Achieving academic rigor is widely considered to require less effort using quantitative methods. Yet, beginning with his dissertation and continuing to this day, Kotter took on the much more difficult task of employing a rigorous set of qualitative methods including interviews, observations, and diaries of research subjects and their knowledgeable informants. The rigor of his research design included comparability across case studies to reach conclusions. Kotter reported that data collection for the 15 case studies in *The General Managers* (Kotter lawrence 1986, p. 2) spanned 5 years and took 1 month spread over a year of his own time, per case. Another case, Kōnosuke Matsushita (Kotter 1997), which also involved 5 years of research, raises often-debated epistemological questions regarding quantitative vs. qualitative research: (1) How can one use normative statistical methods to study an outstanding leader? (2) And on the other end of the spectrum, are qualitative findings from outstanding cases generalizable? Observing Kotter's career, one could conclude the following: Want the safe path to tenure and academic success? Do quantitative research, focus on theories, and get published in academic journals. Want to have lasting impact in the world we study? Do qualitative research, focus on the real-life experiences of leaders, and write in trade publications for practitioners.

## Key Contributions: What Managers Actually Do

### Early Career: The General Managers

Consistent with his focus on practicing managers, Kotter contributed greatly to management education. During his HBS career, he constantly strove for increasing excellence and innovation in teaching and was deeply influenced by the late Anthony Athos, D.B.A., with whom he shared an office and is regarded as one of the best case method and classroom teachers ever to teach at Harvard. As a young professor, Kotter became responsible for the first-year required MBA curriculum and transformed a foundational organizational behavior course into an integrated study of leadership, called "LEAD." The genius was in aligning with what students are

interested in – leading. While he made a large contribution as author, or coauthor, of no less than 40 Harvard case studies, he also innovated pedagogy beyond the case method. When he became responsible for the second-year curriculum, for example, he added self-reflection and self-assessment in a course on career development (Kotter et al. 1978). For his curriculum contributions, Kotter received the Exxon Award for Innovation in graduate business education (Kotter and Sathe 1978). Kotter also became proficient in the use of video and mentored other faculty in their pedagogy. One of his former students recalls a time when Kotter asked him to step out of his comfort zone and teach a workshop for an important international organization. Kotter had become ill and was not able to assist in the teaching. Despite his illness, Kotter laid behind the audience under the risers, so he could later help his colleague perfect his delivery. A different former Ph.D. student and professor at Harvard Business School, Leonard Schlesinger, Ph.D., reports, "Much of the way I see the world, in terms of preparation and standards of excellence was profoundly influenced by John."

The stream of work that resulted in *The General Managers* (Kotter 1982) essentially started with Kotter's doctoral research, which he published with his Ph. D. advisor, Paul Lawrence, as *Mayors in Action* (Kotter and Lawrence 1974). It is a brilliant, thorough, and scholarly study of the leadership styles of mayors, written for scholar, as well as practitioner audiences. The intellectual and emotional support Lawrence provided to the young Kotter are evident, as only the support of a strong and confident advisor would give a student the courage to declare, "we tend to place a higher value on the 'usefulness' and 'innovativeness' of our research and a lower value on its methodological 'cleanness' (how well it follows existing standards), than do many of our academic colleagues." Without this wise guidance, Kotter might still be working on this study, 40 years later, given its scope and the impossibility of achieving perfection with qualitative methods. Despite all that has been written in the organizational behavior literature since 1974, *Mayors in Action*, not only still seems current and relevant (e.g., Kotter's *coalignment* model and use of *morphogenic general systems* theory (Buckley 1967)), but it also evokes the wistful observation, "we just don't do research like that anymore."

Lake (1984) notes several reasons Kotter's next work, *The General Managers* (1982) is significant. First, the reward and cultural systems of universities do not encourage the resource-intensive mixed methods Kotter employed. Second, Kotter's research sought to describe what managers *actually* do, rather than what researchers believe they *should* do. Third, Kotter's findings challenged the conventional views that are often held even to this day, by and about senior executives. For example, Kotter observed that while his research subjects believed they were employing generalized skills and could be successful in any company in any environment, in actuality, the executives had acquired highly specialized skills over the course of many decades in essentially the same environment. He argued this misperception is a disease he called "I can do anything syndrome," which can have disastrous consequences should the executives stray from their specializations. Many of Kotter's findings, such as this, support a contextualism (Goldhaber 2000; Pepper 1942) worldview, which is the worldview in which many qualitative researchers find

themselves. Contextualism holds that human development is guided by circumstances and context, rather than rationality and conditioning (the mechanicism worldview) or predictable patterns that lead to an ultimate, ideal state (the organicism worldview).

Adding to the ages-old debate of nature vs. nurture, Kotter (1982) found the development of the senior executives began with the circumstances into which they were born – another contextualist finding with significant implications for business schools considering admissions applications and policy-makers considering social justice issues. Kotter (1982) also found executives spend the bulk of their time developing and exercising wide interpersonal networks. This may seem counterintuitive, as many business schools and practicing executives tend to stress the importance of data collection, analysis, and planning (a mechanicism worldview) – activities that tend to tie executives down to their desks, or in "executive review" meetings. But Kotter found that in reality, the variety, uncertainty, and flow of issues encountered by his research subjects forced them to rely on intuitive judgement, to be highly dynamic and even "disjointed" in their approaches (a finding again supporting the contextualism worldview) and to depend heavily on their networks – activities that are enormously time-consuming and require executives to be out and about. While critics (Roberts 1984) note Mintzberg (1973) and Burns (1954) made similar, earlier observations, Kotter's work in *The General Managers* stands out for its focus on the phenomenology, rather than the theory, of managerial behavior. This focus characterizes Kotter – from how to deliver in a room full of executives, to his biography of Matsushita, to his observations of why change initiatives fail, to his latest work on leadership.

Extending his research into managerial behavior, Kotter argued in *A Force for Change, How Leadership Differs from Management* (1990b) that leaders produce change, whereas managers produce consistency and order. Leaders set a direction, align people to that direction, and motivate and inspire people to overcome the inevitable obstacles that impede movement in that direction. Setting direction may seem similar to defining a plan. But Kotter argues planning is a management function, "primarily designed to produce orderly results, not change" (p. 35). Management depends on formal structure while leadership depends on "thick networks" among people who share values and vision. Kotter argued that while homeostasis and change may fundamentally conflict, the increasing pace of change in organizations' environments requires less management and more leadership than typically exist. While Kotter had written about change as early as 1979 (Kotter and Schlesinger 1979), *A Force for Change* represents the point at which Kotter's work began to focus on the phenomenon of leading change.

During the period when the topic of corporate culture was in full fashion, Kotter and Heskett (1992) published in their book, *Corporate Culture and Performance*, their research into the corporate cultures of more than 200 companies. The prevailing theory was that a strong, coherent culture would insure high organizational performance. However, Kotter and Heskett found that some cultures lead to "outlier higher performance and some lead their people down a Yellow Brick Road to Oz and failure," recalls Richard Boyatzis, Ph.D. Strong culture is not enough. Kotter argued,

"those cultures that help an organization adapt to a changing world are associated with high performance," and he continued his argument from *A Force for Change* (1990b) that *leadership* is required to make the necessary changes.

## Mid-career: Leading Change

Kotter is most known and perhaps *the* most known among organizational change practitioners for his HBR article, *Leading Change, Why Transformation Efforts Fail* (1995b). His book by the same title became the best-selling book ever of its kind and has been cited over 4,000 times in Google Scholar (Appelbaum et al. 2012). While reflecting on the question of why transformation efforts fail, Kotter postulated eight essential mistakes, which later came to be known as the *Eight-Step Model* for implementing organizational changes. The eight steps are (1995a, p. ii):

1. Establishing a sense of urgency
2. Creating the guiding coalition
3. Developing a vision and strategy
4. Communicating the change vision
5. Empowering employees for broad-based action
6. Generating short-term wins
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change
8. Anchoring new approaches in the culture

Kotter reports that in conversation and correspondence with readers of *Leading Change*, he found readers resonated with his list of eight mistakes. The eight-step framework made sense to them, and it helped them think and talk about their change efforts (Kotter 1995b, p. iv). Critics note, "The success of the theory and at the same time the lack of research and rigorous investigation are quite counterintuitive in the world of empirical research that has been the underpinning of accepted OB and OD references and classics" (Appelbaum et al. 2012). Appelbaum et al. (2012) reviewed the change management literature to find support for and against the eight-step model. They found no formal studies proving the structure of the model itself. But they did find support for each of the steps and found no evidence against the model. Thus, the model has stood the tests of time and critical analysis. Appelbaum et al. concluded, "The model is intuitive and relatively easy to accept since it is based on Kotter's real-life experiences and is well presented with examples" (p. 776). Accessibility and practical, lived experiences of "end users such as stakeholders involved in managing the change" (p. 776), remain the hallmarks of Kotter's work.

## Later Career: Accelerate

Kotter's later career has continued to focus on lived stories of executives (cases) and has further elaborated the eight steps in *Leading Change* (1995a) and the leadership

work begun in *A Force for Change* (1990b). He and Dan Cohen of Deloitte began by documenting in *The Heart of Change* (Kotter and Cohen 2002) the stories of companies engaging in each of the eight steps. He then used a parable in *Our Iceberg is Melting* (Kotter and Rathgeber 2006) to describe the challenges and roles of people involved in change initiatives. After further reflection on the challenges and failures of change initiatives, he "became ever more convinced that it all starts with urgency" (p. ix). His next work, *A Sense of Urgency* (2008), is a deep dive into the first step of the eight-step model and is a practical, how-to guide for managers to instill urgency. But even if a strong, genuine sense of urgency exists, leaders will still face the *NoNos*, the character from *Our Iceberg is Melting*, who will attempt to block any changes. Organizational behavior and theory scholars theorize about the structural causes of these blocking behaviors. But these theories are often of little use to managers who are trying to change those very structures and must traverse a gauntlet of NoNos. In *Buy-in, How to Keep Your Good Ideas from Getting Shot Down*, (Kotter and Whitehead 2010) Kotter bypasses the theories and goes straight to the tactics used by NoNos and the counter measures change leaders can employ against each tactic. Perhaps more than any other work, *Buy-In* exemplifies Kotter's genius in focusing on the actual, real-world challenges of practicing managers.

In *Accelerate* (2014), Kotter returns to the work he began in *A Force for Change* (1990b) and expands on his assertions that management depends on hierarchies and leadership depends on networks. He observes that organizational management hierarchies have a tendency to "quietly yet systematically kill off the network side of an organization" (p. 68) and argues that "truly reliable, efficient, agile, and fast organizations" (p. 21) preserve the leadership network and maintain a *dual system* – both hierarchy and network. Since *Accelerate* is again written for practitioners, rather than OB students, readers are not distracted by analysis of Burns and Stalker (1961), Buckley (1967), Baker (1992), Miles and Snow (1992), and other classics of the academic literature. An apparent adherent of Bandura's (1986) theories of social cognition, Kotter rather relies on the stories of executives to persuade other executives to nurture their network structures and associated leadership capabilities.

In Kotter's latest book (as of this writing), *That's Not How We Do It Here* (2016), Kotter illustrates the necessity of dual organizational systems. Through a parable about fictional clans of meerkats, Kotter shows that a command-and-control bureaucracy (Fayol 1949; Taylor 1916; Weber 1922) cannot adapt quickly enough to the changing environment, while a completely organic structure (Burns and Stalker 1961) with few systems and procedures has difficulty scaling and driving efficiencies. After the end of the fable, Kotter debriefs the reader by using the table of leadership vs. management qualities and the two-by-two matrix of management vs. leadership from *A Force for Change* (1990b) and by reviewing how the eight-step model (Kotter 1995b) enables organizations to capture big opportunities. *That's Not How We Do It Here* is the latest example of Kotter teaching organizational theory and change concepts to entire organizations of workers, many of whom may not have attended business school. Through this work, he shows that engaging senior leadership is not sufficient. For change to happen and stick, employees throughout

the organization must be empowered for broad-based action. That is a key difference between management and leadership (Kotter 1990a).

An important change Kotter made in his later career was retiring from Harvard and starting a management consulting company, "dedicated to leveraging and further developing my work to help businesses, governments, and humankind," says Kotter. He made this change because, "I found the boundaries of what I could do as an individual and I did not want to accept those boundaries." NetApp was an early client of his company, Kotter International. During the Great Recession of 2009, Kotter and his team helped NetApp understand their big opportunity; distill it into a strong, clear message, develop urgency around it; and build a guiding coalition. The team executed a communication campaign including a train-the-trainer program and, because Kotter argued most employees do not like to read business books, the top 700 sales leaders received the parable, *Our Iceberg is Melting* (Kotter and Rathgeber 2006). Rob Salmon, who at the time was executive vice president of worldwide sales at NetApp, says this all resulted in a "social movement – a volunteer army of people who cared deeply about capturing our big opportunity" (step #5 of Kotter's model: "empowering employees for broad-based action"). Salmon, reports, "When you work with John, you realize you are a research project. He never said he had all the answers. Instead, even with all of his knowledge and experience, he was always listening, learning, and ideating within our specific situation. In all my 30 years in industry, I've never had someone have more impact on me than Dr. Kotter."

## New Insights: Pursing Excellence, Not Convention

Kotter exemplifies change and the pursuit of excellence, rather than complacency. He ignored convention, choosing not to follow the normative path of quantitative research and academic writing. Spending several years getting a study published would have taken him away from his students and his research subjects in organizations. Rather, he pursued his passions of researching and impacting the real-world experiences of managers. Kotter's career is evidence that conventional status quo is just one option. Perhaps convention is an iceberg that slowly melts. Or perhaps it is frozen solid for the foreseeable future. But if we go our own way, while listening intently to our customers and audiences, we might just create a movement. Scott Snook, Ph.D., observes that Kotter moved out of the study of organizational culture, which was in fashion at the time, and into the study of leadership – another example of leaving the status quo to pursue a new vision and strategy. The early influence and support of strong mentors are often essential for doing this. Kotter's primary influences were, "Three people, all of whom I worked for, came to respect hugely and helped me greatly: Edgar Schein, Paul Lawrence, and Tony Athos (the latter a brilliant teacher)."

Kotter's focus on practitioners ("what managers actually do"), rather than scholarly discourse (theorists building on others' theories), is a key insight that brings into question our system of business education, which some argue privileges the production of journal articles over the application of scholarly knowledge in real

organizations. Compared to conventional practice, Kotter rarely cites other scholars and theories in his works. Rather, he cites examples from practitioners in real companies. His work thus serves as a reminder that actual business results are the ultimate goals and tests of scholarship.

Another insight that tends to defy convention is Kotter's inclination for contextualism (Pepper 1942). The business world strives continually for predictability, which mechanistic and organismic worldviews promise. So as business scholars, we often look through those Cartesian lenses in the hope of finding patterns that will yield that golden predictability. We attempt to stand on the "high, hard ground" (Schön 1983, p. 42) that scholarly rigor affords. But, if we put down our microscopes and talk to managers in real practice situations, as Kotter prefers, we might find ourselves in "conversation with the situation" (Schön 1983), and we might find ourselves descending into "the swampy lowland where situations are confusing 'messes' incapable of technical solution," (p. 42). We might be forced to sacrifice rigor for relevance (p. 42), to "hold tight to the changing present event" (Pepper 1942, p. 233), and to "vigorously assert the reality of the structure of that event" (p. 235). Our truths would be "change and novelty" (p. 235). I imagine this is the worldview of Kotter, the highly-regarded authority on change and the "old-fashioned social anthropologist" who is always "listening, learning, and ideating" within the context of the specific situation. As a scholar-practitioner, I strongly resonate with this worldview, and my own theories of change leadership are derived through the contextualist lens. While this worldview may not seem very relevant to those scholars whose livelihoods depend on publishing conventional, rigorous quantitative science, Kotter's embrace of contextualism and "research in the practice context" (Schön 1983, p. 68) gives those practitioners and scholar-practitioners whose livelihoods depend on the swampy messes, the courage to embrace situations and discover their imminent change and novelty – in sum, the pursuit of excellence, rather than convention.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Leaders Listening to Those They Lead

Perhaps Kotter's most enduring legacy will not be his seminal, eight-step model, nor his distinction between management and leadership. Perhaps his most important legacies are the thousands of scholars and management practitioners for whom he has been an inspiring role model, his Ph.D. students who treat the next generation of Ph.D. students as colleagues, the researchers who have the courage not to let perfection be the enemy of progress, the leaders and scholars who reject complacency and strive continually for excellence, and the leaders who have the humility and courage to earnestly request feedback and to learn from their followers. I was recently relating a personal John Kotter experience to the dean of a leading business school. Years ago, with the manuscript of one of my books in hand, I met with John, wondering what I might learn from him. But he spent the time picking *my* brain. That humility and curiosity to learn from his students is what makes him such a great

scholar and teacher – and is why he is regarded as one of the greatest business school teachers of all time – and why he continues to be a role model for business leaders, professors, and deans.

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# Edward Emmet Lawler, III: Scholar, Change Agent, Sports Fanatic, and a Hell of a Nice Guy

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**Abstract**

Edward Emmett Lawler, III, has been a central figure in the development of the fields of organizational behavior, management, and organization development. His early work generated and tested theoretical frameworks about motivation and performance, and he was a leader in investigating how organizational practices impact employee and organizational outcomes, including work design, compensation, performance management, and participation and involvement. The Quality of Worklife studies at the University of Michigan that he co-led with Stan Seashore provided a model and developed a methodology for studying and understanding organizations as dynamic systems and for creating knowledge about organizations by intentionally changing them. From this work, he developed his highly influential high-involvement management framework.

During a career that has spanned 50 years, he has influenced both the theory and practice of organizing for effectiveness during a period when organizations have had to change fundamentally to adapt to the emerging dynamic, digitalized, global economy. Lawler has been a scholar of how organizations are changing to be effective in their changing contexts more than he has been a scholar of change processes. His emphasis on doing useful research led to partnerships with companies to address and learn from the challenges they face and to ensuring that the knowledge created is accessible to both academia and practice. His work has helped shape the development and increasing strategic orientation of the human resource function. He founded and for almost 40 years has led the Center for Effective Organizations (CEO), a research center at the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California, which he designed to carry out useful research. He and his colleagues at CEO have contributed to the

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development of methodologies for doing useful research and to the debates in the Academy about the legitimacy of such approaches.

This chapter describes Lawler's evolution as a scholar, the many contributions that he has made to the understanding of how organizations can change to be more effective, and the immense impact he has had on practice and academia.

**Keywords**

Organizational effectiveness • High involvement management • Useful research • Strategic human resources

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## Introduction

Ed Lawler's career has spanned five decades during which modern organization and management sciences have coevolved with the growth and development of the complex global economy, digitalization, and the transition to the postindustrial knowledge economy. He has had enormous influence on organizational people management practices. His early work helped shape the new field of organizational behavior and contributed foundational perspectives in the fields of organizational and industrial (I-O) psychology and organization development. He has had many substantive influences on our understanding and practice of organizational change but first and foremost has been that he has provided a framework of knowledge and has been a role model for how academic research can be relevant in changing times.

Lawler has been less concerned with generating knowledge to help organizations with the process of change than with generating knowledge about the kinds of changes they could make in order to be effective. He has challenged conventional wisdom and served as his own counsel in defining a career and building methodologies and institutional settings for investigating the issues of organizational effectiveness that he believed to be important.

Ed would rather talk about sports than about his career successes and contributions. He attributes his professional accomplishments to the good fortune of having been in institutions where he has had "great people to work with" – something he attributes to "pure luck" (There may have been less luck involved in seeking out universities with great football teams). There is a long list of people, myself included, who feel fortunate to know Ed and to have collaborated with him. And many of us have even have had the chance to go to a football game with him. There the camaraderie was all about what was happening on the field, and the Scholastic All-Ivy Football Team member from Brown University was just as keenly focused, perceptive, and analytic about the behavior on the field (the action) as he is about organizational effectiveness when at work.

A very common way that his colleagues and friends refer to him is as a "hell of a nice guy." One can't capture the essence of Ed Lawler if one doesn't know that about him. This "hell of a nice guy" has put together a stellar career with a mind-boggling list of accomplishments, as will be evidenced below in my attempt to do justice to Edward Emmett Lawler, III, the scholar change agent.

## Influences and Motivations: Institutions and Colleagues

Ed Lawler's influence on the field of organizational change has been deep and pervasive but first and foremost has been his ability to understand and be a role model for how academic research can be relevant in changing times. He has anticipated and rapidly sensed societal and market changes and has focused on generating and disseminating knowledge and practices to help organizations be effective in their changing contexts. He understands that practice evolves faster than academic research. In order for organizational research to be relevant, he has advocated that researchers connect more effectively to organizations and that the knowledge they generate should be useful in addressing the effectiveness challenges that they face.

Lawler's career unfolded in four chapters in four institutional settings: the University of California-Berkeley Psychology Department, Yale University's Administrative Science Department, the Institute for Social Research and the Psychology Department of the University of Michigan, and as a professor of Management and director of the Center for Effective Organizations in the Management and Organizational Behavior Department in the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California (USC). Lawler's contribution to the field of change is best understood through his own metamorphosis as he moved through these settings and developed an increasing commitment to doing useful research. In

his own words, his development has been strongly influenced by his succession of experiences in these four institutions. Close collaborations with colleagues and the opportunities for learning and building new methodological and organizational approaches to doing research have been critical elements of his contributions to academia and to practice.

## University of California-Berkeley (1960–1964)

After graduating from Brown University with a degree in psychology and experience on the football and track teams, Lawler received a PhD in psychology from the University of California-Berkeley in 1964. There he developed the habits for and value of theoretical framing and methodological rigor. Working closely with Lyman Porter, he received a solid grounding in traditional I-O psychology approaches, albeit through field studies that had him out in organizations interacting with managers and employees about how they experienced their organizations. As a doctoral student and subsequently as a young faculty member at Yale University, Lawler conducted psychology research that would help define the field of organizational behavior by extending the focus beyond the industrial worker to managerial and professional organizational members and by focusing increasingly on organizational practices that yield high performance.

Lawler's dissertation examined the relationship between managers' attitudes and performance and became the basis for his book with Lyman Porter, *Managerial Attitudes and Performance* (1968). This seminal work proposed and found empirical support for what came to be known as the value-expectancy theory of motivation. This model expanded the range of variables believed to impact performance and reversed the prevailing causality assumption that employee satisfaction leads to higher performance. It established empirically that satisfaction results from high performance that leads to outcomes that are valued and are perceived as equitable. This core principle has underpinned Lawler's subsequent work, in particular, his focus on creating work systems and practices that motivate high performance rather than trying to satisfy employees. This breakthrough perspective was an early and important example of Lawler having and testing insights that were at odds with current thinking in academia and practice.

## Yale Administrative Science Department (1964–1972)

As a new faculty member in Yale's Administrative Science Department, Lawler built on and extended the theoretical constructs underpinning high performance and motivation (Lawler 1973). He continued doing fieldwork focusing on the interface between individuals and the organization. With his close colleague Richard Hackman and others, Lawler oriented himself increasingly to the practical concern of understanding how organizational contexts can be designed to foster high performance, contributing a body of work in the area of work design (Lawler 1969) and compensation.

He rapidly became one of the foremost authorities on compensation and rewards in the eyes both of academic researchers and corporate leaders (Lawler 1971, 1981, 1990). His multi-community following, and the intentional strategy of focusing on books that were aimed at a dual audience, would be a hallmark of Lawler's career and the underpinning of his undeniable influence on both academic research and organizational practice.

At Yale, Lawler also encountered and was influenced by the work of Chris Argyris, Clay Alderfer, and others who were working within a Lewinian tradition and developing an action science perspective using participatory change processes. Yale provided a fertile environment for exploring the tensions and connections between this group and those who, like himself, were pursuing more traditional quantitative methodologies. He has described his relationship with Argyris as "transformative." It laid the foundation for a fundamental change in how he positioned his work in the field of organization behavior that would be defined during his tenure at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR).

## The University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (1972–1980)

At ISR, Lawler saw the opportunity to do larger scale, funded, field research about effective organizational systems and to focus on research that could make a difference. ISR had been founded in the 1970s to do social science research to help address conflicts and social issues that had been manifest in the preceding decades of wars and social unrest. Scholars such as Rensis Likert, Bob Kahn, Stan Seashore, and Dan Katz found fertile ground there to test their advancing theories of organizational systems and human behavior through field studies. Lawler partnered with Stan Seashore to establish a Quality of Worklife (QWL) Program – securing funding from the US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). HEW was seeking empirical studies to find ways to address the workplace problems of low morale and its manifestations in absenteeism, turnover, low quality, and worker-management conflict. These issues had been starkly reported in the HEW-sponsored *Work in America* report (O'Toole et al. 1973). The aim of the QWL program was to incorporate theories and research knowledge about organization structure, work design, supervision, participative approaches, compensation, and other organizational features in a coherent organizational system that could be created and empirically studied to understand how the various elements of the system can operate together to yield productive organizations with higher morale.

To achieve that purpose, Lawler and his colleagues had to investigate system level dynamics. Lawler was developing comfort with the Lewinian perspective that the best way to understand an organization is to change it – combined with the belief that there is nothing as useful as good theory. Nevertheless, focusing on organizations that were changing represented a departure from the presumed wisdom among traditional organizational psychologists that creditable knowledge

comes from tightly controlled studies holding everything constant but the variables in question.

Lawler and Seashore led a multidisciplined team to study eight large system change efforts. The changes were occurring in very different organizational settings and were based on a variety of intervention models and frameworks that were formulated and implemented by experts in organization development, labor management cooperation, and sociotechnical systems (STS), i.e., by action researchers. To maintain the objectivity that Lawler had learned to value, the Michigan QWL group independently "assessed" the change process, the impact of the various elements of the changes that were being put in place, and the outcomes for the company and for the employees. The ultimate purpose was to generate knowledge that could help organizations change themselves to become more effective. Lawler wasn't particularly focused on the change process and didn't think of himself as an interventionist. Rather, he maintained his concern with (1) generating theory, (2) testing – with as much rigor as possible – the practices that lead to effectiveness, and (3) disseminating knowledge.

The QWL work represented a methodological advance in research about organization system change. The research challenge was to find ways to study the linkages of the various elements of change and of the overall system to productivity and morale, in order to assess and learn from different approaches to improve quality of work life. In order to do this, he and his colleagues had to become change agents in a different way: by "inventing" and implementing new methodological and organizational ways of doing the work of research and knowledge generation. They had to invent approaches to study complex system change and develop a social system capable of doing that. They created a matrix structure, including cross-discipline research teams for projects, and specialist sub-teams with deep knowledge of various organizational frameworks and disciplines, and an overall approach to developing and implementing common instruments to measure the phenomena of focus (Mirvis and Lawler 2010).

The interventions they were studying were multifaceted and drew on multi-level, multidisciplinary theories, and multiple methods for data gathering and analysis that included observation, qualitative approaches, surveys, and the gathering of quantitative archival information. A comprehensive survey was developed to measure the key parameters of the system that were believed to relate to motivation and performance. Archival data were collected measuring financial and productivity outcomes and behavioral outcomes such as absenteeism and turnover. In addition to an overall assessment of outcomes that was foundational to program assessment, various team members carried out focused mini-studies of particular sub-systems that were changing, using a comparison group when possible. Lawler coined the term "adaptive research" to describe a methodology for adjusting the research approaches to fit a dynamic context and to take advantage of the particulars of a site that enabled focused learning (1977). The multidisciplinarity of the research team made it possible to look at the full system while also homing in on particular facets of the system and of the change dynamics. The studies resulted in an interwoven pattern of

findings that shed light both on the impact of particular practices and of the system overall.

This research required managing collaboration among multiple stakeholders – each with different interests, understandings, beliefs, values, purposes, and preferences. Among the stakeholders were executives in corporations where the interventions were occurring. Others were the HEW program sponsors, labor unions, teams of interventionists, managers and employees in the research sites, and the multidisciplinary QWL research team members themselves. An office was set up in Washington to identify research sites and assemble the group of stakeholders that would have to participate in each of the projects to agree to an overall approach. Ed had become a manager of a complex research system, one that could only work effectively if it was populated by people who were energized by the opportunity, excited by the challenges, collaborative in orientation, and able to be heavily involved in making the program a success.

As the work proceeded, the reality of studying such a complex tapestry of interests, interventions, and actors resulted in research approaches that moved farther away from a controlled experimental design. Through long hours of discussion and debate among the research team, each of whom had their own perspectives on relevance and rigor, complex interwoven approaches were generated across the eight projects. Lawler and Seashore ensured that the emerging multidisciplinary, multi-method, multi-level, and longitudinal methodology was systematically documented in articles and books aimed at introducing this systemic and adaptive approach to the field of organizational studies (Seashore et al. 1983; Lawler et al. 1980). This reflects another theme that would characterize Lawler's career – his continual emphasis on generating knowledge about and catalyzing interest in doing useful research.

During his time at ISR, Lawler developed an interest in testing knowledge through new plant startups (greenfield sites) built from scratch to embody the elements of the emerging high-performance, QWL framework (Lawler 1978). The greenfield approach was already being used successfully by companies such as Procter and Gamble and Shell Oil, following a STS approach. The elements of the plant could be developed from scratch by the participants without having to go through the hard work entailed in changing already existing sites, systems, and understandings. This approach provided a different organizational change and intervention methodology in which organizations could build, learn from, and improve prototypes of new ways of operating and disseminate them to other plants. The opportunity to consult to and learn from the start-ups moved him even closer to action science and away from a strict insistence that there should be walls between the research and the intervention.

Lawler was now squarely positioned in the nexus of the methodological tensions and schisms between advocates of qualitative and quantitative methodology and between rigorous positivistic versus action science-oriented research. His emphasis on the importance of research usefulness – albeit with as much rigor as is possible given the constraints of and realities faced by organizations – was now his primary

guiding value. This perspective guided him as he moved to the University of Southern California (USC) and founded the Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) to pursue that purpose.

## The Center for Effective Organizations (1978 Through Present)

Before arriving at the USC, Lawler spent time at the Battelle Memorial Institute where he led contract research programs. There he developed the belief that dependence on elaborate contracting mechanisms and large overhead costs worked against research productivity, flexibility to pursue topics of high relevance, and performance motivation. In 1978, Lawler moved to USC, where he had the opportunity to design a research center based on the knowledge he had generated about high performance. He founded CEO with the mission of partnering with organizations to conduct research that contributes to organizational effectiveness through the simultaneous advancing of theoretical understanding and practical impact. In the CEO model, sponsor companies pay a fee to join CEO, help shape its research agenda based on the issues they are facing, host and partner in the conduct of studies, and are the beneficiaries of rich learning from their own and other organizations that are inventing and adopting leading-edge approaches.

He did not want the researchers in the center to be constrained by the increasing pressure in academic departments to focus solely on A-journal articles through what he had come to perceive as methodologies, theoretical perspectives, and focuses that were increasingly distant from useful knowledge about organizational effectiveness. He designed all aspects of the center to motivate and provide a supportive context for relevant work and in so doing departed from many of the norms and assumptions underpinning traditional academic departments. He secured agreement that the center would report directly to the Dean of the Business School and that the researchers who joined it could choose to be on a track that rewarded a combination of academic and practitioner-oriented publications and research impact. This model was enabled by CEO's pledge to be largely self-supporting, which also enabled the development of a staff of skilled administrative and research services professionals so that the research teams could be maximally productive. He and his first hire and Associate Director Allan (Monty) Mohrman, rolled up their sleeves, built a team, developed a cadre of corporate partners, and went about the hard work of building several large research programs in the areas of strategic human resources practices, the design of high performance systems, and organizational change.

The attitudes and values of many in companies and academia at this time had been shaped during the societal turbulence of the 1960s and had been influenced by the visibility that Lawler's work had achieved both in academia and companies. CEO recruited a cadre of researchers who valued doing systematic research that both advanced theory and positively impacted organizations and society and who valued the opportunity to cocreate this nascent institution to carry out its mission. It was also able to attract and rapidly grow a sponsor network of more than 50 companies that wanted to be partners in this mission.

In order to be well positioned to do research useful to organizations in dealing with emerging issues, CEO recruited researchers from multiple disciplines, including psychology, organizational sociology, economics, information systems, strategy, organization design, and system dynamics. It quickly developed a model of partnering with researchers from across the USC campus, and from other universities nationally and globally, in order to expand its domains of expertise. Lawler did what he espoused. He created a high performance system fashioned to address the needs of the time and sufficiently agile to be able to change itself to address the emerging needs of the next four decades.

The corporate members of CEO came largely from the HR function. Lawler and others at CEO maintained a strong presence in studying effective human resource practices, an area where Lawler had become a globally recognized thought leader. This was a natural fit at the time, as the HR function was beginning to evolve from being a personnel function to becoming a strategic business partner. This evolution reflected the emerging knowledge economy where talent management was becoming a competitive differentiator. Lawler foresaw this trend, and he and his colleagues pursued the generation of useful research that focused on the effectiveness issues inherent in this transition. Over its four decades, CEO maintained an engaged group of sponsors by repeatedly anticipating trends and challenges that organizations were beginning to face and by applying and generating multidisciplinary knowledge to generate useful knowledge.

CEO's multidisciplinary group of scholars took CEO toward more macro and change-oriented focuses, generating knowledge useful to organizations in developing new capabilities and practices to deal with the profound changes they were experiencing, such as the digitalization of information and communication, new ways of organizing and working, and the emergence of the global economy. Challenges addressed in CEO research included dealing with multicultural workforces; coordination and work-life challenges of 24/7 work around the globe; new automated work systems; outsourcing and the associated dislocation of work, workers, and communities; the movement away from life-long employment expectations and fundamental changes in the employment contract; sea changes in the awareness, education levels, and expectations of employees; and the increasingly lateral and networked organizing approaches that called into question traditional assumptions about the role of hierarchy.

With colleague Chris Worley, Lawler expanded his interests to how organizations can become sufficiently agile to operate effectively in an ever-changing world. In another twist on conventional wisdom, they argue that instead of being built to last, organizations should be built to change (Lawler and Worley 2006, 2011; Worley et al. 2014). As societal side effects of the ballooning growth of the highly networked global economy became evident, CEO also began to look beyond shareholder value and employee outcomes as the primary metrics of organization success. One stream of research focuses on how organizations can effectively address the purposes and legitimate interests of a complex web of stakeholders that are impacting and changing the way organizations function, in order to be sustainable into the future. Lawler and colleague Sue Mohrman argue for a reframing of how

academics approach and design their research to reflect this new reality (Lawler and Mohrman 2014).

## Key Contributions: A Relentless Pursuit of Research Usefulness

Lawler's primary identity is not as a scholar of organizational change. Rather, he is a scholar who has made substantive research contributions that have contributed to change in organizations and introduced new research methodologies for the study of organizations. He has been a change agent with influence both on the directions taken in the field of organizational behavior and on practice. His early contributions were foundational in establishing the field of organizational behavior and provided core tenets for I/O psychologists who would work with and in companies to advance practice. His more recent contributions identify important ways in which organizational practices need to advance to fit changing demands and have influenced the fields of organizational development and organizational effectiveness.

Much of what Lawler has studied and advocated over the years has now been widely embedded in organizational practice, including greater attention to employee development, knowledge sharing, increased participation in decision-making, and a more strategic application of rewards and performance management. The widespread influence his work has had on companies, on the education of managers, and on other academics studying and working with companies to solve effectiveness problems has likely played a role in the adoption of these practices.

Through the way he has crafted his career and the strong stance he has taken with respect to the importance of usefulness, he has been a key figure in keeping alive a debate about the role and methodologies of organizational research. He has questioned assumptions and operated outside of and resisted the institutionalization of an increasingly narrow, discipline-based approach to conducting research. A number of Lawler's key contributions are discussed below.

## Systemic and Multi-level Treatment of Organizational Practices Leading to Organizational Effectiveness

As described earlier, Lawler's early work conceptualizing the key link between organizational practices and the motivation of employees and his role in providing a framework clarifying the link between motivation and performance were foundational contributions. Lawler stood out in his early embrace of an integrative perspective on the organization as a system of practices that shape its performance capabilities. This perspective led to a more complex, multi-level treatment of the relationship between the individual and the organization. In the world of organizational practice, it provided the backdrop for the gradual transition of the largely transactional personnel function into a more strategic human resources function.

Related to his work in the QWL program, Lawler developed a system framework for high performance, known as high involvement management (Lawler 1986, 1992). It focuses on a set of mutually supportive practices to increase employee involvement in the success of the business by distributing four resources – knowledge, information, power, and rewards – throughout the employee population. With its simultaneous focus on employee and organizational outcomes, this framework inspired a generation of scholars who honed, extended, and tested it, both through interventional work and assessment of impact and through systematic articulation and testing of theoretical precepts.

## Definitional Work on Research Usefulness

Lawler has been persistent in advocating that usefulness should be a major criterion for organizational research. He advocates empirical field research driven by a clear theoretical foundation and yielding useful, data-based knowledge about effectiveness. This value is instantiated in his own scholarly work and in the research programs and the research center he has led. He and his colleagues have edited three volumes providing frameworks, guidance, and exemplars about the conduct of useful research (Lawler et al. 1985, 1999; Mohrman et al. 2011).

Key to his capacity to achieve usefulness is staying closely connected to organizational practice. Believing that practice generally precedes academic research, Lawler has been a keen observer of trends and even of weak signals that change is underway. Over the years, he has anticipated the trajectory of the emerging and dynamic context in which organizations operate and anticipated the challenges they will face and what that means for organization practice and research. For example, under his leadership, CEO developed expertise in information technology and anticipated the fundamental changes to work and organization that would result from digitalization. CEO researchers were early contributors to cross-functional teaming and other lateral approaches to organizing that would become increasingly important in the global, digitalized economy. A strong organization design capability has been nurtured at CEO, so that it can simultaneously shed useful light on the macro-design issues that organizations are facing and on their implications for the management and human resource practices.

As Lawler and colleagues have written, knowledge is only useful if it is used, and their activities have had that intent. Continual sensing of issues companies are facing combined with research that tests ideas in practice are underpinnings for the value that companies find in his work. Usefulness is enhanced by writing, speaking, and making knowledge about effective practice accessible to multiple audiences. Providing consultative support to companies trying to put new knowledge into practice enables a real-world test of usefulness, as well as feedback to enrich and iterate what is being learned and disseminated. Company relationships provide access to research sites in which to study dynamics and practices in the changing contexts faced by organizations.

## Methodology for Learning from Organizations That Are Purposefully Transforming Themselves

The rigorous methodological approach (described earlier in this chapter) developed in the QWL studies at ISR for learning about the practices that lead to organizational effectiveness provided a methodological framework for many academics whose focus was to do useful research. I include myself among those who were deeply impacted by this approach. In fact, it was this framework and the QWL research that led me to remain in academia when I left graduate school, rather than go directly to a company to try to help make it more effective for its employees.

Elements of the instruments that were developed at ISR in the 1970s have been used by researchers for decades and can be found in the surveys and assessment methodologies that have become part of the fabric of many organizations. Lawler's influence on the use of survey methodology by companies is also a key contribution to the field of organizational effectiveness and change (Lawler 1967).

## Designing a Research Center to Conduct Useful Research

In setting up a purpose-driven research center that has evolved and lasted for 39 years, Lawler was both a social entrepreneur and an innovator. CEO's organizing model is described earlier in the paper. Lawler combined his knowledge of practices that lead to effectiveness, his framework for high involvement, and his experience with greenfield organizations to start up and evolve an organization designed to foster high performance in its mission of relevant research. In so doing, CEO deviated substantially from the traditional academic organization. A key decision Lawler made was to have the research scientists in the center have the choice not to be on a tenure track appointment but rather to have ongoing employment based on research performance. Lawler believed firmly that this was the best way to foster ongoing relevance and productivity. CEO might be considered an exemplar for others thinking about designing high performing organizations for knowledge work.

Lawler carefully designed a strategy to establish legitimacy in the academic world for research that is carried out in a research center by researchers with nontraditional links to the long established ivory towers of academia and mission. He took steps to ensure that CEO's work was connected to the mainstream work in the organizational sciences, while simultaneously connecting it to practitioners. In its early years, CEO convened two conferences involving CEO researchers and a number of highly productive, established organizational academics who at the time were carrying out useful research, and a group of reflective practitioners, to collaboratively produce seminal books on the topics of *Doing Useful Research* (1985) and *Managing Large-Scale Change* (1989). This was a time when scholarly work in the academic fields of management and organization was becoming increasingly distant from the actual operations and concerns of organizations. Lawler's avowed intent was to nudge the

field to contribute knowledge that would be useful to practice and to accept its importance.

As a distinguished management professor, Lawler was able to transcend the pressures for research and publications that advances narrow academic disciplines. He could focus on cross-cutting issues that require new methodologies, highly collaborative approaches, and an openness to discovering knowledge for the future rather than painstakingly analyzing and chronicling what the past has generated. In short, Lawler positioned himself as a bridge between traditional discipline-based university departments and the cross-discipline, problem-oriented research that was being carried out at CEO.

## Insights: Reframing Prevailing Frameworks

Lawler's astute observational powers and capacity to cut through complexity and get to the heart of the matter have allowed him to frame and investigate interesting questions and issues throughout his career. His influence on organization change has stemmed from using empirical data to reframe prevailing assumptions and change how people think about the issues they face and the problems they have to solve. For example, his and his colleagues' early work offered an alternative to the prevailing views of organizations as engineering and industrial systems supplemented by industrial relations and administrative processes. They began collecting data and investigating behavioral and attitudinal dynamics and the professional and managerial workforce and contributed to the emerging fields of management and organizational studies.

Always building on the fundamentals of motivation and performance, he has expanded and reframed the internally focused issues of individuals, teams, and the organization to take into account the impact of the global and knowledge-based economy on the nature of performance and on the employee organization relationship as it was evolving in society.

Keeping in mind that Lawler sees his contributions as resulting from collaboration with colleagues, just a few of his important insights are briefly described below.

## Motivation, Satisfaction, and Performance

A significant early reframing came from his work establishing that performance leads to satisfaction – rather than causality going in the opposite direction. Lawler continues even in current times to remind academics and practitioners of the fallacy of believing that satisfying employees will lead to performance motivation – and of the futility of trying to achieve engagement by focusing on programs to make employees happy. He reminds us that the research finds that the source of employee engagement in the business is the work and performance outcomes.

## Integrative Scholarship

Lawler's work while at ISR cemented his stature as an integrative scholar, one who merged the understanding of individual and organizational behavior and effectiveness in relationship to the changing market and societal contexts that were unfolding. At the time, this represented a reframing for a relatively internally focused field of study. He shifted from research on particular constructs and practices and their individual impact on performance to the investigation of high performance as stemming from a system of practices. His methodological contributions reflect this insight by suggesting ways, imperfect though they may be from a positivistic research perspective, to study, understand, and advance practice in organization systems. This insight led him to question the fragmented production of knowledge both in academia and organizations. A practical manifestation of his impact is the increasing integration of HR functional approaches to support the performance required to deliver on the organization's strategy.

## Criticality of Connection to Practice

Lawler dedicated a lot of his personal attention to creating awareness of good practice and drawing attention to areas where companies are falling short in putting in place practices that would be good for the performance of the companies and the well-being of employees. He believed that useful research could not be done at arm's length as is espoused by many positivist researchers and that usefulness required going far beyond simply discovering and writing up knowledge about organizational effectiveness and implications for practice and then declaring victory and moving on to the next topic of interest. He sought ways to share knowledge with new executives and managers, emerging professional societies, young and established academics and practitioners, and professionals and managers in many fields, industry sectors, functions, and institutional settings. Through example, he redefined the mix of work required to make research useful.

## Built to Change

After three decades of work studying organizations trying to increase performance in the midst of fundamentally changing market demands, Lawler was one of the first to draw the profound conclusion that organizations should be built to change, not to be stable. He partnered with colleague Chris Worley, who led a series of studies of Organizational Agility that yielded a system of organizational elements that enables an organization to be agile (Lawler and Worley 2006, 2011; Worley et al. 2014). Sustainable organizational effectiveness, in their view, depends not only on sound management practices and value-adding capabilities but also on building the ability to change into the fabric of the organization. Change isn't an episodic occurrence that calls for periodically assembling deep knowledge about change management.

Rather, effective organizations are always changing, and change is a core capability. Agility is enabled by a system of routines built into the fabric of the organization. These promote ongoing strategic thinking, sensing of how the environment is changing and what that means for how the organization should operate, testing and learning from new approaches, and effectively implementing new directions. This perspective on change is a significant reframing from many of the core change frameworks in the fields of organizational development and organizational effectiveness that focus on transformations and/or the implementation of episodic change.

## Individualization

Individualization of the treatment of employees has been one of Lawler's key focuses for his entire career (Lawler 1974, 2014; Lawler and Finegold 2000). His insight is that individualization, not homogeneous human resource practices, relates to greater motivation and performance. Despite the field of psychology's concern for individual differences, I/O psychologists have had a quest for ever more sophisticated ways of measuring these and fitting individually different employees into common systems. Lawler has advocated such practices as person-based pay, eliminating job descriptions, cafeteria benefits programs, and other practices that move away from homogenous treatment of employees and that recognize individual capabilities and preferences. In advocating these approaches, he has often been swimming upstream given the legal environment and associated risk aversion of companies, the preferences of managers for commonality and the preferences of many employees and organizations for stability.

Lawler's recent work (Lawler 2017) advocates individualization as a key organizing principle for talent management. He believes this as a key to the agility organizations need to be sustainably effective in today's rapidly shifting society and economy. He points out that individualization is already underway given that lifelong employment is rapidly disappearing, and that companies are increasingly relying on contractors and freelancers rather than expanding their full-time employee base to carry out tasks that may not be needed in the future. This perspective is congruent with the pervasiveness of knowledge work that does not fall readily into well-defined jobs, job families, and grading and compensation systems.

## Ed Lawler's Pervasive and Deep Legacy

My perception of Ed Lawler's legacy is no doubt biased by the fact that I share the values built into CEO, and have found it to be an ideal setting in which to pursue my interests. My own academic career has been largely based in CEO, where I have had the opportunity not only to pursue my research interests and build my research programs and networks of collaborators but also to do things that I personally believe contribute to society. I have worked, often closely, with Ed Lawler for almost 40 years.

My view that Ed's legacy is pervasive and deep is congruent with the perceptions from many in both academia and the corporate world. Ed is a highly honored academic. He is a distinguished professor at USC and has been honored for his lifetime contribution by the American Psychological Association, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, the Academy of Management, the Association for Training and Development, the Society for Human Resource Management, and others. He is a fellow in the Academy of Management, The British Academy of Management, and Divisions 8 and 14 of the American Psychological Association, and others and has served on the directing boards of many of these organizations. He has been on the editorial board of more than 15 academic journals.

Ed's expansive influence on academia has been described in some detail earlier in this chapter. Yet it is important to emphasize the continuity: for almost 50 years, he has evolved his underlying concern with motivation, behavior, and performance in organizations. He has built on core theoretical ideas and has studied and described practices that are continuously changing to adjust to the unfolding contexts in which organizations are operating. His research trajectory, though anchored, has been blown by the winds of change. His foundational frameworks have been catalytic for several generations of unfolding theoretical knowledge as well as for the translational research taking theory into organizational practices.

Ed attributes much of his impact to the longevity of his career and the opportunity to pursue his core interests through time. Just one example is CEO's work on performance management that led to the seminal book *Designing Performance Appraisal Systems* (Mohrman et al. 1989b) that squarely positioned performance appraisal as a strategic tool and one that was all about involving employees not only in the process of their own assessment but also in the success of the organization. Twenty years later, Gerry Ledford, Ben Schneider, George Benson, and Ed are revisiting the performance management practices needed in our changed, digitally enabled world of work. I use this focus not only to demonstrate the longevity, continuity, and dynamic nature of Ed's contribution but also to bring to life his belief that dynamic collaborations have been a source of his impact.

Many organizational practices have been profoundly influenced by his work, including the way people are appraised and paid, how work is designed, and how people are involved in the organization. His work has been an important enabler of the transition of human resource management to address the key talent requirements and challenges of today's global knowledge economy. The field of human resource management is substantively different because of his contributions, and the same is true for hundreds or even thousands of practitioners.

I have been struck by how often I hear managers and executives – even those who have never met Ed Lawler – talk about the influence his work has had on how they think about managing and organizing. Although teaching in USC's MBA programs has not been a large part of his responsibilities at USC, he has nevertheless penetrated that pathway for dissemination of his work. Many if not most students have encountered his work as part of their coursework. Other practitioners have

become familiar through his dedication to sharing his ideas with professional associations, in practitioner outlets, and in companies. Practitioners frequently comment that his writing and speaking are clear and the implications are pragmatic and straightforward. He has generated a steady stream of highly varied publications containing a drumbeat of key empirically based principles of high performance situated in the real, constantly unfolding challenges that are being faced in practice. This approach has clearly been successful in accomplishing his major goal of generating and disseminating knowledge that is useful.

## Unfinished Business

Lawler's strategy of achieving change through empirical evidence of what constitutes effective practice has had great impact. But he has also come to believe that such approaches are necessary and helpful but not sufficient. Many organizations proceed with and even escalate commitment to approaches to managing people that are ineffective. He has a very realistic appreciation that organizational leaders will not always "do the right thing" for their companies, shareholders, employees, and other stakeholders, even if they know what the right thing would be. During the last 20 years, he has been part of a team with David Finegold and Jay Conger examining Boards of Directors and helping understand how they can be organized to more effectively play their role in ensuring that companies are operating effectively for their owners, employees, and stakeholders. Lawler acknowledges that organizational changes are largely driven by the operating necessity to confront the powerful winds of market changes and competition. But he also views change as a political phenomenon. Organizations respond to powerful stakeholders who can influence the way they operate, often through the legislative and regulatory process or through the creation of reputational risks.

Lawler reflects that those who create compelling knowledge about effective practice run into societal limits and into the power structures that control decision making about how organizations are run. In commenting on his latest writing focusing on the individualization of the relationship of workers and companies, for example, he acknowledges that although inevitable given the current trends in the digitalized and global economy, the individualization of human resource practices raises many societal issues that will have to be addressed and crashes into conflicting beliefs and preferences about the responsibility of corporations. What this trend means for the character of companies and the nature of society opens up a whole new area of focus for the organization and social sciences and for economists and political scientists. This reality, one might say, makes it even more important for researchers to get out of the narrow silos of knowledge and develop a more systemic perspective on how all the pieces fit together for effective outcomes for companies, employees, society, and the earth. Those who are taking on this challenge will find in Lawler's work much learning about how to organize to carry out research to inform this transition.

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# Paul R. Lawrence: A Career of Rigor, Relevance, and Passion

## 45

Michael L. Tushman

**Abstract**

Paul R. Lawrence was one of the earliest and most influential figures in the emergence of organizational behavior as a field of study. He was a pioneer in creating a body of work on organization design, leadership, and change in both the private and public sectors. Lawrence's professional work was rooted in an aspiration to do work that was rigorous, relevant to practicing managers, and of service to society. Beyond his research, Lawrence was committed to building the field of organizational behavior at HBS and more broadly in our profession. He had a lifelong passion for participant-centered learning and for the training of doctoral students.

**Keywords**

Organization design • Contingency theory • Public and private organizations • Leadership • Leading change • Rigor and relevance

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## Introduction

Paul R. Lawrence was one of the earliest and most influential figures in the emergence of organizational behavior as a field of study. He was a pioneer in creating a body of work on organization design, leadership, and change, in both the private and public sectors. Influenced by his early experiences with labor/management conflict, Lawrence's professional work was rooted in an aspiration to do work that was rigorous, relevant to practicing managers, and of service to society.

Lawrence spent his entire professional career at the Harvard Business School. He started at HBS before the field we now know as organizational behavior (OB) existed. Lawrence was instrumental in building Harvard's OB unit, its MBA program, as well as several of its long executive education programs. Besides Lawrence's institution building and research, he was also pivotal in building an innovative doctoral program in organizational behavior and was a mentor and role model to over 60 doctoral students. His students, in turn, helped shape the evolving field of organizational behavior in business schools worldwide and at the Academy of Management.

Even after his retirement, Lawrence's passion for his research never diminished. He never let up on his quest to understand the roles of organizations in society and of leaders in shaping organizational, community, and societal outcomes. As a scholar, teacher, mentor to doctoral students, and institution builder, Paul Lawrence set a standard to which our field should aspire.

This essay is both descriptive of Lawrence's career as well as personal. Paul was a mentor and friend. I first met him when I was a doctoral student at MIT in 1973. He was visiting the Sloan School during a sabbatical year. I was interested in determinants of productivity in R&D settings and, more generally, the management of innovation. As a rookie doctoral student, I did not then know of Paul's research. What I did realize immediately was his commitment both to his research and to doctoral education.

I also felt his enthusiasm for the work of a professor and appreciation for the unique and complex responsibilities of faculty in business schools. In contrast to many in the profession, Paul always believed that research should matter. He believed that teaching should draw on this research to help managers solve real-world problems. While Paul was quiet and listened carefully, he was opinionated and firm when it came to the choice of research topics ("work on significant, managerially important problems"), the importance of field data ("carefully collected and detailed"), and the importance of induced theory/conceptual schemes ("the importance of inducing theoretical and managerial 'walking sticks'").

Paul offered a doctoral seminar in organization theory to students at MIT and HBS. His syllabus was exciting, as it included the intellectual pioneers of our field, like Roethlisberger, Barnard, Homans, Selznick, Mayo, and Warner, as well as then-current research on organizations as social systems (e.g., March and Simon, Chandler, Katz and Kahn, Farris, Perrow, Thompson, Burns and Stalker, Trist, Woodward, and Likert). His syllabus was not bound by a single discipline but by managerial

problems and the diversity of social science theory that could help managers solve those problems.

The week before our seminar was to begin, Paul hurt his back. The doctoral students were stunned by his response to this injury. Rather than canceling classes, Paul met with the group in his home. Because he had to be lying down, he managed to conduct the seminar for weeks on his back! I will never forget his passion for our field and his commitment to doctoral students, even while debilitated.

Quite apart from the process by which he managed this class, his students quickly learned the core ideas of organizational theory at the time, and, perhaps more importantly, we were infused with his own passion for problem-oriented work and the relationship between field data and induced theory. His notion of theory as a "walking stick" for managers and our role in creating these tools has always stayed with me.

Paul became an invaluable member of my doctoral committee. He pushed me to use my dissertation's data on social networks and performance in R&D settings to build an overarching midrange theory. At the time, I found his theoretical pushing painful. It did, however, lead to my early work on information processing and social networks in R&D and to my work with David Nadler on the congruence model.

Paul was always there for me during my transition from a doctoral student at MIT to faculty member at Columbia. He actively helped me and David Nadler develop our core MBA course on organizations and our congruence model. When I moved to HBS in 1998, Paul was a trusted guide, mentor, and friend to me in this transition. In 1999, I was named the Paul R. Lawrence, Class of 1942 Professor. As I told Paul on numerous occasions, the professional achievement that I'm proudest of is to hold the professorship named in his honor.

## Influences and Motivations: A Life of Research, Teaching, and Institution Building

As a teenager in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Lawrence's lifelong concern with social problems was influenced by his grandfather's Methodist faith (he was a Methodist minister), his parents' commitment to their children's higher education, and their active role in community affairs. Lawrence's interest in leadership, organizations, and change was sparked as a teenager when he observed labor-management conflict and the eventual unionization of the auto industry in Michigan. Lawrence was sympathetic to both workers and management. He developed a strong sense of doing useful work – work that would help employees as well as the firm. With this interest in leadership, organizational change, and communities, Lawrence enrolled in HBS's MBA program in 1942.

After his first year at HBS, Lawrence interrupted his graduate work to enlist in the Navy. He served in the South Pacific for 3 years where he had significant managerial responsibilities. Because of his ongoing interest in the sociology of organizations (stimulated by a course he had taken at Harvard with Pitirim Sorokin), Lawrence had books by Roethlisberger and Mayo sent to him in New Guinea! After his discharge from the Navy, Lawrence took a job working on an assembly line at Chevrolet Gear

and Axle, an experience that directly exposed him to union-management relations and to the evolution of informal organizations in the workplace. He observed emergent social relations such that management could not take advantage of the workers.

Interested in pursuing doctoral studies in industrial sociology, Lawrence followed the advice of Burleigh Gardner at the University of Chicago to return to HBS to work with faculty in several disciplines who were interested in organizations, communities, and industrial relations. Lawrence finished his MBA and immediately entered the doctoral program at HBS, where he studied with Fritz Roethlisberger, Elton Mayo, and George Lombard, among others.

Following his interest in industrial conflict, Lawrence's dissertation was an analysis of intensive intergroup conflict among engineers, technicians, and production managers. He was interested in conflict dynamics and what top management needed to do to integrate these groups' divergent perspectives and interests. Lawrence earned his doctorate in commercial sciences in 1950 and immediately started work as an assistant professor at HBS. After Lawrence graduated, he was involved in the creation of a doctoral program in organizational behavior. Soon after, HBS created an organization behavior area composed of cross-disciplinary faculty interested in industrial relations and organizations. This faculty was perhaps the world's first OB department.

Lawrence remained at HBS in its organizational behavior unit until his retirement in 1991 and continued to be active as an emeritus faculty member until 2002. He continued writing until his death in 2011. During his more than 50 years on the HBS faculty, Lawrence was involved in teaching MBAs and executives. He was MBA course head, faculty chair of the Advanced Management Program and Owner/President Management executive programs, and was head of the OB unit twice. For more than 50 years, Lawrence played a pivotal role at HBS in the development of OB as a research domain and as a key element in its MBA and executive education curricula.

Particularly meaningful to Lawrence was his work with doctoral students. He taught his doctoral course in what became organization theory each year for over 30 years. He sponsored and mentored more than 60 doctoral students. Many of these students went on to be leaders in the field. To further the training and development of doctoral students, in 1983, Lawrence collaborated with Freed Bales (psychology) and Harrison White (sociology) to create a cross-disciplinary joint PhD program in organizational behavior. This program remains vital to this day.

Throughout his career, Lawrence retained his interest in solving real-world problems. This orientation was reflected in Harvard's doctoral program and in Lawrence's personal mentoring of doctoral students. He took seriously Lewin's emphasis on the importance of good theory and Roethlisberger's metaphor of theory as a managerial "walking stick." Lawrence was adamant with his students. If we could induce research-based models of work and organization design, these models could help managers make more informed and integrated decisions. Since OB was in a formative state in those years, Lawrence's theoretical work on organizations as

complex social systems was induced from his own and his students' careful fieldwork.

To Lawrence, field research, case writing, and theory development were entirely synergistic. His fieldwork generated his cases that furthered his teaching and his emerging theory of organizations as social systems. His research and theory, in turn, shaped his subsequent fieldwork, case, and course development. Well before Stokes' (1997) work on the synergies between rigor and relevance, Lawrence demonstrated the power of the field informing research and research informing, in turn, subsequent field research.

## Key Contributions and Insights: The Emergence of Contingency Theory and Beyond

Lawrence's first three books were devoted to understanding the leadership of organizational change in private firms (Flint Electric and a large supermarket chain) and in a large governmental organization (the Pentagon). These three studies focused on coordination and intergroup conflict associated with new products, programs, or services. Lawrence's early empirical work built on Bales' (1950) careful attention to interaction patterns. His conceptual work built on Homans' (1950) conclusion that social systems outcomes were driven by the interplay among interactions, activities, and sentiments. In his first book, *Administering Changes* (with Harriet Ronken, 1952), Lawrence and Ronken's field observations led to a systems approach to organizational change. They observed that organizational outcomes were not driven solely by external constraints but rather by the complex interactions among external influences, interaction patterns, self-concepts, and work activities.

These themes were then picked up in his second book, *Changing Organizational Behavior Patterns* (1958). In this study of decentralization processes in a large supermarket chain, Lawrence observed that organizational change resulted from the interdependent interactions among the firm's structure, roles, communication patterns, group sentiments, and individual predispositions. Lawrence also observed that organizational outcomes included not just task accomplishment but also self-maintenance and growth as well as social satisfactions. Group and organizational scholars later picked up these ideas on multiple organizational outcomes (e.g., Duncan 1976; Hackman and Morris 1975). Further, Lawrence's conceptualization of organizational change as an interaction among communication patterns, decision-making practices, rewards, structure, and individual predispositions was an early version of what became known as open systems theory (e.g., Katz and Kahn 1966).

Lawrence's earliest work on what was to become contingency theory was his next book *Industrial Jobs and the Worker: An Investigation of Responses to Task Attributes* (1965) coauthored with Arthur Turner. Lawrence and Turner explored the notion that work context or task requirements would influence individual outcomes (satisfaction, turnover, absenteeism). Through their field observations, Lawrence and

Turner first induced the importance and nature of task characteristics. They found that tasks could be described by work variety, autonomy, skill requirements, and individual responsibility. These observations were later picked up by the job design literature (e.g., Hackman and Oldham 1980). Rather than finding that enriched jobs were positively associated with individual outcomes such as job satisfaction, Lawrence and Turner found that the response to enlarged jobs was contingent on individual and cultural differences. Those individuals predisposed to autonomy and control thrived under job enlargement, while those not so predisposed did not.

In the context of administrative sciences at the time, most scholars sought to discover basic, universal principles of administration. In sharp contrast to this work, Lawrence and Turner discovered contingent relationships among task characteristics, individual predispositions, and outcomes. Lawrence then took this surprise observation that individual differences moderate the relations between task characteristics and individual outcomes to a higher level of analysis. Working with one of his doctoral students, Jay Lorsch, Lawrence explored whether this contingency between task characteristics and individual differences might extend to the organizational level of analysis.

Lawrence and Lorsch reasoned that task uncertainty and environmental complexity might be important organizational contingencies. To get at this hunch, they designed a comparative analysis of high- and low-performing organizations competing in low-uncertainty (container), medium-uncertainty (food), and high-uncertainty (plastics) task environments. Based on their field observations, halfway through this research, Lawrence and Lorsch decided to use level of differentiation and level of integration as their dependent variables.

Borrowing ideas from biology and from Eric Trist's work at the Tavistock Institute, Lawrence and Lorsch observed that high-performing firms in different contexts had fundamentally different designs and that these designs also differed from low-performing firms. They observed that the most effective organizational designs were contingent on task and environmental conditions.

Lawrence and Lorsch found that in high-performing firms, the level of differentiation was systematically related to the intensity of integration devices. Further, they found that high-performing firms in uncertain contexts had high levels of differentiation, while high-performing firms in low-uncertainty contexts had low levels of differentiation. Low-performing firms either had inappropriate levels of differentiation and/or did not match the level of integration with the level of differentiation.

*Organization and Environment: Managing Differentiation and Integration* (1967b) and Lawrence and Lorsch's associated ASQ (1967a) article transformed how scholars thought about organizational design and the role of leaders in making design decisions. It also shaped the evolving view of organizations as social and technical systems. Beyond systems ideas and task/environmental contingencies, their comparative methodology influenced generations of subsequent scholars.

Building on these contingency ideas, Lawrence went on to do more work on organization design and leading change in both the public and private sectors. He explored urban dynamics in *Mayors in Action* with John Kotter (1974), matrix designs in *Matrix* (1977) with Stanley Davis, and the difficulties of managing

academic medical centers with Marvin Weisbord and Martin Charns (JABS 1978). The research by Lawrence, Weisbord, and Charns explored the performance consequences of highly differentiated systems lacking correspondingly intensive integration mechanisms. Lawrence's research after *Organization and Environment* extended his view of organizations as social and technical systems and demonstrated how organizational design is an outcome of complex social and political dynamics.

Continuing this theme of leadership and organization design at higher levels of analysis, Lawrence and Davis Dyer (an historian) initiated a multiyear comparative analysis of organizational adaptation and industrial competiveness across seven major US industries. This research took place in a period when American firms were lagging behind their Japanese counterparts. Lawrence and Dyer in *Renewing American Industry* (1983) observed that those firms that were able to renew themselves were both efficient and innovative. They observed that the nature of adaptation was contingent on the firm's levels of resource scarcity and information complexity. This book brought Lawrence's work to the public policy level of analysis even as it made links among economics, history, and organizational behavior.

Continuing this theme of fieldwork-inspired comparative analysis, Lawrence's last major book on organizational design, *Behind Factory Walls* (1990) (with Charalambos Vlachoutsicos), was a collaboration among American and Russian scholars. Like many of his prior studies, this research used a comparative method; it matched four US factories with four Soviet factories. The advent of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) provided Lawrence and his colleagues with an opportunity to explore how Soviet firms would respond to fundamentally altered market conditions and to explore the challenges in joint venture relations between Russian and American firms.

This research was the first time non-Soviet scholars were permitted to do research in Russian firms. This research found systematic differences between American and Soviet approaches to leadership styles, decision-making, work/life boundaries, social networks, and organizational design. Knowing these systematic differences could, in turn, help inform joint venture relations between these countries.

Lawrence became an emeritus professor in 1991. He did not, however, slow down, although he did shift his energies and intellectual ambitions. He became even more passionate about OB's need to dig deeper into how and why individuals, firms, and communities worked the way they did. His intellectual curiosity and passion for these topics convinced him that the disparate fields of evolutionary biology, history, neuroscience, and anthropology held important keys to understanding leadership and organizational behavior.

Lawrence was concerned that rather than opening up, the field of OB was closing in on itself; that important research questions were being crowded out by narrow disciplinary or methodological constraints. His last decade was dedicated to the development of a new, unified theory of human behavior. Lawrence immersed himself in Darwin's writing, especially *The Descent of Man*. This led Lawrence to more recent work in the evolutionary, biological, and social sciences, including his Harvard University colleague E.O. Wilson's work. These explorations led to *Driven:*

*How Human Nature Shapes our Choices* (2002), coauthored with Nitin Nohria. Lawrence and Nohria suggested that four primary innate drives direct human behavior: the drives to acquire, to bond, to comprehend, and to defend. Lawrence and Nohria explained how these four drives are kept in balance and how they interact with culture, emotion, and skills in driving outcomes.

Well into his 80s, Lawrence published his last book. *Driven to Lead: Good, Bad, and Misguided Leadership* (2010) examined human behavior and leadership and developed what Lawrence called the "renewed Darwinian theory of human behavior." This book focused on the impulse/check/balance mechanisms in leaders not addressed in *Driven*. He argued that our moral sense, or conscience, is crucial to effective leadership and that all facets of leadership, from visionary to evil, are natural to the human condition. Lawrence believed that leadership is a trait that we can apply and improve upon as effectively as we do in medicine or technology.

In *Driven to Lead*, Lawrence returned to his earliest work on leadership and change. He reinforced the importance of developing more effective leaders and observed the catastrophic consequences of ineffective leaders and flawed decision-making for organizations, communities, and societies. Lawrence's last work takes full circle his interest in building ideas, concepts, and theory that help individuals, firms, and their communities. It was also a call for OB professionals to hold their work to high standards and a challenge to the community to never take their eyes off working on societies' most pressing leadership and organizational challenges.

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: The Continued Evolution of Organizational Behavior

As I look at the scope of Lawrence's career, I am struck by his enthusiasm and passion for his work, his irrepressible and enduring curiosity, his institutional building at HBS, and his commitment to collaboration with doctoral students. Lawrence never veered from his focus on problems that were critically important to managers and the firms and communities within which they operated. These problems were defined by the real world, and all had aspects of conflict in the context of interdependence.

His research was always comparative and field based. Throughout his career, Lawrence and his students built their midrange theoretical concepts inductively from their fieldwork and from interacting with managers grappling with the organizational, social, and political challenges of innovation and change. His last decade's work focused on leadership and the leader's responsibility to the firm and the broader community.

His ideas continually unfolded from his early work at the individual level to subsequent work at the firm (both public and private), urban, community, and societal levels of analysis. Prior to his work on evolutionary biology, his work on leadership, organizations, and change was rooted in organizations as complex social and technical systems. Such open systems ideas, in turn, provided leaders with more and more sophisticated tools to diagnose and take informed action.

Lawrence's final two books, written after he retired, were different from his prior work. He broadened the sources of knowledge that served as his inspiration. Frustrated with the increasingly narrow state of the OB field, Lawrence immersed himself in the broad range of social and behavioral sciences to develop a grand theory of human behavior. His focus never left the central issues that defined his professional career – the role of individuals, leaders, and organizations in creating contexts that would serve both other individuals and the communities in which they lived.

Lawrence's prolific research stream was executed even as he devoted himself to developing the OB unit at HBS and HBS more generally. He was an accomplished institutional builder. Extending his training under Roethlisberger, Homans, and Mayo, Lawrence built an OB unit that was interdisciplinary in nature. In a profession that became more and more based in narrow academic disciplines, Lawrence helped keep Harvard's OB unit broadly interdisciplinary. He took this interdisciplinary passion and helped co-create the joint OB doctoral program with faculty from psychology and sociology. His focus was always on the phenomena of organizations that were inherently understandable through interdisciplinary field-based research and teaching (Aisner 2011).

Lawrence was also an accomplished teacher and pedagogical innovator. He helped build innovative MBA and executive education courses and curriculum. His teaching was always case based and participant centered, even as he infused his courses with those "walking sticks" developed from his field research. His case fieldwork was a source of these theoretical insights. While Lawrence did a limited amount of consulting, he felt that consulting work was not an important source of ideas for him. As such, he limited his external consulting in order to focus on fieldwork associated with his research, case, and course development activities (see Lawrence and Lawrence 1993).

But perhaps his greatest professional pleasure, a pleasure I saw firsthand, was the energy he derived from working with and mentoring his doctoral students. These students helped Lawrence continue to deliver on his aspiration to do work that was both rigorous and relevant. These legions of students helped Lawrence induce conceptual models of leadership and organizations that helped managers solve complex organizational problems across sectors and countries. Lawrence trained his students to do work that was rigorous and relevant. He was a role model for doctoral students aspiring to do research that mattered, build institutions that mattered, and teach in a way that respected participant-centered learning that emerged from working on problems of practice.

There is much unfinished business for scholars interested in leadership, organizations, and change. These topics are more important than ever. While we know much about organizations in their environment, more work remains. Indeed, it is not at all clear that theory and research born in the industrial Chandlerian tradition will have traction in our post-Chandlerian web and community-dominated contexts. The very nature of organizational design and leadership may be different in this post-Chandlerian world (e.g., Gulati et al. 2012; Lakhani et al. 2013).

Important work remains to retool systems ideas such that they take into account more complex contexts, more complex interdependencies, and more complex

institutional environments. Leadership and organizations in the twenty-first century may well be fundamentally different from leadership and organizations in the twentieth century. If so, Lawrence's passion for field-based research and learning from the phenomenon itself could not be more important (e.g., Benner and Tushman 2015).

## Conclusion

Paul R. Lawrence's legacy reminds us to set our professional aspirations high. The topics he spent a lifetime grappling with, organizational and community design, leadership, and change in the public and private spheres, remain vitally important. While we know much about these topics, we do not understand how open and distributed logics affect these areas. If so, Lawrence's legacy of rigor and relevance must be carried forward by scholars who are not afraid of grappling with important real-world problems. We must not shy away from research that spans levels of analysis and different disciplinary traditions. Finally, Lawrence's legacy can only be carried forward in OB departments and OB doctoral programs that recognize the power of research that is informed by practice and the two-way street between rigor and relevance.

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# Kurt Lewin (1890–1947): The Practical Theorist

# 46

Bernard Burnes

**Abstract**

Few social scientists can have received the level of praise and admiration that has been heaped upon Kurt Lewin. Edward Tolman, one of the most distinguished psychologists of his day, put his contribution to psychology on a par with that of Sigmund Freud (Tolman, Psychological Review 55:1–4, 1948). The distinguished scholar Edgar Schein (Organizational psychology, 3rd edn. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, p 239, 1988) called Lewin "the intellectual father of contemporary theories of applied behavioural science." Recently, the Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman (Foreword. E Shafir: The behavioral foundations of public policy. Princeton University Press, Princeton, p viii, 2013) declared that "We are all Lewinians now." Tributes such as these, from such distinguished figures, show that Lewin made an outstanding and enduring contribution to the field of psychology. He is now best known for his work in the field of organizational change, but, as this chapter will show, he had a wider agenda aimed at resolving social conflict. Among the main factors that influenced and motivated his work were his application of Gestalt psychology to child psychology and the impact of the anti-Semitism he encountered growing up and working in Germany. On moving to the USA, he gravitated from studying child psychology in the laboratory to bringing about social and organizational change in the real world. His key contributions were the creation of planned change, his work on participative management, and countering religious and racial discrimination. He was also responsible for establishing important institutions, such as the National Training Laboratories and the Research Center for Group Dynamics. Lewin's lasting legacy consists not just of his groundbreaking scholarly work but also of his example as a "practical theorist" who wanted to make the world a better place.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Lewin was born in Mogilno, then in Western Prussia, where he received an Orthodox Jewish education. He completed a doctoral degree in philosophy and psychology at Berlin University in 1914 on the topic of "The Psychic Activity: On Interrupting the Process of the Will and the Fundamental Laws of Association'. After serving in the military during World War I, he was appointed as a researcher at the Psychological Institute of Berlin University and then, from 1926 to 1933, served there as a professor of philosophy and psychology. With the rise of Nazism, Lewin realized that the position of Jews in Germany was becoming untenable, and he moved to the USA. He was first employed as a "refugee scholar" at Cornell University. Then, from 1935 to 1945, he worked at the University of Iowa's Child Welfare Research Station. Lewin died of a heart attack in 1947 at the age of 56 just after he had established both the Research Center for Group Dynamics (RCGD) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Commission on Community Interrelations (CCI) and laid the foundations of what was to become the National Training Laboratory (NTL).

I initially encountered Lewin's work sometime in the 1980s. The first time I had to examine his work in-depth was when I was preparing the first edition of my book *Managing Change* (Burnes 1992). It was obvious to me that a serious examination of the change field could not be undertaken without reviewing Lewin's contribution. However, the 1980s and 1990s were not good years for studying Lewin. This was a period when the received wisdom was that organizations, if they were to survive, needed to change in a rapid, large-scale, and continuous fashion. In such a context, Lewin's small-group, slow, participative, and ethical approach to change was seen as outmoded or even just plain wrong in the first place. This view was perhaps most trenchantly summed up by Kanter et al. (1992, p. 10), who referred to his change model as a "quaintly linear and static conception" which was "wildly inappropriate." It was also a period when it was very difficult to obtain Lewin's publications or even identify the extent of his published work. The Internet was in its infancy; there were no effective search engines and little academic material available in digital format, especially if that material had been published some 50 or 60 years earlier. It took me over a decade of collecting, reading, and rereading Lewin's work in order to gain a

good understanding of the breath, depth, and profundity of his research. In the process, I was able to address and refute many of the criticisms levelled against him. Even now, after nearly three decades of studying Lewin, I am still finding new material and gaining new insights.

I have come to realize that there are three factors that one needs to take into account when studying Lewin. Firstly, for most of his life, Lewin's research focused on child psychology rather than social or organizational change, and it is difficult to appreciate the basis and rationale for his later work on change unless one understands his work on child psychology. Secondly, though Lewin's pioneering work on social, organizational, and behavioral change was only undertaken in the last 9 years of his life, it comprises an enormous number and variety of studies. As Table 1 shows, between 1938 and 1947, Lewin carried out an ambitious program of research which covered topics which went far beyond child psychology, including conflict in marriage, styles of leadership, worker motivation and performance, conflict in industry, group problem solving, communication and attitude change, anti-Semitism, antiracism, discrimination and prejudice, integration segregation, peace, war, and poverty. Table 1 does not encompass the full range of Lewin's work at this time. The records of his work are scattered across numerous articles published by Lewin and his collaborators, notably Alex Bavalas, John R P French, and especially his friend and biographer Alfred Marrow. Much unpublished material can also be found in the Lewin, Marrow, and French archives, which are located in the Cummings Center for the History of Psychology at the University of Akron. However, a great deal of Lewin's research was never published, such as his secret work for the US war effort, or was published in the names of his collaborators and students. For example, one of the earliest and most cited articles on resistance to change, Coch and French (1948), was based on research directed by Lewin and based on his methods and theories. It would have been just as accurate, if not more so, for it to have been attributed to Lewin, Coch, and French. Lastly, at the time of his death, his work on change was very much a work in progress. Indeed, some elements, such as his three-step model of change, were barely covered in his writings.

Therefore, in order to understand Lewin's work, the reader needs to piece it together for themselves rather having it presented as a whole by Lewin. Even Marrow's 1969 biography, *The Practical Theorist: The Life and Work of Kurt Lewin*, is a somewhat sketchy and partial account. Despite its title, as Marrow (1969: x) comments in its *Preface*, it does not attempt to provide a "complete summation and appraisal" of Lewin's life and work, but instead is based on reminiscences supplied by a number of Lewin's colleagues some 20 years after his death.

In writing this chapter, it has not been possible to draw on a rounded and agreed picture of Lewin's life and work. Instead, it is based on my own attempts to understand the nature of Lewin's work and how it was developed. The chapter begins by identifying the main influences on, and motivations for, his work. This section also shows how the focus of his work moved from studying child psychology in the laboratory to bringing about social and organizational change in the real world. The next section reviews his key contributions to the field of change and especially his contribution to the creation of organization development (OD). This is followed

**Table 1** Kurt Lewin – key projects and events 1939–1947 (Adapted from Burnes 2007)

| Date | Study/event | Location | Focus | Concepts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1938/ 1939 | Autocracy-democracy | Iowa | The effects of different leadership styles on children's behavior | Participation and group decision-making |
| 1939 | Employee turnover | Harwood | Employee retention | Changing supervisory behavior |
| 1940/ 1941 | Group decision-making | Harwood | Democratic participation and productivity | Participation and group decision-making |
| 1941? | Training in democratic leadership | Iowa | Improving leadership behaviors and techniques | Sensitivity training |
| 1942 | Food habits | Iowa | Changing the food-buying habits of housewives | Participation and group decision-making |
| 1942 | Self-management | Harwood | Increasing workers' control over the pace of work | Group decision-making |
| 1944/ 1945 | Leadership training | Harwood | Improving the interpersonal skills and effectiveness of supervisors | Role play |
| 1944/ 1945 | Commission on Community Interrelations (CCI) | New York | The problems and conflicts of group and community life | Action research |
| 1945 | Research Center for Group Dynamics | MIT | Understanding and changing group behavior | Action research |
| 1946 | Changing stereotypes | Harwood | Changing attitudes to older workers | Information gathering, discussion, and reflection |
| 1946 | Connecticut State Inter-Racial Commission | New Britain, Connecticut | Leadership training | Sensitivity training/role play |
| 1947 | National Training Laboratory | Bethel, Maine | Leadership training | T-groups (sensitivity training/role play) |
| 1947 | Overcoming resistance to change | Harwood | The impact of different approaches to change on productivity | Participative change/force field analysis |

by a discussion of the new insights Lewin's work provided into the nature of social and organizational change. The last section of the chapter examines his enduring legacy and especially the example he set as a "practical theorist" who worked to change the world for the better.

## Influence and Motivations: From Gestalt Psychology to Democratic Participation

At the Psychological Institute of Berlin University, Lewin's field of study was child psychology, an area in which he published many groundbreaking papers and where, in the 1920s and 1930s, he achieved worldwide distinction (Lindzey 1952). However, in the late 1930s, after his move to the USA, he began to change direction and use his theoretical insights to develop practical approaches to social and organizational change. He is now best known as the originator of planned change, which comprises field theory, group dynamics, action research, and the three-step model of change. In developing planned change, Lewin was influenced by four main factors.

Firstly, Gestalt psychology: At the Berlin Psychological Institute, Lewin worked with and was influenced by two of the founders of Gestalt psychology, Max Wertheimer and Wolfgang Köhler. It was the holistic nature of Gestaltism which attracted Lewin. For psychologists, a Gestalt is a perceptual pattern or configuration which is the construct of the individual mind. It is a coherent whole which has specific properties that can neither be derived from the individual elements nor be considered merely as the sum of them. Through his work with Wertheimer and Köhler, Lewin came to appreciate that the piecemeal analysis of individual stimuli and actions could not give a true or accurate picture of the reasons why a person or group behaved as they did. Instead, he felt that Gestalt psychology, by seeking to understand the totality of a person's situation, seemed much nearer to the way in which an individual actually experienced life. As such, it provided the theoretical understanding that allowed Lewin to construct much of his later work, especially field theory or topological psychology as he also referred to it.

Secondly, mathematics and physics: In developing field theory, Lewin was strongly influenced by the work of mathematicians and physicists. He argued that to be seen as a rigorous, scientific discipline, psychology had to represent behavior in mathematical terms. Lewin argued that mathematics allowed psychologists to develop an effective means of theory building, because it enabled the meaning of any concept to be derived from its relationship to other concepts, which he referred to as the "constructive method" (Lewin 1942). Like other Gestaltians, Lewin was attracted by the parallels between the psychological concept of perceptual fields and the work that physicists were doing on field theory (Köhler 1967). However, in the pursuit of scientific rigor, he sought to take this parallel further than other Gestaltians by attempting to base his field theory on the same process of "mathematization" as in the physical sciences (Lewin 1949). In this, he was strongly drawn to the writings of the philosopher Ernst Cassirer, who tried to establish physics as the "paradigm science" (Danziger 2000). In particular, Lewin (1949, p. 35) saw Cassirer's development of a "mathematical constructive procedure" as a way of determining the relationship between general psychological laws and individual behavior, which he saw as central to applying the constructive method to psychology.

Thirdly, child psychology: Lewin's experimental studies of child psychology began at the University of Berlin and continued at the University of Iowa. Lewin's studies focused on child development, especially the forces motivating children's

behavior at particular developmental stages. He observed that children developed at different rates and that some children might move from one stage to the next, but then regress back to the earlier stage. As Lewin (1941, p. 87) noted, "In psychology the term regression refers to a primitivation of behavior, a "going back" to a less mature state which the individual had already outgrown." Drawing on Gestalt psychology and applying his field theory, Lewin sought to determine a child's life space, i.e., identify the environmental forces shaping the child's behavior in terms of progression and regression, which was a major break from established thinking on child development.

Of particular concern to Lewin was the behavior of children in conflict situations. He used field theory to understand how the strength and nature of positive and negative forces in a child's life space generated conflict. In this respect, he drew particular attention to group membership, which he saw as playing a significant role in terms of a child's behavior and development. He also came to recognize that the style of group "leadership" also strongly influenced a child's behavior in terms of the degree of conflict (Lewin 1946). Lewin's work on child psychology, especially in the areas of regression and conflict, has clear links with the unfreezing, moving, and [re] freezing elements of his later three-step model of organizational change.

The last influence was his experience of anti-Semitism: For a Jew growing up and living in Germany, discrimination was a fact of life. Indeed, as he commented to Marrow (1969), not only was anti-Semitism something he experienced everyday of his life in Germany, but by the time he left Germany, his own children, as Jews, were not allowed to attend the university where he taught. In 1933, Lewin decided that the situation for Jews in Germany had deteriorated to such an extent that the lives of his family were no longer safe and they must leave. Even though Lewin and his wife and children got out of Germany, others of his family did not. His mother and other relatives died in the Holocaust.

Given how well Lewin was regarded as a child psychologist, it seems strange that he should leave that behind and instead devote himself to studying and bringing about social, organizational and behavioral change in the real world. The impetus for this move arose from two main motivators.

The first motivator was combating social conflict. With his experience of anti-Semitism in Germany, the rise of Hitler, and the killing of millions of Jews in the concentration camps, it is not surprising that Lewin, like many at that time, felt passionately about the need to resolve social conflict in all its forms (Cooke 1999). Though he rarely spoke of how he had been affected by the Holocaust, he once commented to Marrow (1967, p. 146), who had warned him about overworking, that:

> When you go to sleep each night, hearing the anguished screams of your mother as the brutal Nazis tortured her to death in a concentration camp, you can't think of 'taking it easy.'

Lewin's antipathy to discrimination and persecution was reinforced and broadened by the widespread religious and racial discrimination he found in the USA. This can be seen in his role as chief architect of the CCI, which he established in 1946.

Though it was founded and funded by the American Jewish Congress, its aim was the eradication of discrimination against all minority groups. As Lewin stated:

> We Jews will have to fight for ourselves and we will do so strongly and with good conscience. We also know that the fight of the Jews is part of the fight of all minorities for democratic equality of rights and opportunities... (quoted in Marrow 1969, p. 175).

The second main motivator was promoting democracy. For Lewin, the scourge of Nazism could only be eradicated if Germany's authoritarian and racist culture was replaced with one imbued with democratic values. Indeed, he believed that it would be impossible to prevent the worst extremes of social conflict in any country unless democratic values were spread throughout all the institutions of a society, whether they are public bodies or private enterprises. This is why, as the next section will show, the pursuit of "democratic equality of rights and opportunities" for all lies at the heart of Lewin's approach to change. As his wife Gertrude wrote in the *Preface* to a volume of his collected work published after his death, Lewin was ". . . filled with the urgent desire to use his theoretical insight for the building of a better world" (Lewin 1948: xv).

## Key Contributions: The Emergence of Planned Change

Lewin was a prolific researcher, writer, activist, and networker, the range of whose activities are only touched on in Table 1. Though his contributions to shaping our understanding and practice of change were many, the four described in this section help to explain why Lewin's work had such an impact in his lifetime and why it has proved so enduring. The first two contributions arose from events in 1939 and were crucial in enabling him to turn his experimental and theoretical work on child psychology into a practical approach to bringing about social, organizational, and behavioral change in the real world. These events also allowed him to demonstrate his famous dictum that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory" (Lewin 1943/1944, p. 169). The two events were the publication of the Lewin et al. (1939) autocracy-democracy studies and the invitation from his close friend Marrow to carry out experiments in his family business, the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation.

The autocracy-democracy studies: These showed that children working in groups to achieve a common task behaved very differently depending on whether they worked under autocratic, democratic, or laissez-faire leadership (Lewin et al. 1939). Lewin et al. found that leaders who promoted democratic participation obtained far better results than autocratic or laissez-faire leaders. Consequently, if autocratic leaders or laissez-faire leaders wanted to improve the performance of their followers, they first had to reflect on and change their own behavior before attempting to change that of others. The implications of this research for Lewin's future work were threefold:

- It provided the theoretical basis on which Lewin built his participative-democratic approach to social and organizational change.
- It initiated the participative management movement which grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s.
- Its emphasis on the need for leaders to reflect on their own behavior led to the creation of T-groups through his leadership of the 1946 New Britain workshop and the creation of the NTL (Burnes 2007; Burnes and Cooke 2012; French 1982; Marrow 1969).

The Harwood studies: 1939 marked the formal beginning of Lewin's relationship with the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation, which lasted until his death in 1947 (Marrow 1969). Its CEO, Alfred Marrow, asked Lewin to assist the company in overcoming the twin problems of low productivity and high labor turnover, which it was experiencing at its new plant. In essence, Lewin was asked to apply his theoretical insights and experimental approach to resolving the practical problems of industry. As Marrow (1969, p. 145) observed, "... experimentation at Harwood had to be subordinate to practical factory needs," but between 1939 and 1947, Lewin carried out a wide range of interventions that eventually involved all of Harwood's managers and workers. The key experiments concerned group decision-making, self-management, leadership training, changing stereotypes, and overcoming resistance to change (Marrow 1969).

Harwood was the main test bed for the elements that would comprise up Lewin's planned approach to change, especially action research. As Marrow (1972, p. 90) stated:

> We agreed that the emphasis was to be on action, but action as a function of research. Each step taken was to be studied. Continuous evaluation of all steps would be made as they followed one another. The rule would be: No research without action, no action without research.

Lewin maintained that action research was an iterative, learning process whereby those involved had to be free to analyze their current situation, identify the appropriateness of their current behavior, consider alternatives, and choose what action to take. Therefore, for Lewin (1946), change was a learning process, but to bring about change successfully, there had to be "felt need." However, felt need only arises where individuals and groups feel they have a choice in whether to change or not, which emphasizes the importance of democratic participation to the change process (Carpenter 2013; Diamond 1992; Tversky and Kahneman 1981). It also shows the continuing influence of Gestalt psychology on Lewin's work, which stresses that change can be successfully achieved only by helping individuals to reflect on and gain new insights into the totality of their situation.

Though the Harwood studies in themselves were significant (Dent 2002), it is best to see them as part of an interrelated set of research projects and events covering similar issues and adopting a similar approach that spanned both industrial and social settings (see Table 1). From these studies, Lewin developed a democratic-humanist

approach to resolving social conflict and demonstrated that it could be effective in both industry and society at large. A key element in this respect was Lewin's third main contribution to the development of our understanding of change – the New Britain workshop.

The New Britain workshop: In 1946, Lewin was asked by the Connecticut Interracial Commission to organize a training workshop to equip community leaders with the skills necessary to help black and Jewish Americans counter discrimination in housing, education, and jobs (Marrow 1967). Lewin saw this as an opportunity to put his democratic-humanist values into practice to help disadvantaged groups. The resultant workshop has become famous in the annals of behavioral science and can claim to be one of the foundation stones of the OD movement. What emerged from New Britain was both an approach to change – T-groups – and an organization for promoting that approach, the NTL. The creation of T-groups, where the T stands for training, has been described as one of the most important, and contentious, social inventions of the twentieth century (Burnes and Cooke 2012). In essence, the creation of T-groups was an extension of Lewin's autocracy-democracy studies, which showed that leaders often needed to reflect on and change their behavior before they can change other people's behavior. This can be seen in Burke's (2006, p. 15) observation that in T-groups:

> Participants receive feedback from one another regarding their behavior in the group and this becomes the learning source for personal insight and development. Participants also have the opportunity to learn more about group behavior and intergroup relationships.

Most of those who became leading figures in the OD movement were involved in the NTL and shared its zealot-like commitment to the promotion of T-groups, which created the conditions for the rapid expansion of OD in the 1960s. Though the dramatic growth of T-groups overshadowed other branches of OD, these were able to grow by virtue of their relationship to the T-group movement. Consequently, when the T-group bubble burst in the early 1970s, these other branches of OD, especially planned change, could fill the gap. Thus many of those involved in running T-groups transferred their efforts into providing other OD services to their clients, which ensured that OD continued to thrive and they continued to earn a living.

An inspirational figure: From the 1920s onward, Lewin was a leading international scholar with friends, collaborators, and admirers in countries as diverse as Japan, Russia, and the USA. As Marrow (1969: xi) noted, Lewin was a charismatic individual who:

> . . . kept exchanging ideas with all sorts of men on all sorts of occasions – fellow professionals, students in his own and other fields, colleagues both sympathetic and unpersuaded by his theoretical position, research subjects, casual acquaintances.

The fact that in the last year of his life he was involved in establishing and running bodies as diverse as the RCGD, the CCI, and the NTL is a testament to his restless energy, the breadth of his interests, and circle of coworkers – not forgetting, of course, that those activities were additional to his other work, such as the Harwood

studies. At the time of his death, it would have been very easy for Lewin's work to collapse in on itself in the absence of the central figure around which it all revolved. That it did not, but instead grew, is a testament to the nature of Lewin's legacy and, more importantly, to the inspirational figure that was Kurt Lewin. To quote Marrow's (1969, p. 232) biography once again:

> Lewin left his mark on the thinking of a whole generation of social scientists. He put his stamp on a whole discipline, giving it a name (group dynamics), a scope (action research), and a purpose that transcended psychology itself by setting as its goal not only the study of man but the betterment of society.

## New Insights: The Nature of Change

Though there are many areas where Lewin's work can be seen to be groundbreaking and still relevant, from my own perspective, I believe that Lewin's continuing influence can be attributed to three new insights he offered into the nature of social and organizational change.

Firstly, he showed that change can be viewed as a participative, learning process. This can be seen in his planned approach to change, which laid the foundations for how the field of change was to develop. His planned approach identified that successful change involves four elements: enabling those concerned to understand their current situation and behavior (field theory); assessing how they interact with each other (group dynamics); that change is an iterative, learning process of identifying, trying, and revisiting alternatives to the current situation (action research); and that successful change proceeds through three stages (unfreezing, moving, and (re) freezing). Above all, he showed that change could not be achieved unless those concerned could understand their current situation, evaluate alternatives, and choose the most appropriate. As Lewin maintained and subsequent research has confirmed, if people are enabled to learn about their current behavior and make choices over alternatives, their commitment to making the change work will be greatly enhanced (Burnes and Cooke 2013; Oreg et al. 2011). These are insights which are still highly relevant to social and organizational change today.

Secondly, Lewin made the case for a value-based, ethical approach to change and linked this to creating a better world. He argued that attempts to trick, manipulate, or coerce people to change were doomed to failure and would result in increased conflict and resentment. Instead, his approach to change was based on a set of radical values and utopian aspirations that sought to treat all people equally and fairly regardless of their race, religion, or social standing. This viewpoint underpinned his argument that only an approach to change based on democratic values, power equalization, and participation could achieve effective change. Even today, as we see civil strife, racism, and religious intolerance accompanied by

autocratic and often unethical management of organizations, many may see such an approach as utopian. Yet, much research and many people's everyday experience show that it is this lack of democracy and the lack of respect for human beings that bring about conflict (Burnes et al. 2016; Marrow 1969; Mirvis 2006).

Thirdly, Lewin did not draw a distinction between the laboratory and the real world or between theory and practice. Instead, Lewin (1943/1944, p. 169) argued, in the words of his famous dictum referred to earlier, that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory," by which he meant that theories which cannot be turned into practical solutions to society's ills are not good theories. Similarly, practices that are not based on sound theories are not good practices. Indeed, it was this characteristic which gave Marrow (1969) the title for his biography of Lewin: *The Practical Theorist*. In recent years, there has been much debate about how to achieve rigor and relevance – how to develop robust theories on which to build effective practices (Gulati 2007). Lewin addressed these issues in the 1940s and showed that not only can rigor and relevance be aligned, but that effective change cannot be achieved unless they are aligned. In so doing, he ushered in the age of the scholar practitioner, arguing that academics had a duty not just to study the world but also to help create a better world.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: The Challenge of Change

In the 70 years since Lewin's death, sufficient time has elapsed to judge not only the originality and enduring relevance of his work but also how it has developed in the ensuing period. At the time of his death, Lewin's approach to change was still a work in progress. After his death, his friends and colleagues enthusiastically carried on his work, most notably through the institutions he established, i.e., the RCGD, the CCI, and the NTL. Chief among his friends and colleagues was Marrow, who became Lewin's foremost publicist and a key figure in the institutions he established, as well as continuing his work at Harwood. Other leading figures, such as Douglas McGregor and Herbert Shepard, working as change consultants at General Mills and Esso, respectively, developed their own Lewin-based approaches to OD while at the same time working closely with the NTL. Therefore, Lewin's work, though unfinished, did not fragment or stagnate after his death. Instead, it took a number of separate forms that were linked by the close personal and professional links of the people and institutions involved.

However, there was one important area where these paths did diverge. Lewin had never drawn a distinction between work and the wider society, between resolving industrial conflict and resolving social conflict. For example, in tackling racism, he was active in combating it both in society, by promoting integrated housing, and in the workplace, through getting shops to hire and integrate black sales staff (Lippitt 1949; Marrow 1969). In contrast, those who carried on his work and their successors

tended to focus either on organizational change, such as the RCGD, or social change, such as the CCI. The only real exception was Marrow, who straddled both camps with his role as CEO of Harwood and Chairman of the New York City Commission on Intergroup Relations (French 1979). Therefore, uniting the social and organizational wings of Lewin's work constitutes a major area unfinished business.

In the organizational field, Lewin's work has experienced peaks and troughs since he died. In the 1980s and 1990s, his group-based, participative, slow approach to change was seen by many as unsuitable to the nature of modern organizations. In its place, many tried to argue for rapid, large-scale, imposed change. Also, the popularity of the power-politics perspective on organizations seemed to undermine much of Lewin's argument for a participative and ethical approach to change (Burnes 2004). In addition, many of Lewin's original coworkers retired or died; Marrow died in 1978. However, over the last decade or so, interest in Lewin seems to have experienced something of a reemergence, especially among those industrial-social psychologists who focus their work on social concerns and the greater good of society (Olson-Buchahan et al. 2013), hence Kahneman's (2013: vii) assertion that "We are all Lewinians now." It should also be pointed out that in some areas, such as social work and nursing, Lewin was never out of fashion. This is possibly because these are professions which have explicit ethical codes and standards, which align more closely with Lewin's ethical values than those of many business organizations over the last few decades. Nevertheless, it is clear that there is much work left to be done to develop and utilize Lewin's approach to change fully.

In examining his life and work, we can see that Lewin set an example for other scholars to follow. As a Jew growing up in Germany and losing his mother and other relatives in the Holocaust, Lewin was no stranger to hardship and tragedy in his own life. He also saw around him that he was not unique in this respect. He saw that social conflict was endemic in the world, but he did not believe that it was inevitable. He argued that conflict should be resolved and showed that it could be resolved. Lewin's work offered many new and radical insights into understanding and changing the behavior of individuals and groups. He bequeathed us theories, tools, and techniques for doing so that are still proving effective today. However, one of his greatest legacies was the example he set as a scholar who encountered a hostile and dysfunctional world and chose to use his scholarly knowledge to achieve practical change in the real world. In so doing, not only did he inspire his friends and colleagues to do likewise but he also threw down a challenge to future generations of academics to follow suit. Today, we see that the world faces many difficult and dangerous challenges. It is just not enough for us as scholars to try to understand the nature of these challenges: like Lewin, we also have to work with others to resolve them.

So we can see that much of Lewin's work was unfinished when he died and that there are areas that are unfinished today, especially the need to develop fully his planned approach to change and unite the social and organizational wings of his work. However, in terms of Lewin's wider social agenda – his desire to resolve social

conflict – we should see this not so much as unfinished business, but as challenge that Lewin has laid down to all of us to continue his work.

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## Further Reading

With any writer, a good place to start is usually their own work. However, for those unfamiliar with Lewin's background and theories, I would suggest starting with Marrow's biography of Lewin:

Marrow, A. J. (1969). *The practical theorist: The life and work of Kurt Lewin*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Though this is out of print, it can be obtained through most libraries and can be bought from second-hand book sites such as Amazon, Abe Books, or Barnes & Noble.

I would then advise moving on to some of the critiques of his work, notably the special issue of the *Journal of Social Issues*, 48 (2) (The Heritage of Kurt Lewin: Theory, Research and Practice) published in 1992 To mark (belatedly) the 100th anniversary of Lewin's birth. The following articles should also prove useful:

Burnes, B. (2004). Kurt Lewin and the planned approach to change: A re-appraisal. *Journal of Management Studies, 41*(6), 977–1002.

Burnes, B. (2007). Kurt Lewin and the Harwood studies: The foundations of OD. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 43*(2), 213–231.

Burnes, B. (2009). Reflections: Ethics and organisational change – time for a return to Lewinian values. *Journal of Change Management, 9*(4), 359–381.

In terms of Lewin's own work, there are three collections of his papers that provide a good coverage of his interests and contributions, as follows:

Gold, M. (Ed.). (1999). *The complete social scientist: A Kurt Lewin reader*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Cartwright, D. (Ed.). (1952). *Field theory in social science: Selected theoretical papers by Kurt Lewin*. London: Social Science Paperbacks.

Lewin, G. W. (Ed.). (1948). *Resolving social conflict: Selected papers on group dynamics by Kurt Lewin*. London: Harper & Row.

The collections edited by Dorwin Cartwright and Gertrud Lewin are out of print, but like the Marrow's biography of Lewin, they can be obtained through most libraries and bought from second-hand book sites.

One can also use Google Scholar or other search engines to identify those of Lewin's publications that are accessible in journals, though this is not necessarily as easy as one might imagine. However, the following articles are accessible and a good place to start:

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics. *Human Relations, 1*(1), 5–41.

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# Ronald Lippitt: The Master of Planned Change

# 47

David B. Szabla

**Abstract**

Ron Lippitt, an innovator throughout his distinguished career, was one of the founders of group dynamics and the "T-group" (sensitivity group), a cofounder of the National Training Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and again later was a cofounder of the Center on the Research for the Utilization of Scientific Knowledge at the University of Michigan. A pioneer in the development of experimental social psychology, he is renowned for his classic work on the effects of democratic, autocratic and laissez faire leadership of small groups, and for his later work on planned change. Throughout his life, he demonstrated the power of controlled research in natural settings, creating scientific foundations for small group, organizational and societal change. His hundreds of writings span articles, chapters, and books that contribute his insights and methods to resolve organizational and social problems. He leaves behind a rich legacy for researchers, consultants, organizational and societal leaders, and students.

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## Introduction

It was the mid-1970s through the early 1980s that many would gather as early as seven in the morning at a home on Cambridge Road in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Upon entering the house, which was set well back from the road, guests would jot down on a newsprint flipchart why they had come. Most came to gain insights into how to change their own lives or the lives of others. Nevertheless, everyone who joined the gathering had a specific problem on their minds they wanted to unravel. School heads came with long-range planning challenges. Preachers brought problems of declining church memberships. Consultants arrived saddled with client predicaments they couldn't solve on their own. Business managers brought employee motivation enigmas and meeting effectiveness complexities. Sometimes a neighbor, who was out of a job, would walk over in the hope of learning how to make a career change. Known around town as *The Lippitt Clusters*, these informal gatherings were hosted by an emeritus professor from the nearby University of Michigan, Ron Lippitt, a gentleman who had spent the greater part of his life pursuing his longtime goal: to help make individuals, groups, and organizations more effective through carefully structured change. Once everyone had settled into the living room for the morning, the master of planned change himself would facilitate a session during which guests would sit elbow to elbow and brainstorm each other's difficulties. Pairs or trios would be directed to the kitchen or porch or one of the upstairs bedrooms to develop change plans they would paper over the windows back in the living room for reactions from Ron. Feedback from Ron combined theoretical creativity and scientific rigor, and it was always warm and showed human concern for others. Around noon every guest would leave with a take-home plan of action for addressing the problem they brought to the session. Many who were there confirmed that, "Ron never let anyone leave his house without an action plan." It was here at these unofficial get-togethers of people tasked with change challenges that Ron Lippitt, the originator of preferred futuring, innovator of planned change, coinventor of the T-Group, and cofounder of the National Training Laboratories, would share his insights to help others reach their human potential.

## Influences and Motivations: From Scout Master to Change Master

Ronald Lippit was born in Jackson, Minnesota on March 21, 1914. He was the eldest of three boys, one of whom, Gordon, he collaborated with later in life. His father was a superintendent, and his mother a hard-driving authority who expected top performance of her sons. Some say that it was his mother who instilled in him tall touchstones which he pursued relentlessly throughout his life. Whatever the causes, Ron developed an exhaustive work style and became in adulthood an introverted expert of human systems who continually surpassed his previous efforts.

Ron relished his boyhood experiences in the rolling hills of western Minnesota as a leader in scouts, athletics, fishing, and camping. A young man who enjoyed leading and participating in groups, Ron chose to attend Springfield College, a small college in Western Massachusetts that specialized in group leadership and was, at the time, a training center for YM-YWCA leaders. It was during his undergraduate education at Springfield College in Massachusetts that the foundation of his thought about changing human systems and reaching one's potential began to form. At Springfield, he studied group methods under the direction of L. K. Hall, the director of the Boys' Work Studies Program and a man who became a YMCA Hall of Famer in 1992. In weekly practicum meetings, Lippitt and his fellow students who were involved in fieldwork leading small groups of 10–12-year-old boys met to share their leadership experiences which were written up in logs. Hall provided rigorous feedback to students emphasizing insights about methods for improving the leadership of the groups. Hall frequently referenced the writings of John Dewey and Edward Lindaman discussing group methods as a means to an end, the implications of democracy in the forming of group goals, and the importance of the development of self-management and discipline as contrasted with coercive leadership direction and tactics. In addition to facilitating the learning of group techniques among his students, Hall also shared his philosophy of positive thought, often urging Lippitt and his students not to be disheartened by the way things are or the way things ought to be but to be enthusiastic and hopeful about making one step of progress from week to week. Lippitt's "images of potentiality," a concept he used later in his work as an organizational change consultant, was shaped early on by Hall, a man who cultivated the extraordinary potential that lied dormant in many of the young men he taught and counseled at Springfield.

During his junior year, Ron travelled to Switzerland and spent a year abroad on a Foreign Study Scholarship studying under Jean Piaget in the Rousseau Institute at the University of Geneva, from which he received a Certificat de Pedagogie in Child Development in 1935. Ron was the first male to teach in Piaget's experimental nursery school. It was here in Geneva that Ron was introduced to Piaget's research methods, which emphasized the observation of real-life events, and, which Ron subsequently practiced throughout his career. From Piaget, Ron also discovered that learning requires active experimentation and participation, another practice Ron exercised in his ensuing teaching and consulting. Ron believed that only by keeping

students and clients actively thinking, analyzing, and practicing do people absorb and use new information.

Back at Springfield for his senior year and extremely motivated by Piaget's vision of applying scientific methods to group work, Ron was recruited by Harold Seashore, the new professor of psychology, to act as his assistant. Lippitt began teaching a number of Psychology courses and organizing a variety of experimental research projects ranging from managing a population of guinea pigs to organizing field observations of preschool children. Seashore and Lippitt were particularly interested in the influence of leadership style on preschool children's behavior. Their early investigations became the basis for later studies on the relationship between leadership and group performance that were widely cited in psychology and sociology manuscripts. While assisting Harold, Ron began to develop his research, counseling, and teaching skills – all of which would be of great value in the succeeding years of his life.

After receiving his Bachelor of Science from Springfield College, Ron enrolled at the University of Iowa (Seashore's alma mater) and began working on a master's degree in Child Development. Upon admission, he was awarded a research apprenticeship in the Child Welfare Research Studies. His first research project entailed coding protocols for an experiment on the frustration of preschool children under the direction of a professor who expressed his ideas in German-accented English, Kurt Lewin. Lewin had ingenious ideas about how to interpret data on the behavior of children, and Lippitt was soon immersed in new theory and research techniques. When each of the professors in the program shared topics, they would be interested supervising for master's projects, one curiosity mentioned by Lewin was group structure. Lippitt contacted Lewin and told him that, "Groups are my bag." Lewin responded in a genial manner with "Ja, ja, ja!" The two struck up a friendship that influenced Lewin to shift from child psychology to social psychology where he and Lippitt launched the subfield of group dynamics and generated several theories that explained organizational and social change. Later Lewin confessed that the paper was supposed to be a mathematical analysis of the group structure of numbers, or sets, used in statistical research. Before meeting Lippitt, Lewin had not thought of analyzing human groups. In his many interviews, Lippitt shares this story and ends it with a smile saying, "So you see, my paper really started group dynamics." Lippitt achieved his master's degree in 1938 and immediately pursued a Ph.D. in Social Psychology under the guidance of Kurt Lewin. Lippitt completed his dissertation, "An analysis of group reactions to three types of experimentally-created social climates," in 1940.

Upon receiving his Ph.D. in 1940, Lippitt taught as an assistant professor of psychology at Southern Illinois University from 1940 to 1941. In 1941, Charles Hendry, a respected leader in the field of social work, invited Lippitt to be the Director of Field Research for the National Boy Scouts Council where he conducted national studies on the impact of leadership styles on character development climates. Here, Lippitt began to merge his training as a professional group worker with his training as a social scientist conducting research on groups and, along with Hendry, cofounded the American Association for the Study of Group Work.

A critical project at the time compared successful and unsuccessful scout troops and involved a research team comprised of Fritz Redl, L. K. Hall, Kurt Lewin, Alvin Zander, and John French. Lippitt was heavily influenced by the planning and analysis sessions of the team, which integrated Lewinian theory, the psychoanalytic insights of Redl, and the creation of many new concepts and methods that emerged during the sessions. In fact, Lippitt played a role in the development of new approaches to data collection which combined systematic qualitative inquiry with quantitative observation methods.

With the onset of World War II, he became an officer in the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service, conducting group therapy sessions for the navy. Lippitt then directed the Far East Psychological Warfare Training School for the Office of Strategic Services, with a multidisciplinary staff including anthropologists Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, media, intelligence specialists, and Japanese and Chinese psychiatrists. From Mead and Benedict, Lippitt learned cross-cultural applied anthropology which became a new aspect of his skill repertoire as he prepared for the years after the war. When the war ended, Lippitt became director of training for the Federal Security Agency. There he coled with Leland Bradford organization change initiatives in federal agencies and hospitals.

In 1946, Lippitt reengaged with Kurt Lewin. Together, they designed the Research Center for Group Dynamics at MIT where Lippitt was an associate professor of social science from 1946 to 1948. The center focused on group productivity, communication, social perception, intergroup relations, group membership, leadership, and improving the functioning of groups. In 1947, Lippitt, Lewin, Leland Bradford, and Kenneth Benne cofounded the National Training Laboratories for Applied Behavioral Science (NTL) at Bethel, Maine, the first occurrence of laboratory training for organizational development. As one of the founders of NTL, Lippitt now had the opportunity to apply his vast knowledge of group dynamics to the creation of the T-group or sensitivity training, a form of training that helps people become more sensitive to others and more aware of their own prejudices.

Upon Lewin's untimely death in 1948, Lippitt moved the Research Center for Group Dynamics to the University of Michigan's Institute of Social Research. At Michigan, Lippitt acted as the Center's director and secured an associate professor faculty position of sociology and psychology becoming a full professor in 1952. In 1964, dissatisfied with the emphasis on pure research without concern for its utility, Lippitt founded, along with Floyd Mann, the Center for Research on the Utilization of Social Knowledge (CRUSK) as a part of the Institute of Social Research. This was a laboratory of planned change which became a training and consultation organization, drawing clients from the surrounding community.

In 1974, Lippitt retired as professor emeritus of psychology and sociology from the University of Michigan to help private and public sector systems use behavioral science to improve organizational effectiveness. In the following years, he founded and participated in several organizations that offered management and planned change consultation, including Human Resource Development Associates with Ken Cowing and Della Cowing, Hilltop Associates with Eva Schindler-Rainman,

Organization Renewal Incorporated (ORI) with his brother Gordon Lippitt, Planned Change Associates (PCA), and Xicom, Inc. In conjunction with these organizations, Lippitt conducted numerous workshops and training programs in the United States and abroad and, as described at the beginning of this chapter, led Lippitt Clusters at his home in Ann Arbor until he passed away on Tuesday, October 28, 1986, at the age of 72. He was survived by his wife, Peggy Lippitt; son Larry Lippitt; daughters Martha Lippitt, Carolyn McCarthy, and Connie Cohn; and nine grandchildren.

## Key Contributions: Utilizing Research to Change Groups, Organizations, and Society

Lippitt's contributions to the discipline of social science and to the field of organizational change are many, adding significantly to both research and practice. Over his lifetime, he and his colleagues published over 200 articles and books on such topics as group dynamics, futuring, the processes of learning, socialization and the growth of children and youth, leadership, planned change and change agentry, community planning, and renewal and reconstruction of the traditional educational system and practices. Covering his many contributions is beyond the scope of this profile. Therefore, only his weighty advancements are reviewed – his contributions to the development of the field of group dynamics, his many advancements to the practice of planned change, and his efforts to mobilize the utilization of social science research in practical settings to effect change in groups, organizations, and society.

### Group Dynamics

Lippitt, an innovator of experimental psychology, is renowned for participating in the development of the field of group dynamics. His many contributions to the field explored and defined both the psychological and social processes that occur among members of groups. From his early research studying children to his later investigations with adults, Lippitt discovered and exposed many of the dynamic processes that lead to effective group functioning.

From 1938 to 1943, Lippitt published several papers and studies that explored the effects of various leadership behaviors on group life (Adler et al. 1939; Lewin and Lippitt 1938; Lippitt 1939, 1940a, 1943; Lippitt and Zander 1943; Lippitt and White 1943). One of the more interesting studies on the topic and one of the most noteworthy in the history of the field of group dynamics is a 1939 study conducted by Lewin, Lippitt, and Ralph White, a fellow researcher of both Lewin and Lippitt that investigated the relationship between leadership style and social climates (Lewin et al. 1939). The three researchers organized what they referred to as G-Man clubs, groups of public school middle-class 11-year-old boys led by college leaders. The research was conducted at a boy's club, an organization Lippitt knew well. Three groups of five boys each were created. The boys were given a task to

complete led by a leader with a different leadership style: laissez-faire, democratic, and autocratic. The laissez-faire leader stayed out of the way; the autocratic leader provided strict directions; and the democratic leader helped the boys using participative techniques. While the boys played indoors, a group of researchers observed them. In fact, Lewin filmed the experiment with a movie camera. What Lippitt and his colleagues learned was that a laissez-faire style led to confusion and cynicism, an autocratic style led to overly obedient boys who started bullying one another and destroying toys, and the democratic style led to a situation in which the boys discussed the project and made their own decisions. What was interesting was that when the different groups changed their leadership styles, the boys changed their behaviors to match the new dynamics. Boys with a democratic leader got on much better with one another and respected their leader. Slightly less work was completed under the democratic leader than the autocratic leader, and very little work was completed under the influence of the laissez-faire leader. This stud, and much of Lippitt's early work on group life are considered classic in the field of organizational change because they demonstrate the importance of leadership style in effecting organizational change. The years after this study and throughout his career were marked by many more studies and change initiatives centered on the country's youth. For example, Lippitt initiated research on delinquency with the Flint Michigan Youth Studies (Lippitt and Withey 1961; Lippitt 1962b), investigated the social structure of elementary classrooms in Michigan (Lippitt and Jenkins 1953; Lippitt and Gold 1958, 1961; Lippitt 1960, 1961; Lippitt et al. 1963), researched delinquent gangs in collaboration with the Chicago Boys Club (Lippitt and Withey 1961), and developed a national study on the impact of leadership styles on character development climates while Director of Research for National Council of Boy Scouts (White and Lippitt 1960).

Throughout the 1940s, Lippitt continued to explore group life and to contribute to the burgeoning field of group dynamics. His early research during this decade focused on the leadership and social climates of children (Lippitt 1940a, b, 1942; Lippitt and Zander 1943; Lippitt and White 1943), with much of the research attentive to studying the dynamics of scout troops. Toward the middle of the decade, he began to integrate the study of adult work groups (Lippitt and Bradford 1945a) and prejudice (Lippitt 1945; Lippitt and Weltfish 1945; Lippitt and Radke 1946) into his research agenda. By the end of the decade, his research and practice expanded to training in community relations culminating in a research exploration titled, *Training in Community Relations.* This book (Lippitt 1949), which Lippitt wrote while at the Center for Group Dynamics at the University of Michigan, presents effective ways of teaching individual and group skills required for affable and productive living in society. A significant and interesting contribution, the book explores the functional relationships among educational technology, action methodology, and research methodology in the solution of social problems pronounced with tension and conflict.

In the book, Lippitt presents a detailed account of an experiment conducted in Connecticut to develop new group skills among various leaders across the state. The leadership of the project consisted of a "state team" and a social science team.

The state team consisted of members of two public agencies, the State Interracial Commission and the State Department of Education's Citizenship Consultant Service. One private organization also comprised the state team – the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Members of the social science team were drawn from the Research Center for Group Dynamics and included in addition to Lippitt: Kurt Lewin, Leon Festinger, Morton Deustch, Murray Horvitz, Gordon Hearn, Benjamin Willerman, David Emery, Albert Pepitone, Jeanne Frankel, and Dorothy Swirling. The heart of the experiment was a 2-week workshop that engaged workers from Connecticut communities, each of which held a strategic relationship to some type of intergroup conflict. As examples, trainees included a leader from a politically active Negro association, a leader of a community Jewish group, and a leader from a high active veteran's organization. The social science team designed activities in which trainees would learn by studying themselves, using techniques such as role playing, which the goal of building new understandings of prejudice, attitude change, and resistance. Researchers observed the different training groups and reviewed interactions with the consultants each evening. One night three trainees asked to sit in on the debriefings. Lippitt recalled, "Sometime during the meeting an observer made some remarks about the behavior of one of the three." For a while there was quite an active dialogue between the researcher, the trainer, and the trainee about the interpretation of the event, with Lippitt and Lewin both active probers, obviously enjoying the different source of data that had to be coped with and integrated" (Marrow 1969, p. 212). On the next night, half of the group of trainees attended the debriefing which lasted well into the night. Bradford recalled a "tremendous electric charge as people reacted to data about their own behavior" (Marrow 1969, p. 212). At the time, no one understood the potential of feedback, but it was this experience that led to the establishment of the first National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Group Development (held at Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine in the summer of 1947) cofounded by Lippitt, Leland Bradford, and Kenneth Benne. By this time Lewin was dead, but his thinking and practice was very much a part of the development of NTL.

Based on their learnings during the Connecticut project, Lippitt, Benne, and Bradford designed and launched NTL. Their purpose was to convert scientific knowledge of human behavior into practice – they set out to help people to use available but relatively unused knowledge to gain skills to work effectively. Some of the goals developed by Lippitt and his colleagues were to help people become more competent in solving problems, more keenly aware of the potential for changing, more skillful in how to change, more aware of race and sex issues inherent in society at the time, and more resourceful in establishing conditions under which human energy, one's own and others, could be mobilized toward reaching individual and organizational objectives.

The T (Training)-Group is a training method. A group of 10–12 individuals meet to develop their individual learnings in a group setting. The T-Group's relaxed, yet energetic atmosphere, helps participants to expose their behavior to examination by themselves and to others. Through a feedback process, participants reflect on their

behaviors in group interaction – they come to recognize how others see them and the effects they have others. The T-Group is a caring, personal, rigorous, and analytical methodology. Through the training learners become personally responsible for their own learning. The programs were educational in nature and not a substitute for psychotherapy. NTL saw its value in creating environments in which participants feel free to make choices in an atmosphere which promotes freedom, thought, concern, and support. Lippitt explained the T-Group and how it was designed in a book edited by Leland Bradford, Jack Gibb, and Kenneth Benne (1964) titled, *T-Group Theory and the Laboratory Method*. Much of the concepts, tools, and techniques were based on Lippitt's wealth of knowledge researching and working with groups since his days at Springfield College.

## Planned Change

In addition to his contributions to the development of the field of group dynamics, Lippitt was also a forerunner in the creation of the theory and practice of planned change. If Lewin invented the notion of planned change, Lippitt industrialized it and then mastered it. He led the development of many contributions to the practice of planned change. Two significant contributions are discussed here: the process of planned change and the conception of change agentry.

### The Process of Planned Change

In his 1958 book, *The Dynamics of Planned Change*, Lippitt, along with his colleagues Jeanne Watson and Bruce Westley, developed a seven-phase model of planned change that built upon Lewin's three phase model (unfreezing, moving, and freezing): (1) development of a need for change (unfreezing), (2) establishment of a change relationship, (3) diagnosis of the problem (moving), (4) establishing goals and intentions of action (moving), (5) initiation of change efforts (moving), (6) generalization and stabilization of change (freezing), and (7) achieving a terminal relationship. For each phase, Lippitt and his colleagues developed specific change methods. As an example, helping methods for phase II (establishment of a change relationship) requires that the capacity and motivation of the system to accept and use help is assessed, in addition to the resources and motivation of the change agent. Expectations must be clarified including the kind and amount of work required. A mutuality of expectation for the change relationship must be secured, and any anticipated difficulties which may emerge in the change relationship must be discussed. The influence relationship should be defined, and the goals of the change agent must be clarified. The many meticulous helping methods prescribed by Lippitt and his associates for each of the different phases recognize the importance and responsibility of the change agent to think diagnostically about the client's problem throughout the entire change process. Lippitt's seven-phase model of planned change became the foundation upon which many others would craft their own consulting archetypes and processes. Supporting its different phases were methods and practices that are still critical today to the leadership and management of change,

for example, the importance of establishing the need for change, the significance of a strong relationship between the change agent and the client system, and the consequence of transforming intentions into actual change events.

In a subsequent book, *The Consulting Process in Action*, Lippitt and his brother, Gordon, presented a more practical rendition of the aforementioned model (Lippitt and Lippitt 1978). Instead of a seven-phase model, they simplified their model to include six phases. Similar to the change methods presented in the earlier model, for each of the six phases, Ron and Gordon stipulated the "work focus" to be carried out by consultants. For example, for phase II, *formulating a contract and establishing a helpful relationship*, they suggested that the consulting work focus on identifying desired outcomes, determining who should do what, and clarifying the time perspective and accountability. During the final phase, *completing the contract,* they recommended that the consulting work emphasize designing continuity supports and establishing termination plans. In addition to suggesting the work to be completed during each phase, Ron and Gordon developed a set of critical intervention questions for each phase. As examples, for phase III, *identifying problems through diagnostic analysis,* important intervention questions for consultants include: How can I help people in the client system to be open and to question their assumptions about the causes of their problems? How can I involve them enough in the diagnostic data collection process so they feel ownership of the data and accept the validity of these data? How can I arrange for people in the appropriate parts of the client system to review the data and draw conclusions for action? In *The Consulting Process in Action*, Lippitt's original consulting model is designed for practical use by consultants: subprocesses are integrated; change agent actions for each phase are stipulated; critical questions that need to be asked are posed; and the actions that need to occur to help ensure effective change are identified.

A review of the construction of recent consulting models and processes demonstrate the potency of Lippitt's early efforts. Consider Peter Block's *Flawless Consulting*. Block provides his own rendering of the consulting process along with an abundance of tools, techniques, and activities for leading change, many of which are grounded in the labor of Lippitt and his colleagues (Block 1978). An examination of Jeanne Neumann's consulting model (presented in a chapter in this book) includes many of the phases and processes of Lippitt's model, however, she presents a nonlinear, systemic consultancy model that captures the dynamic nature of the organizational change and development process.

Later in his life, Lippitt and his brother, Gordon, revisited their development work on consulting models and created a new process model titled, The Multocular Process (Lippitt and Lippitt 1985). Like their previous models, it included a series of traditional consulting components, some of which were analysis of the problem, analysis of possible solutions, and recommendations to the leader. Multocular means having several eyes. With their revised model, Ron and Gordon integrated planning groups (the Multocular Group) and assessment groups (the Multocular Panel) into the consulting process (See Figs. 1 and 2). At the initiation of a project, a group was formed to analyze the problem. Groups would be assembled from different disciplines, professions, and industries based on the crux of the problem. Once a problem

# The Adversary Procedure
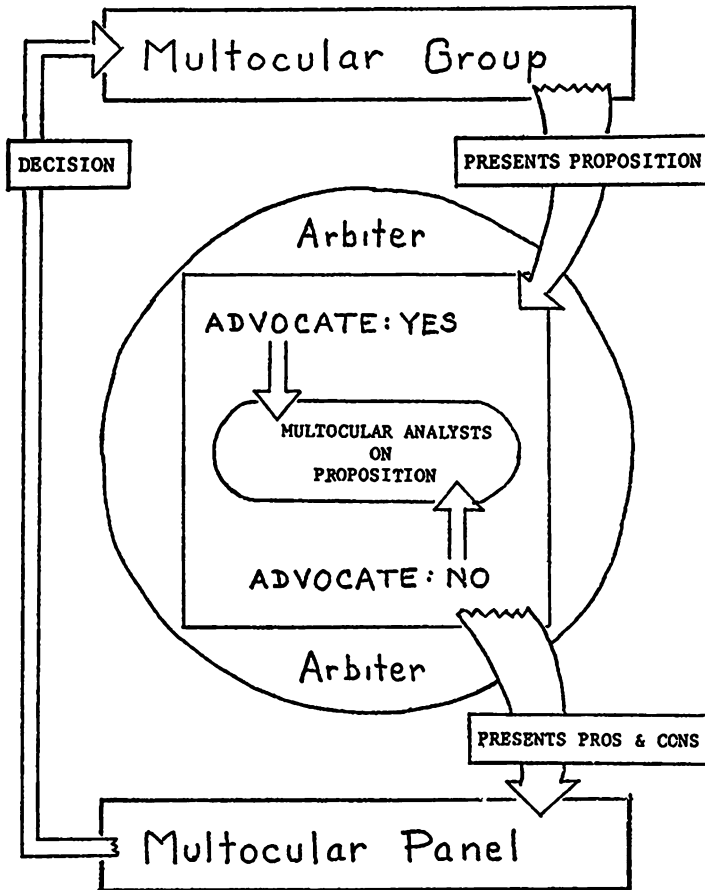


**Fig. 1** With the Multocular Process carefully composed diverse groups of adversaries (i.e., the notion of many different eyes) are established to analyze propositions and make decisions

was analyzed, a proposition would be formed and analyzed, and the pros and cons would be presented to a Multocular Panel (also a diverse group) for evaluation and decision-making. Decisions made by the Multocular Panel would be evaluated by the Multocular Group. Solutions would be explored, recommendations would be presented to the leader, and action planning would begin. What was unique about the Multocular process was its emphasis on exploring the problem of the client. At the outset of a project, change agents would focus on getting the right people in the room to explore a problem and getting the right people in the room to analyze propositions. This weight given to problem-solving over planning and action was distinctive at the time, and many have been influenced by their own experiences working with varying
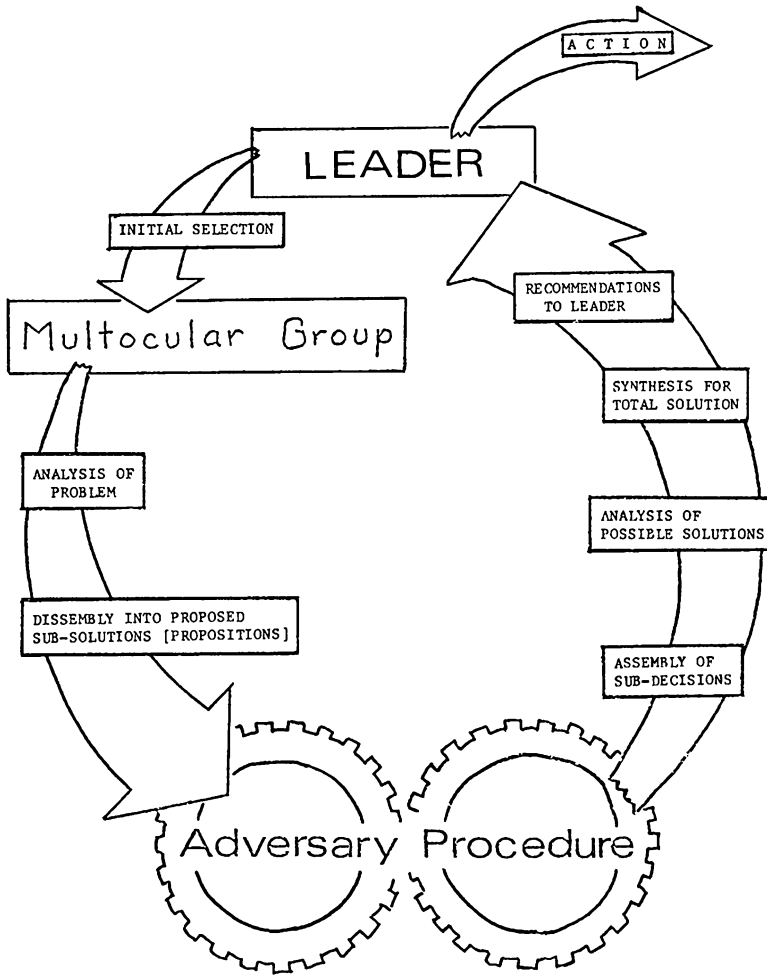
**Fig. 2** As seen here, the Multocular Process follows an established consulting process of problem identification, analysis of possible solutions and recommendations to a leader. What's unique is that the model involves a wisely-selected group of people to analyze propositions and explore solutions

levels of diversity. Ron and Gordon started to write a book on the process, but because of Gordon's passing in 1985 and Ron's in 1986, the book was never completed.

## The Role of the Change Agent

In addition to establishing a change model with which consultants could do their best work and upon which scholars and practitioners could enhance and strengthen, Lippitt and his colleagues also began to define and shape the role of the professional change agent. Lippitt conceived of change agents as professional helpers. He believed

that their primary role was to give help and that it was up to the change agent to select the role he or she was going to play. Shall I mediate, counsel, teach, motivate, guide, or encourage? Each role emphasized helping the client, and the role change agents assumed would change based on the conditions of the system undergoing a change. A recent book relevant to this discussion is Schein's *Helping*. Like Lippitt, Schein, who is also profiled in this book, views helping as a logical extension of the consulting process, and like Lippitt, Schein defines consulting as helping and that means creating a relationship with a client in which they can both figure out what to do (Schein 2009).

In *The Dynamics of Planned Change*, Lippitt and his colleagues present a full discussion of the classification of helping roles based on their experiences as change agents consulting with organizations (Lippitt et al. 1958). Some of the main dimensions of the change agent's role include mediating and stimulating new connections, functioning as experts in matters of procedures, creating environments conducive to learning, giving emotional support during the process of change, and sometimes joining a subpart of the client system and providing strength from within. Lippitt expounded on these roles a year later in an article that explored the dimensions of a consultant's job (Lippitt 1959), providing seven self-reflective questions that actuated the role of the consultant. The different role dimensions established by Lippitt in the 1950s prevail in much of today's organizational change and development literature. In addition to performing these different roles, Lippitt believed that it was the responsibility of change agents to not only foster their own growth but to play a role in the development of the helping profession through research and conceptualization. He encouraged change agents to integrate research into their change initiatives by noting observations of the helping process and then writing and reporting on the significance of these observations.

## Utilization of Research to Change Social Practice

Like many social scientists, Lippitt was frustrated by the fact that vital research on the books was gathering dust; it was not being utilized by the institutions for which it was intended. To tackle the issue, in 1964, Lippitt and a fellow researcher from the Institute for Social (ISR), Floyd Mann, started a separate unit with ISR the Center on Research for the Utilization of Scientific Knowledge (CRUSK). Staff teams of sociologists, psychologists, and others involved with social problems such as delinquency and teen pregnancy, a lack of creative teaching methods, and mental health and productivity problems or work groups in government and industry focused on the process through which scientific knowledge and personnel can help develop and validate significant improvements in education and social practice (Lippitt 1965). Along with Kenneth Benne and Ronald Havelock, their research centered on the internal conditions of the utilization unit needed if knowledge is to be utilized and the external conditions which facilitate or prevent new knowledge from reaching potential users. They modeled the social system needed to ensure a flow of knowledge to effective utilization (See Fig. 3). The model included four levels of analysis.

**Fig. 3** Lippitt's utilization of scientific knowledge brings knowledge to users with individual roles, organizations and both temporary and permanent systems and processes

The first level, the linking role, is a defined position in the system that maintains a bridge between potential consumers and expert resources. The second level, the linking organization, is a specific group with a number of linking roles to effect knowledge utilization. The third level, temporary systems, supports situations in which a special group comes into existence to accomplish a specific task, such as a training seminar, and terminates when the action is complete. Finally, the permanent

linking system comprises the entire range of activities, roles, and institutions involved in the transformation of knowledge into practice (Lippitt and Havelock 1968; Lippitt 1971). Lippitt and his colleagues emphasized the need to not only research these four levels but also to further develop and improve them (Jung and Lippitt 1966). Lippitt believed that only through research and development on "research utilization" could change in education, communities, and policy transpire (Lippitt 1965.)

## New Insights: Images of Potentiality

In 1949, during his consultations with YMCA teams in Michigan, Lippitt and a small group of his students conducted a research project that involved tape recording strategic planning sessions. As the recordings were analyzed, students observed that as participants of the planning meetings identified, discussed, and prioritized problems, their voices became more soft and stressed. It was clear from the recordings that a focus on problems drained the energy of the group and depressed its members. A second finding identified by students was an increase in the frequency of statements about the causes of the problems to sources outside the control of the group. This was interpreted by the researchers as mobilizing a rationale for rejecting problem-solving responsibility. A third finding was an increase in frequency of words and phrases indicating feelings of impotence, futility, and frustration (Lippitt 1983).

These findings led Lippitt to experiment with what he called "images of potentiality" exercises. Lippitt and two of his colleagues at the time, Robert Fox and Eva Schindler-Rainman believed that, "The motivations and perspectives generated by getting away from pain are not likely to contain the creativity or to generate the energy that derives from aspirations generated by images of concrete feasible steps toward desirable goals. Images of potential are not only strong initial sources of direction and motivation, but they also provide the basis for continuous feedback, motivation, and renewal. The excitement and rationality of taking initiative toward the future must replace the anxiety associated with reactive coping with confrontation (Fox et al. 1973, p. 4)." Lippitt affirmed the validity of these arguments many times throughout his consulting years working with school boards, agency staffs, company staffs, families, and individuals.

His "images of potentiality" exercises encouraged participants to focus on the future and not problems. During one of his "images of potentiality" exercises, he would encourage participants to envision the future. "Let's say its 20 years into the future," he would say, "and you are flying over the region in a helicopter, what do you see down there?" He found that the more detailed the future descriptions of participants, the more energized they became. As participants clearly visualized the future, a variety of different perspectives emerged, and participants started to come up with solutions to problems (Lindaman and Lippitt 1979).

The discovery of the power of "images of potentiality" spawned the development of futuring as a change methodology. With assistance from Edward Lindaman, program planning director for the design and manufacture of the Apollo Space

Craft at Rockwell International and professor and futurist at Whitworth College, Lippitt began to conceptualize the method of preferred futuring. The methodology is rooted in planned change theory and democratic philosophy. It supports the argument that real answers lie both within us individually and the whole system. The method involves all stakeholders, embraces differences, mobilizes widespread support, and unleashes energy by connecting change with values, and results with core purpose. The practice requires the examination of data from the past, the present, and the events, trends, and developments going on in our world, community, organization, and personal lives. These data are used to envision images of the future preferred, a future not limited by presently perceived boundaries but one prompted by the realities of the present and emerging human situation. Based on the prioritized images of potentiality, an intentional goal-and-action plan is constructed which makes optimal use of the human and technical resources of an organization. In his early writings about the futuring process, Lippitt discussed a six-component process:

1. Creating a leadership nucleus (a group of key people who are listened to and able to get things done)
2. Designing for organization futuring (nucleus gathers date, i.e., where we have come from and what we are proud of, and trains persons to lead the futuring sessions)
3. Creating integrated scenarios of preferred futures (identify top priority images of the many images developed during future shop sessions)
4. Determine major goals and thrusts (small task teams convert images into goal statements with measurable criteria and achievement)
5. Operational goal setting and implementation designing (all staff develop involved in the futuring develop implementation designs)
6. Continuous progress measurement, scanning, and re-futuring (planning staff monitored goals, identify any new trends and generated new images of potential) (Lindaman and Lippitt 1979; Lippitt 1984)

As Lippitt and his colleagues worked with planning teams in both organizations and communities, they observed a distinction between futuring and planning. Some of the futuring versus planning distinctions they identified included right versus left brain, wide angle as opposed to zoom, open versus committed, rainbow in contrast to black, white and gray, inclusive versus selective, abstract versus concrete, and possible juxtaposed with feasible. These distinctions were used continuously to enhance their explanations of futuring to participants and to extend and strengthen its methods.

Lippitt and his colleagues conducted futuring projects in a variety of different settings, including 80 US and Canadian cities, several industrial projects, and numerous nonacademic agencies and businesses. These initiatives generated hundreds of "images of potentiality" and mobilized thousands of citizens and organizational members to envision the futures they wanted. The practice produced groups of enormous power and drive. Creating "images of potential" provided participants with a decisive direction for goal setting, planning, and skill

development (Lippitt 1983). In 1998, Lippitt's son, Lawrence Lippitt, wrote *Preferred Futuring*, which provided consultants and managers with a step-by-step guide for creating and actualizing preferred futures. Additionally, we see the influence of Lippitt's "images of potentiality" and futuring practices in many redesign and transformation methods that are in use today, for example, the "dream" component of appreciative inquiry which asks participants to envision "What might be?" (Cooperrider et al. 2000) and the development of ideal future scenarios, a module of the Future Search process (Weisbord and Janoff 1995).

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: To Better Human Life Through Social Science

The shy, imaginative, and people-wise social scientist, professor, and consultant leaves behind several lasting impressions. Dr. Ron Lippitt will be long remembered for his use of social science to better the lives of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies. There are many reasons why we remember a man who changed the lives of so many.

We remember Lippitt for his contributions to the field of group dynamics. He published numerous studies on the effects of authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership on group process and productivity. His national study of the impact of leadership styles on character development climates while Director of Research for the National Council of Boy Scouts will be long remembered for laying the foundation for the study and advancement of the constructs of change leadership and organization climate.

We remember Lippitt for cofounding institutes that advanced the research and practice of organizational change. He cofounded the Center for Group Dynamics at MIT with Kurt Lewin, the NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science with Leland Bradford and Kenneth Benne, and the Center for Research on the Utilization of Knowledge with Rensis Likert and Floyd Mann. Through these collaborations, Lippitt brought together researchers, practitioners, educators, and students. He not only created new knowledge of how to change human systems but also developed models and processes to utilize the new understandings in practice.

We remember Lippitt for developing the systematic discipline of planned change. He originated models of planned change, developed the role of the change agent, formulated many methods for moving a group through the change process, and created toolkits of humane change agentry that comprised exercises such as the "prouds" and "sorries" brainstrorm, alternative scenarios, and internal dialog (Lippitt 1981). His continued interest in the professional development of applied behavioral scientists captured in *The Dynamics of Planned Change*, *The Consulting Process in Action*, and *Training for Community Relations* has left an enduring impression on the practice of organizational development and change.

As a side note, one of Lippitt's legacies is the invention of flip chart paper. As the story goes, flip chart paper originated during the Connecticut Workshops described earlier in this chapter. Kurt Lewin needed paper for his force-field diagrams, so Lippitt went out searching in the area. He passed a print shop and brought newsprint

which was taped to the walls providing a living memory of the work of the group. The use of flip chart paper during planning meetings began and soon became a mainstay. Meeting rooms today are often a maze of paper-covered walls with arrows, diagrams, sentences, and scribbles that depict the envisioned futures and action items of planning groups.

We remember Lippitt for the numerous "images of potentiality" he helped to create to change communities across the country. The power of his futuring methodology was observed and validated by the extraordinary levels of citizen involvement his methods helped to activate and mobilize in numerous cities in the country. Throughout his career, his work showed a growing priority for the revitalization of community life and the development of interagency collaboration and management teamwork seen in such works as *Building the Collaborative Community* and *The Volunteer Community* with Eva Schindler-Rainman.

We remember Lippitt for his teaching of planned change. Lippitt leaves behind a three-semester laboratory practicum on planned change that he taught at the University of Michigan. The Planned Change Graduate Seminar was a fixture on the campus for over 15 years. It was grounded in his beliefs about learning and change that he developed throughout his years working with groups at Bethel and facilitating planned change in organizations and communities. Students designed their own personal and organizational change projects. As the leader of his classes, Lippitt created the same democratic atmospheres he observed in his early Boy's Clubs studies. He played the role of the chief organizer and empowered his students to choose books for the course, to develop and deliver mini lectures, to manage class sessions and projects, and to experiment with new approaches. It was one of the most popular courses at Michigan at the time and drew students and a large volunteer faculty from 15 departments and colleges.

Finally, we remember Lippitt for his active participation in several professional societies. Lippitt was a fellow in the International Association of Applied Social Scientists, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the Association of Voluntary Action Scholars, the Clinical Sociology Association, and the American Psychological Association. In addition, he served on the editorial board of the Clinical Sociology Review. The many honors he received during his career include the Distinguished Career Award of the Clinical Sociology Association in 1985, a Concurrent Resolution of Tribute from the Michigan Legislature in 1984, and honorary doctorates from Springfield College, in 1962, and Leslie College, in 1965.

In conclusion, it can be safely said that today, Lippitt's many legacies exert a strong influence in all aspects of group living – from life in families to organizational life and life in communities. His years of experimental research and practiced-developed group work still touch many of the human systems in which he worked: the research labs and lecture halls of universities, the classrooms of school systems, the boardrooms of organizations, and the county seats of communities. Ronal Lippitt was a man of change. He studied it, practiced it, advanced it, and mastered it. Whether it was on a camping trip outside Springfield, in an NTL lab in Bethel, or at a cluster he hosted in his home in Ann Arbor, what energized him and urged his

every action was his undying compulsion to help human systems realize their full potential.

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# Jay W. Lorsch: The Academic Who Changed the Corporate Board Room

Brett A. Geier and Aamir Hasan

**Abstract**

The contributions of Jay W. Lorsch, the Louis Kirstein Professor of Human Relations at the Harvard Business School to the fields of organizational change and organizational behavior, are far reaching and fundamental. He has written and edited 19 books (currently writing twentieth), and the list contains critical pieces including *Organization and Environment* (with Paul Lawrence) that won the Academy of Management's Book of the Year Award in 1969 and was reissued as a Harvard Business School Classic in 1986. The book is listed at number 6 among the 25 most influential books on management of the twentieth century, which include the works of giants like Frederick Taylor, Max Weber, Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, and Peter Drucker. In addition, he has published dozens of articles and contributed scores of case studies to academia. Jay Lorsch has taught in all Harvard Business School's educational programs and chaired the doctoral program as well as countless other units and initiatives at Harvard. He has also acted as a consultant to Citicorp, Deloitte Touche, Goldman Sachs, and many others, and his research on and work with corporate boardrooms has changed the very nature in which they construct, function, and assess themselves. Lorsch was elected to the Corporate Governance Hall of Fame of the highly respected industry magazine *Directorship* in 2009. He serves on the Board of Trustees of Antioch College and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Lorsch was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and studied at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, at a time when Douglas McGregor, the creator of Theories X and Y of human motivation (McGregor 1960), was its President. The progressive college also has the distinction of having had Horace Mann, one of America's greatest thinkers and proponents of universal education, as its founding President (Cubberley 1919). Lorsch completed his bachelor's at Antioch in 1955 where only a few years earlier Warren Bennis, referred to by *Forbes* (1996) as the "dean of leadership gurus," had graduated and was being mentored by the college president. As luck would have it, Bennis became Lorsch's freshmen advisor and, hence, introduced him to McGregor vicariously. Lorsch also took courses in business with Fred Klien who had an MBA from Harvard and which got him later thinking about the Harvard Business School. As Lorsch puts it in an interview with the authors, "I have been very fortunate in my career to keep running into people who were giants in their fields at the time; people who eventually got into organizational behavior and organizational theory and so I too developed an interest in it" (J.W. Lorsch, personal communication, Jan 19, 2017).

From Antioch College, Lorsch went to Colombia University to earn a master's degree in business and thereafter got direct commission into the US Army Finance Corps and was stationed in Europe from January 1957 to August 1959. He ran an office with 25–30 servicemen as well as civilians and also worked as a consultant implementing accounting systems for the armed forces. Finding himself thrust into the role of a manager, Lorsch became involved, as well as fascinated, with the problems of dealing with people in trying to bring about change. Following his service in the army, Lorsch returned home and, after trying his hand at various jobs, got the opportunity to teach an evening course at the University of Missouri at Kansas City (formerly University of Kansas City), which in many ways can be called the turning point in his life. Having already taught in the military and having enjoyed it, Lorsch decided to turn it into a career and applied to various doctoral programs. He got accepted at the Harvard Business School in spring 1961 and the rest as they say is history, and where he has been since.

## Influences and Motivations: Harvard and His Colleagues

At Harvard Business School, Lorsch took the doctoral seminar with the celebrated Fritz Roethlisberger who along with Elton Mayo conducted the famous, as well as the much criticized, Hawthorne experiments that were carried out at Western Electric Company in Cicero, Illinois, in the 1920s. Roethlisberger and William John Dickson later published the official account and findings of the studies (Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939), and the book is placed at number ten among the most influential writings on management (Bedeian and Wren 2001). From Roethlisberger, Lorsch acquired an understanding of the history and perspectives on organizations and organizational theory. However, it was his work, initially as a case writer, with Paul Lawrence, a young faculty member at the Harvard Business School, that shaped Lorsch's academic and intellectual trajectory. He completed his doctorate in 1964 and became part of the faculty in early 1965.

Lawrence was thinking about how to conceptualize the problems one encounters when initiating the process of organizational change and later became chairman of Lorsch's dissertation committee. He was a powerful mentor and influence on Lorsch's career, and they jointly wrote a number of books including *Organization and Environment* (1967), which was reissued as a Harvard Business School classic in 1986. The book was not explicitly about change but rather the design and functioning of large organizations as organizational change was not the primary focus of their research at the time (Lorsch studied the notion of contingency theory for his dissertation). However, the problem associated with bringing about organizational change was an area of interest to Lorsch and is a much analyzed topic in the many cases he has written. He points out that although the faculty at Harvard and elsewhere were pretty good at conceptualizing small groups, and the leadership problems associated with bringing about change within small groups, they had yet to figure out those issues as related to larger multi-functional multiunit organizations.

A few years after becoming full professor at the Harvard Business School in the early 1970s, Lorsch was approached by Citicorp Chairman John Reed, who later served as Chairman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Board of Trustees and as Chairman of the New York Stock Exchange (Augier 2006), to help the group institute a much needed change process in their back office in order to take advantage of computers. It was the work with Citicorp (later Citigroup) that got Lorsch embroiled directly with thinking about change and the process of how to bring about change in organizations effectively. He points out that he was absolutely convinced that the problems Citicorp was having stemmed from the fact that, although they were going about changing and installing computer systems, they were failing to recognize the existence and nature of the huge social system, made up mostly of women, that had to adapt to the changes that the organization needed and wanted to institute. Lorsch always felt that organizations are basically social systems, and everything in them is deeply interrelated, and, accordingly, one should remain aware that any change strategy will have intended consequences, but unintended consequences as well.

To Lorsch, organizations are complex entities, and the complexity emerges as a result of their systemic qualities whereby everything is related to everything else at one level or another. This varies from organization to organization but without grasping this interrelatedness, one can neither understand nor deal with issues the organization may be facing. The fact that no two organizations are alike makes this process even more difficult. One example of such complexity is the delicate relationship that exists between directors of boards and the chief executive officer and is something he has written extensively about in recent years and has offered advice on how this relationship can and should be managed (Lorsch 2015).

Lorsch emphasizes, that given the complexity within organizations, the importance of diagnosing how a system works and the unanticipated consequences one might get in response to changes one is trying to bring about cannot be overstated. He stresses on the need to diagnose and understand a system before attempting to improve it as something that is critical and points out that these were the very issues he and Paul Lawrence were raising and discussing in the many books they wrote together. The contributions that he and Lawrence made to the theory of the workings of large organizations through their research on differentiation and integration are also of great import (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967).

In how his position that diagnosis should come before change may be opposed to Kurt Lewin's famous quote that "if you truly want to understand something, try to change it," Lorsch posits that Lewin's position may be one way, an effective way, to understand a system, but it is certainly not the only way. To Lorsch, Lewin's inference was that when one changes a system, one is able to see what is related to what and the points of resistance, and therefore one gets to understand something about the relationships among the variables that constitute the system. He further clarifies that what he thinks Lewin was saying was that the easiest way to try to understand a system is to try to change it, whereas what he and Lawrence were saying was that one does not go around necessarily changing systems just to understand them since once the system is torn apart, one may never get it back together the way it was. His final comment on the subject is that essentially both were perhaps expressing the same idea; that if you want to understand a system, understand how the parts relate to each other. That Lewin felt that the best way to do that was to change the system is something he understands (J.W. Lorsch, personal communication, Feb 28, 2017).

## Key Contributions: Organization Development

Around the late 1960s, Lorsch's longtime friend Warren Bennis along with Edgar H. Schein and Richard Beckhard of MIT founded the Addison-Wesley series on the emerging field of organization development and toward what has come to be regarded as a seminal work in this field, Lorsch and Lawrence contributed a volume to the series. Lorsch considers this volume, which is called *Developing Organizations: Diagnosis and Action* (Lawrence and Lorsch 1969), as the most significant piece he wrote on organizational change, which was published as part of a collection

of very significant books on the topic. The book is based on the authors' experience as collaborators in the work of developing organizations and focuses on three critical interfaces: the organization-environment, the group-group, and the individual organization. Attention is paid to the attainment both of organizational goals and of individual purpose. A sequence of intervention in which diagnosis precedes action planning and the notion that organizations can usefully be conceived of as systems is emphasized. The book is arranged to present first the authors' overview of organization development and a summary of the research on which it is based, then to examine each of the three critical interfaces, presenting brief examples of work on each.

Among the many people that Lorsch worked with at Harvard with developing ideas around change were Larry Greiner (professor emeritus at the University of Southern California) and Michael Beer (current professor emeritus at the Harvard Business School). The latter had come from industry (Corning, Inc.), and Lorsch, Greiner, and Beer were among the people who were most directly involved with focusing on organizational studies and organizational behavior related to change and change strategies and processes in the 1970s and 1980s. They were each writing on their own but had common ideas and were teaching in the same courses. Interacting around those courses and reading each other's research, the ideas around change began to connect out of those interactions. Though good friends with Greiner, as well as with Beer, Lorsch did not write anything together with either of them (J.W. Lorsch, personal communication, Feb 28, 2017).

In addition, to the classics he wrote with Lawrence, Lorsch has consistently written and edited books as well as articles and case studies. Many of the books he has written (Donaldson and Lorsch 1983) and edited (Dalton et al. 1970) have been about the notion of using structure or formal systems to redesign organizations to take advantage of the change process, as well as the notion that the organization has to be designed to fit into the environment it is trying to compete in. Change and the change process were among the important areas that Lorsch and his colleagues at the Harvard Business School were trying to teach students in the MBA program, and he was the head of the first year course related to this topic and focused on what could be taught to young managers on how to bring about change through innovation and creativity in an organization.

The course has been taught in one form or another since before World War II, but the Harvard Business School had shut down during the war in order to train executives of defense companies. Prior to the shutdown in the late 1930s, the course was called Administrative Practices which was essentially about organizational behavior and human relations and after the school reopened in 1946, it gradually went thru a number of modifications.

When Lorsch started teaching at Harvard in 1965, organizational change was a topic within the first year course and was constantly a work in progress. From the time he got involved, the business school was always teaching something about change as it was a thing people were always interested in, and gradually over time they became more sophisticated and explicit about what was involved in bringing about organizational change. Gradually as he, Larry Grienier, Mike Beer, and others

began to focus on it, change increasingly became the topic of the course because they came to know more about it (J.W. Lorsch, personal communication, Feb 28, 2017).

Lorsch points out that anytime we are structuring change or redesigning the organization, we are dealing with organizational change because of the process side on the one hand and the structural side on the other. However, irrespective of how one reorganizes departments or moves groups around, the real question to him that underlies everything has always been, "how does one get people to accept the new ways in which they are being expected to do things." In other words, how does one bring about new ways of organizing and getting people motivated around the change process? He feels that the greatest obstacle to change is getting people to accept new ways of doing things whether it is a change of structure or a proposed change of strategy.

In speaking about the difference between organizational development and organizational change, a topic that Lorsch has been around for a very long time, he expresses a certain degree of skepticism and posits that people who talk about organizational development and those who talk about organizational change are essentially talking about the same thing. He feels that the work of the Academy of Management is significant, yet at the same time he is unable to clearly differentiate between the work being done at the department that deals with organizational change and the one dealing with organizational development. To him, irrespective of whatever title one wants to put on it, organizational development and organizational change are basically the same thing, which is essentially about using group dynamics to bring about change and moving an organization in a certain direction. In a lighter vein, Lorsch posits that people in organizational development act as if they had the holy grail and that everybody else is missing the point, but he is still not sure what they have other than the idea that one can use small groups to try to bring about change or to use group dynamics to try to influence people to change their points of view (J.W. Lorsch, personal communication, Jan 19, 2017).

## New Insights: Boards of Directors

As a consultant, Lorsch has had clients as diverse as applied materials, Berkshire Partners, Biogen Idec, Citicorp, Cleary Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton LLP, Deloitte Touche, DLA Piper Rudnick, Goldman Sachs, Kellwood Company, MassMutual Financial Group, Tyco International, Shire Pharmaceuticals, and Sullivan & Cromwell LLC. He has been an advocate of greater shareholder democracy (Lorsch and Holstein 2007) and is a member of the Board of Directors of New Sector Alliance and formerly served on the boards of Benckiser (now Reckitt Benckiser), Blasland Bouck & Lee Inc., Brunswick Corporation, Sandy Corporation and CA, Inc. Accordingly, his work has been more on practical implementation, advising organizations on how to institute change and guide the change process, rather than theorizing about it. And it is the work that Lorsch did with organizational behavior related to change that led him to the incisive work that he has been doing, working with and writing about boards and their functioning over the last 25 years.

Lorsch says that probably the most significant work he has been involved with in his career has been in trying to change the way boards function, particularly in the United States. His argument is that the functioning of boards can be improved once you recognize their systemic properties. However, as he points out, the problem in trying to bring about change in the board room through research is that boards are sacrosanct places and a young academic or researcher cannot walk into a boardroom and observe how it operates. In other words, many people try to study boards without ever having seen their machinations from the inside which amounts to trying to change a system without really understanding it. This reality, that observers are not going to be invited into boardrooms for legal and competitive reasons, is something that Lorsch has been trying to get people to recognize and feels that the understanding of the workings of boards is enhanced once they are viewed as systems. He puts it succinctly when he says, "It's not what you know, it's how you think." In other words, one has to take into account the complexity that surrounds the workings of boards in order to understand decisions that emanate from boardrooms.

The efforts that Lorsch has made in writing about and helping boards improve their functioning have been monumental. He is among the preeminent scholars in this area and has made it his niche and enjoys the rare vantage point and license that comes from having served on numerous boards. From this privileged position, he feels that only people who actually serve on boards understand their working or are able to recognize that boards are systems and the amount of change that can be brought about once you acknowledge those systemic properties.

From the time he wrote the book *Pawns or Potentates: The Reality of America's Corporate Boards* in 1989 to publishing his article "America's Changing Corporate Boardrooms: The Last Twenty-Five Years" in 2013, and the many books and dozens of articles on the topic in-between and since, Lorsch has emerged not only as the specialist but also the leading researcher in the field. His contributions include not just writings on how to improve the workings of boards but also how to compose effective boards, and most importantly how to carry out the assessment of boards. Needless to say, his influence on the latter has been truly fundamental.

Some of the earliest research and writing that Lorsch carried out with regards to the assessments of boardrooms with the aim of creating more vital boards highlighted the important difference that self-examination by members could make (Lorsch 1997). Many core issues were brought to light among which was the fact that evaluation of individual directors was harder to do than evaluating overall performance. Assessments of individual members as well as CEO performance were carried out either through questionnaires or appraisals made by committees made up of board members or consultants, and it emerged that members were careful not to criticize the CEO whom they were often beholden to for their own position on the board. Among issues also covered was how well was the most precious commodity that the board had – time together – was being utilized (Lorsch 1994), and he points out that time together is of little value if directors lack the information to hold critical discussion (Lorsch 1996). Other areas of assessment discuss the board's role in strategy formulation, director compensation, board size and composition, and the

board's role in top-management succession and development, as well as many others.

In almost all cases, Lorsch discovered in his initial research that boards were carrying out self-assessments for the first time and as a result of his pioneering work in this area, many home truths emerged not least among which was that boards used to spend too much time on boilerplate or management issues (often placed at the top of the agenda) and not enough time discussing important strategic matters (often placed at the bottom). His recommended solution was to reverse their order on the agenda, which many did. Among other issues that came to light as a result of his designed assessments was that directors were being provided too much data instead of the carefully selected and organized information they needed (Boudett et al. 2013). Another positive realization that emerged from assessments was that instead of the traditional "half-day with lunch," board meetings could be so much more productive if they were turned into longer or full day events, which is generally the case now. Concerns about CEO successor development also surfaced from the assessments as well as skepticism about the need for the executive committees that split boards into tiers. Those who were not on the executive committee felt that its members had access to information and decisions that they did not (Lorsch 1997).

His writings about CEO compensation (Lorsch 1999) and the relationship between boards and CEOs (Lorsch 1996) have also been hugely impactful. He emphasized that new leaders must "unfreeze" the corporate change processes and understand the importance of creating new equilibriums through adaptability. In other words, anticipate and adapt to change. In addition, he has always written about the role that the board has to play as an independent auditor as well as a strategic change agent by closely monitoring company performance by asking the tough questions that management might not ask of itself. In his belief, despite constraints, like the fact that many directors are beholden to the CEO (often also the Chairman), the board can play this role successfully by balancing power between directors and CEO. He wrote on the need for directors to spend time together without the CEO as well as to have access to sources beyond, such as direct discussion with top management to assess performance and provide meaningful feedback to the leader who may have his or her own biases and blind spots. He used the incisive expression "improved balance of information" between directors and CEOs that would result from his suggestions and was correct in his prediction that in the future directors would share influence, which is what we see in the rise of the activist investor (George and Lorsch 2014).

Another area that Lorsch developed and contributed to was how to cultivate balanced board rooms and, along with Colin Carter, presented the six essential and fundamental qualities that any director must possess, namely, intellect, instinct, interest, integrity, interpersonal skills, and a commitment to contribute (Lorsch and Carter 2003). He posited that given the increasingly complex business world, the age of the classic generalist was almost over and advised leaders to think strategically about the mix of the board and the need of performance standards for members. He recommended that boards must be made up of members who bring specialized core strengths with them. He questioned unchallenged tenure and advised on the need for

financial experts on the board who would, correctly, apply "pedantic intensity" to the work of audit committees. He also counseled boards to consider the trade-off between independence and knowledge as sometimes a member may compensate for potential conflict of interest by possessing in-depth experience in a core area or industry. And we see his humane side when he says that empathy with the concerns of the wider population is a good attribute in a director and advises businesses to seek social legitimacy in order to prosper (Lorsch and Carter 2003).

## Unfinished Business: Organizations Are Not People

Lorsch points out that in the latter part of the twentieth century and the first part of this century, there were a lot of people for whom organizational change or organizational development was kind of a formulaic concept and presents the management grid of Blake and Mouton (Blake et al. 1964) as an example. To Lorsch formulaic ideas, whether related to structural change, leadership behavior, or strategy border on the dangerous, because creativity notwithstanding, organizations are not like people. He says that when we study the human system, we know that things we might be looking at, such as the liver or the kidneys, must function in a certain manner, and life and health requires that those organs continue functioning in that way. But in an organizational setup, systems do not always function in the same way, and it is not so clear that organizations have to have the same characteristics to function effectively. Hence, in order to bring about effective change, whether implemented through wide participation or directed from the top down, one has to diagnose the properties of the organization to figure out which approach will give the most effective result.

Lorsch feels that an important contribution he made to theories around organizational change is the idea that there is no one best way to organize, as well as the concepts around contingency theory that he and Paul Lawrence outlined in *Organization and Environment*. He adds that in order to bring about change in an organization, one has to understand how the structure of the organization and the processes of the organization relate to the strategy of the organization. Only then can one think about what one wants to change and what needs to be changed.

Lorsch is presently working on a book about how the group at Harvard, starting with Elton Mayo, L. J. Henderson, and Fritz Roethlisberger in the 1920s, which has been studying organizational behavior coalesced and why it developed in the manner it did. He explains that for this group, including himself, what has been more explicit than it has been to others is the notion that organizations are systems and the recognition of those systemic qualities. Accordingly, he and his colleagues have tried to teach students to think, as leaders and managers, as to how one manages a system that has systemic properties.

The book will essentially be about the history of the evolution of organizational behavior and human relations at the Harvard Business School starting in the early twentieth century when President Abbott Lawrence Lowell and Dean Wallace Brett Donham brought the topic into the curriculum. The fact that they thought this important was revolutionary at the time as most business schools simply equated

the teaching of economics to the teaching of business. Lorsch is attempting a pretty thorough look up to the present by using the considerable amount of material and documents that are available at the business school and trying to pull them all together into a history in order to talk about the field of organizational behavior as it has evolved. He feels that there will probably be some criticism of the way it has evolved because in some ways a sense of direction and purpose has been lost (J.W. Lorsch, personal communication, Feb 28, 2017).

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# Robert J. Marshak: Challenging Traditional Thinking About Organizational Change

Ruth Scogna Wagner

**Abstract**

This chapter addresses the key contributions, insights, and legacies of Robert J. "Bob" Marshak to the field of organization development and change. The narrative opens with a discussion of the concepts, individuals, and institutions (US Army, American University, NTL, and US Department of Agriculture) that influenced his early career, honed his curiosity, and shaped his world view. The chapter highlights his pattern of perceiving change as a cognitive, linguistic construct and his exploration of the impact of language, symbolism, metaphors, and mindsets on how we think about change. Through his writings, Marshak poses critical questions, stimulates controversy, and challenges our beliefs and assumptions about how we think about what constitutes organizational change; for example, in an early article he contrasts our traditional Lewinian, Western perspectives on change with an unfamiliar Confucian, Eastern perspective of change. The chapter highlights his collaborations: in the 1980s and 1990s, he and cocreator Judith Katz explore the hidden dimension of change, creating the "Covert Process Model™"; in the 1990s and 2000s, he collaborates with numerous other scholars on articles and book chapters in the burgeoning field of organizational discourse studies; and in the 2000s and 2010s, he collaborates with Gervase Bushe with articles that explore the distinctions between classical OD (Diagnostic OD) and a new, emergent form of OD (Dialogic OD), culminating in a paradigm shifting book on Dialogic OD. The chapter concludes with a themed list of Marshak's most influential writings.

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## Contents

This chapter presents Robert J. "Bob" Marshak whose contributions on language, symbolism, metaphors, and mindsets have challenged, enriched, and expanded the field of organizational change, for almost four decades through his publications for academics and practitioners. Marshak is simultaneously a wise, accomplished, acknowledged insider to the field of organization development and change and an outsider, who poses critical questions and stimulates controversy about our beliefs and assumptions about what constitutes organizational change. Leveraging his deep understanding of classical organization development (OD) theory, he most recently has brought voice and coherence to the distinction between classical OD and a new, emergent form of OD.

    This chapter addresses the key contributions, insights, and legacies of Marshak to the field of organization development and change as a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at American University's School of Public Affairs, an executive in the US Government, a practicing international consultant, an award-winning author, and a recipient of the OD Network's Lifetime Achievement Award. Marshak began his contributions by helping to start an internal OD function in the US Government's Agricultural Research Service in 1974, began teaching organization theory and change leadership as an adjunct professor at American University (AU) in 1977, and established his own consulting practice in 1983. He has authored or coedited several books and is the author or coauthor of more than 85 articles or book chapters on topics related to consulting, organizational discourse, organizational change, and the theory and practice of OD. At present, he is actively teaching at American University, consulting, and writing. In this chapter, the reader is introduced to the people, events, and books that influenced Marshak's career and helped shape the

thinking and character of this outstanding scholar, educator, and practitioner. This chapter highlights his major contributions to the field of OD; traces how his perspectives on symbolism, language, culture, and mindsets have influenced the field; and finally, reviews his most recent contribution – cocreating a new mindset on transformational change called Dialogic Organization Development. The chapter concludes with a short list of Marshak's most influential works.

## Influences and Motivations: Diverse Experiences Nurture Intellectual Curiosity

Marshak grew up on Long Island, New York where he attended public schools and graduated from high school in 1964. Unlike most of his classmates, who went on to colleges in the northeast, he became the first person in his high school to enroll at Duke University in North Carolina where he pursued a liberal arts education, majoring in political science. When asked what kind of student he was, he shared a story where his faculty advisor suggested during his junior year that with his mediocre grade point average and the absence of career plans, he might best aspire to become a social studies teacher in middle school (R. J. Marshak, personal communication, March 31, 2016). Recall that in the mid-1960s in the United States, the environmental context included the Vietnam War and the compulsory military draft with deferments offered for those in college or graduate school. With this as an incentive to stay in school, Marshak insured he got good enough grades to be a student in good standing but found most of his courses uninteresting. The war and threat of the draft hung over the heads of all his male classmates and like them he sought options for what to do if the war did not end by the time he graduated. He even went so far as to apply for and be accepted into officer training school for the Air Force in December 1967 with induction planned for right after graduation the following June. Those plans were disrupted in the spring of 1968 when the Air Force rescinded its offer unless Marshak could be flight qualified. Given his eyeglasses he could not, and he resigned himself to being drafted sometime after graduating as the deferments for attending graduate school had just been ended and the lottery system did not come into effect until the spring of 1969. Upon graduating from Duke in June of 1968, he left Durham, NC and decided in essence to "hang out in Washington, DC until drafted" (R. J. Marshak, personal communication, March 31, 2016). He received his draft notice 2 weeks later and passed his physical in July and then began filing the three appeals he was entitled to in order to delay being drafted in the hopes that the war would wind down. While his appeals were being processed, in the fall 1968, he enrolled in a master of public administration (MPA) degree at American University (AU) in Washington, DC. His first course was in modern public management, taught by Professor Morley Segal, who exposed Marshak to classical organization theory, which he had never read before. He was surprised and delighted that he quickly understood these readings and found them highly interesting. The readings in classical organization theory amplified his natural curiosity about how

things worked, built on his training to see the political dimensions of organizations, and exercised his bright, analytic mind in a way that other subjects had never done.

## Military Intelligence: Special Agent Assigned to Korea

With his three appeals exhausted, he was inducted into the US Army on December 24, 1968 with a delayed entry provision so he could complete his one semester of graduate school before reporting for active duty in March 1969. Private Marshak did his 2 months of basic training at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina; during that period he found Goffman's (1961) work on total institutions helpful for understanding his experiences especially the mortification process in basic training. After basic training he completed 6 months of training in Army intelligence at Fort Holabird, Maryland, where he was trained in interviewing and data collection methods that he later applied in his work as a consultant and was promoted to corporal. Following intelligence training in 1970, he was assigned to a 47-week Korean language program at the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, where he was certified in the Korean language and promoted to sergeant. In January 1971, he was credentialed as a military intelligence special agent and stationed in Uijeongbu, Republic of Korea. Many of the skills acquired in his intelligence training and learning the Korean language and culture foreshadowed the data-collection and sense-making aspects of OD and eventually helped shape a significant event in Marshak's life: writing his first article for the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences* (JABS) – "Lewin Meets Confucius" (Marshak 1993) – that influenced the course of his career and his contributions to OD and change theory. With the Vietnam War still underway, he was honorably discharged from the Army in October 1971.

## Influences from American University and the NTL Institute

In January 1972 Marshak returned to American University to pursue his interrupted MPA degree and resumed his studies with Professor Morley Segal in organization theory and organization behavior. At this time, Segal was experimenting with a revolution in teaching styles, in which he replaced the traditional teaching podium and instead was "sitting amongst the students providing theoretical insights through more interactive methods" (Marshak 2008, p. 638). Marshak also took courses with Hal Kellner, a colleague of Professor Segal at AU and a pioneer of the group dynamics movement (Lamb 2008). Kellner introduced Segal and Marshak to the National Training Laboratory for the Applied Behavioral Sciences (NTL Institute) in 1972. The association with NTL was fateful for Segal and Marshak, as this is where they both were introduced to the T-group training method, a unique form of experiential education. It was also through Hal Kellner that Segal met Edie Seashore, who became president of NTL in 1975. Soon Segal and Seashore began thinking about how to structure a unique master's degree that would combine the contributions of NTL in the applied behavioral sciences with those of American University.

This collaboration resulted in the founding of a joint venture between AU and NTL, and in 1980 the first class of graduate students began their studies in the AU/NTL master's program with an emphasis in organization development. Although not yet a member of NTL nor on the full-time faculty of American University, Marshak, who had completed his PhD in public administration at American University in 1977 (discussed below) and immediately began teaching courses in organization theory and behavior, was asked by Professor Segal to help design and then teach a course in organization dynamics in the inaugural program. Marshak is currently the only member of the original faculty still teaching in 2016. Today this program is called the AU MSOD program and continues to be one of the top OD programs in the United States.

**Pursuing Ph.D. in Public Administration.** In spring 1973, Marshak graduated from American University with a MPA, having received a prestigious Presidential Management Intern Award with the expectation of starting a career in the US government. Meanwhile faculty at AU were lobbying Marshak to pursue a Ph.D. in public administration. He resisted the idea as he did not envision himself as an academic, did not want to waste his time pursuing a degree he did not think he could complete, and wanted to get on with his career and start making money as he felt he had lost 3 years because of his military service. Finally the Director of the doctoral program at the School of Government and Public Administration offered to make an exception and permit Marshak to enroll part time in the doctoral program while everyone else had to be a full-time student. This tempting offer would allow Marshak to start a career while continuing to take courses that stimulated his intellectual curiosity. After briefly investigating other universities, who all required full-time study, Marshak began his PhD studies in public administration at AU in the summer 1973. He thrived in the doctoral program and completed his Ph.D. in 1977 ahead of all his full-time doctoral classmates. During his doctoral studies, he was exposed to courses in organization theory and behavior, management theory, and organization development. These became central to his conceptual thinking and foundations for his later thinking about change and consulting to organizations. These ideas also informed and reinforced what he was dealing with as an internal organizational consultant and began his lifelong curiosity about how theory could be applied to practice and how practice could shed new or additional light on existing theory.

**Membership in NTL Institute.** For Marshak, the relationship with NTL was fruitful and influential. From 1976 to 1978, Marshak attended numerous week-long NTL workshops as part of their program for specialists in organization development where he learned from such influential and well-known scholar/practitioners as Ron Lippitt, Richard (Dick) Beckhard, Eva Schindler Rainman, Joe Luft, and Bob Tannenbaum (R. J. Marshak, personal communication, April 30, 2016). Overlapping this period and before becoming an NTL member in 1984, Marshak audited a course in 1977 on conflict management at AU being taught by Don Klein – a clinical psychologist, active NTL member, and community researcher and consultant. Intrigued and challenged by Don Klein's style and knowledge, Marshak offered to teach as an apprentice with Klein, who became an important mentor. Together they

taught conflict management workshops through NTL and courses at American University and Johns Hopkins University from 1977 to 1986. Whereas Segal was Marshak's intellectual mentor, Klein became a role model and mentor as an educator and practitioner. For several years Marshak taught a conflict management workshop through NTL entitled "Beyond Conflict" with Klein, Darya Funches, and Edie Seashore, who as noted was one of the founders with Segal of the AU/NTL program and a past president of NTL Institute. Close in age and experience, Darya Funches became a valued colleague, collaborator, and friend and someone with whom he could compare his experiences and perceptions as a white male with her experiences and insights as an African American woman while exploring their joint interest in the edges and limits of existing OD theories and practices. Edie Seashore also became an important mentor, friend, colleague, and collaborator until her death in 2013 and someone who always pushed and supported him to explore his emerging insights and ideas about change theory and practices. Through NTL Marshak also met Judith Katz, who became one of his most important colleagues and collaborators. Together they developed and offered workshops in covert processes, which they co-led for 13 years. In the book *Covert Processes at Work* (Marshak 2006), he indicates that his and Katz's work on covert processes built on the pioneering work of Ed Schein, who had written "One of the most important functions of process consultation is to make visible that which is invisible" (1999, p. 84 as cited in Marshak 2006, p. xii).

Together Marshak and Katz created the Covert Processes Model™ for understanding and addressing the hidden dynamics of individuals, groups, and organizations. It was also an impetus to begin putting his ideas into writing, and together they published four practitioner-oriented articles about covert processes and organization development (Marshak and Katz 1990, 1991, 1997, 2001). The Covert Processes Model™ was an integration of a range of ideas about hidden dynamics in the social sciences, spoke to dynamics that both Marshak and Katz witnessed in their consulting practices, and was the foundation for a 7-day residential workshop for OD consultants offered through NTL Institute.

## Early Work Experiences

Other key influences in Marshak's formative career were the connections he made while at AU. One was with fellow doctorate in public administration alumnus and student of Morley Segal, Len Covello, who was the Director of the Management Improvement Staff in the Agricultural Research Service at the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). Covello recruited Marshak to his staff in 1974 and also hired other AU alumni who had studied under Professor Segal, and collectively they were referred to as the "AU Mafia" (R. J. Marshak, personal communication, March 31, 2016). While initially hired to be a management analyst providing expert management studies, Marshak began to successfully introduce OD methods in his work and the work of the staff began to become more OD oriented, and consequently, the staff was renamed the Organization and Management Development Staff. In that capacity he found himself frequently working on reorganizations and

used his understanding of organization theory or organization development to help shape his thinking and actions. He found his use of theory made up for his early lack of experience, and he quickly became a sought-after participant to work on important organizational issues including the merger of four USDA agencies into the Science and Education Administration. His ability to conceptualize, facilitate action, and work with senior leaders was duly noted, and he was rapidly promoted into higher-level positions within the career civil service, graduated from the first Senior Executive Service Development Program at USDA in 1981, and served in various senior executive positions in his last 3 years of government service. These experiences were critical to Marshak's thinking and approaches to theory and practice. He learned how to relate to government agency leaders and to develop his thinking about organizational processes and politics, the dimensions of change in large complex systems, and a style of consulting that was successful with scientists and engineers who were skeptical of most social science ideas.

In 1983, after working on successive rounds of reorganizations and downsizings that included his own job being abolished two times, Marshak was reassigned to become the Deputy Area Director for agricultural research in the states of Texas and Oklahoma based in College Station, Texas. Although he would have been the first person in a position of that importance who did not have a doctorate and research experience in an agricultural science, he tired of working on the ongoing agency downsizings and reorganizations. Consequently, he decided his future was to continue to be an organizational consultant and not an agricultural research administrator. In June 1983, he left his government career and set up his own consulting practice, which he has continued to the present.

In his more than 40 years as an internal and independent consultant, Marshak has consulted to a wide range of public and private sector organizations both in the USA and abroad. Among the organizations Marshak has worked with as a consultant or educator are AOL-Europe, BASF Southeast Asia, BAE Systems, Exxon, Freddie Mac, GlaxoSmithKline, The Inter-American Development Bank, HSBC, JP Morgan Chase, Kodak, MITRE, NPR, National Science Foundation Board, PSI Consulting-Korea, Singapore Training and Development Association, UNICEF, Unisys, The World Bank, and a wide range of US government agencies and offices.

## Influence of Works in Classical Organization Theory and OD

In several of Segal's courses, Marshak was exposed to a seminal book by James Thompson (1967) titled *Organizations in Action*, in which the author focused on the behavior of complex organizations as entities, how organizations manage uncertainty, and the tension between the closed-system strategy of classical organization theory and the open-system strategy of the "newer tradition" of "bounded rationality" (Thompson 1967, p. 9). It may be from this text that Marshak began to wonder about the challenge of contemporary organizational change issues and how different premises and cultural assumptions can lead to different ways of thinking about organizations and change. For example, Thompson writes:

> . . .the two strategies reflect something fundamental about the cultures surrounding complex organization – the fact that our culture does not contain concepts for simultaneously thinking about rationality and indeterminateness. These appear to be incompatible concepts, and we have no ready way of thinking about something as half-closed, half-rational. (1967, pp. 9–10)

This theme of how our cultural perspectives limit what we can see and what we have the language to describe is a recurring theme in Marshak's work, such as "Lewin Meets Confucius" (Marshak 1993a) and "Changing the Language of Change" (Marshak 2002).

## Influences from Organizational Discourse

In the early 1990s, Marshak still considered himself primarily a practitioner and had written little beyond a few articles for practitioner journals. That began to change with the publication in 1993 of his seminal articles "Lewin Meets Confucius" (Marshak 1993a) in the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, discussed in more detail below, and "Managing the Metaphors of Change" (Marshak 1993b) in *Organization Dynamics*. The article on metaphors drew the attention of the organizers of an academic conference on metaphor and organization held at King's College London in 1994; they called Marshak out of the blue and asked if he would write a chapter for an edited book they were publishing on metaphor and organization. Marshak at first demurred saying he was not sure he had time to write a chapter, but in the end sent them a chapter that was published in their book *Metaphor and Organization* (Grant and Oswick 1996). This began a series of collaborations between Marshak and several of the founders and early contributors to what has become the field of organizational discourse studies. Key colleagues and coauthors of articles, book chapters, and journal special issues on organizational discourse and change include in alphabetical order: David Grant, Loizos Heracleous, Tom Keenoy, and Cliff Oswick (Grant and Marshak 2009, 2011; Heracleous and Marshak 2004a, b; Keenoy et al. 2000; Marshak and Heracleous 2005; Marshak et al. 2000; Oswick et al. 2000, 2010; Oswick and Marshak 2012).

This "discourse crowd" welcomed Marshak and accepted him as a fellow academic, whereas up until then he considered himself primarily a practitioner, not an academic. Collaboration with this international group of scholars also legitimized Marshak's thinking about language and change (R.J. Marshak, personal communication May 5, 2016). With them he found a home for his innate thinking: How someone talks about something reveals a window into what is going on in their mind. In addition to reinforcing and contributing to his thinking about language and change, these collaborations with welcoming colleagues also began to shift Marshak's identity from being primarily a consultant to someone who could and should make contributions to the conceptual and academic literatures especially related to language and change as well as the shifting contours of change theory and practice. This shift in identity continued as indicated by an increase in his academic and practitioner publications, his greater willingness to point out the

limiting edges of various traditional change assumptions and concepts including even the word "change" itself as discussed in "Changing the Language of Change" (Marshak 2002), becoming the acting editor of *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* in 2004, and accepting for the first time a full-time academic appointment as a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at American University in 2006.

## Key Contributions: Continuously Challenging Traditional OD Thinking

Before exploring the key contributions of this great thinker, it seems appropriate to ponder the following: What gifts does Marshak possess that have enabled him to contribute so significantly to the field of organizational change? The answer may lie in his own values and beliefs. First, the review of his early influences suggests someone who was energized by organization theory and learned in his early work in large bureaucratic organizations the impact of skillfully applying theory to bring about positive change. His teaching and writing continually make this linkage between theory and practice. For example, most of his writings include some specific vignettes that make the theory come alive. Although he initially saw himself as a practitioner, his successes as a scholar and academic have never diminished his belief in the importance and value of practice. Marshak's thinking and practices have been guided by the continuous interaction of theory and practice, where theories informed his actions and experiences in his practice inspired his search for new ideas and concepts.

Second, his attention to language, symbolism, and narrative has enabled him to see beyond words and actions, and he has raised our awareness of how our culture privileges actions over words. He has a gift for identifying patterns in client systems and is just as adept at seeing patterns in bodies of literature and the evolving interventions under the umbrella of organizational change. Third, he combines his gift at observation and his curiosity to fuel his exploration into a variety of literatures and fields. For example, he borrowed the term "morphogenesis" from biology to juxtapose the concept of creating a new shape within the context of OD. Fourth, his penchant to explore the edges of current theories and practices and raise questions for himself and others about the limits of prevailing assumptions has highlighted how different assumptions might lead to new ways of thinking and acting. His natural curiosity about what goes on behind the scenes and outside of conscious awareness coupled with his approach to analyzing a situation by drawing similarities and differences within the situation and with other situations comes through in his writing, which is full of tables that compare one thing with another, raising our awareness that there is not just one perspective but rather contrasting perspectives. Finally, he has developed his skills through the years to become the gifted writer that he is today. As one of his academic colleagues and coauthors said, "Marshak writes like an angel" (D. Grant, personal communication, June 7, 2016).

Marshak has applied these gifts over the last 40 years in his writings and teachings as a scholar/practitioner, resulting in at least five significant contributions to the field of organizational change.

## Contrasting Lewinian, Western with Confucian, Eastern Perspectives of Change

The impetus for "Lewin Meets Confucius: A Re-View of the OD Model of Change" (Marshak 1993a) was a workshop Marshak presented in Korea in 1991 when an alumnus of the AU/NTL program invited Marshak to Korea to conduct two workshops, one on conflict and one on organizational change. During the change workshop, Marshak felt that "something was off in how the participants responded to the ideas and models he was presenting" and as a result became curious as to what might be going on with this Korean audience (R.J. Marshak, personal communication, March 31, 2016). Knowing from his Army training and experiences 20 years earlier that Korea had been deeply influenced by Confucian philosophy, Marshak decided to learn more about Confucianism and especially the assumptions or models of change in traditional Confucian thinking. He embarked on several years of reading books about Confucian thinking, the *I Ching*, traditional Chinese Medicine, and the like before realizing that Confucian philosophy envisioned change as continuous and cyclical, whereas most Western theories were based on ideas of discontinuous and linear change (e.g., Lewin's unfreeze-movement-refreeze model (1951)). These insights led him to write his first scholarly article for a refereed journal "Lewin Meets Confucius: A Re-View of the OD Model of Change" (1993a) in which he ponders:

> ...whether or not a change model that emphasizes creating change is as relevant to contemporary managers and organization facing continual change, 'permanent white water' (Vaill 1989), as it was to their counterparts of past decades when organizational life was more stable and bureaucratic. (Marshak 1993a, p. 403)

In this seminal article, Marshak compares and contrasts the assumptions about change from a Lewinian, Western perspective to assumptions from a Confucian, Eastern perspective. See Table 1 for a summary of this comparison.

This article not only attempted to identify and raise questions about the deep cultural assumptions underlying OD change theory but also was one of the first discussions of continuous change in a field that had been implicitly based on planned, episodic change. In a later and widely influential article, Weick and Quinn (1999) extensively drew on Marshak's ground breaking analysis for their comments on continuous change.

A year after the publication of "Lewin Meets Confucius," Marshak wrote an article for OD practitioners called "The Tao of Change" (Marshak 1994) in which he presented and explained his perspective on the Lewinian view of change and introduced the cyclical/Confucian view of change as captured in Table 2.

**Table 1** Assumptions About Change
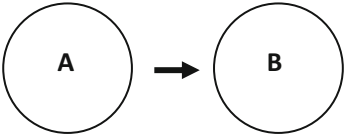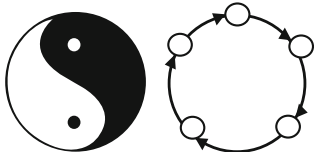
| Lewinian/OD | Confucian/East Asian |
|---|---|
|   Change is: |   Change is: |
| 1. *Linear*. One moves from one state to another state in a forward direction | 1. *Cyclical*. There is a constant ebb and flow to the universe and everything in it is cyclical |
| 2. *Progressive*. One moves from a less to a more desired state | 2. *Processional*. One moves constantly from one condition/form/state to the next condition/form/state in an orderly sequence through a cycle |
| 3. *Destination Oriented*. One moves toward a specific end state | 3. *Journey Oriented*. Because there is constant cyclical change, what matters is how well one follows the way |
| 4. *Based on Creating Disequilibrium*. In order to get movement from the current state, one must alter the equilibrium of the status quo | 4. *Based on Restoring/Maintaining Equilibrium*. Everything is naturally in harmony and perfect. One acts only as needed to restore balance and equilibrium |
| 5. *Planned and Managed by People Who Exist Separate From and Act on Things to Achieve Their Goals*. One learns the principles about how to master and manipulate the forces in the world in order to achieve one's own ends | 5. *Observed and Followed by People Who Are One With Everything and Must Act Correctly to Maintain Harmony in the Universe.* |
| 6. *Unusual, Because Everything Is Normally in a Quasi-Stationary or Static State*. Unless something is done, things will stay the same because a body at rest stays at rest until force is applied | 6. *Usual, Because Everything Is Normally in a Continually Changing Dynamic State*. The continual process of everything in the universe is change. The Yin-Yang law of opposites says everything contains its own negation, so nothing stays forever (Marshak 1993, p. 403) |

**Table 2** Two Views of Change

| OD/Western | Cyclical/Confucian |
|---|---|
| Focus on the Future | Attend to the Past-Present-Future |
| Assume Satisfied People Hold On | Assume Wise People Let Go & Realign |
| Overcome Resistance | Maintain Balance & Harmony |
| Think in Terms of Either/Or | Think in Terms of Both/And |
| Plan and Manage Change | Cultivate System Self-Renewal |
| Think Analytically | Think Holistically |
| Use Reason and Logic | Use Artistry & Composition |
| Measure Progress | Be Values Centered |

Marshak (1994, p. 24)

These two articles "marked a significant shift in [Marshak's] thinking and writing as well as a clear example of 'views from the edge' presented via contrasting ideal types" (Marshak 2009, p. 65) and introduced his cross-cultural views on organization development and change.

## Creating a Framework for Analyzing the Hidden Dimensions of Change: The Covert Processes Model™

Another key contribution is his work with Judith Katz in the late 1980s and 1990s on covert processes and change. Here he and Katz explored the edge of conventional OD practices that tended to emphasize that change would result from rationally putting issues and dynamics out openly "on the table." Marshak and Katz thought this was important but insufficient to explain what they both observed in their practices. Not everything could or even should be put out on the table openly as they asserted that things were hidden for a multitude of reasons that may have included desires to manipulate a situation, but also fear of punishment or retribution, blind spots, limiting mindsets, and unconscious dynamics. After developing a conceptual model that integrated these differing dynamics, they named it "The Covert Processes Model™" drawing on the use in many of the social sciences of the term "covert" to represent hidden dynamics and of course an obvious connection to Marshak's experience in the Army as a special agent in military intelligence. (See Fig. 1.)

They later facilitated intensive residential workshops on covert processes for OD practitioners through NTL Institute, presented workshops at annual ODN conferences (Marshak and Katz 1990, 1991), and wrote a series of articles about covert processes also for practitioners (Marshak and Katz 1997, 2001). An important aspect of his work with covert processes was how symbolic representations (i.e., the four Ms of metaphors, music, movement, and media (Marshak 2006, p. 57)) could reveal unspoken and often subconscious framings and dynamics guiding actions in individuals, groups, and organizations. He and Katz summarized this way of thinking with the phrase "Explore literal messages symbolically, and symbolic messages literally" (Marshak 2006, p. 55). This furthered his interest in the power of metaphors and symbols and also contributed to his later thinking about language and discourse being "situated, symbolic action" as discussed in an article he coauthored with Loizos Heracleous (Heracleous and Marshak 2004a, p. 1285), who Marshak knew from his interactions with the academics developing the new field of organizational discourse studies in the 1990s and early 2000s.

In his book, *Covert Processes at Work* (2006a), Marshak presented the model and captured much of what he and Katz had learned. "In some ways this book can be seen as an extension of the pioneering work by organizational psychologist Ed Schein on process consultation, especially on the importance of being able to decipher hidden forces" (Marshak 2006, p. xii). Marshak and Katz's work on covert processes added an explicit focus on the unconscious and symbolic diagnosis; in
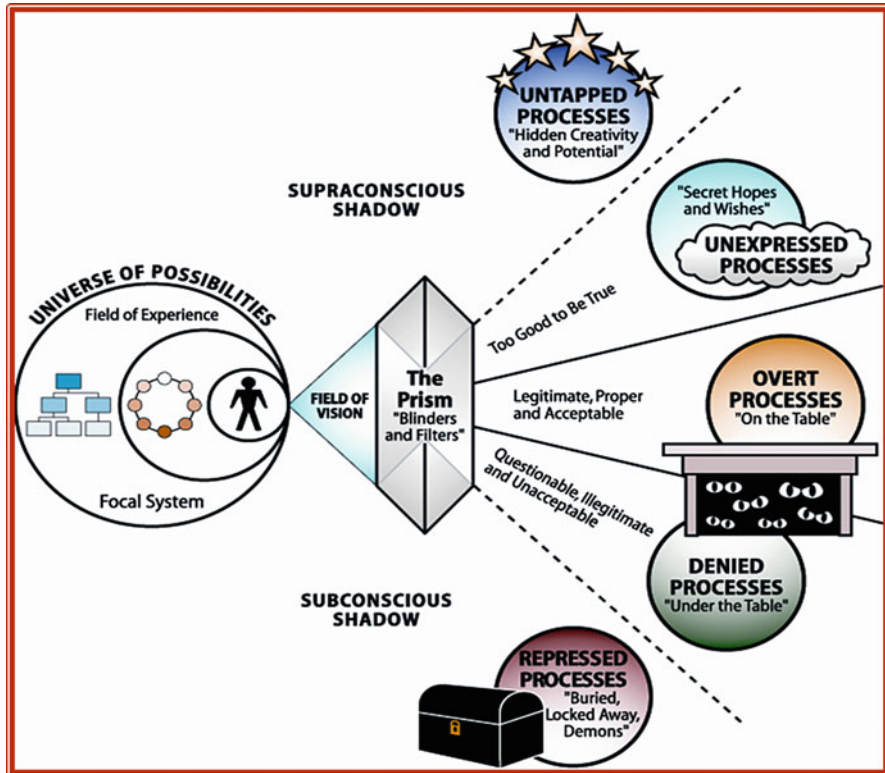
**Fig. 1** The Covert Processes Model™ (Marshak and Katz 1991)

addition, it challenged the implicit OD thinking of putting everything on the table. In their workshops, they trained hundreds of OD practitioners in the basic concepts of covert processes, and through these workshops, articles, and Marshak's book, the concept and language of covert processes became more fully integrated into the OD profession. Covert processes has added to or reenforced in the practice of OD an explicit interest in a range of hidden dynamics including unspoken hopes and dreams, the importance of establishing psychological safety before things can be openly "put on the table," the importance of tacit mindsets in determining what can be openly addressed, and how symbols can be understood as representations of subconscious knowing and framings.

## Focusing on Language, Symbolism, and Metaphors of Change

A large body of Marshak's work deals with how language, symbolism, and metaphors influence how we think about change and are reflected in our actions and theories of change. In the introduction to a collection of his previously published

**Table 3** Metaphors of Change and Change Agents

| Image of Change | Image of Change Agent |
|---|---|
| Fix and Maintain | Repair Person, Maintenance Worker |
| Build and Develop | Trainer, Coach, Developer |
| Move and Relocate | Planner, Guide, Explorer |
| Liberate and Recreate | Liberator, Visionary, Creator |

Marshak (1993b, p. 49)

articles grouped under the heading "Metaphors, Language, and Change," Marshak provides an insight into his curiosity with language:

> Behind this curiosity originally was an untrained belief that specific words and phrases might also reveal unspoken or even unconscious beliefs and understandings. This early predilection has over the years grown into a more educated and practice-proven orientation about how metaphors and language reflect inner cognitive schemata. (2009a, p. 123)

From his earliest consulting experiences in the 1970s, Marshak had a linguistic ear and noted, for example, that people resisting changes frequently used the expression "If it's not broke don't fix it." It was years later that he realized that the phrase was likely connected to thinking about organizations as machines and that change therefore implicitly involved repairs and fixing things that had broken down. This ultimately led to his article "Managing the Metaphors of Change," (Marshak 1993b) where he described different implicit metaphors of change that potentially impacted or revealed unspoken mindsets, as indicated in Table 3.

The concept of how metaphors, and more broadly language, shaped thinking and action became a central aspect of his thinking, practice, and writings. His book chapter entitled "Metaphors, Metaphoric Fields, and Organizational Change" (Marshak 1996) was included in a book by David Grant and Cliff Oswick on metaphors and organizations. The chapter itself extended his previous discussion of the metaphors of change and further explored the relationship of language and symbolism related to organizations and change. Marshak contributed another chapter to a book on discourse and organization, "A Discourse on Discourse" (1998a), where he explained how talk was a form of action and elaborated on how discourse shaped both thinking and action. Several articles addressed concepts and practices associated with language, discourse, and change all derived from his consulting practice: "Changing the Language of Change" (Marshak 2002), "From Outer Words to Inner Worlds" (Marshak et al. 2000), "A Discursive Approach to Organization Development" (Marshak and Heracleous 2005), "Generative Conversations" (Marshak 2013a), and "Leveraging Language for Change" (Marshak 2013b). In addition to his strong theoretical contributions to the field of organizational discourse studies, other contributions were seeing discourse as a vehicle for affecting change and demonstrating how the emerging theory of organizational discourse could be applied (D. Grant, personal communication, June 7, 2016).

This work in organizational discourse besides being a major contribution in itself became a cornerstone of his thinking that led to his next major contribution to the field, which was his work with Gervase Bushe on conceptualizing Dialogic OD.

## Conceptualizing and Describing a New Form of Organization Development: Dialogic OD

Another major contribution to the field of organizational change was identifying a new form of OD. In an award winning article in 2009, Marshak, with colleague and coauthor Gervase Bushe (Bushe and Marshak 2009), conceptualized and described the emergence of a form of OD that differs from the traditional, foundational form of OD. They label the old form of OD "Diagnostic OD" as it focused on diagnosis and problem solving and this new form of OD "Dialogic OD."

Dialogic OD is a recent, important, and still evolving conceptualization of organizational change that integrates a number of different developments that have emerged in OD theory and practice over the past 30 years. In a recent review of the field, two important scholars – Jean Bartunek and Richard Woodman (2015) – noted that Bushe and Marshak (2009) were responsible for a major advancement in the field of organization change theory and practices. See Table 4 for a comparison of Diagnostic and Dialogic OD.

For Marshak the path to conceptualizing a new form of OD and change started in the early 1980s. From the mid-1980s through the 1990s, Marshak had noted developments in OD theory and practice and how they differed from the classical

**Table 4** Contrasting Diagnostic and Dialogic OD

|  | Diagnostic OD | Dialogic OD |
|---|---|---|
| Influenced by | Classical science, positivism, and modernist philosophy | Interpretive approaches, social constructionism, critical, and postmodern philosophy |
| Dominant Organizational Construct | Organizations are like living systems | Organizations are like meaning-making systems |
| Ontology and Epistemology | Reality is an objective fact | Reality is socially constructed |
|  | There is a single reality | There are multiple realities |
|  | Truth is transcendent and discoverable | Truth is immanent and emerges from the situation |
|  | Reality can be discovered using rational and analytic processes | Reality is negotiated and may involve power and political processes |
| Constructs of Change | Usually teleological | Often Dialogical or Dialectical |
|  | Collecting and applying valid data using objective problem-solving methods leads to change | Creating container and processes to produce generative ideas leads to change |
|  | Change can be created, planned, and managed | Change can be encouraged but is mainly self-organizing |
|  | Change is episodic, linear, and goal oriented | Change may be continuous and/or cyclical |
| Focus of Change | Emphasis on changing behavior and what people do | Emphasis on changing mindsets and what people think |

Bushe and Marshak (2014, p. 58)

concepts of OD he had learned in textbooks and through NTL Institute. He describes the anomalies he saw in how OD was practiced in an article "My Journey into Dialogic Organization Development" (Marshak 2015). Some of these anomalies were observable shifts: from close facilitation of small groups as was found in OD teambuilding in the 1960s–1970s to the more choreographed processes found in "large group interventions" (Bunker and Alban 1997); from "diagnosis," which was labeled as problem centric, to "discovery" in appreciative inquiry (Watkins et al. 2011); the shift from episodic change to continuous change (Weick and Quinn 1999); the shift from planned, episodic change to the introduction in the 1990s of ideas of continuous and self-organizing change from the complexity sciences and some pioneers such as Meg Wheatley (1992); a shift from objective reality to constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966); and many of the ideas in organizational discourse (R.J. Marshak, personal communication, May 5, 2016). By the early 2000s Marshak began to see these newer assumptions and approaches as beginning to converge in a way that suggested a newer form of OD was emerging. In 2005 he published a short article in an OD practitioner journal asking, "Is there a new OD?" (Marshak 2006). This drew the attention of Gervase Bushe who called Marshak and said he was thinking some of the same things. This led to a collaboration in working through the conceptual framework of a newer form of OD that combined influences from the interpretive sciences (e.g., social construction, discourse, and meaning making) with ideas from the complexity sciences (e.g., continuous change, self-organizing systems, and complex adaptive systems) (Bushe and Marshak 2015b).

Bushe and Marshak writing separately and together sought to conceptualize a newer form of OD. They quickly learned that calling something "new OD" was unacceptable to those in the field since it implied other forms of OD were "old" and out of date. This forced them to sharpen their thinking and triggered a search for different terminology to describe what they were conceptualizing and culminated in their article "Revisioning Organization Development: Diagnostic and Dialogic Premises and Patterns of Practices" (Bushe and Marshak 2009) that won the Douglas McGregor Memorial Award for the best article in 2009 in *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*. Over the following years, these two change thinkers contributed a series of articles, book chapters, special issues of journals, and in 2015 an edited book elaborating the theory and practice of this new form of OD.

In their book Bushe and Marshak (2015c) introduce the concept of a "Dialogic OD Mindset" that they define as "the combination of theories, beliefs, assumptions, and values that shape how one sees and engages the world" (p. 11). They assert that how OD practitioners approach a specific situation is a product of these variables. They describe the Dialogic OD Mindset with a combination of eight key premises (see Table 5) and three underlying change processes.

These key premises represent assumptions about organizations and change. In addition, they include three core principles that Bushe refers to as the "secret sauce": emergence, narrative, and generativity (Bushe and Marshak 2015a). See Table 6 for a description of these core principles.

**Table 5**  Key Premises of the Dialogic OD Mindset

| |
|---|
| 1. Reality and relationships are socially constructed |
| 2. Organizations are meaning-making systems |
| 3. Language, broadly defined, matters |
| 4. Creating change requires changing conversations |
| 5. Structure participative inquiry and engagement to increase differentiation before seeking coherence |
| 6. Groups and organizations are continuously self-organizing |
| 7. Transformational change is more emergent than planned |
| 8. Consultants are a part of the process, not apart from the process |

Bushe and Marshak (2015b, pp. 17–18)

**Table 6**  Three Core Processes of Organizational Change in Dialogic OD

| |
|---|
| **Emergence** is when a disruption in the ongoing social construction of reality is stimulated or engaged in a way that leads to a more complex reorganization |
| **Narrative** is when there is a change to the main story lines people use to explain and bring coherence to their organizational lives |
| **Generative images** are when words or symbols are introduced or emerge that allow people to see old things in new ways |

Bushe and Marshak (2015a)

See www.dialogicod.net for a list of comments about their book and ideas. Later in this chapter the discussion returns to possible next steps in the development of theory and practice to flesh out the new Dialogic OD.

## Contribution as a Leader, Educator, and Practitioner in the Field of OD

Marshak's thinking and writings have always been stimulated by something experienced as a practitioner, teacher, or contributor to the field of OD and its supporting organizations. He has made significant contributions to the field and institutions of OD by assuming numerous leadership roles: cochair of the 1984 OD Network Annual Conference; cofounder of the Chesapeake Bay OD Network in 1984; vice chair of the board of trustees, NTL Institute in 1990; founding faculty member for the AU/NTL MSOD program in 1979–1980; trustee of the OD Network Board of Directors (2003–2008); acting editor, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* in 2004; and cofounder of the OD Educational Association (ODEA) in 2007.

Not to be overlooked is the personal impact he has had on thousands of students he taught through NTL workshops in the US and overseas and as adjunct faculty at several universities including American University, Georgetown University, University of Texas, and Johns Hopkins University. As a faculty member at American University's School of Public Affairs between 1977 and 2016, Marshak has served as both an adjunct professor and most recently as Distinguished Scholar in Residence, teaching

both in the masters in public administration and in the AU Masters of Science in Organization Development Program, which was previously known as the AU/NTL program. As one of the founding faculty, Marshak has taught more than 70 cohorts since 1980 and well over 1500 students have experienced Marshak's engaging, yet challenging, teaching style. With an insistence on the importance of theory to the practice of OD, the ability to present complex information succinctly, and his experience as both a practitioner and thinker about OD, students continually give Marshak's class the highest ratings in the AU MSOD program.

Some insight into Marshak's unique approaches to learning in the classroom can be found in an early article he wrote explaining his approach in the classroom titled "Cognitive and Experiential Approaches to Conceptual Learning" (Marshak 1983), in which he argues that as cognitive creatures we employ a "conceptual system to understand phenomenon and guide behavior" (p. 72). He explains that our conceptual system consists of theories and concepts; these theories are of two types: personal and formal. Our personal theories develop from our childhood and life experiences and inform us as to how the world works; the downside is that our personal theories are usually unexamined and out of our conscious awareness. Not coincidentally this also forms a foundational idea that he revisited and expanded upon in his later work on covert processes more than a decade later. In the classroom one of Marshak's gifts to students is to make them aware of these personal, unconscious theories and to encourage them to question whether these unconscious theories are hurtful or helpful, all while teaching them formal theories of organizational behavior.

Marshak seeks to develop students to be strong, thoughtful practitioners. Today, alumni of AU's MSOD program are in positions of leadership and influence in all of the OD academic and professional associations as well as multiple sectors, including government, industry, and the nonprofit where they are observing and applying insights into organizations and organizational change that they learned from Marshak. One recent cohort of students in the AU MSOD program spoke about the "Pocket Marshak" (B. Hall, personal communication, May 1, 2016), which represented a desire to have in your pocket Marshak's ability to listen to the language being used; to observe the situation for clues of the underlying meaning; to form assumptions based on the language used, the observed behavior, augmented by relevant theories or models; and, within seconds, to ask riveting, insightful questions that shift the person or system to a new perspective.

Having reviewed Marshak's key contributions to the field of organizational change, what new insights have illuminated and shifted how academics and practitioners view the field of organizational change?

## New Insights: Influencing Theory and Practice

This section reframes Marshak's key contributions and presents the derivative insights that have influenced the field for more than 30 years. The section begins with a narrative of how Marshak illuminated the author's view of organizational change.

## Impact of Marshak's Thinking, Teaching, and Mentoring on This Author

Reflecting on Marshak's contribution to the field of organizational change, I begin with the impact his thinking, teaching, and mentoring has had on me as an OD practitioner and educator. In 1994 my mentor was Fred Nader, a former president of NTL Institute and an OD change practice leader whom I met when he was consulting to American Management Systems where I was an information technology (IT) professional. With Nader's encouragement and support, I applied to and enrolled in the AU/NTL master's degree program in OD with cohort 33 in 1996. As Nader taught in the AU/NTL program, I shared with him that I had some misgivings about our next professor, Dr. Marshak, who had a reputation as being exceedingly challenging and demanding; many of my classmates were quite anxious about taking Marshak's course in organization theory. Nader pointed out that I had a choice: I could let Marshak's reputation intimidate me and hinder my learning, or I could reframe it as an opportunity to spend two weekends with one of the cleverest minds in the field of OD. I chose the latter option and even 20 years later, Marshak's course was one of the most memorable and powerful learning experiences I have had. In class we explored the classical literature with Weber (1946), Burns and Stalker (1961), Katz and Kahn (1978), Lawrence and Lorsch (1969), and Thompson (1967), as well as more recent writings on metaphors (Morgan 1986). What surprised me was being challenged to be aware of my own perceptions of organizations and my personal assumptions and beliefs about the world. Marshak stimulated my curiosity about human systems.

With the encouragement of another professor in the program, Charlie Seashore, I subsequently chose to pursue a Ph.D. in human and organizational systems at Fielding Graduate University, where Seashore was the dean of faculty. When I approached the dissertation phase, I knew I wanted to focus on exploring how people in complex organizations made sense of planned organizational change. I needed an external reader for my dissertation and asked Marshak to be that reader because of his focus on change, language, and meaning making, his insights into large, bureaucratic organizations, and his academic and professional rigor. My research (Wagner 2006) was focused on how different stakeholder groups experienced and made sense of Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's intended transformation of the US Department of Defense (DOD) in the early 2000s as part of the second President Bush administration. Marshak's review and feedback on what I had hoped was my close to final draft was both devastating and insightful; he encouraged me to look deeper into the study. When he gave me positive feedback on my revisions, I was delighted and knew that I had a good product as later indicated by the fact that a summary of my dissertation received a Best Paper Award from the OD&C Division of the Academy of Management (Wagner 2006). After obtaining my PhD, I returned to the AU/NTL program with a friend and colleague, Dr. Kathleen Cavanaugh, where we offered to redesign the one course that had least prepared us for our doctoral work: Methods of Problem Solving (MOPS), which at the time focused on only quantitative, not qualitative, data collection and analysis. Marshak offered to mentor us through the design phase and to co-teach

the first course with us; under his tutelage I learned much about designing experiential learning and structuring activities to reinforce the readings through activities in the classroom.

With Marshak's ongoing support, I have continued to teach in this program since 2006, became the Interim Director in 2014, and the next year the Director and an Executive in Residence in the School of Public Affairs. Marshak continues to challenge my thinking, heightening my awareness of language and metaphors, and encourage me to strive for excellence. I have felt blessed to have Marshak's continued support in my quest to grow and develop as an educator and administrator in higher education.

## New Insights and Contributions to OD and Change Theory and Practice

Throughout his work Marshak has led us to view change in organizations in new and surprising ways. He has challenged the dominant OD model of change (1993a), shifted the focus on language from being how it reports reality to how it creates reality (1993b), provided a model for seeing the hidden or subconscious factors that can impede a change initiative (2006a), highlighted how we implicitly privilege action over talk (1998a) and stability over change (2002a), and conceptualized and introduced the Dialogic OD mindset (Bushe and Marshak 2009, 2014, 2015a, b, c). Each of these new insights and contributions are reviewed briefly below.

**Expanded the Lewinian paradigm on organizational change from "the" paradigm to "a" paradigm.** When Marshak's acclaimed article "Lewin Meets Confucius: A Review of the OD Model of Change" (1993a) was published almost a quarter of a century ago, it raised some important ideas and challenged the then dominant OD model of change (unfreeze, movement, refreeze (Lewin 1951)). He asserted that this foundational OD model was based in Western culture and argued that alternative conceptions of change existed in other cultures. He presented and described contrasting world views: the linear, start-stop nature of the Lewinian perspective on change with the continuous cycle of change in the Confucian and Taoist perspectives. Marshak's insight – change is both continuous and cyclical rather than just episodic and linear – enables us to step out of the prevailing paradigm in order to see our paradigm of change not as "the" paradigm but as "a" paradigm. The following year, Marshak adapted and expanded these insights for practitioners in "The Tao of Change" (Marshak 1994). See Table 2 for how a practitioner might understand the difference between the Lewinian and the Confucian views of change.

In the process of presenting these new insights at conferences and in both academic and practitioner journals, Marshak quickly learned that "the possibility that there might be something outside of, and different from, the dominant OD model of change seemed to be an unacceptable proposition" (Marshak 2009, p. 66). Years later, he would encounter similar pushback when he and Bushe proposed that there was an alternative to the foundational OD mindset and models of change.

**Highlighted the importance of nonrational and hidden aspects of change in partnership with Judith Katz.** Marshak and Judith Katz integrated a range of ideas in the social sciences into a single model of hidden dynamics, signaling the importance of paying attention to the nonrational and hidden dynamics of a change effort. As practicing scholar/practitioners, they developed their insights into how nonrational factors (e.g., politics, inspirations, emotions, ways of thinking, and psychodynamics) have important influences in change efforts. They began by presenting these insights at organization development network conferences (Marshak and Katz 1990, 1991) and in articles in the *OD Practitioner* (Marshak and Katz 1997, 2001). Marshak documented these insights in his book *Covert Processes at Work: Managing the Five Hidden Dimensions of Organizational Change* (Marshak 2006).

Katz observes that one of Marshak's strong skills is his brilliance at integrating different ideas and concepts, a recent example being detecting the shifts in OD, pulling them together, and drawing the distinction between the traditional OD, calling it "Diagnostic OD" and the new, emerging practices that he and Bushe labeled "Dialogic OD" (J. Katz, personal communication, April, 20, 2016). In discussing her experience working with Marshak, she reflected that he was not a "stop and start guy" meaning that once something caught his attention he would stay focused on it across the decades. His tenacity has brought the field an increased awareness of language, symbolism, and metaphors as discussed below.

**Galvanized the importance of language, symbolism, and metaphors of change.** Marshak provided the field with the insight that people hold different formal and informal conceptions of change and that these different conceptions directly influence how people see and respond to change. In so doing he encouraged practitioners and academics to reflect on their implicit assumptions and then try to experience the world through a different set of assumptions. This line of thinking and questions ran through much of his work and was a central theme in his classic article, "Managing the Metaphors of Change." Starting with his first practitioner publication about the difference between magicians and shamans of OD (Marshak 1982), a significant portion of his work was intended to raise awareness of the conceptual confines of the field as revealed by word images, prevailing narratives, embedded meanings, and other forms of symbolic expression and to then suggest things beyond existing confines. Some of his key insights for the field of organizational change related to language, symbolism, and metaphors include the following (R.J. Marshak, personal communication, May 5, 2016):

- Language socially constructs and both enables and limits how we think about and experience change.
- Metaphors, story lines, and other forms of symbolic expression reveal explicit and implicit ways of thinking.
- Intervening through language can reframe mindsets and lead to both new behaviors and actions.
- Talk is a form of action, and talk contains action.

Marshak's views from the edge have challenged our conceptions of consulting and change for almost 35 years and led him to his most recent set of insights and collaboration with Bushe on conceptualizing an emerging form of OD they call, Dialogic OD. As Marshak notes, when one perceives language as constructive and change as continuous it begins to lead one's thinking away from traditional OD assumptions to a different conceptualization of OD focused on continuous, emergent change, the role language and symbols play in change, and the unplanned spontaneity of systems that recreate themselves (R.J. Marshak, personal communication, May 5, 2016).

**Identified and brought coherence to a new form of OD: Dialogic OD.** In 2010 NTL sponsored a special conference titled "The New OD" where Marshak challenged the status quo in his keynote address in which he shared his observations about the emergence of a new form of OD and potential consequences for the field as a whole. In a subsequent article, "OD Morphogenesis: the Emerging Dialogic Platform of Premises" (Marshak 2010), he captured the central concern: "...how the underlying premises that historically formed the field of OD have been expanded to allow a broader range of new communities of OD practice to emerge" (2010, p. 5). In the title Marshak borrows the term "morphogenesis" from biology where it refers to a biological process that "deals with the form of living organisms" (Brown et al. 1993). In the article he applies the concept of morphogenesis to the field of OD and proposes a platform of premises upon which the original OD was built. He then contrasts that with a set of premises that he identifies as creating a platform for an emerging, new form of OD. The two platforms of premises are presented in Table 7.

In the article Marshak also builds on an earlier presentation of metaphors of change (see Table 3) and expands it to the influence on change theories (see Table 8).

Three important insights presented in the morphogenesis article are that the emergent "dialogic" form of OD "offer[s] different possibilities and practices than found in foundational OD," "both [forms] currently exist and that OD, as a field, would benefit from a clearer differentiation," and "that people are more and more drawing on and combining the newer premises such that some practices now include a combination of several or even all of them" (Marshak 2010, p. 8). As the story of Dialogic OD emerges, there is still much work remaining.

**Table 7** Contrasting Premises in OD

| Foundational Premises in OD | More recent premises in OD |
|---|---|
| 1. Positivism and Univocality | 1. Social Construction and Plurivocality |
| 2. Social Psychology and the Primacy of Small Groups | 2. Large Group/System Events |
| 3. Open Systems Theory | 3. Meaning-Making Systems |
| 4. Humanistic Psychology | 4. Participative Action Inquiry |
| 5. Action Research and Process Consultation | 5. Discursive Studies |
| 6. Planned Change | 6. Complexity, Self-Organizing, and Continuous Change |
| 7. Humanistic and Democratic Values | 7. Humanistic and Democratic Values |

Marshak (2010, pp. 6–8)

**Table 8** Influences on Change Theories

|  | Mechanical Sciences (1900 to Present) | Biological Sciences (1960s to Present) | Interpretive Sciences (1980s to Present) | Complexity Sciences (1990s to Present) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organizations are: | Determinate, closed systems | Contingent, open systems | Generative, meaning-making systems | Complex adaptive systems |
| Focus on: | Efficiency, plans, structure, IT, productivity | Alignment, congruence, strategic plans | Discourse, meaning making, culture, consciousness | Chaos, self-organization, emergent design |
| Change by: | Fix and Re-engineer | Adapt and Re-position | Reframe and Rename | Flux and Emergence |

Marshak (2010, p. 5)

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Advancing the Dialogic Mindset

In concluding this chapter, the reader is invited to reflect on what inspiration or insights he or she has derived from Marshak's body of work and how to apply these learnings in his or her practice as an OD scholar/practitioner or as an OD-enabled leader. In addition, readers are challenged to consider how they might build upon Marshak's contributions.

## Legacies for Scholars and Practitioners

Marshak has collaborated with many scholar/practitioners throughout his career. Several who shared their stories of working with Marshak described him as a generous colleague; their comments helped identify the key contributions discussed earlier in this chapter. When asked about his legacies, the conversations focused on his heightened skills at observation, analysis, and synthesis; his gifts as a theorist, cognitive linguist, and writer; and his exceptional presence as a classroom teacher. First, so many commented that Marshak is one of the great intellects in our field; one reason is because he is brilliant at integrating disparate things and creatively pulling them together into a coherent whole (J. Katz, personal communication, April 20, 2016). Another said his brilliance played out in his strong contribution to theorizing in both organizational discourse studies and Dialogic OD (D. Grant, personal communication, June 7, 2016). Marshak's ability as a writer was a theme that came through; several mentioned his style of including vignettes in his writing; one colleague observed that the "vignettes give his writing so much energy. . .his language comes alive" (D. Grant, personal communication, June 7, 2016). Practitioners commented that when they read

Marshak's description of conversations with clients, they recognized similar conversations from their own practice and this helped reframe everyday conversations and provided new insights.

Many discussed Marshak's contributions to the field of OD. One colleague asserted that Marshak's work in organizational discourse studies and Dialogic OD has "reinvigorated the field of OD" and that Marshak was a "bridge" between the foundational forms of OD and the newer forms of OD (D. Grant, personal communication, June 7, 2016). Grant went on to say that without Marshak's bridging role the field might have lost some of its traditions and values of OD if Marshak had not reminded them of its origins. Others also described his commitment to the field of OD, but commented that he embraced it with a tough love and that he was not one to "drink the Kool-Aid," which enabled him to cast a critical eye on the field (M. Minahan, personal communication, April 2016). One colleague wrote "A sense of hopeful anticipation may not be unwarranted when we reflect on the possibility of receiving Bob's next effort, contribution or 'humble inquiry' into organizational dynamics, enterprise performance, and 'wise' actions for improved change leadership" (D. LaCour, personal communication, April 15, 2016).

In the classroom, the first Director of the AU/NTL program remembers Marshak as "a remarkable, extraordinary classroom instructor... the best" (D. Zauderer, personal communication, April 25, 2016). One colleague provided insight into Marshak's philosophy in the classroom, which is to teach the direct relationship between theory and practice; noting that he has a "high-bar" desire for students to deeply understand theory because that directly influences the effectiveness of their practice (J. Katz, personal communication, April 20, 2016).

## Unfinished Business: Creating Theory and Practice for Dialogic OD

Bushe and Marshak's book (2015c) – *Dialogic Organization Development: The Theory and Practice of Transformational Change* – is viewed as a paradigm shift in the field of organizational change. The authors have hosted webinars, presented at conferences, held book signings at various universities, and sponsored the First Annual Dialogic International Conference held in Vancouver, BC, Canada in August 2015 as a prelude to the annual Academy of Management Conference. Other such events will likely follow. However, the work that they have started continues. In the conclusion of their book, they propose a series of questions that will need to be addressed:

- How do dialogic processes of transformation work in practice?
- When is a Dialogic OD approach called for?
- What are the key choice points Dialogic OD practitioners routinely face?
- What choices do they and organizational leaders make and why?
- What skills and knowledge are needed for successful Dialogic OD practice? (Bushe and Marshak 2015c, p. 402)

In closing, it seems appropriate to highlight Marshak's decades of bringing to the field his integration of ideas from different theories, practices, and traditions. Almost everything he has done has brought together ideas that might have been previously disjoint, such as magicians and shamans (Marshak 1982), Lewin and Confucius (Marshak 1993a), talk and action (Marshak 1998), overt and covert (Marshak 2006), and finally Diagnostic and Dialogic OD (Bushe and Marshak 2009).

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Thompson, J. D. (1967). *Organizations in action: Social science bases of administrative theory.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Wagner, R. S. (2006). *The human element of organizational transformation: A phenomenographic study of how internal stakeholders in federal defense organizations experience and make sense of planned organizational change.* (PhD), Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara.

Watkins, J. M., Mohr, B. J., & Kelly, R. (2011). *Appreciative inquiry: Change at the speed of imagination* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Pfeiffer & Co.

Weber, M. (1946). Bureaucracy. In J. M. Shafritz & J. S. Ott (Eds.), *Classics of organization theory* (3rd ed., pp. 81–86). Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing.

Weick, K. E., & Quinn, R. E. (1999). Organizational change and development. *Annual Review Psychology, 50*, 361–386.

Wheatley, M. J. (1992). *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organization from an orderly world*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

## Further Reading

This final section includes a short list of books and journal articles that enable readers to take their interests further. The readings are organized by the identified themes in Marshak's work.

## Classic Articles: Lewinian, Western with Confucian, Eastern Perspectives of Change

Marshak, R. J. (1993). Lewin meets Confucius: A re-view of the OD model of change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *29*(4), 393–415.

Marshak, R. J. (1994). The Tao of change. *OD Practitioner*, *26*(2), 18–26.

## Presenting a Framework for Analyzing the Hidden Dimensions of Changes: The Covert Processes Model™

Marshak, R. J. (2006). *Covert processes at work: Managing the five hidden dimensions of organizational change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

## Focusing on Language, Symbolism, and Metaphors of Change

Marshak, R. J. (1993). Managing the metaphors of change. *Organizational Dynamics*, *22*(1), 44–56.

Marshak, R. J. (1998). A discourse on discourse: Redeeming the meaning of talk. In D. Grant, T. Keenoy, & C. Oswick (Eds.), *Discourse and organization* (pp. 15–30). London: Sage.

Marshak, R. J. (2002). Changing the language of change: How new contexts and concepts are challenging the ways we think and talk about organizational change. *Strategic Change*, *11*(5), 279–286.

Marshak, R. J. (2013). Leveraging language for change. *OD Practitioner*, *45*(2), 49–55.

Marshak, R. J., & Grant, D. (2008). Organizational discourse and new organization development practices. *British Journal of Management*, *19*, S7–S19.

Heracleous, L., & Marshak, R. J. (2004). Conceptualizing organizational discourse as situated symbolic action. *Human Relations*, *57*(10), 1285–1312.

## Conceptualizing and Describing a New Form of Organization Development: Dialogic OD

Bushe, G. R., & Marshak, R. J. (2009). Revisioning organization development: Diagnostic and dialogic premises and patterns of practice. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 45*, 348–368.

Bushe, G. R., & Marshak, R. J. (Eds.) (2015). *Dialogic organization development: The theory and practice of transformational change*. Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Marshak, R. J. (2015). My journey into dialogic organization development. *OD Practitioner*, *47*(2), 47–52.

## Writings for Practitioners in the Field of OD

Many of Marshak's best works for practitioners are included in a section in *Views from the Edge* in "Part Four: Insights for Organization Development Practitioners."

Marshak, R. J. (2009) *Organizational change: Views from the edge*. Bethel: The Lewin Center.

# A 30-Year Collaboration of Victoria Marsick and Karen Watkins: Learning in the Workplace

# 50

Michael Beyerlein, Khalil M. Dirani, and Lei Xie

**Abstract**

A field in the social and organizational science grows in richness of perspective, methods, and tools, the same way a field in the hard sciences does: new ideas emerge from the rich conversation of the members. Sometimes, a rich flow of ideas emerges from a special subgroup, such as collaborative partnerships. This chapter focuses on such a partnership: the 30-year collaboration of doctors Victoria Marsick and Karen Watkins. It is a story of discovering new ways to view learning in the workplace, but it did not start with that focus. The content of our chapter is based on interviews with Marsick and Watkins and with seven of their colleagues, who read much of their work and related material and interacted with them for several decades. Interviews included former students, colleagues, coauthors, and fellow board members for the Association for Talent Development (ATD, formerly ASTD) and the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). Those individuals had known the two scholars 15–25 years.

**Keywords**

Collaboration • Informal and incidental learning • Learning organization • Human resource development • Performance Learning • Organization development • Problem-solving

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## Contents

## Introduction

In 1985, one of those rare collaborations between scholars was born that influenced both research and practice in multiple disciplines around the world. Victoria Marsick and Karen Watkins began a 30-year partnership of thinking and writing that resulted in focusing the attention of scholars on workplace learning and provided them with frameworks and tools. This chapter traces the evolution of their collaboration and the impact of their work on organizational change, human resource development, and adult learning. Twenty-first century organizations depend on constant learning for generating constant adaptive change at a level unprecedented in prior centuries. Marsick and Watkins' work provides insight and guidelines for development of learning organizations.

## Influences and Motivations: Marsick and Watson's Development as Scholars

Marsick is currently the professor of adult learning and leadership for the department of organization and leadership, and codirector of a research institute at Teachers College (TC), Columbia University, which studies learning in organizations. Marsick's scholarship includes work on informal learning, action learning, team learning, system learning culture, strategic organizational learning, and knowledge management.

Watkins is currently the professor and program coordinator in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy (Learning, Leadership, and Organization) at the University of Georgia. Her scholarship focuses on learning organizations, action learning, action science, workplace learning, reflective learning,

informal learning, incidental learning, human resource development, organizational change, and learning at the core.

During three decades of shared thinking and writing, doctors Marsick and Watkins have produced more than 50 joint publications, including five books and one significant measurement instrument (the Dimensions of the Learning Organization Questionnaire, *DLOQ*). Those publications have had a significant impact on both the research and practice of human learning at the individual, team, and organizational levels in all kinds of organizations. Our chapter will trace the development of those ideas, their impact and the legacy of this team of two exceptional individuals, and their notable collaboration.

Marsick and Watkins started their careers in different fields and different locations, although their commencement dates for BS, MS, and PhD show that they were on parallel schedules. Marsick grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and noticed that its many ethnic neighborhoods each represented distinct cultures with "stick-to-your-own-kind" norms about boundary crossing. She became interested in socialization, particularly its influence on "unspoken, tacit assumptions about what is or is not possible in society (Marsick, personal communication, April 10, 2016)." This led to her interest in the works of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön (whom she discovered in graduate school) on single-loop and double-loop learning, tacit assumptions, and societal suppression. Her interest in cross-cultural dimensions of socialization originated when – as part of her master's degree in international public administration at Syracuse – she spent a little more than a year in India – an "eye opening" experience that enabled her to examine her own unspoken assumptions about society. A classroom assignment that grew out of this internship experience upon her return to Syracuse to complete her degree was used by a nonprofit organization, World Education, with which she subsequently worked, including 3 years as a field representative in Southeast Asia (and on whose advisory board she has served). Through that assignment, she met Jack Mezirow, Len Nadler, Bob Luke, and other adult educators who had interests in adult learning and change. Marsick learned about training and development by working with Nadler, among others, on training design and implementation, and through working with nonprofit organizations in Asia and Africa as a consultant.

## Victoria Marsick's Career

Marsick's PhD studies in adult education were completed at Berkeley, under the mentorship of Jack London, who had an interest in equity and in international adult education. While at Berkeley, Marsick collaborated with Mezirow and others on a grounded theory study of higher education programs designed for women who returned to their studies after raising families or earning a living. This research led to Mezirow's (1978) seminal theorizing about how adults critically examine assumptions, leading to transformation of their views, perspectives, and actions. Marsick worked with Mezirow as a graduate student and then as a colleague through his retirement at Columbia in 1992. She described Mezirow as a major influence on her

thought and work, particularly transformative learning (personal communication, April 10, 2016). Her understanding of society's role in shaping lives grew while working on her dissertation – a comparative analysis of experiential learning designs for training programs preparing field workers in health and family planning (Nepal, Taiwan, and the Philippines). Another key influence was the 5 years she spent in a staff development position at the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) after earning her PhD, where she honed her training and development (T&D) design skills. She learned organization development (OD) skills from her supervisor, Eigil Morch, who utilized an OD framework in supporting organizational learning at UNICEF. Marsick's extensive international work provided her with the opportunity to refine a focus on experiential learning design to support individual and organizational development, and to gain an appreciation of the complexities of change in nested systems through the management of system dynamics. That rich experience was the prelude to meeting Watkins.

## Karen Watkin's Career

Watkins began her academic career as a teacher of English at Miami-Dade Community College, where Carol Zion's mentorship involved her in faculty and organization development (Watkins, personal communication, April 10, 2016). Watkins became frustrated with how difficult it was to get faculty to change, so she began to develop an interest in learning and organizational change. Oscar Mink convinced her to complete her doctoral work at the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), and played a significant mentoring role for her in OD. She worked with Mink on OD in workshops, in developing a new Human Resource Development (HRD) program, on conference presentations, on book chapters, in consulting through the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, and in the cochairing of dissertations – frequently during the early 1980s, but continuing on into the 1990s. She joined the Human Resource OD Program at UT Austin to teach OD, and discovered the work of Argyris and Schön. Watkins read Schön's book *Beyond the Stable State* for her dissertation work. She invited Argyris and Schön to speak at UT, which led to a long-term relationship with Schön and his students, to develop curricula in action science. In 2001, she and Jackie Wilson coauthored a paper about Argyris for a book on influential twentieth century authors in adult and continuing education.

## Launching a 30-Year Collaboration

In the 1980s – in the early days of HRD as a field – a debate to decide whether or not HRD was "adult education" because of its focus on behavioral change and skills training was arranged between Mezirow and Nadler at the Commission of Professors of Adult Education Conference. By contrast, the field of adult education – with its roots in community development – advocated for a view of social justice that did not

include organizations that were considered anti-worker. Watkins facilitated a small group to discuss the debate remarks, and Marsick was in her group. She spoke to Marsick during the break, and the two women immediately discovered how parallel their histories and interests were. Marsick invited Watkins to coauthor a chapter on approaches to researching workplace learning in the book she was editing, *Learning in the Workplace* (1987). That led to their first coauthored book, *Informal and Incidental Learning in the Workplace* (1990), which focused on learning outside the classroom; that volume was reissued in 2015. The continued development of those ideas led to the realization that informal learning strategies were central to HRD and that they differed by level and by how individuals deal with the system dynamics of the organization.

Through the 1990s, Marsick and Watkins each published books with other coauthors, but their key contributions linked their scholarship on informal and incidental learning with organizational learning. Over time, they have updated their model of informal and incidental learning to recognize its interactive, social nature (Marsick and Watkins 1990). In 1993, they coauthored *Sculpting the Learning Organization*, followed in 1996 by an edited book that illustrated what learning organization looked like *(In action: Creating the Learning Organization)*. In 1999, they published a follow-up to *Sculpting*, called *Facilitating the Learning Organization*, which was followed in 2003 by *Making Learning Count: Diagnosing the Learning Culture in Organizations* as an issue of *Advances in Developing Human Resources*. How did these ideas coevolve over time?

Their early conversations were about informal and incidental learning, based on common interests in action science (Argyris and Schön), learning (John Dewey and Mezirow), OD (Kurt Lewin), and action research. They realized later that they had both written dissertations on organizational change but had different foci and contexts. The subsequent intermingling of these ideas formed a part of their intellectual scaffolding. They conceptualized the outline for their first book on informal and incidental learning while traveling by train in England to participate in an international conference. They continued to develop their ideas in joint workshops and conference presentations as they worked on *Sculpting the Learning Organization*, drawing on research they were carrying out independently or with other coauthors, such as the studies of team learning that Marsick undertook with Kathleen Dechant and Elizabeth Kasl in the 1990s. Their work with other colleagues often enriched their work together. The writing process for *Sculpting* published in 1993 radically differed from the process for *Informal and Incidental Learning*. For the 1990 book, they each wrote chapters by themselves and shared the results for editing by email between Austin, Texas, and New York City. They did the same with chapters for *Sculpting*, although they had worked together on the arguments in the book and the outline for its chapters. When they received reviewer feedback about the manuscript for *Sculpting*, they realized that they needed to refocus and do a significant rewrite on several chapters. They found ways to work together in blocks of time, but this go-round, each of them rewrote the other's chapters after extended conversations about the necessary changes, leading to the publisher's observation that this book seemed to have a single voice.

Their primary areas of shared scholarship include the learning organization and informal and incidental learning. The impact of that scholarship has been global with their key measurement instrument, the *DLOQ*, and learning organization conceptual framework, translated into at least 15 languages and used in studies in a number of countries. Another major impact of their work was its key role in influencing research directions in the field of HRD. They are widely recognized for providing the field with a research-based set of theories, tools, and practices that have influenced how scholars and practitioners think about and study learning in organizations – a multilevel process that represents the cornerstone of sustainability in the turbulent times of the twenty-first century workplace. Their work together continues today. The next section provides an overview of the more critical ideas they have cocreated.

## Key Contributions: Informal and Incidental Learning and the Learning Organization

In the following section, we will discuss two of Watkins and Marsick's main scholarly contributions, namely informal and incidental learning and the learning organization.

### Informal and Incidental Learning

Informal and incidental learning gained researchers' interest during only the past 20 years; efforts started with defining and describing both types of learning. Marsick and Watkins pioneered this field by providing a model for informal and incidental learning and through the publication of their book, *Informal and Incidental Learning in the Workplace* (first published in 1990 and reprinted in 2015). Marsick and Watkins knew that traditional structured approaches to training were not effective when it came to learning in the workplace. They believed that informal and incidental learning were more effective approaches to helping people in the workplace, and they developed a theory that captured their concepts and provided strategies for understanding and capturing informal learning. At that time, they did not think that in 25 years, their work would become central for scholars, practitioners, and students of the field of HRD.

Marsick and Watkins (1990) said that they wrote their book for "those who are interested in informal and incidental learning in the workplace, which [they] contrast with more highly structured workshops, seminars and courses that are often referred to as training and development (1990, p. 3)."

Marsick and Watkins said that they believed that, unlike formal learning, informal and incidental learning were learner-driven and were intentional, self-directed, and not highly structured. They suggested that organizations can deliberately encourage such forms of learning and that individuals can learn informally or incidentally, irrespective of their organization's environment.

## Informal and Incidental Learning Origins and Model

Informal learning can be traced back to the works of Lindeman (1926) and Dewey (1938), who emphasized the importance of learning from experience and the role of reflective thought in the learning process. Marsick and Watkins (2001) noted that their theory of informal and incidental learning was rooted in concepts such as formal and nonformal learning (Jarvis 1987), social modeling (Bandura 1986), experiential learning (Kolb 1984), self-directed learning (Knowles 1950), action and experiential learning (Revans 1982), action science (Argyris and Schön 1978), reflection in action (Schön 1983), critical reflection and transformative learning (Mezirow 1991), tacit knowing (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995), situated cognition (Lave and Wenger 1991), and communities of practice (Wenger 1998).

Marsick and Watkins' (1990) model describing informal and incidental learning has been empirically tested in numerous studies that represent a variety of organizational contexts. Based on that model, researchers have (a) identified catalysts for informal learning (Ellinger et al. 2003); (b) examined learning strategies, techniques, and outcomes and consequences for organizations (Cseh et al. 1999); and (c) explored the importance of context on informal and incidental learning (Marsick and Watkins 2001).

Marsick and Watkins (1997) characterized their model as a problem-solving approach that commences with an event or situation as a trigger, stimulating the need to develop a solution to a problem and to find the meaning in a situation. Triggers often challenge an individual's presently held frame of reference and require a nonroutine response (Marsick and Watkins 1990). The informal learning process continues through phases that include the individual's interpreting the trigger, considering alternative solutions, identifying appropriate learning strategies, and implementing the chosen strategy – followed by an evaluation of anticipated and unanticipated consequences of the chosen solution (Cseh et al. 1999). The concluding phase of the informal and incidental learning model provides a foundation for further learning, and shapes expectations for future experiences. The entire process is embedded in "context," or the complex environment in which the informal learning occurs (Marsick and Watkins 1990).

Figure 1 depicts the Marsick and Watkins model of informal and incidental learning. The model shows a progression of meaning making – for each new insight individuals may have to go back and question earlier understandings. According to Marsick and Watkins (2001), the model is arranged in a circle, but the steps are neither linear nor necessarily sequential.

Figure 2 presents the reconceptualized model of informal learning. In this newest version of the Marsick and Watkins model, the doctors integrated the incidental learning process, since "it was clear to us that it is always occurring, with or without our conscious awareness (Marsick and Watkins 2001, p. 29)." Both models of informal and incidental learning show the genuine evolution of Marsick and Watkins as scholars and students of learning in the workplace through the integration of research and practice within HRD.
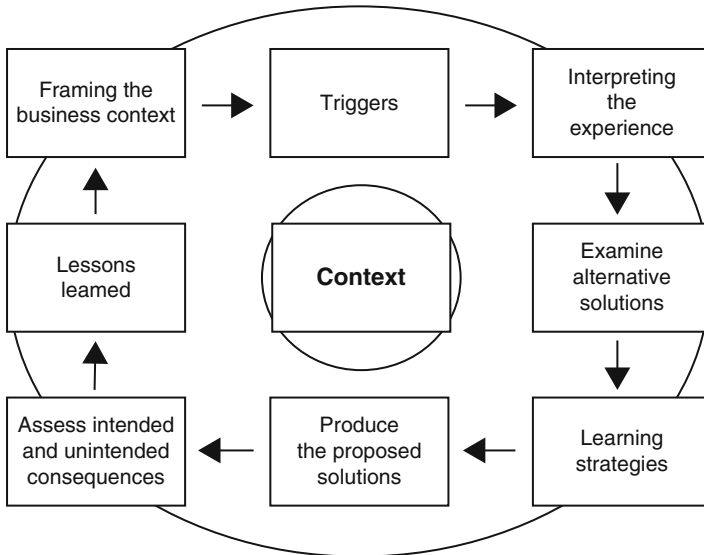
**Fig. 1** Informal and incidental learning model (Reprinted from *Informal and Incidental Learning* (Marsick and Watkins 2001) and *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (Marsick and Watkins 1989, p. 29). Copyright 2001 by Marsick and Watkins)
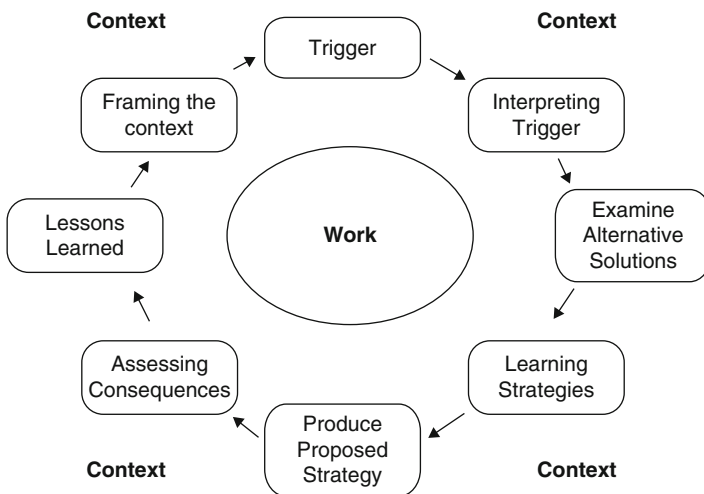


**Fig. 2** Marsick and Watkins' reconceptualized model for enhancing informal and incidental learning (Adopted from Cseh et al. 1999. Reprinted with permission)

## The Learning Organization

The early work of Watkins and Marsick on incidental and informal learning has generated a huge impact in the world of adult and continuing education. Interweaving that work with their study of organizational learning created a unique perspective impacting both scholarship and practice. Three books later, the ideas on "sculpting" and "facilitating" the learning organization continued to evolve. This is such an important piece of organizational change because of its influence on organizational readiness for change and continuous improvement. Dr. Marie Volpe, a former senior employee at Exxon and current adjunct assistant professor of adult learning and leadership at TC, Columbia University, contributed a comment for the book cover of Watkins and Marsick's (1993) book, *Sculpting the Learning Organization: Lessons in the Art and Science of Systemic Change:* "This is not a 'flavor of the month' management book; this is a blueprint for organizations in the 21st century."

In *Sculpting the Learning Organization*, Marsick and Watkins defined a learning organization as "one that learns continuously and transforms itself. Learning is a continuous, strategically used process – integrated with, and running parallel to, work (Watkins and Marsick 1993, p. 8)." With a profound understanding of informal and incidental learning and considerable professional experience in organizational change consulting, they offered "analysis of the characteristics, qualities, and efforts of emerging learning organizations that will help . . . set a course and develop practices to create . . . learning organization (Watkins and Marsick 1993, p. xv)." They captured the characteristics of a learning organization at four different interacting levels: individual, group, organization, and society.

The essence of the book stems from the question of how to improve organizational change effectiveness and increase continuous learning capacity. With the intention of helping organizations succeed, their conceptualization of learning organizations draws on relationships among learning culture, leadership, and strategy. As an important part of "sculpting" a learning organization, organizational learning culture becomes a cornerstone for organizational change readiness. Learning culture supports employees in planned and unplanned change via continuous learning opportunities, collaboration, and work toward a clear vision (Haque 2008). A learning organization also constantly creates learning opportunities for employees to hone their learning skills, which changes them to become more adaptive toward future organizational change (Argyris and Schön 1978). Learning occurs at multiple levels and is both cognitive and behavioral. Initially, Marsick and Watkins identified six action imperatives for the creation of a learning organization that occur at four levels (individual, team, organization, and society), as shown in Fig. 3. Based on those six action imperatives, recommendations are drawn to guide the creation of learning organizations. Unlike researchers focused primarily on theory-building, this model thus also supports implications for practice.

Although they are two independent "sculptors" for their first book, their long-term collaboration made one unified masterpiece with obvious value. The similarity

**Learning Organization Action Imperatives.**
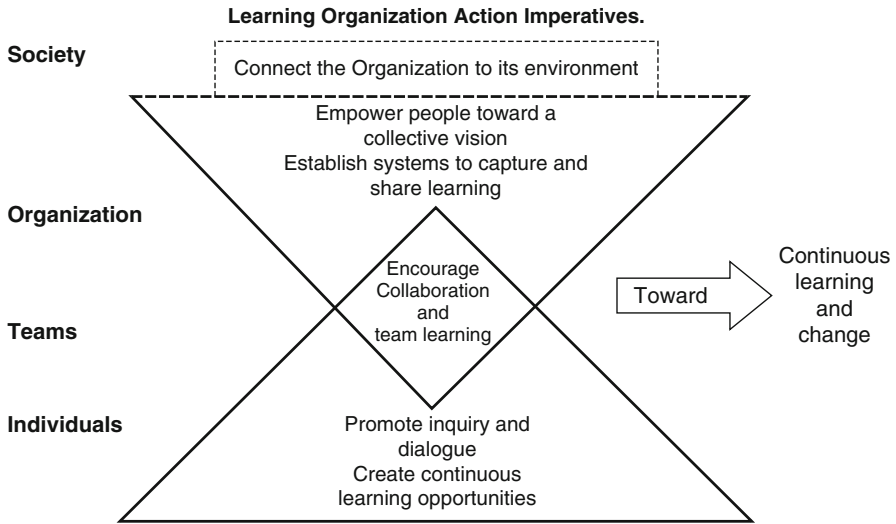


**Fig. 3** Learning organization action imperatives (Adopted from Sculpting the Learning Organization: Lessons in the Art and Science of Systemic Change (p. 10) by K. E. Watkins and V. J. Marsick (1993), San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Copyright 1993 by Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. Reprinted with permission)

of their professional experiences enhanced their relationship for writing and combining thoughts. Both Marsick and Watkins have applied these ideas in their work with organizations, especially through action learning and action research, both in the United States and in other countries. In using the metaphor of sculpture, they acknowledge the differences between a work of art and the dynamic work of organizations that are dealing with ever-changing people and ever-evolving goals (Watkins and Marsick 1993). The core dimensions of learning organizations are thus expressed in many different ways. To illuminate what this looks like, in 1996, they published another book, *In Action: Creating the Learning Organization*, through the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD), which sent out more than 7,500 invitations to submit cases, from which Watkins and Marsick selected 22 examples of real-world organization learning applications. Each company employed unique means of managing change and promoting continuous learning, respectively. This book illustrated the action imperatives in Fig. 3. Watkins and Marsick showed that learning organizations are socially created: "the visionary leader serves a role not unlike that of the sculptor who releases the inner essence of the creation (Watkins and Marsick 1996, p. iii)." Intuitively, it is not hard to notice that building a learning organization is as much an art as it is a science (Watkins and Marsick 1993).

With heated competition from companies around the globe, organizations with learning cultures react faster than traditional organizations to business environment

change, such as economic downturn or unplanned economic consequences. Therefore, the biggest change in the 1996 book from the doctors' previous publication was not only a greater focus on examples from case studies – instructing readers about how to facilitate building a learning organization – but also the learning level change from "society" to "global," due to increasing international influence. They wrote, "Learning at the global level is thinking globally; crossing boundaries of environmental or societal impacts, including those that affect the quality of life afforded organizational members by the organization (Watkins and Marsick 1996, p. 7)."

Watkins and Marsick (1996) said that the vision of key leaders is primary. Marsick and Watkins later developed their third book, *Facilitating Learning Organizations: Making Learning Count* (1999), adding one more imperative to the previous six: "provide strategic leadership for learning." This showed their evolving understanding of the role that leadership has been playing in organizational change (Fig. 4). Therefore, they adapted their original model by adding leadership as a seventh action imperative.

In most cases, as the first step, changing leaders' roles supports all of the organizational learning interventions that take place during organizational change (Marsick and Watkins 1999). Cases in the writers' second book have shown a close relationship between leadership and organizational learning, as Senge (1990) also emphasized. There is no doubt that leaders in the executive level are key in the early phases of organization change (Burke 2002). Many argue the important role that leaders play in organization change, even though there is little scientific support for that impact of leadership (Burke 2002).
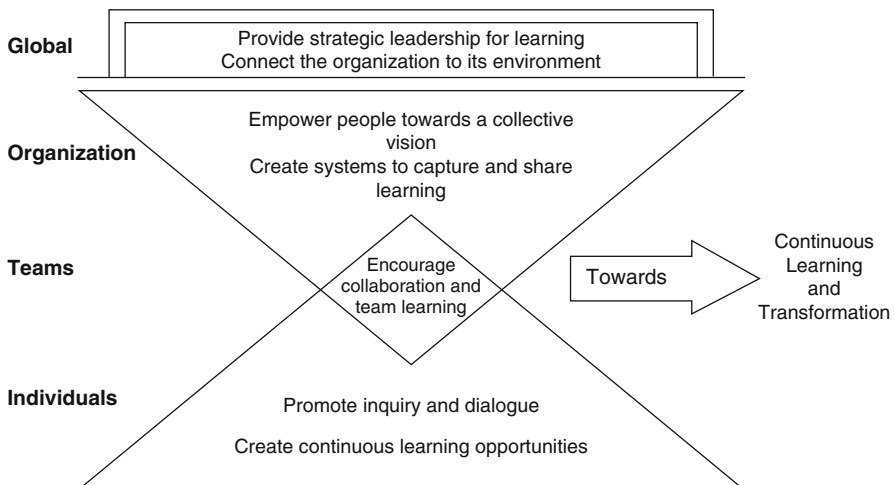


**Fig. 4** Learning organization imperatives (Adopted from *Facilitating Learning Organizations: Making Learning Count* (p. 11), by V. J. Marsick and K. E. Watkins (1999), London: Gower Press, Copyright 1999 by Marsick, V. J., & Watkins, K. E. Reprinted with permission)

## Bridging Theory and Practice

In their book *Facilitating Learning Organizations*, Marsick and Watkins (1999) proposed that leadership should be a mindset for *everyone* in the learning organization, not only those on the executive level. They wrote, "Leadership spurs learning individuals that spreads out in ever-widening waves through teams, larger groups within the organization, and in some cases, the entire organization (Marsick and Watkins 1999, p. 209)." The leadership resides in employees that empower them to actively bring in new ideas from the outside environment, and thus to absorb, digest, and spread what they have learned to the whole organization. Successful organizational learning interventions must grow within the organization to fit in the special context with right and timely guidance from the leadership level. To summarize, Marsick and Watkins wrote, "The learning organization is a living, breathing organism that creates the space that enables people and systems to learn, to grow and to endure (Marsick and Watkins 1999, p. 210)."

Along the learning organization research journey, Watkins and Marsick advocated that people and companies enact these ideas by working through action technologies such as action learning, action research, and action science. Action research brings action and theory together, enabling practitioners to produce effective actions that stem from theories. At the same time, researchers develop theory with real applications (Dickens and Watkins 1999). Brown and his colleagues (1988) said that action research is most effective when participants immerse themselves in objective problems, and critically reflect on those issues. Action technologies emphasize personal inquiry, self-reflection, and critical thinking. Its essence matches one of the seven imperatives for a learning organization: promoting inquiry and dialogue. The learning organization model provides a map for employees to change cognitively. Meanwhile, action technologies create an inquiry environment at the larger organizational level. Thus, action techniques "add a strong dose of behavioral practices and affective changes of heart and will (Marsick and Watkins 1999, p. 5)."

In their 1999 collaborative book *Facilitating Learning Organizations*, Marsick and Watkins built the connection between the leaders' role as facilitators and the learning organization by using recent, vivid, practical examples. An increasing number of managers – undergoing changes in leadership roles – play more of a facilitator role in order to foster organizational learning (Ellinger et al. 1999). Implications for facilitators are the keys to this book. Separating itself from many that focus primarily on theory, this book emphasizes translating theory into practice.

To summarize, the concept of the learning organization is an important area of interest for HRD scholars and is a valuable framework for managers of organization change. Marsick and Watkins' body of research about learning organization theory and practice during the past 25 years has had a major impact in the area of research and practice. Watkins and Marsick (1993, 2003) provided a framework of seven dimensions for the learning organization and constructed a 43-item questionnaire to measure these dimensions. Scholars have used different variations of

the learning organization questionnaire – i.e., a 21-item *DLOQ* or a seven-item *DLOQ* – in many contexts. Today, scholars have validated and employed the *DLOQ* in various national and organizational contexts and produced more than 100 related studies around the world (Watkins and Dirani 2013). For example, based on the *DLOQ* framework, Dirani (2013) worked on validating the *DLOQ* and measured how a learning culture impacts theory and practice in the Lebanese culture. Based on Dirani's work, several researchers are already using the *DLOQ* in the other Arab countries such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. The *DLOQ* has recently been added to the APA PsychTests database.

## New Insights: Continuous Development of Conceptual Models

More than 150 studies using the informal and incidental learning model and more than 100 studies using the learning organization model have examined learners from varied organizational settings and professional contexts. Scholars have adopted, adapted, or utilized different versions of these models (such as 21-item DLOQ with Egan et al. (2004), or the informal and incidental learning model with Cseh et al. (2000)). Time and time again, Marsick and Watkins have indicated that these models need to be further examined within other professions and cultures, and have collaborated with other coauthors on such initiatives such as Marsick and Yates' (2012) work on communities of practice in various contexts; Marsick et al.'s (2013) work on schools; and Marsick et al.'s (2015) work in the public sector in Spain.

## Holistic View on Divergence and Convergence of the Two Models

While most perspectives on informal and incidental learning models are focused on the individual level, Watkins and Marsick see interactions among the individual, group, and organizational learning levels. Scholars have attempted to provide a holistic view of learning and connect learning models at different levels (see for example, Yang 2003). The divergence of those learning models is that each makes a unique contribution to learning practice in HRD as well as organization development and change. The convergence between the models is striking. Both informal and incidental learning and the learning organization (a) emphasize dialogue, inquiry, and reflection, (b) are largely supported by constructivism or emphasis on how adults make meaning of new incidents and/or information by relating them to previous experiences, and (c) stress ownership of the learning process by learners. Both models have contributed to learning theory at the individual level (supported by Mezirow 1991) and fit with individual learner development goals. At the same time, both models are equally powerful in developing better institutions with the ultimate goal of systematically using learning activities to improve the institution sponsoring the learning activity.

## How the Thinkers Impacted Our Work and Why We Want to Write a Chapter

Marsick and Watkins' impact on the three authors of this chapter has been substantial, as it has on the field. We represent three differing perspectives on their work: full professor from a different field, associate professor with a HRD focus (and 6-year colleague of Watkins'), and doctoral student in HRD. As a result, our combined perspectives represent the long-range influence of the two thinkers, covering more than 20 years and the current impact that continues to spread. The impact has been tangible and intangible, direct and indirect. For example, impacts include influences such as Beyerlein's move as a full professor from industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology and organizational leadership departments and foci into the field of HRD 3 years ago, Dirani's choice of major field as a doctoral student and assistant professor to focus much of his scholarly work on further development of the Watkins–Marsick framework and instrument and expand its use into Middle Eastern countries, and Xie's recognition as a doctoral student of the importance of the framework for explaining innovation in organizations and committing to the study of companies in central China that would benefit from it.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Impact on Theory and Practice

During more than three decades of professional work, Marsick and Watkins have had a significant impact in a variety of ways, including (a) students they mentored; (b) research publications; (c) practice-oriented publication; (d) development and validation of the DLOQ and related instruments; (e) contributions as officers and board members in professional organizations such as Academy of HRD, Association for Talent Development, CCL, and World Education; (f) contributions to not-for-profit organizations such as UNICEF, the International Red Cross, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); (g) consulting with corporations; and (h) administrative roles on campus, including department chair and center director. The work in all of those forms of contributions typically focused on an increasing capacity for learning in organizations (O'Neil, personal communication, April 25, 2016), which aligned with their definition of HRD as "enhancing the learning capacity of both individuals and the organizations (Russ-Eft et al. 2014, p. 10)," a role they have contributed to for more than three decades, directly through consulting and indirectly through students, publications, and service.

For example, Walter McFarland (personal communication, April 28, 2016) included Marsick on his dissertation committee for a study of collective learning. Later, he started a division at the consulting firm Booz Allen focused on learning in organizations. It grew to 600 people building learning cultures that increase resilience over time. McFarland found the Marsick and Watkins approach to the learning organization more appropriate for his large projects than the Senge model was, saying that "they gave the concepts some rigor," "accelerated the evolution" and "elevated the discourse," as well as creating a measuring tool. He said that he sees a

trend toward a greater valuing of learning as a central process in organizations and so, in his role as chairman of the board of ATD, recently launched a new journal for chief learning officers. Competitive advantage goes to the organization that "learns faster, better, cheaper."

Professor Andrea Ellinger completed her dissertation under Watkins, and coauthored publications with her and Marsick (personal communication, May 6, 2016). She agreed with McFarland that "through learning, you can get performance." She suggested that one of the values of the *DLOQ* was an "exponential impact" for use in practice and as a focus in research spread around the globe, partly because there is no fee for its use. She said that the *DLOQ* reflects both the informal and incidental learning and the learning organization streams of research. Watson and Marsick's influence on her and the way she works as an academic was substantial; "working with both of them is just fun," she said. "It energizes you."

As a member of the board of directors for the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), Bill Pasmore (personal communication, April 28, 2016), said that he was "trying to shift focus from individual development to organizations and societies at CCL." Marsick served on the board with him, and so brought a perspective that emphasized a multilevel view of learning in organizations. Pasmore said, "Good strategy is a continuous process . . . based on learning," and "the organization change people and strategy people are converging and learning is the bridge." However, he added that in spite of several decades of research and practice about the learning organization, many of today's firms continue to focus only the individual's learning. Watkins and Marsick's legacy "is still being built."

Lyle Yorks had worked as a consultant for Drake, Beam, and Morin when he entered the Adult Education Guided Intensive Study (AEGIS) doctoral program at TC, Columbia University that Marsick directed. As a faculty member at Eastern Connecticut State University, Yorks worked with Marsick and Judy O'Neil to research action learning programs. He later joined the TC faculty as a colleague, and now directs the AEGIS program. He said that he sees the shift toward a learning emphasis in major organizations, "companies increasingly relying more on informal and self-directed learning. Companies identify who they need to develop; they make the resources available . . . but the emphasis is on employees . . . to actually take the initiative. Companies ask, 'How do we track the incidental learning? How do we document that and provide for it?'" Therefore, there is a declining use of formal workshops (personal communication, April 28, 2016). Yorks and McFarland both spoke about the fact that new partnerships are emerging on campuses between colleges of education and business colleges to focus on the practical value of scholarly knowledge about learning processes. That bridging of disciplines is also reflected in York's course and text on strategy development as an organizational learning process.

The impact of that scholarship has been global with Watkins and Marsick's key measurement instrument, the *DLOQ*, and its conceptual framework, which has been translated into 15 languages and used in studies in many countries. Their work has been influential in building the young field of HRD and in examining the

relationship between the fields of HRD and adult education that – over the years – have often experienced tension over boundaries. Since Marsick and Watkins worked across the boundaries and challenged them through writing, speaking, and example, they contributed to the emergence of a more collaborative spirit (O'Neil, personal communication, April 25, 2016). The timing of Marsick and Watkins' early work correlated with the evolution of organizational designs from the dominantly hierarchical – where decision-making was reserved for higher levels in the hierarchy – to flatter structures with increased empowerment because of the essential involvement of individual workers in processing information, sharing it effectively, collaborating on local decisions, and feeding critical insights upward.

The work that Marsick did with Watkins influenced Marsick's early work with ASTD Vice President of Research Martha Gephart, who had invited Watkins, Marsick, and others to a workshop to examine similarities and differences among models and instruments that assess and measure organizational learning. Gephart and Marsick eventually won a competitive grant to fund and codirect a research center at Columbia University in 1999, the J. M. Huber Institute for Learning in Organizations. Gephart's work with Marsick emphasized research into organizational system dynamics underlying learning and performance. Gephart and Marsick's book *Strategic Organizational Learning* (2016) features framework and assessment tools for diagnosis and assessment that, as Gephart summarized, "jointly optimize learning and performance (personal communication, April 29, 2016)" for adapting to the changing environment rapidly and for crafting a strategy that enables management of the environment.

Rob Poell in the Netherlands – with whom Marsick, York, and others at TC are collaborating to develop a new integrative framework for researching work-based learning – summarized their impact from his perspective as a student in the 1990s and a collaborator in later years (personal communication, April 26, 2016): "They have shown the world that there is an immense world of learning outside of formal training. They pre-empted 70:20:10 by about 25 years. They have drawn organizations to seeing the importance of a learning culture for performance. They have opened up so many avenues for new research in HRD, not to mention avenues for new researchers' careers in HRD."

## Impact on Theory and Practice

The next stage for this remarkable collaborative team represents their recent shift toward the support of schools, human service, and not-for-profit organizations. This humanitarian focus is not new for either of them. They both completed work with such organizations in the 1980s and occasionally every decade, but now it seems to be a greater focus. For example, in a conversation with Marsick upon her return home from a trip, McFarland (personal communication, April 28, 2016) asked what she did there in Bermuda. Her answer was, "I worked with academic and Bermudian colleagues on a story-based conversational approach to improving education in Bermuda." Watkins, on the other hand, has been working with the Red Cross to

use the *DLOQ* to improve its humanitarian initiatives, and with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (*OECD*) to create an international measure of schools as learning organizations. These are a few examples of their service-oriented attitudes and concern about human and organization development on the global stage, as is their project work and visiting-professor assignments in nearly two dozen countries. There may be a shift in the focus of their energies, but there is no loss of momentum as they continue their impactful collaboration with book chapters and journal articles that are in progress or in press this year.

A snapshot of their impact is visible in the list of awards they have received, ranging from scholar of the year; induction into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame and the Academy of Human Resource Development Scholar Hall of Fame the Robert L. Dilworth Award for Professional Achievement in Action Learning; a number of best paper awards at conferences; and, of course, teaching awards. The caliber of their work with graduate students can be inferred from the number of dissertation awards won by those students, and by the impact they have had as scholars and practitioners continuing to apply, refine, and expand the ideas they learned from their mentors, Watkins and Marsick.

## Conclusion

The 30-year partnership of Marsick and Watkins has been profiled in this chapter to provide an example of long term collaboration's value and to summarize their joint work and its impact. They enriched the understanding of learning in the workplace by emphasizing the key roles of informal and incidental learning and its role in building learning organizations. They also provided the field of organization change with an assessment tool for implementing their ideas in the workplace that has been used around the world. The important ideas of their mentors found new expression and made impactful development through more than 50 joint publications. Their legacy of work together continues through the many successful students they mentored. Many organizational and societal challenges will be handled with more insight when their work forms a cornerstone for future research and application.

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# The Human Side of Douglas McGregor

# 51

Peter F. Sorensen and Therese F. Yaeger

**Abstract**

This biography covers the life and contributions of one of the most significant contributors to management and organizational thinking. Douglas McGregor set the stage for a new wave of management with his Theory Y managerial assumptions. McGregor's work influenced a generation of scholars and practitioners who changed the practice of management and created the foundation for the twenty-first century of management thinking. This chapter presents and discusses the forces that influenced and motivated McGregor's thinking. It reviews McGregor's basic contributions particularly his best-known contribution of Theory X and Theory Y. In addition, it reviews McGregor's key insights and their impact on theory and practice that have led to organizational change being viewed in new and surprising ways. Finally, a discussion of McGregor's legacies, unfinished business, and further readings is provided.

## Contents

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## Introduction

Theory X and Theory Y and the *Human Side of Enterprise* are classics, which shaped the thinking of both practitioners and scholars into the twenty-first century. The organizations that McGregor envisioned more than a half-century ago in his original work are now the norm.

The scholars who have shaped the field who worked with and were influenced by McGregor represent a "Who's Who" in the field of organization development. Through his writing, McGregor brought the field of management theory to the everyday manager. He had the ability to translate new and emergent concepts in management into a language that appealed to practitioners. It is no accident that the BNA film (a film series dedicated to highlighting the most influential behavioral science approaches to management) on McGregor's thinking was presented by an exceptional academic (Bennis), an exceptional OD scholar (Beckhard), and an exceptional practitioner (John Paul Jones).

## Influences and Motivations: Culminating Life Experiences

There are several sources for understanding McGregor's history and background that discussed the influences and motivations of McGregor's work, in particular, two chapters on McGregor in Weisbord's *Productive Work Places Revisited: Dignity, Meaning and Community in the 21st Century* (2004) and the introductions to two of McGregor's early works: *Leadership and Motivation* (1966) and *Human Side of Enterprise* (1960). An additional source for understanding what influenced McGregor is the work of Heil, Bennis, and Stephens, *Douglas McGregor, Revisited* (2000). A number of direct quotes are included from his colleagues and students to better capture the influences and motivations underlying McGregor's work.

Douglas McGregor was born in 1906 and died suddenly in 1964 at the age of 58 from a heart attack. Weisbord (2004) describes McGregor as "being born into a strict Scotch Presbyterian family in Detroit, Michigan, on September 16, 1906." McGregor's early years were spent in the McGregor Institute, an organization dedicated as a shelter, a mission for homeless men founded by McGregor's grandfather, and later led by McGregor's father. McGregor, as an early student, spent time in the office there as well accompanying gospel songs on the piano.

As a student, McGregor spent time at Detroit City College and Oberlin, completed graduate work at Harvard, earned a doctorate in social psychology, and joined the faculty at Harvard. Several years later, he joined the faculty at MIT in the Industrial Relations program.

In 1948, McGregor became the president of Antioch College. While at Antioch, the college became one of the first to welcome students of color. At that time, McGregor also had to deal with pressures from the American Activities committee to expel student activists. After serving as president of Antioch College, he returned to MIT as faculty in the Sloan School of Management where he wrote *The Human*

*Side of Enterprise* ([1960](#)). In the preface to his book, *Human Side of Enterprise*, McGregor describes the initiating factor in his work. In 1954, he received, along with Alex Bavelas, a grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to explore the question of what makes a good manager. Studies from the Sloan Foundation grant led to the following comments:

> It seems to me that the making of managers, in so far as they are made, is only to a rather small degree the result of management's formal efforts in management development. It is a much greater degree the result of management's conception of the nature of the task and of all the policies and practices which are constructed to implement this conception. The way a business is managed determines to a very great extent what people are perceived to have 'potential' and how they are developed. (p. vi).

Weisbord ([2004](#)) describes McGregor's work as developing between 1937 and 1949, a time characterized by World War II. During this period, his work involved conflicts between management and labor. Weisbord cites a quote from one of McGregor's work from that time, a quote which in a way predicts what the field of OD was to become, "It is not the fact of change but the method of bringing it about which is important if we are going to achieve a greater degree of cooperation between management and labor" ([2004](#), p. 123).

McGregor was certainly influenced not only by his early childhood experiences in a strict Scotch Presbyterian family who had a mission for homeless men but also by the characteristics of the behavioral sciences of that time. McGregor's thinking is described as maturing during a time of major new developments in the behavioral sciences (Weisbord [2004](#), p. 138). Kurt Lewin, Abraham Maslow, and Frederick Herzberg are described as being part of those new developments. McGregor is described as being deeply committed to the ideas of Maslow and Herzberg, in particular Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's concept of job enrichment. He believed that the higher level needs that Maslow touted needed to be built into jobs through the redesign of work systems that promote dignity, meaning, and community into work ([2004](#)).

In relation to the field of Organization Development, Weisbord ([2004](#)) writes, "Organization Development professionals are indebted to him not only for his ideas and exemplary practices but for the people he encouraged and inspired. McGregor helped Kurt Lewin found the Research Center for Group Dynamics at MIT. He was one of the earliest appliers of Lewin's ideas in academia . . . McGregor recruited the extraordinary MIT organization group, Richard Beckhard, Warren Bennis, Mason Haire, Joseph Scanlon, Edgar Schein, all who played major roles in setting the boundaries, practices, and values behind systematic organizational change" (p. 118). In describing the friendship between Beckhard and McGregor, Weisbord ([2004](#)) attributes the origin of the term Organization Development to McGregor and Beckhard, while the two of them were working together consulting at General Mills.

McGregor's childhood influences and his later influences are related again by Weisbord ([2004](#)) in citing a 1981 interview with Jerry Harvey: "All the biggies like Argyris, Likert, and Blake suddenly disappeared. I peeked through the door to the next room and saw them huddled around the piano singing gospel songs,

accompanied by Doug McGregor" (p. 116). This narrative demonstrates how McGregor's early childhood experiences later allowed him to create an unanticipated and shared experience among the top people in the field, all of whom shared a common motivation – the improvement of the human condition at work.

One way of identifying those who influenced Doulas McGregor, or who were influenced by McGregor, is to review persons identified in his last publication, *The Professional Manager* (1967). This book was in progress at the time of his death and completed by Warren Bennis. Included in the preface are Edgar Schein, Richard Beckhard, Mason Haire, Rensis Likert, Charles Myers, John Paul Jones, Eric Trist, Robert Blake, Edwin Boring, Gordon Allport, Irving Knickerbocker, Leland Bradford, and Jay Forester, while the contents of the book include references to such familiar names as Larry Greiner, Wendell French, Kenneth Benne, Robert Guest, Fredrick Herzberg, Katz and Kahn, Hal Leavitt, Ron Lippitt, J. Loft, Floyd Mann, Abraham Maslow, Jane Mouton, Donald Pelz, and Eric Trist, all familiar names in the field of Organization Development. A number of these names cited included the early MIT group, industry experts, and organizational scholars, who shared Theory Y beliefs with McGregor, helping to redefine the field of organizational change.

In summary, what were the dominant influences and motivations that created the foundation for McGregor's work? For an answer to that question, we defer to one of his closest friends, colleague, and student, Warren Bennis. Bennis writes in his introduction to McGregor's *Leadership and Motivation* with reference to McGregor's early family life:

> The kind of an 'upbringing' using that word in the old fashioned sense, puts into focus the dominant chords in Doug's intellectual origins: religion, the search for meaning, music and the firmly embedded idea that through productive work man will find his salvation. (1967, p. xi)

Again Bennis writes:

> It was no accident that Doug's central theoretical worry, the last few years, was the 'management of conflict'. There is no doubt in my mind that his intellectual contribution was based on his uncanny capacity to use himself so splendidly. The fallout from his management of (and learning from) his own conflicts have given us an enhanced and more realistic vision of man's potential. (1967, p. xii)

## Key Contributions: Translating for the "Human Side"

McGregor's work had profound and multiple influences on the field of Organization Development and management in general. In the following section, we address two of his major contributions: (1) his contributions to theory and (2) his influence on a generation of OD scholars who were to become the OD giants. There is no way that we can do justice to the contributions of Douglas McGregor, but at least we can give

a glimpse of what he accomplished. Again, we use quotes from McGregor himself and those who knew him in an effort to give "life" to our description of his work. In a way, McGregor's contributions need to be assessed as a "translator." In other words, it was his ability, his gift, to be able to communicate to a larger audience, the audience of managers, that which was taking place as the new discipline of the behavioral sciences was beginning to have a significant impact on the changing field of management and the emerging field of Organization Development. We begin with a quote from McGregor, followed by a brief description of his contribution to the field of OD, which leads us to transition to his influence on the next "first" generation of ODers. We complete this section with a review of his major conceptual contributions and illustrations of what we call his role as a "translator."

In the preface to the 25th Anniversary printing of *The Human Side of Enterprise*, Warren Bennis quotes McGregor in 1950, when McGregor wrote:

> Out of all this has come the first clear recognition of an inescapable fact: we cannot successfully force people to work for management objectives. The ancient conception that people do the work of the world only if they are forced to do so by threats or intimidation, or by the camouflaged authoritarian methods of paternalism, has been suffering from a lingering fatal illness for a quarter of a century. I venture the guess that it will be dead in another decade.

**Contributions to Theory: X and Y**. There is no question that McGregor is most closely associated with his Theory X and Theory Y, but he also had the ability to translate behavioral science practices that were having a profound impact on management and how organizations were structured. He had the ability to translate these activities into a form that was both attractive and understandable to managers. He used emerging applications to illustrate his Theory Y. We briefly present his Theory Y and Theory X, a related concept called the self-fulfilling prophecy, followed by a brief summary and discussion of four of the Theory Y practices identified by McGregor.

We would like to let McGregor speak for himself as he defines the concepts that were to make such a profound impact on management, and he ultimately defines his concept of Theory Y (McGregor 1957). He writes:

> The conventional conception of management's task in harnessing human energy to organizational requirements can be basically stated in three propositions. In order to avoid complications introduced by a label. I shall call this set of propositions 'Theory X'.
>
> 1. Management is responsible for organizing the elements of productive enterprise...
> 2. With respect to people, this is a process of directing, their efforts, motivating them, controlling their actions, modifying their behavior to fit the needs of the organization.
> 3. Without this active intervention by management, people would be passive – even resistant to organizational needs. They must therefore be persuaded, rewarded, punished, controlled...
>
> ...we require a different theory of the task of managing people based on more adequate assumptions about human nature and human motivation ... Call it 'Theory Y' if you will. (1957, p. 6)

McGregor presented Theory Y using another set of propositions:

- People are not by nature passive or resistant to organizational needs. They have become so as a result of experience in organizations.
- The motivation, the potential for development, the capacity for assuming responsibility, and the readiness to direct behavior toward organizational goals are all present in people. Management does not put them there. It is a responsibility of management to make it possible for people to recognize and develop these human characteristics for themselves.
- The essential task of management is to arrange organizational conditions and methods of operation so that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their own efforts toward organizational objectives (1960).

Although McGregor is best remembered for his Theory X and Theory Y, another one of his contributions directly related to Theory X and Theory Y is the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy, the idea that a manager's assumptions determine and shape a manager's managerial style and that this style creates a set of reactive behaviors on the part of subordinates, reactive behaviors that reinforce the manager's original assumptions. In other words, Theory X assumptions create Theory X management behavior, which in turn creates Theory X behavior on the part of employees, and that Theory Y assumptions, in turn, create Y styles of management resulting in more positive and productive employee behavior, again, reinforcing the manager's original assumptions.

McGregor's contributions also rest on his work that relates Theory Y to certain management styles and organizational practices, which included management by integration and self-control, a critique of performance appraisal, administering salaries and promotions, the Scanlon Plan, participation, the managerial climate, staff-line relationships, and improving staff-line collaboration.

His original presentation of his thinking, "The Human Side of Enterprise," was first published in *Adventures in Thought and Action*, Proceedings of the Fifth Anniversary Convocation of the School of Industrial Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, April 9, 1957. In it, he presents Theory X and Y, refers to Maslow theory of motivation, and discusses four approaches to management that are consistent with Theory Y. They are performance appraisal, decentralization and delegation, job enlargement, and participation and consultative management.

McGregor was highly critical of the manner in which performance appraisals were conducted. He felt that they raised issues of integrity, placing managers in a position of judgment of others. McGregor's answer to traditional performance appraisal was a more collaborative system based on goal setting, which became known as Management by Objectives. Management by Objectives moved control of the job from the manager to the employee and created conditions under which employees had greater control over their own activities – a move from external control to employee control and intrinsic motivation.

Decentralization and delegation represented another example of Theory Y practices. For McGregor, decentralization and delegation were ways of freeing

employees from external control and a way of increasing a sense of responsibility and satisfying higher level needs. He cited the work at Sears, Roebuck, and Company where delegation approaches were implemented to increase employee's sense of responsibility. He also thought of decentralization and delegation as being closely related to Management by Objectives, in that both were a means of enhancing employee responsibility and decreasing management control.

McGregor cited work at IBM and Detroit Edison as illustrations of job enlargement, work redesign that enhanced opportunities for satisfying higher level needs and acceptance of responsibility. Here McGregor was influenced by the work of Herzberg, another way for increasing employee responsibility and the satisfaction of Maslow's higher level needs.

Participation and consultative management, for McGregor, served as an additional approach consistent with Theory Y. This was another way of increasing employee responsibility and the fulfillment of higher level needs. However, McGregor noted that these Theory Y approaches to management experienced a number of failures. He attributed these failures to the fact that frequently management had "bought" the ideas but had implemented and applied them within a Theory X context.

The work of Woodman (1965) relating organization form to technology and the work of Burns and Stalker (1961) and Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) have helped us to understand the number of forces mandating new organizational forms. The rapidly changing field of technology and a rapidly changing environment were forces that required increased delegation and decentralization, which are forms of McGregor's Theory Y (Sorensen and Minahan 2011, p. 179). The further development of the field of Organization Development over the years has also served to strengthen and develop these McGregor "Theory Y" approaches. For example, the work of Hackman and Oldham and the Job Diagnostic Survey have significantly furthered and developed the concept of job enrichment and job redesign. Specifically, the work by Hackman and Oldham gave us a way of measuring changes in job redesign.

At the time of McGregor, many of McGregor's concepts were counterculture. But his ideas have continued to gain momentum and are reflected in, for example, the popularity of *In Search of Excellence* by Peters and Waterman (1982) and, more recently, for example, in *Built to Change: How to Achieve Sustained Organizational Effectiveness* by Lawler and Worley (2006). In addition, while at McKinsey, Tom Peters notes that Douglas McGregor's theory of motivation known as Theory X and Theory Y was directly influential on the direction of his projects.

## Influence on the First Generation of OD Scholars

There is no question that McGregor's work had a significant influence on the field of management and Organization Development. He wrote at a time when the social sciences were providing data that supported McGregor's thinking, but McGregor had the ability and language to present a concept of management that was emerging in a way that was more attractive to managers and changed the way organizations

were managed. In short, McGregor made the behavioral sciences relevant to the world of management.

Clearly, it is impossible to adequately assess McGregor's influence on a generation of ODers and managers, but here we provide illustrations of his influence on the "first generation," the creators and developers of the field. We provide illustrations from this first generation through Warren Bennis, Edgar Schein, Dick Beckhard, Marvin Weisbord, and Edith Seashore.

McGregor influenced Bennis, Schein, and Beckhard directly through their interaction at MIT. Marvin Weisbord was influenced indirectly through his application of Theory Y concepts as a manager. In a different way, Edith Seashore was influenced by McGregor as her mentor and at a more personal level, as she stated, "Doug was my mentor and very good friend, and Charles and I planned our wedding date around the availability of Doug" (Schein et al. 2007).

Warren Bennis became Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California and was a major contributor to the literature and practice of Leadership and Organization Development. He published numerous books including *Douglas McGregor Revisited*, as well as several books with McGregor.

Edgar Schein became the Sloan Fellows Professor of Management in the Sloan School of Management and is one of the major figures in the field of Organization Development. Schein is also a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and the National Training Laboratories (NTL). He is author of numerous books in the field, from the classic *Process Consultation* (1987) to *Humble Consulting* (2016), and he is a major contributor to our understanding of organizational culture with *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (1985).

Dick Beckhard became an adjunct professor of management at the Sloan School of Management. He was author of several books and articles including the classic "The Confrontation Meeting," in the *Harvard Business Review*, March–April, 1967, and is coeditor with Warren Bennis and Edgar Schein of the Addison-Wesley Series in OD. Marvin Weisbord became a major contributor to the field and an internationally recognized consultant and writer in the field. Weisbord is probably best known for his contribution to large group methods for organizational change with his technique called Future Search.

Edith Seashore became a woman pioneer in the field at a time when a woman's role was perceived quite differently than it is today. She became president of the NTL Institute, received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Organization Development Network (NTL), and was one of the cofounders of the American University/NTL Institute Master's Degree Program in Organization Development. One telling illustration of McGregor's influence is reflected in comments by Edith Seashore to Marvin Weisbord (2004, p. 119) in reference to McGregor's inaugural address as Antioch College President, "Two minutes before he started to speak I had no idea of what I wanted to do with my life. At the end of his talk, I knew."

It is no accident that one of the most influential book series in the field of Organization Development, the classic Addison-Wesley "six-pack," was edited by persons significantly influenced by McGregor, namely, Warren Bennis, Edgar

Schein, and Dick Beckhard. Each contributed a volume to the "six-pack." Other contributors included Blake and Mouton, creators of the Managerial Grid, and major influencers on the emerging field of Organization Development and the field of management.

In his discussion of the roots of Organization Development and the work of Douglas McGregor, Weisbord cites the meaning of McGregor's work for himself (Weisbord), a meaning which is also a fitting description, not only of McGregor's major conceptual contribution Theory Y but a description of the fundamental values of the field Organization Development which is "an expression of life's purposes – affirming dignity in every person, finding meaning in valued work, achieving community through mutual support and accomplishment" (Weisbord 2004, p. 122).

## New Insights: Illustrating McGregor's Impact

Douglas McGregor has clearly had a profound effect on the field of management. His thinking became part of, and laid the foundation for, today's organizations – and many would argue for organizations and management of the future. In *Douglas McGregor Revisited* (2000), Heil, Bennis, and Stephens identify the trends that have determined the necessity for McGregor's concept of management. These trends include technology, environmental turbulence, need for innovation, and more powerful consumers, among other changes. To quote Heil, Bennis, and Stephens:

> One of McGregor's most important contributions to management today underlies all of these movements. He asked every manager to view management not merely as a toolbox of tasks but as an integrative function that asks them to examine their deepest held beliefs about people and the nature of work. (2000, p. 15)

McGregor's impact on management was not immediately realized. For us, two significant contributions are of particular importance. First, his tenure as president of Antioch College, where he created an environment of learning and experimentation, in what was to become the foundation of the emerging field of OD: participation, action research, and group dynamics. Second, McGregor was instrumental in bringing Kurt Lewin to MIT, the establishment of the Research Center for Group Dynamics, as well as the recruitment of Beckhard, Bennis, Haire, Scanlon, and Schein to MIT (Weisbord 2004, p. 118).

The influence of McGregor continues to be reflected in the work of a significant number of contributors to the field of management, most significantly the contributors that were cited earlier in our discussion on the influence of McGregor. They also include the work of Michael Beer in *High Commitment High Performance* (2009); Marvin Weisbord's, *Productive Workplaces Revisited* (2004); and Edgar Schein's, *Process Consultation* (1969) and *Humble Consulting* (2016) to name but a few.

Below, we share the role that McGregor's work has played in our personal development, both in our practitioner life (Therese was Director of Global for

Motorola and Peter began his OD career as Assistant Director of Organizational Analysis for CNA Financial) and our academic careers. We include illustrations of McGregor's influence on our academic work over the years (for Peter, articles and publications that began over 50 years ago) with selected references of our work at the end of this section.

**SORENSEN**: In 1959, I joined a newly formed corporate department called "Organizational Analysis" in a major insurance and financial organization. I was invited to join this group by my mentor Dr. Bernard Baum who had just completed his PhD at the University of Chicago. Much of the work dealt with defining the formal organization structure, but we were also free to collect data and publish studies related to the behavioral sciences and management. The department became a mecca for university studies, with researchers from the University of Chicago, MIT, Michigan, IIT, and a number of others. Much of the early work and publications had to do with the distribution of power and influence in organizations. In fact, the first publication was the reporting on the power and influence studies at an insurance conference (a little bit different from the usual presentations at an insurance conference). In a way, the department became one of the early internal Organization Development departments. My first paper at the Academy of Management in 1970 was on perceptions of influence by students in several universities, with colleagues from the University of Illinois who had joined the department. As part of our education in organizational analysis, we created an informal study group within the department. The first required reading on our list of readings was *The Human Side of Enterprise* by Douglas McGregor (1960) and, later, the work of Warren Bennis. There were several aspects of McGregor's work that were of particular interest, particularly Theory X and Y and how these concepts were reflected in such management practices as performance appraisal, Management By Objectives, and participatory management and delegation.

I cannot say that the company at that time was a model of Theory Y, but with degrees and education in sociology, these were concepts that clearly resonated with members of our department. This period was a time of turbulence, recognition of gender discrimination, discrimination involving people of color, the Weathermen (an American left wing extremist organization in the 1960s and 1970s), the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), Kent State, sit-ins at major universities, chaos in Chicago's Grant Park as part of the presidential election activities, and Chicago's Mayor Daley at the Democratic Convention. Along with the turbulence, there was also an element of optimism. McGregor's writing was popular in management but frequently misinterpreted as being "soft management," while just the opposite was true. Somehow, out of all of this, things were moving in the direction of Theory Y.

After leaving corporate to complete my dissertation, my interests in McGregor's ideas continued as I joined the faculty at George Williams College, truly a Theory Y College. There, a newly formed department of administration staffed by faculty from NTL, highly familiar with the concepts of McGregor and Theory Y management

was growing. At George Williams, studies and publications related to management power and participation continued, but this time on an international basis, more studies were done on Management by Objectives and the role of organizational culture in determining the extent to which MBO was truly Theory Y, and the seeds of Appreciative Inquiry were planted, as David Cooperrider, a student in the George Williams program, was introduced to McGregor's concepts and Organization Development. McGregor's influence was also part of the Contemporary Trends Lecture Series in Change Management, which included a number of scholars and practitioners influenced by, and who were also students of, McGregor including Edgar Schein, Marvin Weisbord, and Edith Seashore. The Lecture series continues today as does the influence of McGregor's work on me and on the PhD program in Organization Development, now at Benedictine University.

**YAEGER**: As a new graduate student in Management and Organization Behavior, I entered my MGMT530 Organizational Behavior course in the early 1990s at Illinois Benedictine College (now Benedictine University), having read the appropriate textbooks. I loved my OB reader – it had contributions from Blake and Mouton, Lawler, Likert, Lawrence, and Lorsch, just to name a few. But one particular reading was McGregor's article "The Human Side of Enterprise" first published in *Adventures in Thought and Action*, in the Proceedings of the Fifth Anniversary Convocation of the School of Industrial Management at MIT in 1957. The article was a short ten-page piece, describing how management thinking should merge more with the social sciences (more than just the physical sciences) to make human organizations effective. In the article, McGregor stated, "we are becoming quite certain that, under proper conditions, unimagined resources of creative human energy could become available within the organizational setting."

I realized that in 1957 when McGregor wrote this thought piece (which culminated into his 1960 book), there were no formal Organizational Behavior or Organization Development programs to share this thinking with. This thinking was shared among Industrial Management thinkers and managers, who probably thought that these Theory X and Y concepts were too soft. I wondered how this thinking was working today and how (or if) it was received in the management arena. In short, had Theory caught on as I think it should have?

I let go of the reading in class just long enough to watch a two-part BNA Video entitled "Theory X and Theory Y: The Work of Douglas McGregor" created with Saul Gellerman in 1969. The video provided a description of Theory X and Y in Part One, the assumptions that managers make about workers, and the self-fulfilling prophecy. Part Two was more application oriented with role playing in a factory setting and a response to the factory illustration by Dick Beckhard (of MIT) and John Paul Jones (then with Federated Department Stores). The film, which went from film reel in the 1970s, to VHS in the 1990s, to DVD after 2000, and finally to thumb drives today, is still shown in introductory OB courses today. For me, it evidences how groundbreaking McGregor's Theory X and Y were, yet it drives the discussion of "why aren't we more Theory Y yet."

I share this story because, after understanding Theory X and Y and the self-fulfilling prophecy, I was introduced to Cooperrider's work on Appreciative Inquiry. In Cooperrider's famous 1990 article, "Positive Image, Positive Action," he opens by paraphrasing McGregor stating, "Modern management thought was born proclaiming that organizations are the triumph of the human imagination. As made and imagined, organizations are products of human interaction and mind rather than some blind expression of an underlying natural order" (McGregor 1960). This reminded me of McGregor's statement about unimagined resources of creative human energy, which, in essence, is indication that McGregor's Theory Y is thriving via Appreciative Inquiry! Still today, both McGregor's Theory X and Y, along with Cooperrider's Appreciative Inquiry, have been two of the most resonant theories in my work and writing. My alignment with both of these scholars merely affirmed my passion to live in the Organizational Behavior and Organization Development disciplines.

## Unfinished Business: McGregor's Legacy

In this article, we have discussed McGregor's major contributions and the later thinkers that McGregor influenced who have carried his concepts forward. Here again we reference works by those scholars that McGregor has influenced as they describe, in their own words, the major intellectual legacies of McGregor. We also present a discussion of how McGregor's legacy is still to be fully investigated, the extent to which McGregor's concepts are universal, and the extent to which the thinking of a person shaped by a Scotch Presbyterian background extends across international boundaries. This question, of course, has significant implications for the true legacy of McGregor's work.

The legacy of McGregor's work is reflected in Marvin Weisbord's classic work *Productive Workplaces Places* and *Productive Workplaces Revisited*, subtitled Dignity, Meaning, and Community in the twenty-first century, in which Weisbord devotes three chapters to McGregor, the first chapter of the book "A Personal Prologue: Discovering Theories X and Theories Y" and two later chapters, "McGregor and the Roots of Organization Development" and "The Human Side of Enterprise Revisited."

But for us, and specific to Weisbord, McGregor's legacy is captured in a single Weisbord quote: "Douglas McGregor, a gifted professor, wrote *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960) and changed forever the way managers view their own assumptions and behavior" (Weisbord 2004).

One of the most comprehensive discussions is by Warren Bennis, in *Douglas McGregor Revisited*, in which the authors discuss the legacy and continued relevance of McGregor's work.

According to Bennis, Heil, and Stephens, McGregor matters, and they capture McGregor's legacy in a single quote:

The world that Douglas McGregor spoke of is here. In today's inter-connected economy of bits and bytes, of wired companies and real-time business, the spread of technology has made the human side of enterprise more important than ever. (Heil et al. 2000)

Another comprehensive discussion of his legacy can be found in Sorensen and Minahan's article in the *Journal of Management History* with guest editor Therese Yaeger and later in the *Oxford Bibliography* by Yaeger and Sorensen. Sorensen and Minahan explain:

Most recently, McGregor's concepts have been reflected in one of the most popular and influential new approaches to organizational performance – Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry is founded on the philosophy of social construction and incorporates one of McGregor's important concepts – the concept of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The tremendous influence and effectiveness (Yaeger et al. 2005) of Appreciative Inquiry stands as probably the strongest testimonial to the continued validity of McGregor's work. (Sorensen and Minahan 2011)

Without question, one of the most important questions in the field today, and clearly for the future, is the question of globalization and the role of national cultural values as they relate to and influence the field of Organization Development. Some of the most influential work in this area is the work of Geert Hofstede (1980, 1991). Hofstede discusses the limitations of management approaches developed in the USA (including the work of Douglas McGregor), in countries characterized by different national cultural values. Hofstede (1980) directly addresses a number of management approaches presented in McGregor's classic works, namely, motivation, leadership, decision-making, Management by Objectives, Management of Organization Development, and humanization of work. Hofstede's work is based primarily on four concepts representing issues that are characteristic of societies and different countries in general, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity.

To quote Hofstede, in terms of the applicability of Organization Development across different cultures:

American-style Organization Development meets, for example, with formidable obstacles in Latin European countries...Latin countries lack the equality ethos which is an important motor behind OD....OD processes creates insecurity which in a high uncertainty avoidance culture is often intolerable. OD represents a counterculture in a Latin environment. (1980, pp. 266–267)

On the other hand, more recently, there has been considerable discussion concerning the applicability of OD across national cultural boundaries. Golembiewski et al. (2005) present an array of extremely impressive data that OD works well across national boundaries in general.

In addition, one of the most successful and influential approaches to OD today is Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry is highly consistent with the principles of McGregor's Theory Y and the self-fulfilling prophecy. In a comprehensive review of

the literature of AI (Yaeger et al. 2005), a review which included over 400 publications, the review reports a high degree of success across highly diverse national cultures including, for example, the USA, Brazil, Canada, Australia, Nepal, the UK, Africa, Mexico, and the Netherlands.

## Conclusion

It is our impression that over the last half-century, the world in many respects has become more Theory Y. In fact, based on reviews of OD by Golembiewski, and reviews of AI by Yaeger, Sorensen, and Bengtsson, we repeat a sentiment expressed by Golembiewski that somehow, national cultural values serve as a veneer over basic, fundamentally shared universal values, values reflected in the work of Douglas McGregor and the field of Organization Development.

But we believe McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y are far reaching, even broader than OD, as McGregor's concepts remain an indelible part of contemporary management thinking. This is evidenced in one example, by management scholars Bedeian and Wren who published the "Most Influential Management Books of the 20th Century" in *Organizational Dynamics* (2001). In their review, they ranked McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* as number four of the 25 most influential management books of the twentieth century. Clearly, this book popularized the idea that managerial assumptions about human nature and human behavior are all important in determining managers' styles of operating. We agree.

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# Eric J. Miller: Practicing Scholar in Action

<span style="font-size:2em">**52**</span>

Jean E. Neumann and Antonio Sama

**Abstract**

This chapter traces Eric Miller's early career from social anthropologist in industry through four decades as a second-generation social scientist for the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR). We assert that each decade can be understood as emphasizing one of Eric's contributions within four categories that sustain our field today. (1) *Systems of Organization* (Miller and Rice 1967) stands as a seminal contribution to *organizational theory and work organization design*. Not only does Eric's original research with Ken Rice in Indian weaving sheds embody the emerging principles of socio-technical systems, but their ideas about boundaries, levels of analysis, representational meetings, and differentiation between subsystems led to extending systems thinking into other sectors. (2) Eric's extensive *action research* shaped social policies in a range of "people processing institutions": for example, geriatric and psychiatric hospitals; the education, treatment, and support of people with disabilities; and role changes for nurses, occupational health specialists, and wives in diplomatic service. His "working notes" and "working hypotheses" technique helps outsiders and insiders to mutually negotiate action, bringing together organizational development with action research. (3) By his third decade at TIHR, Miller demonstrated explicit concern with *systems change and societal analysis*, applying social science for social problems (e.g., workers' strikes, relations between immigrant communities); he began using cross-boundary developments that required both systems design and psychodynamic interpretation (e.g., mergers and acquisitions, a Mexican water system). An outcome of this concern was an Organization for the Promotion of Understanding of

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Society (OPUS). (4) While Eric directed TIHR's *group relations and experiential learning* offerings from 1970, he emphasized that culturally appropriate dissemination needed to be led by people within their own countries. Thus, while avoiding hero worship, Miller encouraged the formation of two dozen institutions scattered around the world, each identifying somehow with Tavistock schools of thought.

**Keywords**

Action research • A. K. Rice • Anthropologist in industry • Cultural change • Group relations • Role analysis • Societal analysis • Socio-technical systems • Systems psychodynamics

## Contents

## Introducing Eric J. Miller

Eric John Miller (1924–2002) was most closely associated with The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR), London, UK. In search of a career in applied social science, he joined the staff of this small yet globally influential R&D center in 1958, working steadily for over four decades until his death at 78. As a part of the second generation recruited by TIHR founders, Eric's substantive impact can be tracked over several categories of scholarship and practice that still underpin organizational change thinking today. The titles of those categories have varied over the years, depending on fads, funding, and geographical application. Here, we trace Eric Miller's publications and practice relevant to developments and dissemination of organization theory and work organization design, action research, systems change and societal analysis, and group relations and experiential learning.

## Influences and Motivations: Anthropologist in Industry

Eric J. Miller was born in 1924 (between the two world wars) in the then small town of High Wycombe, located in the county of Buckinghamshire, which is northwest of London. Both of his parents encouraged his intellectual precociousness. His father

was a schoolteacher and his mother had ambitions for her first-born son to become a classics scholar. At the age of 17, he won a scholarship in classics to Jesus College, Cambridge University. In 1941, with WWII heating up, Eric anticipated a year of university before joining the army. In his own words, "I did a minimum of study, rowed and worried about the future" (Miller 1993, p. ix).

Once he joined the army and completed basic training, Eric was sent in 1943 to participate in a War Office Selection Board – this was, unbeknownst to him, a social innovation in which founding members of the Tavistock Institute had been involved. Its purpose was to enable soldiers from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds to be assessed in groups on their potential to become military leaders. Eric was selected to be a junior officer in the Royal Artillery, serving initially in North Central India and then in Burma toward the end of the war. For the next 3 years, his military roles were immersed in "the cultural mélange" of troops who were Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Gurkhas complicated by "surrendering cohorts of Japanese" (Miller 1993, p. x).

These wartime and cross-cultural experiences motivated Miller to switch from classics to anthropology once he returned to Cambridge University in 1946. He achieved a first class degree and funding for doctorate field research where he spent 2 years in a southwestern region of India studying "change in the traditional social system in Kerala, where substantial Muslim and Syrian Christian minorities lived alongside the highly stratified caste structure of the Hindu majority" (Miller 1993, p. x). Subsequent funding for 18 months of postgraduate research, based on a contrasting social system in northern Thailand, came from the Foreign Office.

Miller had been enacting "social anthropology" in the footsteps of leading early-twentieth-century anthropologists. His professor, Meyer Fortes, had studied under Bronislaw Malinowski at London School of Economics. This British anthropological approach blended structuralism and functionalism – a distinction defined in a history of anthropology text as follows: "social structure was the matrix, or enclosing form, of society, while social function was the role that individual parts of society played in maintaining the structural whole" (Erickson and Murphy 2013, p. 91). Malinowski, widely accepted creator of participant observation as ethnographic method, is associated with Emile Durkheim's notion that functionalism is rooted in biology (ibid: 94).

By 1952, Miller was in his late 20s and eager to find something other than field anthropology, yet he was reluctant to consider academic anthropology. Eric wanted to do something to address the social problems he had seen. He wrote to his professor asking for guidance; Fortes activated a British-American network on Eric's behalf. This search for a role included the Chief Executive of Glacier Metal Company, Lord Wilfred Brown, whose manufacturing firm was the subject of the Tavistock Institute's first major action research project. Also contacted was Peter Jones, Executive Vice-President of Ludlow – a family-owned jute (a fiber used in making burlap, hessian, etc.) company with several mills particularly in Eastern India. Jones was looking for an anthropologist to work internally on several outstanding issues of cultural change.

At this point, Wilfred Brown introduced Eric to the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR), wherein he met four of the founding social scientists: Tommy Wilson, Eric Trist, Harold Bridger, and Ken Rice. Rice (who eventually became his

mentor, colleague, and boss) had begun his well-known study at the cotton mills in Ahmedabad, Western India. Eric writes about his first direct contact with TIHR: "I met a strange set of people, who seemed to be mixed up with psychoanalysis as well as with 'proper' social science"; about Ken Rice (also a social anthropologist), he says, "This was the kind of applied social science that I was looking for, and I badly wanted to know more" (Miller 1993, p. xii).

Eric was hired at the progressive and innovative Ludlow Company. Initially, he spent a year at the USA headquarters in Massachusetts preparing for relocation to Eastern India, as well as learning about the industry in general and about jute processing in particular. With his anthropological field sensitivities, Miller absorbed much about Northeast USA culture of the early 1950s. Simultaneously he was reading publications from the Tavistock Institute, being introduced to the American "human relations school" (e.g., Roethlisberger and McGregor), having his first experience as a "management trainer" with groups in New York, and visiting other mills in Mississippi and Pennsylvania. He also shadowed Tom Harris (a consultant with both Ludlow and Polaroid) who used his own psychometric tests "to predict the cultural adaptability of expatriates to work in the Indian culture" (ibid.).

Thus began Eric's formative, 3-year stint as an internal consultant or change agent with an overall focus on cultural change. Early on, he assisted public health officers in culturally aware approaches for encouraging Indian workers to take anti-malaria medication. Once in India, he focused on what would later be understood "as a transition from Theory X to Theory Y" in a situation ambivalent at best toward "the proposition that workers who were treated as responsible would behave more responsibly" (Miller 1993, p. xiv). Eric made a point to visit Ken Rice in Western India to study the experiments in semiautonomous working groups in weaving. He found it possible to apply what Rice was learning to Eastern India by "designing the work organization for new, very broad looms for carpet-backing that Ludlow had just acquired" (ibid.).

Miller's additional challenge was to consider how to work with the cross-cultural tensions affecting relationships between expatriate US and UK managers and engineers and the more qualified Indians. While the corporation had a manifest policy to hire more Indians, there was an inconsistency between the status hierarchy and the managerial hierarchy. Eric helped to work through the various issues by consulting to the senior management group (ibid.).

Apparent in his formative period in applying social science to business challenges, Eric out of necessity and circumstance enacted the dual emphases that would characterize his career for decades to come: action research with work organizational design, and group consultation in situations wherein issues of difference blocked progress. In 1956, 2 years into these change processes, a shift in US corporate ownership meant the internal role was finished. Eric accepted another internal consultant role at the Ahmedabad Calico mills – this time as "a full-time counterpart to Rice's visiting consultancy from the Tavistock Institute" (ibid.). Two years later, now aged 34, Miller moved back to London to join the TIHR staff working in the small unit led by Ken Rice.

# Key Contributions: Organization Theory and Systems Psychoanalysis

## 1958–1969: Organization Theory and Work Organization Design

Eric's publications during his first few years at the Tavistock Institute built on his practical experiments within the two Indian mills and tested related ideas within UK manufacturing settings along with other industrial sectors new to him. His transition into TIHR culminated with *Systems of Organization: The control of task and sentient boundaries* (Miller and Rice 1967), a book that established his credibility as an organizational theorist in the emerging discipline of systems approaches to complex organizations. Additionally, it exemplifies the close collaboration that he and Ken Rice transferred from Ahmedabad back to London and the intensity to which social scientists at TIHR were engaged in the early days of developing socio-technical systems (STS) theory and practice.

Initially, Miller – the social anthropologist with experience as an internal consultant for 5 years – crafted a detailed description and analysis of principles of ways in which work in an organization can be grouped. He asserted "three possible bases for clustering of role-relationships and thus for the internal differentiation of a production system" (Miller 1959, p. 249): technology, territory, and time are shown as essential "dimensions of difference in the context of transition from a primary or simple production system to a complex system" (Miller 1959, p. 245). Further, "differentiating a complex system into sub-units means breaking down the kind and quality of management required" (ibid: 257).

Around the same time, Ken Rice published a detailed case analysis about the Ahmedabad experiments focusing on productivity and social organization, as well as the process and implications for organizational change (Rice 1958). Subsequently, a second more theoretical book appeared introducing the concept of primary task to open systems theory (Rice 1963) and illustrating the undeniable relevance of the enterprise's environment as a force in organizational change.

*Systems of Organization* (Miller and Rice 1967) brought together into an overall framework central concepts and logically connected learning from both men. We think that the major contribution delivered by Miller and Rice was that this book summarized a pivotal point in the creation of a systems approach to organizations. Their scheme could be applied within, across, and between levels of analyses of social systems, including individuals, pairs, trios, small groups, intergroups, large groups, subunits, across units, departments, divisions, organizations, and their environments as enterprises. The open systems model echoed the idea of functionalism being rooted in biology and biological metaphor. Their overall conceptual framework introduced four broad angles: systems of activity and their boundaries; individuals, groups, and their boundaries; task priorities and constraints (including primary task); and organizational model building – "the patterning of activities through which the primary task of the enterprise is performed" (Miller and Rice 1967, p. 33).

Miller and Rice struggled over organizational boundaries such as theoretical and practical interfaces through case analyses of building a new steel works, open

systems and boundary controls applied to a research institute, and a full-blown application of the systems approach to the flying and ground systems of an airline. They illustrated a fairly new concept of transactions within and across organizational boundaries by providing case material from selling and sales forces, as well as from a dry cleaner's shop with his backstage technical cleaning process. They also showed how task roles and functional boundaries within a family business had become tangled up with the psychodynamics of the family members holding most roles.

The final two parts of the book address how computer systems were beginning to eliminate organizational boundaries within enterprises, ending with a snapshot of learnings about task and sentient groups (think about those anthropological kinship networks at different levels of social analysis) and their boundary controls. In later years, Miller felt that an important contribution of *Systems of Organization* were the values that he and Rice had explored. He identified two issues that echo the human relations movement of the time, of which TIHR was a part: (1) what "led to effective forms of group working – semi-autonomous groups – which optimized the psychosocial needs of the workers and the demands of the technical system" (Miller 1993, p. 27); and (2) that the manager's job was "not to tell individual workers what to do, but to provide the boundary conditions which enabled the work groups . . . to get on with their task" (ibid.: 15). These values may seem a bit underwhelming now, but they were ground breaking in the 1960s through 1980s.

Indeed, Miller and Rice (1967) remained a classical text for three generations of academics of work organization, organizational consultants, and change agents (managerial and employee representative) who were involved in applying socio-technical systems (STS) to improve the quality of working life (QWL) and to design and implement improvements and innovations in the technical and technological aspects of all sorts of work. A list (much too long to mention of edited books and collections in organizational theory, in general, and the systems approach to organizations particularly) includes selections from *Systems of Organization* and related publications from others at TIHR. Eric himself put together just such a collection in a two-volume series entitled, *The Tavistock Institute Contribution to Job and Organizational Design* (1999).

By the new millennium, much of the core values and concepts became so widespread that newer generations did not consider the need to cite Miller and Rice. Their TIHR colleagues Trist and Emery – better disseminated to both US and Australian audiences – might still be mentioned today as representatives of the TIHR socio-technical systems approach. Even so, the impact of this school of thought persists to the extent that many of the tools, techniques, and design outcomes were taken up, often without the values of optimization of workers' needs and incorporated into such approaches as cellular working, lean management, interdisciplinary care teams, patient and student pathways, etc.

## 1970–1979: Action Research

At the age of 46, Eric's second decade at the Institute began with the sudden death of Ken Rice from a brain tumor. Shortly thereafter, Miller published twice in Rice's

honor: an evaluation of the STS work at the weaving shed and a compilation of papers in the spirit of Rice's last 10 years (Miller 1976). He also accepted a role, previously held by Rice, as Director for the Tavistock Institute's Group Relations Programme. As far as publications go, the 1970s saw Eric using his action research and consulting more within the health, social care, and public service domains, and, with one notable exception, less directly with industry and commerce.

In the early 1970s, results became available from a major stream of action research concerning the application of the systems theory of organization to residential institutions for physically handicapped (Miller and Gwynne 1972). Along with TIHR social scientist, Geraldine Gwynne, the colleagues had worked within and across five such organizations in collaboration with residents, staff, and management. Their nomenclature contrasted a warehousing approach centered on dependency based on a purpose of prolonging physical life, with a horticultural approach emphasizing independence based on a purpose of developing and using remaining abilities. The project aimed to develop organizational models catering to these mixed needs, experimented with implications for staff's role definition and development, including exploring ambivalent attitudes all around. The question driving the action research was how to manage the work of both subsystems in a way that residents and staff could retain integrity in their own functioning egos.

This stream of projects – *A Life Together* (Miller and Gwynne 1972) and subsequently *A Life Apart* (Dartington et al. 1981) – helped shape social policy in the education, treatment, and support of people with disabilities. The researchers had to grapple with cultural issues underpinning the primary task of different models of care, as well as ways of thinking and communicating about the personality and behavior of staff and residents. Subsequent opportunities to use an open systems approach to organizational analysis in, what Eric called "people-processing institutions," arrived from a geriatric hospital, handicapped persons in the community, a psychiatric hospital, and a diocese of the Church of England.

Simultaneously, the topic of changing occupational roles, and the organizational changes necessary to address same, became an increasingly important arena for Eric's scientific research and consultancy practice. In the opening pages of the book edited in honor of Rice, Miller focused on role analysis and organizational behavior (1976, pp. 1–18). The interconnection of roles and structure was showing up in the social anthropology literature at the time. As his second decade at TIHR unfolded, Eric had completed two projects on role change for professional associations in occupational health and in nursing leading to an influential study concerning the role of wives in the diplomatic service.

Eric's work on diplomatic wives made waves (Miller 1993, pp. 132–145). There was a diversity of stances apparent between traditional roles for UK diplomats' wives around the word that was being questioned by some women who did not want to be required to take on embassy roles and by others who wanted to work elsewhere. These tensions seemed to coincide with age, phase of family development, and stage of husband's career. More consultancy than action research, the study's impact was substantial as change unfolded right into the early 1990s. The report itself constitutes, in our view, Miller at his most blended as anthropologist and systems thinker

and most entertaining in observing and analyzing while standing a bit back so that the network of determined stakeholders could work things out on their own without his input.

## 1980–1989: Systems Change and Societal Analysis

During his very busy second decade at TIHR, Eric participated in three other substantial action research projects. While the actual client engagement took place in the 1970s, subsequent contributions only became apparent later. One involved a large manufacturer suffering with merger and acquisition problems, the notable exception to his extensive experimentation with nonindustrial sectors in the 1970s. The other two took place in Mexico and demonstrate Miller in social anthropologist mode applying open systems to the complexity of societal issues. Over several years, he consulted on (a) the conceptualization of a socioeconomic process of integrated rural development and (b) the macro-design of regional water authorities tied to hydrological systems.

After some thought, we have placed these three projects under systems change and societal analysis, a substantial area of interest in Eric's third decade at TIHR. A cluster of publications between 1977 and 1980 illustrate his preoccupation with making sense of how psychoanalysis and power could be brought into ways of thinking about the processes of development and change. Within the context of the UK at the time, there was a great deal of turmoil going on in the society (e.g., conflict in Northern Ireland, multiple trade union strikes affecting public services, a controversial female Prime Minister). It was also a period in which ideologies of employee involvement and participative management were being used within corporations, sometimes alongside STS-inspired semiautonomous working groups.

Keeping in mind that Eric had been functioning as Director of TIHR's Group Relations Programme, the incorporation of applied psychoanalysis in his publications increased gradually and always in relation to what could be labeled role analysis or cultural analysis. That is, Miller's observations of behavior were described and interpreted in a way that spelled out challenges being experienced by the people within the social system under study. Attempts were made to propose actions that allowed those implicated to work out the challenges themselves, in the light of an analysis.

Eric's writings about processes of change and development increased. Heavily drawing on group relations thinking as applied to consultancy practice, he argued in favor of seeing the relationship between the individual and enterprise as "a relationship between two systems" and of "the reciprocal dependence of the boundary role-holders on the role-holders inside [the boundary that] goes unrecognized; it gets forgotten that there can be no leaders without followers" (Miller 1977, pp. 38–39). Based on a merger-acquisition industrial case, he asserts that the use of group relations events as an intervention serves the dual purposes of organizational

development and industrial democracy. "Authority, by becoming detached from rank and status, and attached instead to task and role, is available to each member of the organization" (ibid: 60). In related writing, Eric puzzled over why UK trade unions turned down the opportunity to join the rest of the European Union in mandated workers' councils (1985). He concluded that "British industry and society generally are moving out of that dependency culture, through a phase of failed dependency and toward 'post-dependency'. . . shifting into a more genuinely instrumental . . . relatedness to the employing organization" (Miller 1993, p. 313).

Clearly, Miller was going through a period of thinking bigger systems change, like his extensive rural development project in Mexico. Combining open systems thinking with social anthropology, he proposed that even something large and complex (like integrated rural development aiming at reaching 20,000 rural communities) could be considered a system and, therefore, subject to processes of thoughtful development. "A change in the relatedness of a system to its environment requires internal changes within the system: it must shift to a new steady state if it is to survive" (Miller 1979, p. 218).

Eric's Mexican clients were inquiring about how to coordinate organizationally such an intervention that cuts across state and local levels, with many different federal ministries and agencies involved. For 3 years, he helped them "identify the kind of relationship, at the interface between the 'developers' and their 'client systems' that would enable" a self-sustaining process of rural development (ibid: 220). He used a four-model template to help the clients consider how their project might unfold: top-down, bottom-up, enlightened paternalism, and negotiated model. Action research cycles were undertaken to achieve the primary task of the negotiated model: "to provide resources to help each community to formulate, negotiate and implement its own community development programme" (ibid: 224).

Back in the UK, Eric assisted in the creation and development of a registered charity, the Organisation for the Promotion of Understanding of Society (OPUS). Together with its first executive director, Olya Khaleelee, they wrote an influential paper that brought together this emerging concern for what was happening in society and communities (Khaleelee and Miller 1985). The goal of the paper was implied in the title, *Beyond the small group: Society as an intelligible field of study* (ibid.; see also Miller 1993, pp. 243–272).

Apparently, Miller's central theme in his third decade at TIHR was integrating power, psychoanalysis, and systems approaches into community change and societal analysis. His work with an extensive community conflict and resolution project in Northeast London was characterized by the sort of multiracial, multi-immigrant, multi-socioeconomic population that echoed his earlier years in India and Burma. He subsequently consulted to two extensive action research projects on the effectiveness and complexity of a Self-Help Alliance in health and social care. Both projects brought him into relationship with voluntary organizations struggling with public sector agencies. And he felt drawn into writing explicitly about organization consultation and dynamics.

## 1990–2002: Group Relations and Experiential Learning

When Miller joined the Tavistock Institute in 1958, the group relations program had started and was gearing up. In parallel with furthering socio-technical systems, Ken Rice, who had participated in Wilfred Bion's small study groups, was active in the creation and development of these conferences. Indeed, he wrote the seminal text, *Learning for Leadership* (Rice 1965), and emerged as Director of TIHR's Group Relations Programme in these early days. Eric would have been subjected to TIHR's policy of scientific staff undergoing psychoanalysis; and, he was involved as participant and staff for these experiential learning conferences.

Despite taking over as Director of TIHR's Group Relations Programme in 1970, there are few publications from Miller that exclusively address the conference work itself. As a part of his preoccupation with integrating power with psychoanalysis and systems change, he spoke to a 1980 annual meeting of the US-based A.K. Rice Institute on the politics of involvement (Miller 1985) as well as the politics of identity "a subject which has long intrigued me" (Miller 1993, p. vii). Eric asserted three levels active in the micro-politics of any situation (macro, inter-institutional, and intra-institutional) indicating that "it is a subject that nestles on the boundaries of micro-sociology, social psychology, psychodynamic psychology and political science" (ibid.).

We consider this preoccupation to be one of Miller's contributions to group relations and experiential learning. Sama recalls Eric speaking with him about "how the here and now can be used, at times, to ignore the political nature of power" (personal communication, January 1996). Miller insisted that, within the conference design, the interpersonal level of study constituted work on the politics of identity – "the me, not me" (ibid.). He clearly had been motivated to take up this issue in the light of a debate going on within the US group relations community of practice at the time. He places himself firmly with one foot in the camp supporting the integrity of the conference model as a place for socio-psychological-political study of systems dynamics. On the other foot, he calls for an increase in the emotional and cognitive capability in studying politics within the conferences including those between staff and participants. "The political dimension of group relations conferences, at both micro and macro levels, has been relatively neglected, to the detriment of our understanding both of the processes that occur within the conferences themselves and also of the processes involved in the transition of members to their roles in external institutions" (Miller 1985, p. 387). He challenges consultants working in the group relations tradition to search for interpretations related to what systemic political function might be served by the behaviors they are observing and considering already in a socio-psychological light.

This was a strong statement, coming as it did during his tenth anniversary as Director of TIHR's Group Relations Programme, that harmonizes with the intensive action research and consulting he was doing with community systems change and societal analysis. Early in his fourth decade at TIHR, aged 66, Miller wrote two short papers (1990a, b) about experiential learning in groups, focused specifically on the Leicester model. Leicester is a city in the UK wherein the Tavistock Institute's

intensive 2-week residential group relations conference takes place annually as it has done since 1957. The experiential study conference provides configurations at multiple levels of system: individual, small group, intergroup, large group, and institutional – interwoven with individual review and application to external roles and situations.

Miller's two papers on Leicester conferences (1990a, b) had been requested by Eric Trist and Hugh Murray. Trist and Murray were editing three volumes about the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations' contributions to the social engagement of social science (1990, 1993, 1997). The group relations innovations were essential to the first volume on socio-psychological theory and practice, wherein TIHR social scientists were experimenting with integration of the British psychanalytic tradition (e.g., Bion, Bowlby, and Klein), Kurt Lewin's principles of analysis, and a systems approach to organizational analysis. Two aspects of Miller's papers stand out.

Firstly, while containing a density of information, the writing invites the reader to engage simultaneously with the educational and historical value they represent. The initial paper introduces the group relations conference as a long-established, still vibrant approach. Eric offers historical origins and developments in design, explores the interplay between theory and method (including conceptual framework, the practice and role of staff, theory, and phenomenology), and ends with the role of participant and the nature of learning (Miller 1990a). The subsequent paper addresses dissemination and application of group relations conferences in the UK and across the world. Eric begins with institutional reproduction and adaptation, summarizes applications as interventions at the organizational and the societal level, and ends with reflections on – what was then – current experiences with the model (Miller 1990b).

The second aspect of these papers worth noting is that Eric writes as if he has been on the boundary of the group relations conferences. He takes no credit for the maintenance, enhancement, and adaptations of the TIHR Leicester conferences since 1970; nor does he insert himself into the narrative of institutional reproduction (a term he credits with Rice's 1965 *Learning for Leadership*) within the UK and around the world. Such a stance is consistent with both values and concepts underpinning the group relations model and the experiential learning of a community of practice. During a celebration of Eric's life after his death in 2002, his international colleagues (Gould et al. 2001, 2004) spoke eloquently of Eric as an institution-builder globally who was a master of leading from behind.

In addition to TIHR's own Group Relations Programme and the Advanced Organizational Consultation (AOC) program (Neumann 2007), Eric played roles in the formation and development of most of the national institutes of human relations dotted around the world. These included, but are not limited to, AKRI (USA), OFEK (Israel), OPUS (UK), MundO (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland). Remember back to his first TIHR publication wherein he proposed a notion that the job of a manager or a leader was not to tell individuals what to do, "but to provide the boundary conditions which enabled the work groups . . . to get on with their task" (Miller 1959, p. 15). Apparently, Miller's institutional building capacity enacted this idea at the level of community of practice and cross-institutional and cross-national boundaries!

## New Insights: Both Macro- and Micro-collaboratively

In a posthumous publication, Eric states that by the mid-1960s, "a set of four frameworks – psychodynamic, psychosocial, socio-technical and systemic – was available and being used in the Institute's action research and consultancy with organizations" (Miller 2002, p. 193). We consider that Eric's career before and during his time at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) embodies a steady taking on of each of these frameworks until a full set constituted his own scholarly practice.

Our understanding of his 1940s experience in the military and subsequent training at Cambridge in social anthropology suggests that the psychosocial already was intimately apparent during his fieldwork studies of social stratification in India and Thailand. Surely, his formation in the 1950s as an applied social scientist – from the role of internal consultant during work organizational redesign processes in manufacturing – can be understood predominately as immersion in the early evolution of socio-technical systems. By the late 1960s, Miller and Rice had created a significant book on systems of organization, from which clearly grew a workload manifested in Eric's 1970's extraordinary action research into nonindustrial sectors.

Miller convincingly asserts that "the psychodynamic is never irrelevant" (ibid.). Yet with few exceptions, he did not set the psychodynamic off on its own, away from the systemic, socio-technical, and psychosocial (see, e.g., Miller 1998). He clearly considered "that a psychodynamic perspective is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective organizational consultancy" (ibid: 186).

In his 1993 collection of papers, Eric clusters his selection into five sections: toward a conceptual framework, three studies of "people-processing institutions," analysis and diagnosis, processes of development and change, and societal processes. We have used this book, which includes a bibliography of his publications, to map and then trace his evolution as an applied social scientist. In reviewing Miller's own chosen papers, we were struck by the sheer volume of action research projects and a pattern of gradually evolving toward a way of thinking that integrated those four frameworks.

As people closely associated with TIHR ourselves, it is worth mentioning that some of the frameworks were taken as separate specialties by different units within the Institute. To strive for (and achieve to some extent) a type of integration across the four frameworks was not necessarily a shared institutional task. In the 1970s, there seemed for a while to be a dissemination split by sectors: socio-technical systems disseminated through industrial and commercial organizations and group relations disseminated through health, social care, and public sector organizations. Even in the 1980s, it was possible to glimpse how these frameworks had been adopted by different academic disciplines and related occupations, for example, systems of organization and socio-technical being taken on by industrial sociologists, business strategists, and management schools and group relations, psychosocial, and psychodynamic being taken on by psychologists, micro-sociologists, psychiatrists, and not-for-profit scholarly practitioners.

In Fig. 1, we indicate something of the integration that we think emerges from Miller's action research publications. At the center of the figure, a diagram from
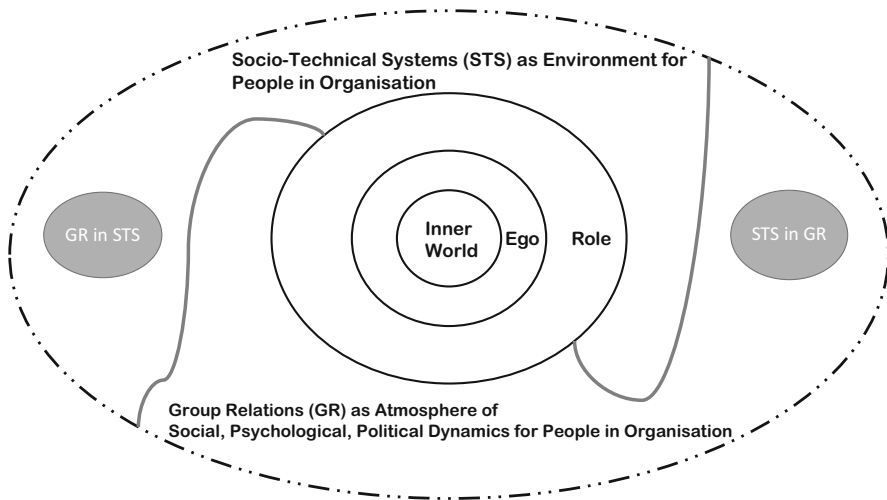
**Fig. 1** Integrating socio-technical systems and psychodynamics

*Systems of Organization* (Miller and Rice 1967, p. 17) illustrates the authors' lowest level of analysis: "the individual … represented on the pattern of a system of activity" (ibid: 16). To this, we have added a third concentric circle entitled, "role," as an element of analysis that Eric increasingly used as necessary for understanding people-processing systems. We set this individual down into the middle of a context – a total situation to use Kurt Lewin's concept – depicted by a larger systemic circle (the social system relevant particularly to this person or people) with a dotted-line boundary, indicating an environment wider than and surrounding the visible relevant social system.

In that final concentric circle, we assert our experience of Eric Miller's contribution as a change thinker: that is, manifesting theoretically and practically both separate and simultaneous aspects of socio-technical systems and group relations. Elsewhere in this paper, we also have used different phrases: "organization theory" in recognition of the importance of the *Systems of Organization* book (Miller and Rice 1967) and "systems psychodynamics" in the light of Eric's social anthropological bias of attending simultaneously to both social structure and social function. Eric claimed a unique consolidation of these two frameworks, while explicitly respecting a genealogy that combined systems theory and psychoanalysis (Miller 1997, p. 188). He defined systems psychodynamics as meaning, "a model of open socio-technical systems informed by a psychoanalytic perspective" (ibid.: 187).

From 1993, Eric worked as part of a trio to create the Advanced Organizational Consultation (AOC) program with the explicit purpose of experimenting with an integration of organizational theory, systems psychodynamics, and consultancy competence. While it was possible to locate and work with original TIHR socio-technical and socio-ecological theory (e.g., Neumann et al. 1995; Trist and Murray 1993, 1997), it is fair to say that much had been taken into the established academic

domains of organizational theory, business strategy, and operations management. AOC faculty found it necessary to draw on other contemporary literatures to illustrate and flesh-out aspects of TIHR organizational theory. Fortunately, it was possible to locate and work with original TIHR socio-psychological theory (e.g., Trist and Murray 1990).

An integrated lens of systems psychodynamics, however, required additional publications (Holti 2011; Miller 1993; Neumann 1999, 2010). It was readily possible to find scholarly practice and academic publications in this area (e.g., writers like Gould et al.). In terms of consultancy competence, methodologies, and practices related to action research, work organization design and group relations had much to offer (e.g., Armstrong et al.; Pasmore et al.). Miller usefully wrote up his "working note" methodology (Miller 1995), and much was accomplished through experiential learning (Neumann 2007). A focus on the consultant's role helped motivate participants to bring many angles on consultancy competence into their learning community, thereby introjecting Eric's strong stance of inviting collaboration while avoiding the creation of dependency.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Accessible and Normal Integration

### Integration of Applied Social Science

In the 2000s, there has been a rise of approaches that define themselves against systems of organization in favor of conversations, dialogue, strength-based approaches, etc. These politics of identity are very strong: systems is the "not me," and one of these "new paradigm" approaches is the "me." Apparently, that which was unique and exciting in 1960s, has become taken for granted within organizational theory and work organization design. This could have something to do with many examples of systems thinking being applied without the human optimization values! Some vocal and well-published academics among current generations of practitioners (including a few baby boomers) are holding the term, "systems," accountable for abuses in consultancy and change management practice. The essential critical theory aspects of the TIHR traditions seem less understood.

Perhaps this is a point where the historical split caused trouble. We refer to a split between the group relations tradition, in which talking and working through is a central methodology of a soft side, and the socio-technical tradition, in which the application of specialist knowledge to jobs, roles, technology, work flows, and industrial relations constitutes a hard side. Theoretically, there is still much to be done that addresses integration. Those working within a systems approach to organizations perhaps need more exposure to group relations thinking, which legitimizes thoughts and feelings and politics without looking for premature solutions. Many in the group relations community of practice may rely primarily on *Systems of Organization* for organizational theory and could benefit from understanding how improved structures can free up emotions including anxiety.

If we take Eric's action research as example, it could well be that we need another round of intensive study within nonlinear STS work, along the lines of the people-processing systems that Miller investigated. Combined with information technologies as the central form of coordination and management, impact on roles and the structure of work can be examined in the light of the social, psychological, and political issues. Certainly, current changes within the environment of enterprises must be taken into consideration. These studies may be there but seem difficult to find with explicit reference to these TIHR integrated theories of practice.

There are many reasons why elements of the "me" methods in the "new paradigm" could be used to encourage and reveal the range of system psychodynamics at play in today's settings. Further, both group relations and STS methods can be adjusted, even customized, for contemporary purposes of cross-boundary OD. For example, service departments contracted outside the boundaries of main organizations may not live up to their anticipated financial benefits (valued by the people in core decision-making departments) while redefining belonging and task concerns of people on the front line in the contracted suppliers. Enforced matrix and project management routines suffer from inadequate shared cultures across various boundaries (e.g., functional, occupational, geographic, etc.). That, which is considered sacrosanct from so-called rational viewpoints, may be addressed more effectively when influenced by so-called emotional viewpoints. Methodologies for emotional-rational collaboration might well heal unnecessary splits within economic-technological logics.

## Writing and Publishing Action Research

We think Miller's use of action research to report specifics of systems issues integrated with psycho-social-political dynamics is still important. People respond to stories that show how environmental challenges put people in difficult positions and how finding ways to air the issues and work things through within the boundaries of their own groups can make a difference. Miller clearly had a professional knack for applying theory in practice and then summarizing it in a working note (e.g., Miller 1993, 1998) to enable basic dialogue with clients. Then, he could write it up again as a case scenario for scholarly practitioners and then incorporate more than one such case to illustrate more theoretical points for academe.

We puzzle over the degree to which this capability might be rooted in social anthropological ethnography. Such "narrative analysis" methodology – in the form of case studies and storytelling – powerfully evokes the qualitative richness of both particularities and totalities of client and scientific situations. However, current publication conventions can work against such methodology being published in organizational and managerial academic journals. Scholarly practitioners often find it difficult to impossible to move beyond the writing and submitting stages. A master of the form (like Eric Miller) does not necessarily make for a functioning role model. Differentiation within the action research publishing community further complicates that as an outlet. Similarly, clinical research of such a narrative form is not widely

distributed outside – for example – psychotherapeutic communities of practice. This suggests it is no accident that books of papers have become a norm of dissemination in these arenas.

## Differentiation and Integration of Consultancy Methodologies

While there has been a plethora of publications on systems-based psychoanalysis, there is a paucity of publications on action research and consultancy from that perspective. Of concern for us is the education and development of scholarly practitioners in this regard. In addition to the publication issue above, there is the need to differentiate from and integrate with both the expert-oriented management consulting role/methodology and the collaboratively oriented group relations consulting role/methodology. It seems that idiosyncratic solutions to polarities between these two roles can be observed in individuals but not so much in a way that the field of organizational change benefits.

Eric Miller is a good example: he was a management consultant when working with organizational clients (usually managers or leaders) and used the working note to input his ideas to those who had to live with the problem and implement solutions. In contrast, as a group relations consultant, Eric spoke very little and kept in mind a particular attitude toward the role that enacted his integrated notions of what he was doing (see Fig. 1). He was committed to studying factors that gave people substantial difficulty in thriving in modern organizations and society. Active as both an applied social science researcher and management consultant, Miller's brilliance was to point people toward emotional attitudes and ways of thinking that worked against their taking power through accessible systemic actions in their idiosyncratic situations.

Ideas within the systems psychodynamic communities of practice that are crying out for attention point to current "appropriate dependency" in relation to the 1980s values of "autonomy." This seems even more serious in the light of cutbacks in governmental programs, the "on your bike" and "go it on our own" societal dynamics, and projection of hatred toward those who are visibly different – all present as we write. The emotional downsides of "primary task" and "primary risk" and how it relates to cultural change could suggest applications of altered group relations methodologies. And, finally, the need for mechanisms for on-going learning in the applied social sciences – originally created as face-to-face and time-consuming – now seem too costly to operate with any certainty. What might contemporary practicing scholars in action do?

## Conclusion

Eric John Miller (1924–2002) entered the fields that have evolved into what we now label, "organizational change," as a nascent social anthropologist in industry. Coming of age during WWII in India and Burma, Eric's scholarship capabilities emerged

through his ability to study practical challenges being experienced at the boundaries of society, social systems, and organizations. He arrived at the influential Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR) in London, UK, under mentorship of A.K. Rice, already steeped in the innovations that became socio-technical systems and systems psychodynamics. As we have shown into this chapter, Eric's substantial impact from that base can be traced across the multiple, interconnected domains of organization theory and work organization design, action research, system change and society analysis, and group relations and experiential learning.

We assert that Eric Miller's publishing output over four decades at TIHR shows how his practical scholarship developed in relation to a massive volume of action research and consultancy projects. He considered that his learned aim combined "a model of socio-technical systems informed by a psychoanalytic perspective" (Miller 1997, p. 187). This blend can be seen repeatedly in his preoccupation with integration of micro- and macro-level of social analysis, with the integration of accessible models for action with deep theoretical frameworks, and with the integration of collaborative working with consultancy clients for change as well as offering publications and presentations that coach academics into the social engagement of social science.

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Monica E. Biggs

**Abstract**

Frederick A. Miller has contributed to the theory and practice of organization change by challenging and reframing how organizations understand and leverage differences to create inclusive workplaces. With Judith H. Katz, he published the first comprehensive model and framework for implementing diversity and inclusion as a lever for strategic culture change, moving diversity from a compliance-driven set of programs to a breakthrough OD strategy linked to higher operational and bottom-line performance. Miller came of age during a period heavily influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which significantly shaped his vision not only of what society could be but also of the role organizations needed to play in moving society toward a greater equality of opportunity and participation. His work reflects a lifelong commitment to pushing back on the status quo to help change organizations into places where human beings can be fully human and where each person can grow, do their best work, and have a meaningful experience. Many of Miller's insights come from observing and learning from his clients, engaging with peers on corporate and not-for-profit boards, and studying what is happening in the world. In collaboration with Katz and others in his firm, he has developed several simple models and practical tools and processes that make it easier for clients to move toward a workplace in which people can do their best work in service of the organizational mission, vision, and strategic objectives. Miller believes that, fundamentally, organizations are only as productive as the interactions between people. Significant organizational change for today's organizations requires an adjustment in the quality of interactions between people. Conscious Actions for Inclusion is a tool that provides a set of behaviors communicated in simple, common language that opens the door to greater clarity and enhanced ways of interacting.

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## Contents

## Introduction

An organizational heretic is "someone who sees a truth that contradicts the conventional wisdom of the institution to which she or he belongs – and who remains loyal to both entities, to the institution and the new truth" (Kleiner 2008). Much of what Frederick A. Miller has done to advance the field of diversity, inclusion, and organizational transformation has been done as a heretic (Kleiner included Miller in *The Age of Heretics* (2008)). A black activist, he chose to be a change agent working *inside* major US corporations. In many of his early client engagements, he was the first African-American to interact in a consultant capacity with members of senior management.

Throughout almost 45 years of organization development (OD) practice, he has facilitated large-scale organizational change without undermining the cultural values that made the organization successful: acknowledging the contributions of the founding "white male" culture, while at the same time aggressively challenging the institutionalized "isms" that have kept other groups down. He rejected change

efforts that sought to level, or even raise, the playing field for all groups to the current level of white men as *insufficient*, saying the treatment many white men receive is not good enough either. The real challenge was to raise the playing field *for all* by creating an inclusive culture in which everyone felt valued as an individual and where differences were leveraged in support of the enterprise's goals (Miller and Katz 2002).

To raise the playing field, organizations needed an "inclusion breakthrough," a level of culture change that involved the rethinking and redesigning of many aspects of organizational culture: policies, practices, and sometimes structure. With Judith H. Katz, he published the first comprehensive model and framework for implementing diversity and inclusion as a lever for strategic culture change, moving it from a compliance-driven set of programs to a breakthrough OD strategy linked to higher operational and bottom-line performance.

## Influences and Motivations: The Civil Rights Movement and OD - Aligning Personal and Professional Values

Miller came of age during a period heavily influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, which significantly shaped his vision not only of what society could be but also of the role organizations needed to play in moving society toward a greater equality of opportunity and participation.

He was born in 1946, into a lower middle-class neighborhood in West Philadelphia, Pa., the only son and youngest child of four. With a 13-year gap in age between him and his next older sister, his experience growing up was more like that of an only child. He was also introverted by nature and liked spending time alone or with a close friend or two, playing make-believe battles with miniature plastic soldiers or competitive board games. He also learned to play chess, a pastime he still loves. Miller's extraordinary ability to strategize and position organizational change interventions, always thinking two or more steps ahead, was born out of these early play experiences.

His mother Clarice, whom he described as "the first activist I ever met," was resolute in overcoming any barrier her son faced as an African-American child in the 1940s and 1950s, as he made his way through school and life in the inner city. She was indomitable and would not let anyone, regardless of her or his title or level of authority, limit her son's potential. When the school counselor put Fred – along with most of the other African-American children in his class – on the vocational-technical track, Clarice demanded that he be moved into the college entrance courses. The counselor resisted, explaining the unlikeliness that Miller could manage the workload, as he was "not college material," to which Miller's mother retorted, "You are not going tell me what my son can't do. You do your job and get him into those classes, and I will make sure he does what he needs to get to college" (Miller, personal communication, May 12, 2016).

Even then, Miller knew that he was lucky; he did not feel he deserved more breaks than his friends, he knew he was not the smartest in the group, and he did not

feel superior to his friends and others of his peers. What he did feel was a deep responsibility to pay back the support and love of his parents and the kindnesses shown by neighbors and peers, by doing something big that would make the world a better place. He dedicated *The Inclusion Breakthrough*, a book he wrote with Katz, to his parents, who gave him "the wings to fly out of the box that was supposed to be the destiny of an inner city child whose birth certificate indicated Negro" (Miller and Katz 2002, preface). In 1946, the word "negro" on a person's birth certificate was more than a description of his or her racial group. It defined – and limited – who a person was and what she or he could become.

His father, for whom he was named, died suddenly when Miller was a high school senior. It was an enormous blow in many ways. Miller had no way to pay for college until a local pastor, the Rev. Leon H. Sullivan, recommended him for a scholarship set aside for fatherless boys. He reflected on this turn of events as the last gift his father gave him. Sullivan, a clergyman and civil rights leader, would become famous in 1977 for drawing up the Sullivan Principles, guidelines for American businesses operating in South Africa under apartheid (Lewis 2001).

## Learning from Great Black Thinkers and Activists

In 1968, Miller arrived at Connecticut General Insurance Corporation (now CIGNA) as a management trainee, with a degree from Lincoln University (Pennsylvania), the country's first degree-granting historically black university. Founded in 1854, the school provided a springboard for many notable African-Americans who became pioneers in their fields. These included US Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Harlem Renaissance poet Langston Hughes, music legend Cab Calloway, Medal of Honor winner and editor Christian Fleetwood, Emmy Award-winning and Tony Award-nominated actor Roscoe Lee Browne, first President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah, and first President of Nigeria Nnamdi Azikiwe. In the 1960s, Lincoln was a place that awakened and sharpened Miller's social justice and Black Power activism and expanded his worldview.

He recalled, "At Lincoln I was exposed to some of the great black thinkers and activists of the decade. Charles V. Hamilton was the dynamic chair of the political science department. He and civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael (later changing his name to Kwame Ture) were coauthoring their groundbreaking book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, and they would come into class and 'rap' about their ideas" (Miller, personal communication, May 12, 2016).

Miller was also inspired by civil rights leader James L. Farmer Jr., who had joined the faculty in 1966 after becoming disenchanted with the growing militancy of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which he had cofounded. He was known as one of the Big Four, along with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Whitney Young of the Urban League, and Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Farmer was a pioneer in the development and use of nonviolent direct action as a tactic for fighting racial

discrimination; he helped develop the concept of affirmative action and was one of the first blacks to serve in a high-ranking government position (Connell 1999).

## Becoming an Organizational Change Agent

Unlike many of his college friends, who were eager to become community activists, Miller felt he could be most effective as a change agent inside organizations. When he joined Connecticut General in 1968, the insurance industry was still reeling from the riots of the early 1960s. The devastating riots that erupted in 125 cities nationwide after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968 reinforced the need for change. When the 1968 riots were over, some 39 people were dead, more than 2,600 injured, and 21,000 arrested. The damages were estimated at $65 million, approximately $385 million today (Risen 2008). While King's death may have ignited the riots, black people's frustration with de facto segregation, workplace discrimination, police brutality, and urban poverty had been building for decades. Connecticut General, recognizing that things needed to change, both in society and inside the corporation, increased its commitment to affirmative action. Miller was recruited to join a pioneer cohort of African-American professionals in the company. He eventually became the first person of color in the company's 100-year-plus history to rise from management trainee to the rank of officer.

Miller said, "I was brought into a corporate setting eager to work hard and be successful. I soon learned that it was not a level playing field – that it was not fair for everyone in the organization, and especially not for our group of black professionals. For example, after a round of performance evaluations, I realized that every single one of us was rated lower than our white peers. The organization just had a culture that very much supported certain people and groups, and did not support others" (personal communication, May 12, 2016). His career was interrupted in October 1968 when he was drafted for military service. Miller served for 2 years in the US Army in Korea during the Vietnam War. He returned to his position at Connecticut General in 1972 with a greater awareness and appreciation for the value of all people and a determination to eliminate discrimination.

In spring 1972, Miller was introduced to what would become his life's work in OD when he attended a company diversity education session. OD was a natural career path for this black activist and change agent at heart because, for Miller, the underlying values of the Civil Rights Movement and OD were fully aligned:

> Civil Rights: To create both a society and organizations in which people are treated fairly and with respect.
> OD: to create workplaces in which people matter, are valued, and participate in and influence their work experience (Katz and Miller 2014).

Fortunately for the work that Miller was to do, Connecticut General was a progressive organization led by CEO Henry Roberts, who valued individual and system change. Miller transferred from the group pension department to work with

his white colleague, Richard H. Kremer, in human resources. With Kremer, he facilitated, and then directed, the Intergroup Cooperation and Understanding (ICU) Program. The ICU Program, one of the first diversity initiatives in a major US corporation, was the management's response to black employees' increased pressure on Connecticut General to make good on its commitment to equal employment. Thousands of employees participated in 3-day residential and experiential workshops that taught them how to work across racial and gender differences. This training shook up the status quo. Black-white, and later, woman-man, workshops brought people together across hierarchical levels for honest and emotional discussions about race relations and gender stereotypes. The workshops impacted all three levels of the system: building personal awareness, interpersonal understanding and group collaboration, and mobilizing employee action groups to challenge organizational norms and practices that kept some people "down." It is important to note how revolutionary the concept of partnering across racial and gender differences was during this period. It would be another decade before works such as Thomas Kochman's *Black and White Styles in Conflict* (Kochman 1981) and Alice Sargent's *The Androgynous Manager* (Sargent 1981), among others, would describe new paradigms for workplace communication and partnership.

At the black-white workshops, Miller originated the practice of starting every session by having people say "hello" to each other. Greeting another person and shaking hands in a sincere manner are a very simple intervention, but one that Miller believed was fundamental to interacting across differences in an honest and authentic way. For some whites, this "hello" activity was the first time they had ever touched a black person's hand. Since that time, "hellos" have been a keystone in Miller's work; he continues to use the practice to help people connect across differences, whether in the workplace or community gatherings.

## NTL, Kaleel Jamison, and Other OD Pioneers

Miller's facilitation style and methods were influenced by the National Training Laboratories' (NTL) T-group methodology in which the facilitator creates a safe "container" that encourages participants to share emotional reactions (as opposed to judgments or conclusions) that arise in response to their colleagues' actions and statements. The focus on suspending judgment, to deeply listen to others, foreshadowed Miller's and Katz's later work on the impact of shifting from a judging to a joining mind-set as the first step toward improving the quality of people's interactions (Katz and Miller 2013). As an NTL member facilitating public workshops, Miller would find great satisfaction facilitating more than 20 T-groups, deeply impressed with the power and the effectiveness of the T-group as a means of fostering positive change in individuals and teams and the potential impact on organizations.

Miller also participated in Will Schutz's Esalen encounter groups, which encouraged people to face their fears and express themselves honestly and directly. Later, with Kaleel Jamison, he taught and continued to develop her model of straight talk,

which was one of the first to identify direct, honest, and clear communication as a precursor to real systems change (Jamison 1985). Straight talk was a radical proposition for the time by presuming that conflicting views, values, cultures, and styles were best addressed openly and that those differences – properly resolved – will enhance rather than detract from the organization and its success.

After meeting in 1973 at a Living School women-men working together lab, Miller hired Kaleel Jamison as a consultant to facilitate woman-man and transactional analysis workshops at Connecticut General. Kaleel's workshops encouraged vigorous disagreement so that people in these groups could be heard and self-empowered. She was also one of the first to talk about self-empowerment in organizations. In their book, *Be Big*, Miller and Katz expanded on Kaleel's idea of the "big circle" by offering ways for people to show up more fully as individuals and in their interactions with others and to find ways to be big together in organizations (Katz and Miller 2008). Miller left Connecticut General in 1979 to join Jamison's OD practice, to partner with, and continue to learn from her.

Miller's role at Connecticut General afforded him the opportunity to immerse himself in personal growth and OD workshops led by a variety of theorists and practitioners, including Jack Gibb, Robert Bales, Peter Block, John Weir, Sherman Kingsbury, Moshe Feldenkrais, Peter Vaill, Rose Miller, John Scherer, Jimmy Jones, Edith Seashore, and Marvin Weisbord. (Weisbord and Seashore both consulted to Miller as he formed his firm, The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group Inc.; Seashore continued to provide coaching, support, and entry for Miller into the OD professional network, throughout her life.) What Miller took from these experiences significantly influenced his thinking about group process, OD, and his use of self as an instrument of change.

When Block came to Connecticut General to co-facilitate his consulting skills workshops with Miller, he was still formulating what would later become *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used* (Block 1981). While Miller practiced Block's process for engaging clients in an empowered and direct way, Block observed. Miller also went to visit Herb Shepard at Fort Courage, his home in Connecticut, to "inhale his wisdom," and then asked Shepard to lead a life planning workshop. When a senior vice president heard that people were being encouraged to plan their lives beyond the company, he blew his top and demanded that Miller be fired. This was tantamount to organizational sabotage and not to be tolerated. Luckily for Miller, CEO Roberts intervened and Miller's job was saved. That would not be the last time Miller would be threatened with termination. He joked, "I used to keep a letter of resignation in my back pocket for the day when either the company or I would be ready to end it. (personal communication, May 18, 2016)."

## Partnership with Judith H. Katz

Miller met Katz at a NTL board meeting when Miller was a board member and Katz – along with colleague Bailey Jackson – conducted a workshop on racism. Katz's seminal work, *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training*, is still used as

a resource for consultants and educators (Katz 1978). They stayed connected through NTL. Immediately after Jamison's untimely death in 1985, Miller invited Katz to become his business and thinking partner as he formed The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group (KJCG) to continue Kaleel's work and legacy.

Miller and Katz's shared set of values and their passion to make organizations places where all people can do their best work – places that leverage the differences, as well as similarities that all people carry – have sustained their creative partnership for more than 30 years. Both were influenced by NTL values and methodologies. Both instinctively seek out people in the organization who are on "the fringe" or are not given the opportunity to do their best work and therefore cannot add their value to the mission and vision of the organization. Their work creates environments that enable those voices to be heard. Both try to follow Lewin's counsel that there should be no research without action and no action without research. Their client interventions are followed by intense reflection and discussion, leading to the development of theoretical constructs, models, and practical tools that help their clients create more inclusive cultures.

## Key Contributions: Inclusion as a Strategy to Achieve Higher Organizational Performance

Miller has made his major contributions to the theory and practice of organization change by challenging and reframing how organizations understand and leverage differences to create inclusive workplaces and how change agents facilitate strategic culture change using inclusion as a means to achieve higher organizational performance and accelerate bottom-line results.

### A New Definition of Inclusion

In September 1991, NTL Institute asked Miller to bring together the voices of 40 leaders, researchers, and practitioners who were working to address issues of diversity in organizations. Little had been written to date to make this topic accessible for managers and the general public. The result was the landmark book *The Promise of Diversity* (Cross et al. 1994), coedited by Elsie Y. Cross, Katz, and Seashore. The book was a call to action for leaders and OD change agents to eliminate oppression which, despite the advances made in the 30 years since the Civil Rights Act, remained a daily struggle for many in organizations. It proposed that practitioners find ways to hear, understand, and appreciate both the individual difference perspective (which held that the fundamental issue of diversity was to create understanding between different individuals, to discover, and celebrate "common ground") and the social justice perspective (which called for addressing discrimination and oppression at the group and system levels).

In the chapter "Forks in the Road: Critical Issues on the Path to Diversity," Miller went a step further by calling for a radical rethinking, redefining, and restructuring of

many aspects of institutions and people's lives. At a time in which diversity was presented in organizations as a human resource problem to be managed, overcome, neutralized, or minimized, he was one of the first to describe the organizational change driven by diversity as a *revolution*. Organizations could not realize the benefits of a diverse workforce without fundamental changes in how people led, communicated, planned, solved problems, and designed organizational structures, policies, and practices. Leaders also needed to surface and address conditions, some subtle and "invisible," that blocked and oppressed people due to their differences. Miller did not think that people understood the magnitude of the changes involved. "Inclusion," he wrote, "turns comfortable upside down and inside out" (Cross et al. 1994, p. 39).

Miller and Katz were among a few practitioners who pioneered the use of the term *inclusion* in 1990, in part because it more fully described the goal for strategic culture change and in part to differentiate between true culture change and mere change in head count. Proponents of the value-in-diversity perspective advocated a "business case for diversity," linking a more diverse workforce to improvements in customer service, product quality, and bottom-line profitability; however, few management practices, policies, and accountabilities changed to make diversity a core business success factor (Cox 1993). Miller recognized that diversity without inclusion did not work. A definition of inclusion was developed and popularized that linked directly to enhanced individual, team, and business performance, standing apart from other definitions in the literature which generally overlooked the system-level element of improving collective work.

> Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued and seen for who we are as individuals. There is a level of supportive energy and commitment from leaders, colleagues and others so that we – individually and collectively – can do our best work. (Katz and Miller, 2010)

Historically, discussions of organizational development ignored diversity and inclusion as a means by which to position and drive strategic culture change (e.g., Tichy 1983; French et al. 1989; Sikes et al. 1989; Bolman and Deal 1984; Kezar 2001). In *Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity* (Miller and Katz 2002), Miller and Katz introduced a comprehensive model, the inclusion breakthrough cycle, and change implementation technology, the KJCG methodology for strategic culture change, that synthesized their insights, experiences, frameworks, and interventions from three decades of OD practice. Inclusion is framed as the *HOW* – the means for transforming people's connections and interactions as they do their work and achieve results.

## The Inclusion Breakthrough Cycle and Methodology for Strategic Culture Change

The inclusion breakthrough cycle (see Fig. 1) focuses on five key elements for leveraging differences and creating a culture of inclusion: (1) new individual and
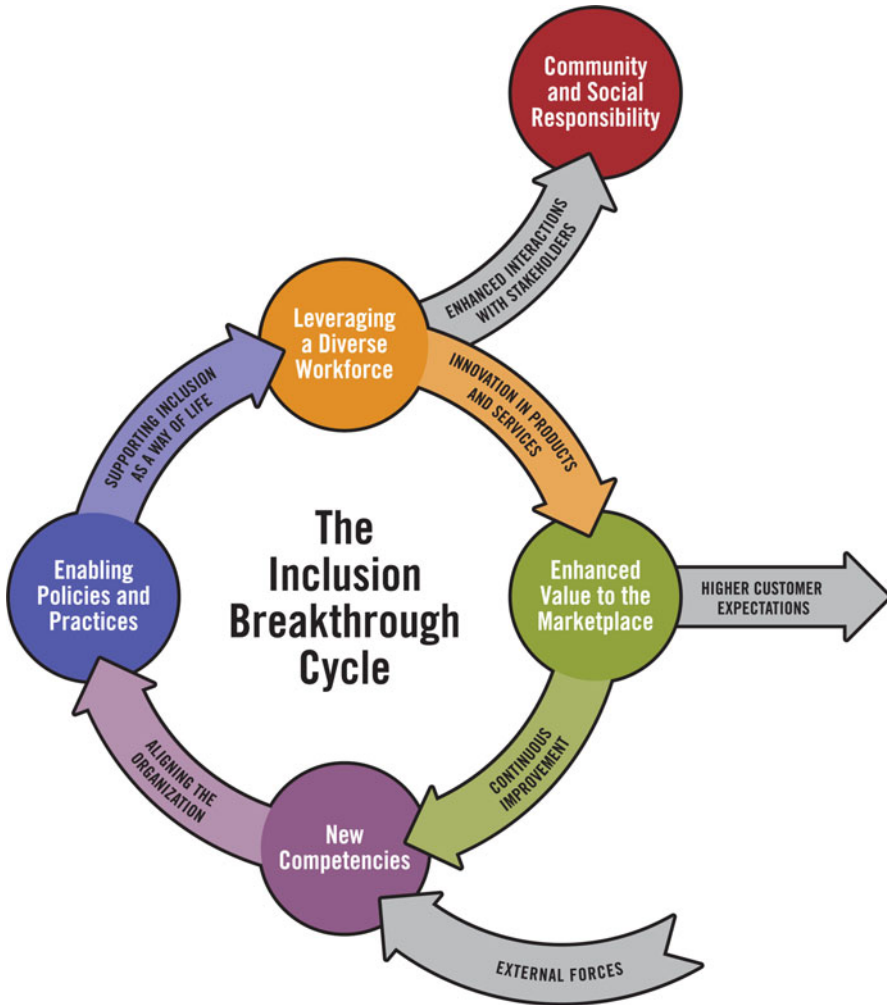
**Fig. 1** The inclusion breakthrough cycle describes five key elements for leveraging differences and creating a culture of inclusion (Reprinted from Miller and Katz (2002). Copyright 2002 by The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. Reprinted with permission)

team competencies, (2) enabling policies and practices, (3) leveraging a diverse workforce, (4) community and social responsibility, and (5) enhanced value to a diverse marketplace.

- New competencies: Individual and team competencies for communicating across differences, addressing and working through conflict, and creating a safe and supportive environment for all. The competencies were further refined as 12 conscious actions for inclusion (Katz and Miller 2012b).

- Enabling policies and procedures: New baseline for how policies and practices support individuals and address all social identity groups.
- Leveraging a diverse workforce: Nine guidelines for becoming a worthy organization that retains key talent.
- Community and social responsibility: Ways to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with the people and organizations that furnish their workforce, customers, suppliers, and distributors and to support economically healthy and safe communities.
- Enhanced value to a diverse marketplace: Capitalizing on the full range of differences of people in the organization's home country before "going global."

Recognizing that the marketplace is becoming increasingly diverse, therefore, the ability to partner across differences needs to be core competency of the organization. The KJCG methodology for an inclusion breakthrough has four phases:

- Phase I – Building a platform for change: Develop a bottom-line business case for change, position the effort, and conduct an organizational assessment.
- Phase II – Creating momentum: Develop a critical mass of people modeling the new culture.
- Phase III – Making diversity and inclusion a way of life: Link the inclusion breakthrough to operations and business process improvement initiatives; inclusion becomes how business is done and how people interact.
- Phase IV – Leveraging learning and challenging the new status quo: Measure progress and reassess.

Through the implementation of the KJCG methodology, many organizations have been able to connect the inclusion culture change effort to achieving their higher business objectives. The methodology also introduced several innovative change interventions developed, tested, and refined in large client systems (Dun & Bradstreet, Eastman Kodak, Ecolab, United Airlines, Mobil Oil Company, Allstate Insurance, Toyota Motor Co., Merck & Co. and Apple Inc., among others). Some examples include cocreation with senior leaders of the "from-to culture vision" (see Fig. 2) to provide a gap analysis and concrete vision of the desired future state, pockets of readiness strategy to engage business units or functions to be the first to model and act as "proof of concept" for the new culture, and group interventions such as learning partners and core inclusion and change partners designed to inform, enroll, and build a critical mass of people in the organization to reach the tipping point for change.

## Pockets of Readiness Strategy

Miller developed the pockets of readiness strategy to increase buy-in from clients who were more willing to invest in a systemic culture change effort once they saw

**Fig. 2** Examples of a from-to culture vision that provides a gap analysis and concrete vision of the desired future state (Reprinted from F. A. Miller and J. H. Katz (2014). Copyright 2014 by The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. Reprinted with permission)

evidence of successful transformation in a business unit or function. Miller knew senior leaders needed a concrete picture of the "end state" – what a more inclusive organization that leverages differences will look and feel like, how people would interact differently, and, most importantly, how inclusion would impact the bottom

line. From his experience, Miller also knew that there were parts of the organization that could move a lot faster toward the new culture. Why not leverage these pockets of readiness as "proof of concept?"

It is common for organizations to cascade or "roll out" change initiatives from the top down through the organization, a slow and unpredictable way of building critical mass for change. Some organizations invest in large group interventions (e.g., search conference, future search, and open space technology), engaging the "whole system" to describe current state and identify targets for change (Bunker and Alban 1997). These technologies give voice to all the organization's stakeholders and can create common ground to move the entire organization forward, but they can be time-consuming and the implementation of the change – new state – can be uneven.

In contrast, the pockets of readiness strategy has proven advantageous because it provides observable and measureable benefits of an inclusion breakthrough quicker in order to inspire and enlist the rest of the organization. Both approaches have their place, but the proof-of-concept model creates a "pull" in the organization as leaders see the success and bottom-line impact and say, "I want some of that."

## Learning Partners

Miller believes that the most critical component of any culture change effort happens in Phase I: the positioning of the organization and its leaders to create and support a structured, systematic inclusion breakthrough. When an organization's senior leaders realize that a culture change effort will affect every dimension of the organization, big questions arise: "How can we make changes of this scope, intensity and depth?" "Where do we start?" "How can we ensure success (Miller and Katz 2002)?" They often need to develop a new perspective on the organization's current state and how it is suboptimizing many in the organization, not just those who are different from the founding group. To that end, Miller enhanced the impact of the organizational assessment process by developing learning partners, a diverse cross section of high-performing team members who interview their peers and share with senior leaders – in a direct and personal way – the different experiences people in the organization are having. Learning partner sessions provide powerful insight for leaders about why change is needed and prepare them to create a culture change strategy that everyone can understand. Learning partners continue to support the change effort, acting as credible witnesses to the leaders' learning process and commitment to action.

## Peer-to-Peer Leadership

As important as positioning the change with senior leaders is for the success of any culture change effort, an exclusively top-down approach can lead to skepticism and resistance. Core inclusion and change partners is a peer-to-peer leadership model that involves selecting, educating, and supporting groups of internal change

advocates focused on accelerating change through peer-to-peer education, interaction, and modeling. Momentum for change increases as each change advocate initiates and leads peer groups. People throughout the organization come to trust the change because they learned it from team members they trust. From a systemic standpoint, including more people in this way accelerates the creation of a tipping point for culture change (Katz and Miller 2012).

## Four Corners Breakthrough Model

Miller developed the four corners breakthrough model (see Fig. 3) to help clients recognize that, to meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and changing environment, they need the wisdom of everyone, not just leaders, greater speed in knowledge transfer and knowledge application across the organization, and breakthroughs, not just incremental change. The model grew out of consulting work with Digital Equipment Corp. in the 1980s, when Japanese competition was threatening US market leadership. The four corners breakthrough suggested that the wider diversity of perspectives, thinking styles, and skills among US workers, if sought out and valued, would allow for a 360-degree vision of business problems and create conditions in
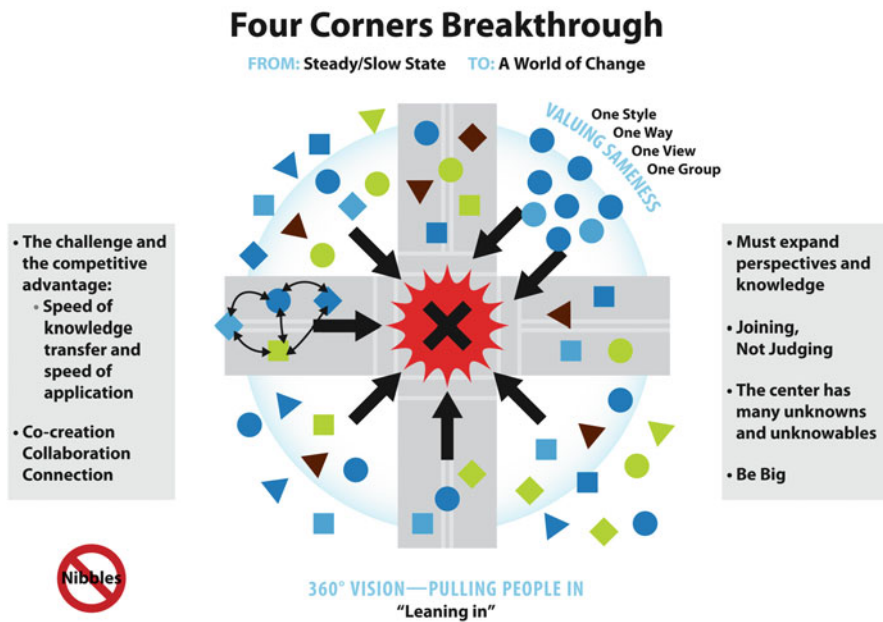


**Fig. 3** Four corners breakthrough model describes the mind-set shifts necessary for organizations to thrive in a steady state of change (Reprinted from Miller and Katz (2010). Copyright 2010 by The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. Reprinted with permission)

which innovation could flourish, providing a strong competitive advantage over what Japanese companies could accomplish with their value on sameness.

## Conscious Actions for Inclusion

Miller believes that, fundamentally, organizations are only as productive as the interactions between people. Significant organizational change requires an adjustment in the quality of interactions between people. With others in KJCG, he cocreated Conscious Actions for Inclusion (see Fig. 4), behaviors communicated in simple, common language that describe and open the door to greater clarity and enhanced ways of interacting.

One example of a Conscious Action for Inclusion is "state your intent and intensity: notions, stakes, boulders and tombstones," language that helps people both signal their intent to join with the other person and clarify intent at the onset. When people clearly state what they mean and how committed they are to an idea – ranging from a low level of commitment or "notion" to a level of the greatest investment or "tombstone" – others are better able to act quickly, decisively, and correctly. This simple model has been adopted as standard work by client organizations globally, to eliminate the guesswork that creates so much waste in effort, resources, and time in people's interactions. Its application has resulted in organization behavioral change at all three levels of system: individual, group, and system.



**Conscious Actions for Inclusion**

**4 Keys that Change EVERYTHING**

1. **Lean into Discomfort**
   Be willing to challenge self and others. Speak up—bring your voice and street corner.

2. **Listen as an Ally**
   Listen, listen, listen and engage. Be a partner. Challenge as an Ally.

3. **State Your Intent and Intensity**
   Clarify intent: State Notions, Stakes, Boulders, and Tombstones. Say what you mean and how much you mean it.

4. **Share Street Corners**
   Accept others' thoughts and experiences as true for them. Hear others' differences as additive.

**Sustaining Behaviors**

5. Greet people authentically—say "hello."

6. Create a sense of safety for yourself and your team members.

7. Work for the common good and shared success.

8. Ensure right people, right work, right time: Ask who else needs to be involved to understand the whole situation.

9. Link to others' ideas, thoughts, and feelings—give energy back.

10. Speak up when people are being made "small" or excluded.

11. Address misunderstandings and resolve disagreements—work "pinches."

12. Build *TRUST*: Do what you say you will do and honor confidentiality.

CHANGE THE INTERACTION · CHANGE THE EXPERIENCE · CHANGE THE RESULT

**Fig. 4** Conscious actions for inclusion are 12 behaviors that describe and open the door to greater clarity and enhanced ways of interacting (Adapted from J. H. Katz and F.A. Miller (2012). Copyright 2012 by The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, Inc. Reprinted with permission)

## New Insights: Client-Focused Models and Tools Grounded in Multiple Change Ideologies

Many of Miller's insights come from observing and learning from his clients, engaging with peers on corporate and not-for-profit boards, and studying what is happening in the world. Most often in collaboration with Katz, he derives actionable theories from these experiences and then develops simple models and practical tools and processes that make it easier for clients to move toward the desired "TO" state, a workplace in which people can do their best work in service of the organizational mission, vision, and strategic objectives.

As a practitioner, his approach is grounded primarily in OD, described most often as part of the teleological or planned change theoretical tradition, but the models and change technologies he cocreates reflect many different ideologies of change, each with its own assumptions about the nature of human beings and social systems. In addition to the theories of planned change, these include dialectical or political theories; social cognition; environmental theories such as contingency, open systems, and chaos theory; and cultural theories (Van de Ven and Poole 1995).

The Inclusion Breakthrough Cycle model and the KJCG methodology for strategic culture change added to the conceptual knowledge base on OD by providing the first comprehensive framework and set of interventions that leaders and change agents can utilize to position, implement, and sustain culture change related to leveraging differences and inclusion as the *HOW*. Both models reflect the application of teleological theories, specifically planned change, in that the organization is presented as purposeful and adaptive and relies on leaders and change agents to plan and implement change in a manner that is aligned with the organization's external environment, vision, mission, and goals and enables people to do their best work.

The methodology also draws from dialectical or political theories that include change processes such as persuasion, influence and power, and social movements. Embedded in the approach are many strategies for positioning the effort with senior leaders through consciousness-raising education; defining the business case for inclusion, which links the change to stakeholders' self-interest; developing a critical mass of agents of change; and creating networks to spread influence and support the change effort. The approach rejected "diversity for diversity's sake," making the case for the investment in culture change only if the new state supports and advances the mission, vision, and strategies of the organization.

## New Language Supports New Mind-sets and Behaviors

In numerous client engagements, Miller and his colleagues in KJCG have demonstrated that significant culture change requires a change in the conversational dialectic. The rhetoric that emerged in the field of diversity in the 1990s replaced the term "diversity" with "inclusion." This created substantial confusion: in many organizations, "diversity" became synonymous with US affirmative action, which by

definition excluded white men. In other cases, there was no material change in diversity management practices that continued to focus on how to assimilate the newcomers into the current culture. A new definition of inclusion was offered that differentiated it from diversity. The term "leveraging differences" was also introduced, allowing for a broader range of differences beyond race, color, age, and gender, such as thinking style, background, skills, and experiences.

Conscious Actions for Inclusion is a model of inclusive language and behaviors, introduced and refined over the course of many years. It provides people with an easy way to signal their intent to "be different." The model supports the emergence of new meaning and helps rechannel people's energy to create more inclusive partnerships on individual, group, and system levels. In this way, it represents a blend of the dialectical and cultural perspectives described by Shein (1985) and others.

## Informed by Chaos Theory

Miller has adopted several concepts from open systems and chaos theory, i.e., organizations are systems operating in a constantly changing context and environment; therefore, they must find ways to stay open to information "from everywhere, from places and sources people never thought to look before" (Wheatley 2006, p. 83). Meg Wheatley's application of chaos theory to organizational change (Wheatley 2006) informs the four corners breakthrough model, which describes environmental complexity as "unknowns and unknowables" and offers simple language like "street corner" as a metaphor for different perspectives, world views, and experiences that can be brought to bear on the complex problems faced by organizations. The idea that all organizations are fractal in nature is applied in a new way in the pockets of readiness strategy, i.e., one business unit or function not only represents a microcosm of the culture but also can initiate a new and repeatable pattern of behaviors to help accelerate whole system change.

## Presence Consulting

In chaos theory, "you can never tell where the system is headed until you've observed it over time" (Wheatley 2006, p. 132). This holds true within the newer dialogic OD practices, as well. As organizations become composed of more diverse people operating in a more dynamic environment, the assumption that there is some singular social reality "out there" to be diagnosed and changed becomes less useful for OD practitioners (Bushe 2010). Miller developed presence consulting, an intervention in which external change agents become fully integrated into the day-to-day work life of the people inside the organization, "being present" at meetings, on the shop floor, etc. to support them as they learn and experiment with new inclusive mind-sets and behaviors in their daily interactions (DaRos 2011). By being present in this way, consultants learn from the variety of realities that exist in the system and

then intervene to help create the enabling conditions for successful interactions to take place.

As a point of illustration, several presence consultants were deployed during a 5-year cultural transformation of the manufacturing division of a global pharmaceutical company, under Miller's direction. It became evident that continuous quality improvement, safety, and reduction of waste were strongly held values in this organization's lean environment. One of the most impactful interventions was the introduction of inclusive mind-sets and behaviors that enhanced the quality of day-to-day interactions and reduced the waste typically generated by unresolved conflict, nonproductive meetings, and a pervasive fear of being blamed for errors.

As the new mind-sets and behaviors took hold, people gained the sense of emotional safety needed to speak up, make problems visible more quickly, and leverage different people's ideas to come up with innovative solutions. Leaders attributed the accomplishment of a major global corporate business objective, including reduced cost and improved efficiency, to the culture change effort. Inclusion linked to what mattered most in the organization: corporate values and goals of quality, safety, and reduction of waste, resulting in a positive impact to the bottom line for a key division and the overall corporation.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Creating a New "We" in Society and Organizations

Miller has changed how leaders and OD practitioners conceptualize and implement diversity and inclusion as a strategic lever for large-scale organizational change. The KJCG framework and methodology, cocreated with Katz, provide clients with the means to identify cultural barriers to inclusion, establish the organizational imperative for change, build critical mass, and accelerate the adoption of new mind-sets and behaviors needed to sustain the new culture.

When asked about "unfinished business," Miller speaks first about the need for people to create a new *we* in society and in our organizations. History is rife with examples of how not to approach differences. All too often, we have identified with a narrow version of *we*: immediate family, village, clan, social identity group, and – in our organizations – department, function, level, and team. Differences continue to be met with mistrust, isolation, fear, and oppression. Miller challenges this mind-set and initiates social change as part of every role he holds: OD consultant, member of the boards of directors for numerous corporate and not-for-profit organizations (e.g., Ben & Jerry's, Day & Zimmermann, Sage Colleges and One World Everybody Eats), and as a business owner and citizen leader in community, church, and civic groups.

In 2017, The Sage Colleges awarded Miller an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters for his lifelong efforts to move society and organizations toward greater equality of opportunity and participation.

In 1990, he led one of the first major diversity efforts in a large US municipality, City of San Diego, CA, that focused on the inclusion of white women, people of

color, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) people in the police and fire departments. During his firm's consulting with Mobil in 1997, it became the largest company to implement domestic partner benefits, setting the precedent for many companies to follow. In ODN, Miller initiated the first people of color conference and gained board sponsorship for what is now the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer) affinity group. As a board member of One World Everybody Eats Foundation, he contributes his thinking to the sharing economy through the "pay what you can café" model as a way to address hunger. And in Troy, NY, where his firm is located, he founded the Troy 100 Forum, which brings together leaders in different sectors of the community to share perspectives on topics of public concern to the city.

He raises the question of how OD practitioners can help organizations go beyond traditional social responsibility initiatives to create a new *we* that includes their local communities. Safer, more inclusive, and sustainable communities benefit organizations in many ways, including attracting and retaining the best talent, which will continue to be a competitive advantage for most organizations.

## Artificial Intelligence

Looking into the future, Miller sees artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on organizations and organizational change as the next frontier for the field, both in terms of theory development and practice. While AI applications are increasingly being integrated into the workplace, we know little about their impact on work processes, organization design, and culture. Compared to previous technology-driven social changes, AI is expected to transform how we work at a rate that is exponentially faster. AI will present significantly new challenges for OD theorists and practitioners who will need to mediate between humans and intelligent machines to create more inclusive workplaces where everyone (and everything) can contribute their best thinking.

A final thought about unfinished business is the need to develop more heretics. Miller said, "We just can't have enough of them, given the changes we need to make to move to a much better state for all humans."

## Conclusion

Frederick A. Miller was one of the first to recognize that diversity efforts in organizations, without inclusion, did not work. With Judith H. Katz, he developed a new definition of inclusion and published the first comprehensive model and framework for implementing diversity and inclusion as a lever for strategic culture change, moving it from a compliance-driven set of programs to a breakthrough OD strategy linked to higher operational and bottom-line performance. His contributions to the field reflect a lifelong commitment to the underlying values of both the Civil Rights Movement and OD: to create both a society and workplaces in which people

are treated fairly and respectfully, feel valued, and can participate in meaningful ways.

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# Philip Mirvis: Fusing Radical Humanism and Organizational Spirituality in a Boundaryless Career

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Tojo Thatchenkery and Param Srikantia

**Abstract**

This chapter explores the distinctive contributions of Phil Mirvis, an organizational psychologist who has skillfully fused radical humanism and organizational spirituality in what can be best described as a boundaryless career. The boundaryless label captures the character of his contributions that defy categorization as they seamlessly weave together theoretical imagination, research-oriented creativity, and practical ingenuity while integrating multiple epistemologies and methods, including within his ambit individual, group, and societal levels of functioning, in addition to attending to both the tangible and intangible dimensions of organizational functioning. After reviewing some dominant influences and defining moments that shaped his career, the chapter explores Mirvis's contributions in five thematic dimensions of organizational life, namely (a) large-scale organizational change, (b) mergers and acquisitions, (c) the character of the workforce and workplace, (d) leadership development, and (e) the role of business in society. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Mirvis's key insights and legacies that include but are not limited to his work on failures in OD work as opportunities for new understandings, his elaboration of learning journeys as an instrument of promoting emotional and spiritual self-actualization in business contexts and his amplification of the compatibility of organizational cultures as a determinant of success in mergers and acquisitions.

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## Introduction

Philip H. Mirvis is an organizational psychologist who has built bridges between research, theory, and practice to make deep and enduring contributions in five thematic dimensions of organizational life: (a) large-scale organizational change, (b) mergers and acquisitions, (c) the character of the workforce and workplace, (d) leadership development, and (e) the role of business in society. In each of these domains he has introduced new concepts and frameworks while also inventing organizational interventions and dynamic action research practices. A self-described "jack of many trades," he has studied and helped to stimulate different kinds of organizational sense-making not dependent on any particular methodological device or epistemology. Much of his change scholarship is drawn from his consulting work and field research with large and innovative organizations around the world. He has operated in academic, business, consulting, and research roles, freely navigating the unique challenges of each of these domains with energy and insight (see his writings on issues in scholarship and practice). He situates himself today, first and foremost, as a reflective practitioner.

Mirvis has a B.A. from Yale University and a Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology from the University of Michigan. In early career, he was a professor in the School of Management at Boston University and held research posts at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, the Center for Applied Social Science at Boston University, and (part time a decade ago) at the Center for Corporate Citizenship at Boston College. He has been a visiting professor at Jiao Tong University in Shanghai, China, and the London Business School, and has contributed to executive education programs at universities and in businesses on six continents. For the past 25 years, Mirvis has operated as an "independent" consultant and researcher. He is relocating to Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his wife, Mary Jo Hatch, a renowned organizational theorist, prolific author of influential books, and recently retired professor from the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia.

## Influences and Motivations Artful Creative Rebellion

As scholarship is to some extent autobiographical, the tenor of Mirvis's independent, nonconforming, and antiauthoritarian orientation was evident early in his life when, for example, he refused to document his long division calculations to his insistent fourth grade teacher in a Catholic grammar school and was later expelled for failing to comply with what appeared to him to be rigid and mindless rules. This orientation continued to grow during the 1960s when his public high school in Columbus, Ohio, was racially integrated, and Mirvis was suspended for running an "underground" student newspaper that challenged prevailing taboos on everything from interracial dating to wearing blue jeans to school. After he joined the undergraduate program at Yale, this "us-against-them" world view was expanded into activism by consciousness raising from faculty and students and participation in campus teach-ins and the "May Day" protests over the dubious murder trial of Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers in New Haven (where he also learned of the shootings of antiwar protestors at Kent State University). These experiences and the general climate of antiestablishment protest met by state repression appear to have ignited a strong desire in him to not only rail against but also to reform social and institutional realities.

Mirvis was first initiated into the field of organizational change during his undergraduate years as a psychology and administrative science major. He was introduced to more humanistic organizational psychology concepts through a directed reading course with Richard Hackman, participated in various T-group experiences, and was exposed to organization development (OD) and change practices by Yale faculty (including Chris Argyris and Clay Alderfer) and campus visitors such as Harvey Hornstein and Saul Alinsky. His "revolutionary" zeal (an attribute that would exercise a subterranean influence in his organizational change work later on) became focused through his coursework on "freeing" workers from the tyranny of oppressive managers and organizations. At the same time, he came to realize that OD was a "double-edged sword" that was capable of both energizing human emancipation and potentially pacifying working people, thus serving the interests of the so-called ruling elite.

Tough and troubling questions about supposedly "value-free" organizational concepts and the varied "uses" and "misuses" of OD interventions appear in Mirvis's writing about ethics in organizational research, values in change efforts, and consciousness raising in executive development (see *Company as Total Community*). His own personal dilemmas on these fronts (on teaching in a business school, advising senior managers, and consulting on large-scale mergers) are reported in his autobiographical writings (see *Midlife as a Consultant*) and more recently in a book on "intellectual shamans" by Sandra Waddock (2015).

Right after graduating from college, Mirvis sought to enact his "save the worker" aspirations by joining the US Department of Labor and participating in a study led by Neal Herrick to assess the economic costs of "bad" management in employee absences, grievances, and the like. Mirvis was joined in this investigation by colleague Barry Macy, a former Alcoa executive, and also met regularly Labor Department advisors Eric Trist, Warren Bennis, and Edward Lawler. Connecting

with these luminaries, learning how they wrestled with questions of reform versus cooptation in their own work, and seeing them as role models led Mirvis toward an academic career path. Lawler encouraged him to apply to the Ph.D. program in the organizational psychology department at the University of Michigan and to join his Quality of Work Life (QWL) program based at the Institute for Social Research.

Mirvis was deeply influenced by Lawler's capacity to mix research and consulting fluently within the context of his academic career and also was his tenant (in Lawler's home) for several of his graduate study years. He benefitted immensely from the creative tension between schisms in the doctoral program at Michigan. One camp of students favored rigorous empirical research in established topic niches while another was more discovery-oriented, exploratory, and engaged in more qualitative studies that were higher on practical relevance. Lawler had blazed his trail betwixt these poles as an "action researcher" with his well-known studies of plant start-ups at TRW, Procter & Gamble, General Foods, and Honda and as a practical scholar in studying the impact of Quality of Work Life programs on working people and their organization.

A seminar at Michigan led by psychoanalyst Michael Maccoby became a pivotal point for Mirvis's self-definition. Maccoby argued passionately about how the "interior life" of managers shaped their actions and how context was crucial in understanding organizational dynamics. These ideas resonated and further reinforced Mirvis's appetite for activism and applied work that aimed at broad, meaningful change rather than addressing microscopic questions. Mirvis began to inhabit the role of a "reflective practitioner," exploring "artful" change methodologies and gaining insights into the interplay of one's own psyche and the role of social construction in how action research projects are selected, framed, executed, and interpreted.

After earning his Ph.D., Mirvis went to Boston University where he taught in the management school while simultaneously working at the Center for Applied Social Science with senior faculty Gerry Gordon, Mike Useem, and Robert Chin (who would be another mentor and guide him on his first overseas teaching and research in China). His research in these years examined multiple levers of organizational change including the impact of computer technology on office and factory workers, work-life balance initiatives, and his first studies of corporate mergers and acquisitions (M&A). He designed and executed several survey feedback and action research projects with Amy Sales and Edward Hackett.

It was perhaps a blessing in disguise that Mirvis was denied tenure at Boston University in what appears to have been a process influenced by political differences and tensions related to his activism against University President John Silber and his involvement in the faculty union as a steward for the School of Management (though Mirvis also notes that his antiauthoritarian streak led him challenge proposals by the School's associate dean and a department chair which would hamper the promotion prospects of any nontenured faculty member). The denial of tenure marked his full-blown entry into the world of what he would call "scholarly practice," initiating a string of consulting assignments in M&A, human capital development, and the social responsibilities of business.

His writing also reflected a different style relative to mainstream academic research literature in organizational behavior and change. The style was more spontaneous, organic, incorporating qualitative information and case study material and demonstrating a greater concern with questions of practical impact. Mirvis's scholarship demonstrates methodological eclecticism, featuring case studies, interviews, and shared reflections that take on a story telling quality, capturing significant lessons derived from organizational interventions. His research studies have involved an extensive array of collaborators from multiple continents drawn from universities, business, and consulting. The research is typically focused on investigating real world issues, talking with organizational participants, and constructing comprehensive learning histories that capture the social, emotional, and task-centered dimensions of change interventions undertaken in their companies.

Another event of great importance in Mirvis's life was a workshop that he attended led by Scott Peck, M.D., author of the best-selling book, *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*. Mirvis remembers this as a very important part of helping him to confront his knee-jerk antiauthority reactions and to "heal" from the denial of his tenure. Through his 10-year association with Peck and colleagues in the Foundation for Community Encouragement, Mirvis gained skills in dealing with powerful male authority figures and also introduced a spiritual dimension into his work. It expanded his epistemology and ontology, making him more open to varied forms of sense-making and stimulated his writing on *Soul Work* and *Community Building* in organizations.

## Key Contributions: The Transformation of Consciousness in Large Systems

As noted in the introduction, Mirvis has integrated and made meaningful contributions to theory, research, and practice along five thematic dimensions of organizational life. In this section, the discussion of key contributions is organized according to these five thematic dimensions, namely: (a) large-scale organizational change, (b) mergers and acquisitions, (c) the character of the workforce and workplace, (d) leadership development and consciousness-raising, and (e) the role of business in society.

(a) **Large-scale organizational change:** Mirvis has been a prolific contributor to enriching our understanding of large-scale organizational change. He has approached this domain from multiple angles and through multiple lenses. One of his early provocative contributions to the OD and change discipline was the book he coedited with David Berg titled *Failures in Organizational Development and Change: Cases and Essays for Learning*. It pointed out very correctly that while OD scholars had written extensively on the failings of organizations, the field had not been very reflective on its own failures. The *Failures* book speaks to the minds and hearts of OD scholars and practitioners as it features first-person essays chronicling failures by leading figures in OD, identifies where they went wrong and why, and highlights specific lessons learned. The various

chapters explore some of the most important sources of OD failure including the absence of shared understandings during entry, resistance to change embedded in cultural hostility, intergroup conflict, hidden authority relationships, and bureaucratization of change processes. The volume helped to promote critical self-examination and a learning-from-errors orientation to the field. By focusing on failings, it also sought to promote healthy skepticism and continuous improvement to the field of OD, the very qualities that OD strives to entrench in organizations.

Mirvis has also fashioned himself as an "amateur" historian and presented useful and insightful perspectives on the evolution of OD from the 1960s to 1980s. OD in the 1960s represented more of a human relations perspective and philosophy, a set of values celebrating human potential in organizations, consistent with Theory Y assumptions of McGregor and self- actualization insights drawn from Maslow. The OD consultant's focus in that era was on creating a deeper alignment between the individual needs and organizational needs. Mirvis traces how this emphasis shifted in the 1970s during the "technostructural" era in which the perceived looseness of the field was rejected in favor of more formalized organizational interventions that attempted to increase the synergy between technology, organizational structure, and the sociotechnical dimensions. This was also the period in which university departments for training OD professionals were established.

According to Mirvis, the evolution of OD continued with another swing of the historical pendulum, this time in favor of recognizing and according the environment a much bigger role in organizational effectiveness and resilience. Changes in technology, ownership, structure, and strategy demanded significant developments in environmental scanning, stakeholder analysis, and business planning. The firm level focus of OD had to be expanded to allow for a greater recognition of interorganizational networks involving mergers, acquisitions, and other cooperative arrangements. In projecting the future of OD through the 1990s, Mirvis was remarkably accurate in forecasting greater integration of seemingly contradictory perspectives that would strive to embody and transcend the apparent paradoxes in organizing such as the ones between internal and external aspects of the organization or control and flexibility as the basis of culture (Denison and Spreitzer 1991).

Mirvis also wrote two papers about "revolutionary" developments in the field celebrating, for example, the innovative contributions of Barry Oshry with his power labs, Bill Torbert's Theatre of Inquiry, and more recent contributions concerned with art-based and spiritual forms of intervention. Of particular interest is his distinction between evolutionary and revolutionary perspectives on the history of OD. Evolutionary perspectives and revolutionary perspectives can be contrasted according to four dimensions. For example, evolutionary perspectives have represented a *knowledge base* that is cumulative and universalistic, a *movement* that has been scientific and utilitarian, a *client base* that has been logical and pragmatic, and *OD practice and practitioners* that have been

market-driven and professional. In sharp contradistinction to this is the depiction of a revolutionary perspective to OD in which the *knowledge base* is contextual and particularistic, a *movement* that is humanistic and value-based, a *client base* that is explorative and experimental, and *OD practice and practitioners* that are visionary and free-spirited. These four bipolar categories structure two sharply contrasting perspectives on the history of OD and reflect a deep understanding of the need for integrating and embracing seemingly contradictory orientations. A recent paper on 50 years of contributions to the *Journal of Applied Behavior Science* (*JABS at 50*) provides at more expansive summary of the academic side of the field.

(b) **Mergers and acquisitions:** Early on in his career when Mirvis was at Boston University, he and his colleague Mitchell Marks were invited by W. Michael Blumenthal, then CEO of Burroughs Corporation, to facilitate the human integration in what was the largest hostile takeover in US corporate history at that time. This engagement, involving the creation of Unisys, marked the beginning of what would become a storied career in M&A consulting. His scholarly work in this domain concerned the "merger syndrome" – a term coined to highlight a range of merger dynamics including: human resistance; explication of the integration of structures and processes involved in a merger; the much publicized concept of the clash of company cultures, and insight into the subsequent acculturation phase that mark several successful mergers. He has coauthored (with Marks) several books such as *Managing the Merger* and *Joining Forces: Making One Plus One Equal Three in Mergers*, *Acquisitions and Alliances*, and scholarly research articles capturing the lessons learned (outlined in the bibliography ending this chapter).

Marks and Mirvis (2001) analyzed their experience in over 70 mergers and acquisitions to discern characteristics that differentiate successful from unsuccessful combinations. While noting that three of four mergers fail in terms of their core financial and strategic objectives, the study pointed to importance of managing the strategic and psychological elements in the "precombination phase." In their words:

> The strategic challenges concern key analyses that clarify and bring into focus the sources of synergy in a combination. This involves reality testing of potential synergies in light of the two sides' structures and cultures and establishing the desired relationship between the two companies. And the psychological challenges cover actions required to understand the mindsets that people bring with them and develop over the course of a combination. This means raising people's awareness of and capacities to respond to the normal and to-be-expected stresses and strains of living through a combination. (p. 80)

To this point, most of the focus in M&A scholarship and practice concerned "post-merger" integration. This experience-based study also stimulated scholars and practitioners to give fuller attention to "premerger" issues (which, as the authors point out, is complicated because of legal requirements for secrecy and the inability to bring the two parties together). Mirvis writes about several

premerger sessions with companies that helped them forestall culture clashes and, in a couple of cases, back out of the deal because of cultural misfits. All of this highlights the value of insights gained from "hands-on" engagement with practitioners.

(c) **The character of the workforce and workplace:** Mirvis also explored characteristics of the workforce and the workplace from his early days of working with Edward Lawler to more recent investigations of the "boundaryless" career with Douglas (Tim) Hall. Along the way he studied the financial impact of employee attitudes, the import of demographic changes on work attitudes, the rise of cynicism in the US workforce and society, and matters of work-life integration. Many of his writings provide useful pointers to practitioners on these strategic human resources management issues and themes.

One of Mirvis's enduring contributions was contributing to the Organizational Assessment Package (OAP) at Michigan and coediting a volume on methods and measurement tools for assessing organization change. His leadership in two national surveys of US employee attitudes and the Louis Harris and Associates' *Laborforce* 2000 survey also yielded data-based understandings of conditions in the workforce and workplace and documented the impact of progressive work designs, management practices, and employee engagement strategies.

While schooled in traditional research designs and survey methods, Mirvis came to question the merits of "scientific" research methods during his graduate study years. Guided first by Donald Michael, who wrote provocatively about the limits of technology assessments, Mirvis authored a series of papers reframing assessment as an art rather than as a science. In these, he goes about systematically taking apart the often unacknowledged fallacies and absurdities of the logical positivist assumptions that have bedeviled approaches to assessment. For example, in an early contribution titled "The Art of Assessing the Quality of Life as Work: A Personal Essay with Notes," Mirvis (1980) makes some conceptually elegant and intriguing arguments for embracing artistic imagination, empathy, and intuition as a necessary and legitimate component of a valid, reliable, and holistic evaluation.

The essay is a critique from a philosophy of science perspective on how the study of organizations, workers, and work itself has been distorted to fit into the Procrustean bed of the organization scientist's templates and rational mental models. A more ecologically grounded and holistically expansive perspective could emerge if only the researchers would allow the organic phenomenology of the worker, the nonrational and unconscious forces at work in organizations, and the recognition of workers and organizations as entities imbued with unique characteristics of their own. His recommendation that we unabashedly "rely on our intimate and personal knowledge of human behavior to derive models of work and working people" (p. 472) represented a bold departure from the canons of standard scientific research at that time while demonstrating how this expansion of our attitude would actually result in more valid and accurate depictions of organizational and worker realities.

In one of the most significant reinterpretations of a classic study, Mirvis revisits the results and analysis of the classic Hawthorne experiments and demonstrates how the researchers missed very important lessons from the bank wiring room experiments because of the narrowness engendered by their academic socialization. In Mirvis's (1980) words:

> Had they gone further. . .they would have conceived of the changes as an emergent work form and experienced the euphoria of the women as an indication of their quality of life at work. . .Moreover, if it is to be believed that the Hawthorne studies and the ensuing predictions that better "care" of workers would lead to human and economic improvements helped to stimulate the human relations movement in organizations, an alternative and more compelling interpretation of the findings might have changed the quality of work life itself in the subsequent four decades! (p. 483)

His vision of assessment as a subliminal integration of the artistic and scientific appreciation of work and his detailed elucidation of how to carry out such assessments is a powerful blueprint for a revolution in assessment studies that incorporates the imagination and lived experience of the workers themselves and is carried out by researchers who are real human beings, fully inhabiting their subjectivity, as opposed to dispassionate, passive observers of the objects of their studies.

(d) **Leadership Development and Consciousness Raising:** Informed by his exploration of the spiritual and aesthetic dimensions of organization life and practice, Mirvis began to incorporate these dimensions consciously into his intervention work in the late 1990s. *To the Desert and Back: The Story of One of the Most Dramatic Business Transformations on Record* describes his work with the British/Dutch consumer product conglomerate, Unilever. During his 1-year stint at the London Business School at the invitation of Sumantra Ghoshal, Mirvis was contacted by Louis "Tex" Gunning, who was running the Dutch side of Unilever foods, and invited to design and conduct community building retreats in the Ardennes, Scotland, and Middle East. Mirvis's experience at facilitating these "journeys" represents a radically innovative methodology, linking community building with deep "soul work" and consciousness raising in executives and in organizations. These journeys involve actual instances of travel of intact divisions or management teams to distant locations, sets of both planned and spontaneously occurring events and activities during the sojourn all of which would then become a springboard for new insights relevant to grasping underlying organizational dynamics.

Through a "behind the scenes" perspective, he was able to identify multiple ways in which performing arts can provide the impetus for large-scale organizational change. As one example, nearly 1600 of the Unilever employees were taken in buses, without prior indication of destination, to a factory setting in which they witnessed aisles and aisles of food that was wasted and spoiled. The team then disposed of the food through a burial ceremony. This incorporation of such scripted as well as spontaneous sequences and ceremony interspersed with

collective sharing and sense-making processes breathed dynamism, emotion, and vitality into their workplace. Speaking of this interweaving of performance arts into management consulting, Mirvis et al. (2001) write:

> In the language of the arts and the emerging discipline of performance studies, the events described might be termed performances. In each instance, the actions of the leaders and staff are more or less scripted and unfold through scenes. The events themselves are staged, with scenery and actors in place, costumes and props ready, and the chairman cum director exerting a strong or light hand, depending on the performance. The parallels between process and performance are striking: the latter also involves an arrangement of activities across time and space, dramatization with a beginning and end, and activity, termed by scholars of the genre as performativity, that pulls it all together (Carlson 1996). This distinction may seem moot. In everyday language, people speak easily of the "art of leadership," read about management as a "performing art," and move toward craftsmanship in labor, harmony in teamwork, and "world-class performance. But to lift up and focus specifically on the performative aspects of leadership, we believe, offers a fresh, useful way to see, understand, and undertake organizational change. (p. 24)

His work is an invitation to organizational change practitioners to expand their creativity in leveraging dramaturgy and the performing arts more powerfully in their work even while seeking to unravel the mystery of organizational change through the metaphor of change as theater.

Mirvis also collaborated with Karen Ayas, from the Society for Organizational Learning, to work with Gunning in Unilever's operations in Asia, further developing what is a unique contribution to organizational studies, namely cutting edge experiential learning work in which participants live through shared organizational experiences, internalizing them and living them in the "here and now" followed by phases of storytelling about what is happening to them. In the words of Mirvis:

> One intervention of interest is a "learning journey" in which hundreds of leaders in a company travel together to inform their strategies and intentions. The journeys, lasting up to a week, are multilayered, multisensory experiences that engage the head, heart, body, and spirit. They are tribal gatherings in that we typically wake at dawn, dress in local garb, exercise or meditate together, hike from place to place, eat communally, swap stories by the campfire, and sleep alongside one another in tents. In our daily experiences, we might meet monks or a martial arts master, talk with local children or village elders, or simply revel in the sounds and sights of nature. We spend considerable time in personal and collective reflections about who we are as a community, what we are seeing, and what this means for our work together. Throughout a journey, a team of researchers prepares a "learning history" that documents key insights for continued reflection. (Mirvis 2006, pp. 81–82)

These methods have also been incorporated into the design of innovative leadership development programs. Mentored by Noel Tichy in the use of action learning in "project based" leadership development programs, Mirvis has championed the design and development of these programs in Intel, Ford Motor Co., Shell Oil, Novo Nordisk, Wipro (India), and CP (Thailand). His

ability to inject theater and the performing arts into organizational interventions and to lead outdoor leadership experiences has led to a number of extremely creative consulting interventions in exotic locations spanning all the way from the Rockies, Pyrenees, Alps, and Himalayas. He has developed and orchestrated corporate learning and growth journeys coupled with community service projects in the "urban" USA, Paris, London, Sao Paulo, Tallinn, Estonia, rural India, China, Vietnam, in Greenland, and among aboriginal people in Borneo, Paraguay, and Australia.

In bringing "soul work" to corporations that are thought to be essentially devoid of soul and obsessed with the bottom line, Mirvis's contribution demonstrates the potential for community and spirituality at the workplace. It is a very promising indication that organizations and their leaders can be responsive to radically humanistic interventions.

(e) **Role of business in society:** Mirvis's scholarly and consulting career reflects an enduring interest in the role of business in society, beginning with his early, defining experiences with Ben and Jerry's, then with Royal Dutch Shell amidst the Brent Spar crisis, and finally with Unilever as it embarked on its sustainability journey. One of his "academic" stints was to join with Bradley Googins at the Center for Corporate Citizenship which afforded him a unique opportunity to study hundreds of companies in the development of their relationship to society. Mirvis has written extensively on the stages of development of corporate social responsibility (CSR), enhancing employee engagement through CSR and social innovations that simultaneously promote both societal and business objectives. He conducted the International Survey of Corporate Citizenship (2003–2009) and was the author of an annual ranking of the top corporate citizens in the world and in the USA in association with the Reputation Institute (2008–2010). His scholarly work has been paralleled by real world engagement at senior levels of corporate leadership working with Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream, Unilever, the SK Group (Korea), IBM, PepsiCo, and Mitsubishi (Japan) among others.

## New Insights: Synergistic Integration of Divergent Modalities

In terms of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) *Sociological Paradigms of Organizational Analysis*, Mirvis's scholarship and practice can be situated in the Radical Humanist quadrant of organizational paradigms, espousing a conception of reality as socially constructed (not objectively constituted) and a commitment to exploring the potential for change in making organizations more responsive to human needs and aspirations (as opposed to continuity and maintenance of the existing order). For all of us whose scholarship and practices derives its inspiration from a Radical Humanist model of organizations, Mirvis's commitment to the potential for emancipatory scholarship has been a great source for inspiration. Given that the majority of scholars in the organizational studies field who undergo intellectual socialization in US business school espouse logical positivism, Mirvis's work blazes a trail from which all of us who are committed to an alternative framing of organizations can find

intellectual and spiritual nourishment. He has by his prolific scholarship, imaginative theorizing, and creative consulting demonstrated the intellectual vitality, generativity and aliveness of a radically humanist view of organizations. His scholarship can be used as a model to help embryonic researchers in doctoral programs to see for themselves the unique insights that can emerge from qualitative research that embraces methodological pluralism and multiple epistemologies.

Mirvis's contribution lies at the intersection of at least five distinct well-defined literature streams within the discipline of organizational studies, and his work enriches each one of these tributaries of specialized scholarship in research, theory, and practice. First, there is the organization change and development (ODC) literature that focuses on the effective management of planned organizational changes designed to enhance the problem-solving capabilities of organizations. Mirvis's exploration of different organizational change interventions, his studies of failure in OD, and his research into large-scale organization change would align appropriately here. Second, there is the organizational behavior and organizational theory streams (OB and OT) that deal with the micro and macro aspects of organizational life with the intent of studying existing processes from a research and scholarly perspective. Mirvis's numerous studies on the character of the workforce and workplace summarized earlier exemplify and enrich these streams of scholarly literature in the organizational studies. Third, there is a growing movement exploring the spirituality dimensions of organizational life (MSR), and Mirvis's work on leadership and consciousness development reflects a profound appreciation of the spiritual dimension. His early work in this area is also tied to the recent emphasis on well-being in organizations (Davies 2016; Bishop 2016; Conyers and Wilson 2015; Bojanowska and Zalewska 2016). Fourth, his research connects with the strong literature arising from the recognition among scholars of the ways in which bureaucracies involve asymmetrical power relationships that privilege some constituencies and associated world views at the expense of some others. Mirvis's work, based on his early defining experiences, demonstrates a consistent commitment to creating egalitarian structures based on power equalization and this commitment is widely diffused throughout his research, scholarship, and practice. Finally, the proliferation of studies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) constitutes another clearly defined research stream that absorbs Mirvis's work on the role of business in society. CSR and the role of businesses in creating (or destroying) a sustainable environment and economy have become one of the most visible areas of research and action today (Moon 2015; Eichar 2015). Mirvis's work had a significant impact in stimulating interest in this topic when it was in its early stages.

**Personal Reflections** I (Thatchenkery) deeply resonated with Mirvis's work on several counts and I would like to highlight just a few of the broader similarities in orientation and conceptual spaces that Mirvis and I share at the level of core interests and commitments. Paralleling my interest in the social constructionist perspective on organizations, Mirvis is also comfortably aligned with a social constructionist perspective that examines organizations as sociocultural productions that arise from consensus and rooted in social processes and subjective meaning making

processes. Reflecting my interest in Appreciative Inquiry and contributions in Appreciative Intelligence®, Mirvis is similarly committed to understanding what provides energy and vitality to organizational systems. I have also attempted to create synergy between action learning, sensitivity training, and experiential learning, a trinity that constitutes a very fertile area of creative experimentation for Mirvis in both theory and practice. Mirvis's foray into the social responsibilities of business is similarly echoed by my own intellectual excursion into the theme of positive design, sustainability, and sustainable value.

Equally important is another quality that Mirvis has modeled for all of us, namely professional courage. When faced with senior organizational leaders who may have a very narrow focus on bottom line profitability, Mirvis's work on learning journeys and performance art can help OD practitioners make a credible case for transcending the obsession with short-term or immediate measurable business outcomes and create a space for exploring alternative methods for reenergizing management teams. Similarly, Mirvis's work on failures in OD empowers us all to be more playful and adventurous in framing and designing interventions, and reminds us that without the permission to fail, no real creativity is possible. For all those of us who see ourselves as exponents of the Positive Organizational Scholarship tributary of organizational research, we can all build on the multiple ways in which Mirvis has dedicated his life to discovering the hidden life forces that give vitality and momentum to human organizing when the constraints of rationality, rigid bureaucracy, and mechanistic thinking are transcended.

On a more personal note, I (Tojo Thatchenkery) have known Phil since my doctoral studies at Case Western. My mentor Suresh Srivastva used to organize seminar series where leading thinkers in organization studies were invited to participate for a few days with doctoral students and invited scholars on the latest thinking in the field. All of us were assigned to "shadow" a scholar and I was lucky to be assigned to Phil. I still remember the excitement of meeting someone who spoke his mind and challenged everyone around him not to be afraid and to say what they were truly thinking. He taught me how to disagree with respect but not to give in. I observed that Phil had genuine credibility because he "walked the talk." He did not preach anything that he was not doing himself. While listening to my dissertation ideas which included appreciative inquiry, Phil encouraged me to listen with empathy and an open mind, and to be prepared for surprises.

Later on, as I moved to the Washington DC area to start my academic career at George Mason University, I was delighted to find that Phil lived in the area. Thus began our long-term friendship where I could meet him as frequently as I wanted (he was very generous with him time) and share what I was working on and receive insightful feedback. Phil believed in relationships rather than playing a formal role. He would invite me to watch the Washington Wizards game as his guest (he was an ardent fan of the team) and many of our productive dialogues happened during the dinner before or after the game. I felt Phil's presence most rewarding because he had a gift of offering feedback without judging. I was able to launch a few risky initiatives early in my academic career because Phil coached me in doing so. The courage I had gained since then stays with me today.

**Personal Reflections**   As the coauthor, I (Param Srikantia) would like to register my deep gratitude to Mirvis for several facets of his work that have been a source of inspiration to me. I deliver a seminar titled *Beyond Emotional Intelligence: The Manager as an Enlightened Presence* which is based on the work of the legendary Indian mystic Osho, to managers of Fortune 500 companies in several cities through the international training organization, Institute of Management studies (IMS). The seminar, based on Eastern perspectives embodied in Osho's books and discourses, engages managers in inner work that crosses many of the same organizational and tacit boundaries that Mirvis describes in his experiments with the management teams of Unilever. Participants engage in deep emotional sharing, going beyond social masks and exploring how their managerial styles were shaped by the emotional challenges they encountered in their childhood.

Mirvis's work has given me enormous moral support, creative fuel, and professional courage in promoting this brand of inner self-exploration to managerial populations normally unaccustomed to such public displays of emotional authenticity. It has also given me a solid platform to stand on in speaking to business audiences, knowing that the modality of transforming managerial consciousness is one that has been successfully attempted in the history of OD.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Transcending Polarities in a Boundaryless Career

Mirvis's distinctive accomplishment has been his ability to engage with the seemingly irreconcilable tensions between research and action and to craft a role as a scholarly practitioner. He has been able, by virtue of his own personal example, to demonstrate that it is possible for a scholarly practitioner to enjoy a level of recognized success within academia. He has been able to integrate the best of what the real world offers in terms of conceptually challenging consulting work with the theoretical heights that a scholar can scale by developing experientially grounded lessons derived from the field. Further, crafting novel and unusual interventions and learning events encourages OD professionals and change agents to think and act more creatively and provocatively. To sum his contributions:

- His book with Berg on Failures in OD moved the field away from the notion of failure as something to be feared to the idea that failure is something that can be celebrated for the useful insights that it may produce. Until the message that it is okay to fail was broadcast among OD practitioners, there was much less willingness in the field to engage in self-questioning and reflective practices that may call into question the consultant's mental models and intervention strategies. This book represents the potential for double loop learning that must be leveraged not just by the clients but also by the consultants themselves.
- Mirvis's work on M&A with Marks awakened organizations to the importance of compatibility (or lack thereof) between organizational cultures as a vitally significant determinant of success or failure in making deals. It is a perennial reminder

that due diligence is not merely a matter of business architectures and strategies but of attending to the underlying human variables that are much less tangible and much more complex.

• Mirvis's orchestration of learning journeys represents a creative response to the contemporary global epidemic of alienation in organizations. With the uncertainties of the global era and the competition, employees experience high levels of powerlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, normlessness, and self-estrangement. Learning journeys are the perfect antidote to these states of alienated consciousness and represent a very lively intervention modality that embraces people in their wholeness and totality, allowing the entire system to be informed by the significance of the individual and for the individual to feel honored and affirmed in being contributed to by the whole system.

Notwithstanding these contributions, Mirvis agrees that his kind of work represents an anomaly to mainstream scholarship and practice and that there is plenty of "unfinished business" in the field of OD and change. For instance, the idea that assessment and change practices are both an art and a science is agreeable to many but the prevalence of pseudo-scientific assessment tools and standardized change management packages suggest that the field has yet to catch up to the level of organizational wisdom and scientific perspicacity represented by this integration of epistemologies. With a few notable exceptions, most graduate programs in organizational studies disproportionately inculcate the epistemology of a scientist among their students and do very little to help encourage the celebration of this work as both an art and a science.

While Mirvis's work carries with it a deep honoring of work/family integration and careers that represent a "path with a heart," a celebration of egalitarianism and power equalization within modern bureaucracies, and a radically humanistic vision of work, there are definite indications that the organizational zeitgeist may actually be evolving in precisely the opposite directions. Working people everywhere are treated as disposable assets and continuous job insecurity yields dependency, subservience, and serious work/family imbalance engendered by the fear of job loss.

In turn, Mirvis's work on CSR may be intellectually inspiring but evidence attests to strong corporate control of the world's food resources by a handful of conglomerates (including some that Mirvis has worked with and featured as icons of CSR), the displacement of indigenous people by corporations thirsting after natural resources on cooperatively owned land, and further threat of environmental degradation through fracking, global warming, and deforestation even as the global epidemic toward privatization of the commons leaves the average citizen ever more impoverished. And as Mirvis's writings on "best practices" in CSR stress laudatory conduct, such unflagging corporate optimism also carries with it the serious risk that CSR could be serving as the proverbial "opiate of the people" administered by people with high power in corporations to preserve and perpetuate the inequities of the status quo and the disenfranchisement of communities across the whole world.

# Conclusion

There has been a longstanding tension in the organizational studies disciplines between the cynicism of critical theorists and the sometimes Pollyannaish perspectives of positive organization psychology (Davies 2016). The early Mirvis, through his revolutionary zeal, had been a trenchant champion of disaffection with the status-quo and much of his writing preserves a healthy level of skepticism including a deep awareness of the distortions caused by power structures. The positive psychology movement, on the other hand, seems to sweep power issues aside in calling for a focus primarily on the "good" side of the picture. Rather than seeing cynical realism and positive thinking as incompatible, the truly positive scholar will appreciate the idealism that fires the cynic and empathize with the sources of the cynic's wariness in the deep witnessing and understanding of how modern institutions frequently partake in and create impunity to extreme abuses of power. And perhaps the cynic as well might cast aside "miserablism" (especially prominent in business schools today, as the late Mirvis (2014) writes) in favor of exploration and experimentation aimed at uplifting the human condition. This level of transcendental integration of these seemingly divergent and antithetical stances is what will bring both tendencies into a condition of mutually beneficial dialogue and maybe even collaboration. And it would be perfectly in keeping with Mirvis's capacity to transcend polarities that has been one of the most distinguishing hallmarks of his boundaryless career.

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## Further Reading

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# Dr. Susan Albers Mohrman: Scholar and Agent of Effective and Meaningful Organizations

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Ramkrishnan V. Tenkasi and George W. Hay

**Abstract**

Dr. Susan Albers Mohrman is a senior research scientist with the Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business. Many consider her to be a giant in the field of organization development and change (ODC) with her independent and joint contributions with other luminous colleagues from CEO such as Edward Lawler, Allan "Monty" Mohrman, Susan Cohen, and Christopher Worley. Mohrman has made several path-defining contributions during her illustrious and continuing 38-plus-year career at CEO. These contributions touch on multiple aspects of the field – teams, leadership, organizational design, organizational growth and development, rigorous research, theory development, useful research, and the cultivation of the future generation of scholar-practitioners.

Several core themes unite these diverse aspects. One integrative theme is her deep respect for and dedication to the constructive role that organizations can play in the lives of their members and the communities in which they are located. Another integrative theme is the need to build organizations that meet the multiple hurdles of effectiveness, efficiency, meaningfulness, and significance. A third is the multivocality of organizational expertise that rest in scholars, organizational leaders, employees, and other stakeholders. A fourth integrative theme is the persistent quest for models (and theories) of organizational functioning that better explain desired outcomes. As we reflect upon Dr. Mohrman's contributions, legacy, and unfinished business we are inspired to hold fast to the

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values of human dignity, meaningful work, sustainability, and scientific empiricism as we continue to cultivate powerful agents of change who fulfill the promise of the field of ODC.

### Keywords

Teams • Leadership • Organizational design • Organizational growth and development • Rigorous research • Theory development • Cultivation of the future generation of scholar-practitioners

## Contents

## Introduction

Dr. Susan Albers Mohrman is one of the leading scholars, researchers and practitioners of Organization Development and Change (ODC) who has reached this point in her still active career after traveling a path filled with robust experiences in diverse organizations. Although there is much that differentiates these experiences from each other, there are also some patterns that repeat themselves and are therefore characteristically Dr. Susan A. Mohrman. Dr. Mohrman has always been engaged in serving society and helping to build better communities. She has also actively reflected upon her experiences and chosen to pursue the fulfillment of her vision for society by furthering her expertise as a change agent. She has shared what she has learned in books, articles, and workshops so that others might learn from her experiences. Last, and perhaps by far the most important, she works collaboratively with organizations, their leaders, and other scholars to apply this expertise and develop it further. These patterns are visible in the next sections that describe the influences, contributions, legacy and unfinished business that constitute her work.

## Influences and Motivations: The Quest for Meaningful and Effective Organizations

Dr. Susan Albers Mohrman is a senior research scientist with the Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) at the University of South California, Marshall School of Business. Many consider her to be a giant in the field of organization development and change (ODC) with her independent and joint contributions with other luminous

colleagues from CEO such as Edward Lawler, Allan "Monty" Mohrman, Susan Cohen and Christopher Worley. CEO is considered the first university-industry partnership of its kind in the United States, dedicated to carrying out collaborative social science research projects to generate useful knowledge.

Mohrman was born and raised in Lancaster, PA with a family focused on public service. Her father was a physician who provided support and care to the needy. Given a strong interest in societal good and the empowerment of human beings, Mohrman enrolled at Stanford University and completed her undergraduate degree in psychology. While at Stanford, she also met Monty Mohrman, her future husband, research colleague and life partner. The two eventually married in a dream wedding at the Stanford University Chapel. Given their penchant for public service and the progressive social change ethos of the 1960s, both decided to pursue a Master's degree in education at the University of Cincinnati as a way of giving back to society, particularly the public school system.

Sue Mohrman's first brush with ODC was in a course at the University of Cincinnati, where she was exposed to the avant-garde work of Bennis, Benne and Chin (1961) – in particular their ideas of democratic, planned change in the creation of meaningful work systems. These ideas seemed to hold the answers to some longstanding questions provoked by Mohrman's work experiences as a youth. She found organizations to be dehumanizing bastions of domination and control. Her quest henceforth was, "How can we make work and organizations more effective, satisfying, interesting, and meaningful?"

Mohrman's subsequent work as a secondary school teacher with the Cincinnati Public School System sparked her interest in furthering the development of social mission-driven organizations such as schools. She wanted to understand what drives individuals to join organizations like these that require its members to subjugate the pursuit of wealth, prominence, or fame, to the interests of the larger good. More importantly, she wondered how such organizations could become more effective by aligning and sustaining the interests of their members to promote their social mission in fulfilling and meaningful ways. Her experience was that many teachers join schools for altruistic reasons, but after a matter of time, their motivation to serve gets "beaten out of them" due to the constraining nature of hierarchical and seg-mented organizational structures that do not match the work that has to be carried out to educate and engage children (Mohrman and Wohlstetter 1994). In order to gain a deeper understanding of these early formative questions, Mohrman enrolled in the Ph.D. program in organization studies at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Her Ph.D. studies allowed her to further familiarize herself not only with the fields of Organization Behavior and Organization theory, but also with the field of Orga-nization Development. This included further focus on Warren Bennis's work on values-based approaches to organizational change as well as the writings of other leading change scholars – like Ed Lawler and Chris Argyris – in making work more meaningful and interesting. Robert Duncan's mentorship at Northwestern helped complement micro-psychological approaches with macro-sociological organization theory understandings of organization design and change that were further influenced by Jay Galbraith's postulations on organization design. The Socio-

Technical Systems (STS) perspective that focused on the joint optimization of both human and technological systems were meso-level influences, since organization design approaches in that era entered ODC via STS. Her dissertation work focused on the impact of an intervention into the Waukegan School District, aimed at providing teachers with the opportunity to make changes in how the school district operated in order to improve the educational outcomes for students. Based on that work she developed the belief that school systems, like other organizations, could not be changed simply by motivating people to work harder and be told that they are empowered to make change. School districts had to be redesigned to fit with the requirements for educating "whole people". Her doctoral studies set the stage for Mohrman's lifelong work as a scholar-practitioner, focusing on how to participatively design and change organizational systems to accomplish human purpose.

Although Mohrman's intention post-Ph.D. was to return to work with public school systems as a change agent, she joined the business school at the University of Southern California (USC) as an assistant professor. Lawler arrived around the same time at USC with the vision of starting a research center that would redirect organizational research to actually influence practice, based on an understanding of the real issues organizations were facing. This was also a time when the discipline of organizational studies was devolving into a field of narrow perspectives and frameworks that lacked an appreciation for the systemic nature of organizations. Business schools were increasingly emphasizing a disciplinary-based approach toward research. It was in this context that Lawler and Monty Mohrman founded the CEO at USC with the explicit goal of doing rigorous theory-driven research in which practical usefulness was a major concern.

Sue Mohrman was inherently drawn toward the mission of CEO and transferred her services as assistant professor from the management and organization department to CEO as a research scientist, which, in her words, "shaped me as a scholar, researcher and change agent" (Mohrman, personal communication, May 2016). This was an opportunity for her to actively engage in field research doing experiments, case studies and evaluation studies to help organizations become more effective by combining rigor with relevance.

Dr. Mohrman's career also includes substantial service to professional associations such as the Academy of Management (AOM) where she was Chair of the ODC Division, and a member of the governing board. In these roles she championed the importance of bridging knowledge to action and research to practice.

## Key Contributions: Building Meaningful and Effective Organizations Through Research, Theory Development, and Application

Dr. Mohrman has made several path-defining contributions during her illustrious and continuing 38-plus-year career at CEO. The following are examples of the key research studies, theoretical developments, and practical applications that characterize her work.

An early contribution in collaboration with Tom Cummings was reconfiguring the STS model to a self-design process model (Mohrman and Cummings 1989). Putting into play the STS model in multiple factories that were undergoing transitions led to the realization that any model or framework can only be an initial tool within the target organizational system. The members of that system must go through a learning process to apply the model in their local setting. They must learn about incorporating their values in the change process because the self-design model is driven by the "engineering" piece of STS as well as the "values" piece of it. It is a critical step in self-design to map out the values of the people in the organization, since those values must be embedded in the STS redesign that have implications for the design itself and its' implementation effectiveness.

The work of CEO in terms of bridging rigorous research with relevant practice was at odds with how academia in general and organizational studies in particular were evolving with a narrow focus on disciplinary based research (Mohrman 2001). Mohrman and her colleagues were instrumental in organizing two conferences at the Center to legitimize translational research. The first one on useful research (Lawler et al. 1985) brought together several mainstream scholars who had moved their personal interests to having an impact on organizations, and captured their insights on how best to achieve such an impact. The second conference on managing large-scale change (Mohrman et al. 1989) was a congress of rigorous researchers and practical interventionists to draw insights on how best to combine rigorous research with practical interventions to effectively change organizations. The integration of research with practice has been a continuing quest for Mohrman, who is now recognized as one of the foremost world scholars in this domain (Mohrman et al. 2001; Jarzabkowski et al. 2010; Mohrman and Lawler 2011).

Designing team-based organizations (Mohrman et al. 1995; Mohrman and Mohrman 1997) came out of STS foundations, and Mohrman's interest in understanding how to design for this new form of organizing, was spurred by her firm belief that team based designs offered an antidote to the "tyranny of bureaucracy" (Mohrman, personal communication, May 2016). There were challenges associated with how teams learn across the organization, work laterally, and retain their unique capabilities while working in collaborative settings. Added to these challenges is the superimposing cultural context of Western societies, where teamwork does not come naturally to people.

Organizational redesign is a critical capability for organizations to develop in order for a system to adapt to the dynamic and rapid changes in both the business and societal environments. One of Mohrman's key contributions in this regard concerns the potential ways through which the gap between the theoretical understandings of ODC and the actual practice of design in organizations can be bridged. ODC needs to become a discipline (Mohrman and Mohrman 1997; Mohrman 2007). Organizations need to build into their core functioning the capacity to continually adjust, adapt, and redesign the organization with the involvement of multiple stakeholders (Mohrman et al. 2007). It is more important than ever to juxtapose theories of ODC with the actual organizational design process to cultivate organizations that are good for their stakeholders and for society (Mohrman, personal communication, May 2016).

Building networks, particularly self-designing and self-organizing networks involving multiple stakeholders, also needs to be an integral part of design. Networks have the power to solve problems, foster innovation, and deliver more effective services than traditional hierarchical organization designs (Mohrman et al. 2003, 2007; Wagner and Mohrman 2009). Note that the networks envisioned by Mohrman exist within the organization itself but also extend across organizations (inter-organizationally) and ultimately throughout communities at large.

Mohrman's interest in sustainability came about as a response to the changing micro and macroeconomic realities, and to the very personal realization that her grandchildren would inherit a world with seemingly intractable problems. In her view, the Western world has created a very dark manifestation of humanity with its undeniable adverse impact on the natural environment and on issues of social justice. The unfolding of the global economy that has brought many out of poverty (and allowed a small element of the population to become extremely wealthy) has been accomplished with the costs of environmental degradation, climate change, and burgeoning inequality. The pursuit of wealth has become the key driver for individuals and organizations at the expense of the common good. This economic ethos has become the sine-qua-non of organizational being and has placed other values such as sustainability at the margins (Mohrman et al. 2015). Her current work builds on a larger recognition that ODC (and organization studies in general) should help redirect the global economy toward a more sustainable and equitable trajectory that incorporates social justice and human meaning (Mohrman and Worley 2010; Mohrman and Shani 2011, 2012, 2014).

## New Insights: New Forms of Organizing and New Roles for Change Agents

The contributions that Mohrman has made to ODC described in the prior section also demonstrate the broad reach of her insights. This section will highlight a few dominant insights that merit continued consideration and reflection.

Bridging research with practice has gained momentum in recent years, including the fields of medicine and public health in the increasing prominence of "translational research." Dr. Mohrman believes that we have not yet unearthed its full potential. There is not much premium placed on the usefulness and impact of research in many academic settings, and the field of organizational studies almost exclusively continues to support disciplinary-based research. The external environment for corporations is changing so fast that they rely on a process of invention through trial and error to counter these forces, and do not have the patience to consider the vast research and theory knowledge base available on designing and changing organizations. This need for translational work suggests the first insight to be highlighted – organizations will not reach their full potential in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, meaningfulness and social value until they move beyond trial and error modes of organizational design and into the thoughtful application of extant research and theory.

Furthermore, the field does not have a population of change agents who are able to appreciate, value, or critically assess this extensive store of knowledge for practical use. The charge then for ODC scholars (and a professional passion for Mohrman) is to find ways for the accumulated knowledge to be packaged in a practical fashion without sacrificing rigor, and for multi-disciplinary teams to provide knowledge and support for organizations as they face the challenges in our fast-paced world. Scholars need to imagine and experiment with research that can have an impact, utilizing questions such as "How do you do it?" and "What are the elements that go beyond theoretical understanding of the distal focus on organizations?" How do scholars combine research knowledge with the ideas of organizational practitioners on how organizations design to accomplish human purpose? This realization leads to a second insight – that organizations cannot thoughtfully apply research and theory without employees and consultants trained in those skills. Translational work is inherently human and people driven.

Dr. Mohrman has some contrarian insights about the role of the leader as a change agent. Some of her early publications attest to her thoughts on this matter (Mohrman 1998). There is an overemphasis on the leader as the primary agent of change that ties in with the whole lore around the "romance of leadership" (Meindl and Ehrlich 1987). While the leader may provide a vision and a path or direction and communicate the values embedded in the required change, the legions of people lower down in the organization bring the vision into fruition. Organizations need employees to emerge as leaders to make the change work. It is not accurate to give all of the attention and credit, good or bad, to the leaders and executives who are a small percentage of organizational members. Understanding the self-regulatory characteristics of organizations and organizational systems, and the role of lower participants in the dynamics of fundamental change is an important area for future research. A third insight is that effective translational work involves a redesign of the structure and culture of the organization to include not just the specialized knowledge brokers but also the other members of the organization. Translational work shifts the roles of leaders and followers.

Dr. Mohrman's 38-plus years of experience studying organizational change as a theoretician, researcher and scholar-practitioner has led to the personal recognition that change cannot really be managed. Hence the fourth and final insight – all we can do as change agents is create organizational enablers for change to happen. This approach – called "Beyond Change Management" (Worley and Mohrman 2016) – in some ways harkens us back to Herbst's (1974) thoughts on designing with critical minimum specifications. In a paradoxical fashion, the outcomes of efficiency, effectiveness, meaningfulness and social value may come from doing less rather than more.

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: Harnessing the Integration of Theory and Practice for Future Good

Dr. Mohrman's contributions and insights touch on multiple aspects of the field – teams, leadership, organizational design, organizational growth and development, rigorous research, theory development, and the cultivation of the future

generation of scholar-practitioners. Several core themes run through these and serve as her legacy within the field of ODC. One core theme is her deep respect for and dedication to the constructive role that organizations can play in the lives of their members and the communities in which they are located. Another core theme is the need to build organizations that meet the multiple hurdles of effectiveness, efficiency, meaningfulness, and significance. A third is the multivocality of organizational expertise that rests in scholars, organizational leaders, employees, and other stakeholders. A fourth core theme is the persistent quest for models (and theories) of organizational functioning that better explain desired outcomes. The following areas of work in ODC form a short list of the unfinished business of her legacy.

Consider the role of technology in human work systems. A trend that started in the early 1990s and continues until today is the technological imperative that appears to guide organizations at the expense of human values. Technological capability – whether it is business process reengineering, enterprise-wide information systems, or powerful IT platforms and applications – have become the key underpinning of designing and redesigning modern organizations. It is only recently that we have been dealing with the values piece of this change, whether that requires being on call 24/7 due to instantaneous global communication or working from late at night until early morning to synchronize with virtual team partners across the globe. The direction humanity wants to go is not well understood, and many workers are going where technology takes them. A big challenge for ODC – and the first area of unfinished business – is to understand and grapple with the question of how organizations can allow their employees to reassert control over their lives, given the dominant technological imperative.

Likewise, there is a dominant technology focus with teaming. The way teaming was formerly understood has disappeared; the emphasis is now on newer forms of computer-supported collaborative work with "smart teams". "Smart teams" are temporary and often virtual, and with an increasingly transactional nature of employment. Investigating and understanding the development of collaborative systems in the context of technology-mediated communication versus intact teaming may better serve organizations, but only if their leaders develop a profound understanding of how to make this new form of work and employment address the needs of people. This introduces a challenge and a second area of unfinished business for ODC scholars as they search for ODC models that maximize the potential of collaborative systems.

Achieving global sustainability goals require collectives of people who can self-organize more effectively around desired human preferences. The chance of global sustainability happening organization by organization is more remote. Real development must move to the inter-organizational level – which is a third area of unfinished business. Dr. Mohrman's focus lately has been on how to design for such inter-organizational collaborations, building on her earlier work on trans-organizational development that began with Tom Cummings. ODC scholars have to create better understandings of how to build self-organizing networks around critical issues such as providing adequate global food supplies, mitigating the health inequities experienced by some populations, delivering wellness care that is tailored

to the individual needs of specific patients, and addressing the human rights and social justice implications of how our global economy is unfolding. These challenges, in Mohrman's view, can only be addressed by many networks of stakeholders working together to focus on sustainable development while considering the various eco-systems that constitute our interconnected world.

Dr. Mohrman considers the most significant part of her legacy to rest with scholar-practitioners located in organizations, such as Stu Winby, formerly of Hewlett Packard. Stu Winby is now a scholar-practitioner working with many companies to merge the design of digital technology with the design of organizations. Mohrman is a founder and core faculty member in the CEO's Organizational Design Program, and has dedicated much of her time and energy to helping its participants learn how to lead their companies' complex redesigns aimed at developing the new capabilities required in the changing world. She feels that it is with this group that she is most directly able to bridge the gap between research and practice. This call to bridge the gap between research and practice is a fourth area of unfinished business.

In terms of impact on other scholars, Mohrman believes that her scholarship and mentorship has primarily influenced scholars who aspire to do useful research. These include several of her colleagues – past and present – at CEO, such as Susan Cohen, Cristina Gibson, David Finegold, Chris Worley, George Benson and an author of this chapter, Ram Tenkasi. From a broader angle, researchers working on teams and collaboration – such as Eduardo Salas – have found Mohrman's work useful. A significant contribution is getting academic researchers and scholar-practitioners in organizations to think about ways to bring in rigorous research and embed them in practical organizational projects. Toward this end, many of her publications and much of her contribution to the Academy of Management have focused on what it means to do useful research, and how to do it. This fifth area of unfinished business, clearly related to the fourth area of unfinished business, is the cultivation of scholar-practitioners within academia, for-profit, and not-for-profit organizations so that translational work can start, grow, and prosper.

As we reflect upon Dr. Mohrman's contributions, legacy, and unfinished business we are inspired to hold fast to the values of human dignity, meaningful work, sustainability, and scientific empiricism as we continue to cultivate powerful agents of change who can fulfill the promise of the field of ODC.

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# David Nadler: A Life of Congruence

William Pasmore

**Abstract**

David Nadler was a scholar-turned-practitioner who left his mark on the field of organization development through his work with CEOs and his writing about organizational diagnosis, data feedback, organization design, transformation, and boards. The consulting firm he created, Delta Consulting, was the premier firm specializing in consulting to CEOs on matters related to their personal and organizational effectiveness. He is perhaps best remembered for creating, along with Michael Tushman, the congruence model, which serves as a guide for organizational diagnosis and design. However, his greatest impact was on those who knew him as clients, associates, and friends.

**Keywords**

Congruence model • Data feedback • Organizational architecture • Board effectiveness

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## Introduction

It is my deep pleasure to reflect on the life of my friend, mentor, boss, and colleague David Nadler. He led an extraordinary life; one that sometimes seemed either blessed and cursed but was always remarkable. His impact on the field of organization development was huge, and yet the influence he had on his clients and contemporaries was greater still.

It would be hard to capture all that David thought and everything that David was in a series of volumes, let alone a short chapter. His mind was incredibly fertile, making a series of almost continuous groundbreaking contributions from the 1970s to the 2010s. As a consultant, he influenced others to change the course of their lives and their corporations. As a businessman, he became very wealthy and helped others to do the same. He had his quirks and hard sides; he was not a perfect human being. Yet, in retrospect, his quirks and hard sides made him who he was and were as important to his success as the generosity, brilliance, and fearless tenacity he displayed.

## Influences and Motivations: Shaping Forces

I worked with David Nadler at Delta Consulting, the firm he founded, from 1997 to 2008. I knew him long before then, but only as a fellow academic attending Academy of Management conferences with some shared interests. David was teaching at Columbia in the late 1970s and had already established a reputation as one of the up and comers in our field.

David's transition into full-time consulting in the early 1980s probably came as a surprise to him, as did mine, although our paths there were different. David had been denied tenure at Columbia, not due to his lack of scholarly productivity but because he ran afoul of a senior member of the faculty who resented the fact that an assistant professor without tenure had created a consulting/research firm instead of focusing his full attention on teaching, scholarly publishing, and service to the school.

David modeled his firm largely after the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, where David had done his doctoral work. It made perfect sense to him that he would use the firm to advance his research and to provide consulting to organizations based on that research, since he had seen the model work at Michigan. His senior colleagues at Columbia had different priorities in mind. They expected untenured faculty to focus their attention on research and publishing in scholarly journals, not on creating a "business." Noel Tichy, who hired David, was unable to stem the tide that turned against David in the tenure review process.

I, on the other hand, had been a tenured full professor at Case Western Reserve for 20 years before trying my hand at consulting full time, a move triggered by a desire to relocate to the Northeast. David welcomed me to Delta despite my being a passing acquaintance and remained a friend and mentor for the rest of his life. David died of cancer in 2015 at age 66, far too soon. By then, he had ascended to the position of Vice Chairman of Marsh McLennan, the huge corporation that purchased Delta

Consulting and also owned Mercer, Putnam Investments, Oliver Wyman, and many other subsidiary assets. As a result of the sale, David had become very wealthy, had homes in New York, Westport Connecticut, and Naples Florida and a sailboat named "Congruence" after the famous model that he developed with Michael Tushman. I have fond memories of sailing on that boat with David, which he captained as meticulously as he ran his affairs. "Perfect" was lowest the acceptable bar for David.

But let's go back to the beginning. David's father, Leonard Nadler, was an academic who taught at George Washington, with a focus in Human Resources Management. In fact, he is credited with coining the term, "Human Resource Development." He applied his scholarship in projects with the state department, and then in ASTD, setting an early example of the life of the scholar-practitioner for his eldest son. At first, David saw his career going in some other direction but when it came time to attend college, he chose his father's institution. Mark Nadler, his brother, recalls living with David as a freshman while David was a junior at George Washington. Mark said that during the Vietnam war years, David interned at IBM. The contrast between what seemed like a hopeless international quagmire and the relentless pace of action and excitement at IBM altered David's trajectory from a career in the Foreign Service to one related to business.

After George Washington, David enrolled in the MBA program at the Harvard Business School in order to familiarize himself with all aspects of business. The connections he made there and the emotional ties he felt to Harvard were among the strongest influences in his later career. For years, the consultants at Delta Consulting would hold regular all-hands meetings at the Harvard Club in New York, where David also met frequently with his colleagues, clients, and former classmates. In addition to the connections Harvard provided, his membership in the Harvard community provided David a patina of aristocracy, which he valued and used to maximum advantage.

David's time at Harvard convinced him that he was on the right path by focusing on both academics and business. Therefore, it was not as surprising as it may have seemed at the time that his next move would be to pursue his PhD at the University of Michigan.

Ed Lawler, who was David's chair, describes David as a terrific student, albeit business focused. David worked extensively with Ed on quality of worklife projects while at Michigan and became enamored with the Institute for Social Research (ISR) which had been founded by Rensis Likert and others and was being run by Bob Kahn, David Bowers, and Charlie Seashore during David's time as a graduate student. ISR served as the model for David's consulting firm, Organizational Research and Consultation (OR&C), which later became Delta Consulting.

Ed said that David was always happy to contribute to discussions in class but could become impatient or even rude at times if others were not prepared to do the same. David was on a mission to become a scholar-practitioner. He never imagined anything other than becoming a faculty member and turned down several opportunities with consulting firms that expressed interest in him. While Ed did not see the "pure researcher" in David that he saw in other students, he had no doubt about his motivation to succeed and become a part of the academic elite.

David had a natural ability to translate the complex work that others were doing on theory into practice. He was profoundly influenced by Katz and Kahn's book on the social psychology of organizations and systems theory in particular. It was clear to Dennis Perkins, a fellow doctoral student at Michigan and lifelong friend who also held a Harvard MBA, that the congruence model was based on the open systems thinking they had learned from Katz and Kahn. Michael Tushman, co-author of the congruence model, confirmed that David was the one who brought the open systems thinking to their work on the congruence model, without which the model would not have been nearly as powerful. David was also intrigued with Harold Levinson's work on organizational diagnosis and counted him among his key influences.

Perkins remembers David the doctoral student creating a reference location system out of computer punch cards and push rods that enabled him to find references about a specific topic by inserting the rods into the holes on the cards and using them to pull certain cards from the deck. He was far ahead of what Google Scholar would eventually allow the rest of us to do.

David was a person, according to Perkins, who had a knack for getting things done. He used checklists to track work details and kept his desk in immaculate order, while books and papers from his office-mate frequently overflowed into David's space, something David did not appreciate. David had an entrepreneurial orientation even then and took full advantage of the opportunities that Lawler, ISR, and its Survey Research Center (SRC) afforded. It was a fertile ground for what was to come.

## Key Contributions: The Scholar-Practitioner in Action

Joining the faculty of the Columbia Business School upon earning his doctorate in 1976, David commenced what would be a productive, lifelong career in contributing to the literature in the field of organization development. Given that ISR and David Bowers in particular had pioneered the survey feedback method, it is understandable that one of David's earliest and best-known publications was a book in the Addison-Wesley series on organization development titled simply *Data Feedback*. It was a contribution that is as timely today as it was in its year of publication, 1977. I still use it in my consulting course; there simply is not a better resource on how to collect, prepare, and impart information of all kinds to clients. Later, David would use his expertise in data feedback to perfect methods for collecting and feeding back data to CEOs, a demanding audience who expected extremely high-quality analytics and value-added sensemaking.

It was at Columbia that David worked closely with Noel Tichy, Michael Tushman, and Warner Burke, the latter who was on the faculty of Teachers College. Tushman remembers that he and Nadler followed one another around for interviews at different institutions in the hiring process. Tushman was aware of Nadler, but the two did not really know each other until Tichy hired them both and brought them together for the first time in his home. The two hit it off immediately and began work on redesigning the core course on organizations which, according to Tushman, had
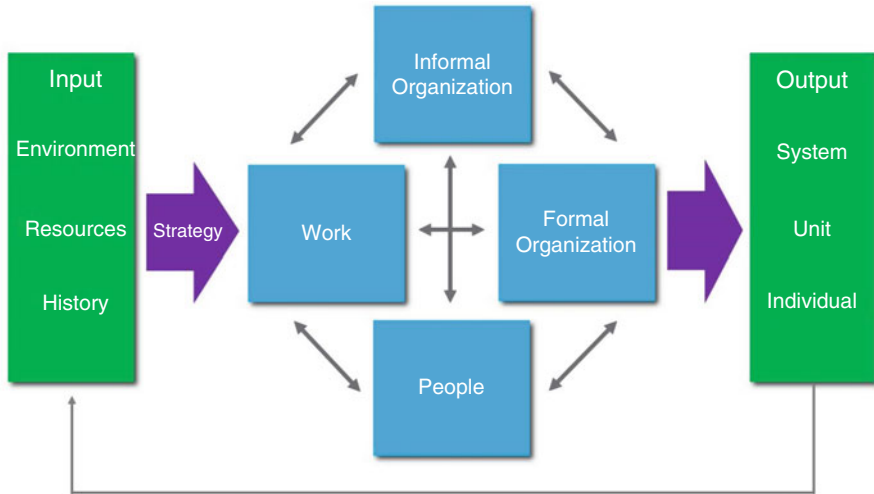
**Fig. 1** The congruence model (From Nadler and Tushman 1980)

been a disaster. In the process of redesigning the course, David suggested that having a model around which to build the course would be a good idea. A few working lunches later, the now widely known congruence model was born (Nadler and Tushman 1977). Tushman's work had been on networks, social innovation, and culture. David brought Katz and Kahn's open systems thinking perspective (Katz and Kahn 1966), as well as Levinson's work on organizational diagnosis (Levinson et al. 1972) and Lawrence and Lorsch's work on organizations and the environment (Lawrence and Lorsch 1967). They combined these different scholarly traditions to create the congruence model, which has stood the test of time. Tushman says that the model was intended to help leaders solve problems they faced. It was more than an "academic theory" about how organizations worked. It was a tool that David and others would apply in organization development consultation from that point forward (Fig. 1).

Applying the congruence model started with examining the fit or "congruence" of an organization's environment and its strategy. A good strategy considered opportunities and threats, the resources at the organization's disposal, and its unique history, positioning, and capabilities. As we know, however, even good strategies do not always produce the results intended. When this happens, according to the congruence model, there can only be three explanations. First, the strategy can be at fault; what appeared to be sound strategic thinking needs to be reconsidered, either because the strategy was faulty or the environment changed substantially. If after review the strategy is deemed sound, there are two additional explanations for a lack of success. First, the formal organization design and processes used to perform the work may not be designed to execute the strategy. Second, the informal organization (culture) or people (talent) may not support success. It is the responsibility of leadership to determine what the cause of the problem is and to experiment with

different solutions until the desired results are achieved at the overall system, business unit, and individual levels.

Some leaders believe that improving the culture or making strategic talent changes can overcome problems associated with poor organization design or work processes. The congruence model argues the opposite, based on the sociotechnical systems school. Poor work organization, structural barriers, and inappropriate use of power by virtue of position are more deterministic of outcomes than positive motivation or thwarted capabilities. The same point was recently made in a 2016 Harvard Business Review article by Lorsch and McTague.

If the work processes and formal organization are judged to be well aligned with a workable strategy but results are not forthcoming, only then should attention shift to the informal system (culture, teamwork) and people (talent, engagement, rewards). Once necessary improvements are made in all four elements of the organizational design (work, formal organization, informal organization, and people), the final step is to ensure that the four elements are designed to be mutually reinforcing. The arrows in the model represent the fit or "congruence" among the elements and are considered as important in their impact on outcomes as the individual elements. As Russell Ackoff explained so colorfully, identifying the best individual components of every automobile engine in existence would not permit one to build the world's best engine because the parts would not fit together. The implication is that rather than benchmarking each element of an organization against "best in class," it is better to assemble the elements in ways that fit well together and, by so doing, produce optimal overall results. In the sociotechnical systems school, which David studied, the process of improving the performance of a single element at the expense of the effectiveness of the overall system is known as "sub-optimization." David was against implementing changes in one part of an organization without considering their impact on the whole, especially if the changes were faddish or driven by the desire of a unit or individual to "one-up" others. If the HR department was about to roll out an employee engagement program, for example, David would ask why. It was not that he was against employee engagement, but he wanted leaders to understand how the entire system worked to produce results. If employees were more engaged, how would this contribute to the work being done better or the organization design more effectively supporting the strategy? It is safe to say that if the congruence model was understood and applied more often, leaders would save billions annually on implementing programs or changes that either have no impact or actually make matters worse.

Dennis Perkins, David's peer at Michigan and early colleague at Organizational Research and Consultation (which would later evolve into Delta Consulting), pointed out to David that "leadership" was missing as a separate variable in the congruence model. Perhaps because Nadler and Tushman were tasked with designing a course on organizations, they saw leadership as interspersed throughout the model rather than in a category of its own. Nevertheless, David conceded that adding leadership to the model might have been a good idea, had not OR&C just finished printing 4000 copies of the model for use with clients. Money was tight, and David could not bear to see the printed copies go to waste.

Michael and David worked together on developing cases for the course that featured managers dealing with issues of motivation, culture, and organization design. These topics later became the subjects of books or white papers produced by OR&C and then Delta Consulting. David felt that consulting included educating leaders on topics that every Columbia MBA would have learned in the course that he and Tushman taught. Nadler and Tushman continued to work together on a number of these publications, including *Strategic Organization Design* (1988), *Organizational Frame Bending* (1989), *Beyond the Charismatic Leader* (1990), *Competing by Design*, 1997, and, with Donald Hambrick, *Navigating Change* (1997).

In these works, Nadler and Tushman leveraged the congruence model to point toward ideas in the areas of organizational design and change that would consume David for the next decade. The idea of congruence, or alignment among the building blocks, was what produced excellence. The organization design process, as conceived by David, began with understanding which elements in the model needed to be better aligned with the strategy and with one another (using diagnostic methods modeled on Levinson's work). In strategic organizational design, the large pieces of the organization first needed to be grouped together according to function, product, geography, or processes, as dictated by strategic priorities. Then, these groups needed to be "linked" by mechanisms that would allow coordination across their boundaries, using both formal and informal mechanisms for sharing information and making decisions. Finally, after creating the strategic or high-level design of the enterprise, the work of operational, or within-unit design, would begin. Operational design includes the definition of work processes, roles, talent requirements, and other details that determine the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. Since organizational design is a process that involves change, Nadler and Tushman also addressed issues concerning power, anxiety, and control during the transition from one structure to another.

Tushman says that the scholar-practitioner model was clearly what guided David in his years at Columbia. David understood that publishing was an important part of the job but truly loved consulting and being an entrepreneur. He worked with Warner Burke to create a fabulous course on consulting to organizations which continues to be taught at Teachers College today. I have taught it and am amazed at both its complexity and design integrity. In addition, David collaborated with Tichy, Tushman, Jeff Pfeffer, and Charles O'Reilly on programs about change that are still being taught in executive education programs at Harvard and Columbia. David also guided the work of graduate students, including Deborah Ancona, who worked on research and consulting projects with David.

David valued research and recruited Tushman, who remained at Columbia, to be his part-timer at "research department" in the early years of OR&C and Delta Consulting. David also applied his own research skills to advance understanding and practice during his years at Delta. Tushman cites David's work on boards (2004, 2011) as being perhaps the most creative and groundbreaking of David's later career. This work helped CEOs and board members better understand the range of relationships that may exist between boards that are "passive" or inactive and boards that are overly involved, which he calls "operating boards." The ideal balance is one

that David calls "engaged." The engaged board accepts its responsibility for overseeing the performance of the CEO and the success of the enterprise. To do this, they need relevant industry and financial expertise. Moreover, they must work hard at defining the way they will work with the CEO to ensure that the most important issues are addressed while the roles of the CEO and the Board are clear. The engaged state is difficult to maintain as issues arise, but it is helpful to remind both the CEO and the board that this ideal should be the goal, even if discursions from the ideal occur from time to time. In the book on *Building Better Boards* (Nadler et al. 2011), David and his colleagues leverage research that Delta conducted as part of a National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD) study to address issues such as the pros and cons of combining the CEO and chairman's role, succession planning, board composition, and board assessment.

David's other noteworthy contributions include books on *Organizational Architecture* with Marc Gerstein and Robert Shaw (1992), *Discontinuous Change* with Robert Shaw and Elise Walton (1994), *Champions of Change* (1997) and *Executive teams* with Janet Spencer (1998). *Organizational Architecture* (1992) included chapters by a number of Delta Consulting senior partners on the history of organizational architecture, managing acquisitions, building strategic partnerships and joint ventures, designing high-performance work systems, succession planning for the executive team, and collaborative strategic planning. A chapter by Robert Shaw on the capacity to act defined the steps that CEOs need to take to have the wherewithal to address problems and implement solutions, including such things as having a clear vision, prioritizing a vital few imperatives, assigning clear responsibility, and providing adequate resources. The concept of capacity to act was one that caught on with CEOs who often felt helpless in the face of what seemed to be overwhelming forces working against them. Likewise, the chapter by Shaw and Perkins outlined how CEOs can learn from "productive failures," a concept that we see embodied in design thinking today.

*Discontinuous Change* (1994) tackles the topic of organizational transformation, with particular attention to the leadership and cultural requirements to achieve success. Discontinuous change begins with a bold and courageous strategy that must be communicated so that the transformation can be carefully staged. Then, the executive leaders must engage in ways that impact the culture in the present and for the future. David writes about the need to go beyond the myth of the heroic leader, since the actions of the heroic leader only do so much and produce dependency which is not supportive of true engagement. While heroic leaders provide a vision, enable change to happen, and use charisma to create positive energy, leaders must work together to provide instrumental and institutionalized leadership. Instrumental leadership addresses how the new enterprise will be structured and measured, and people will be rewarded. Institutional leadership leverages the contributions of the members of the entire senior team and broadens the notion of leadership to extend beyond the senior team to include senior management.

*Champions of Change* (1997) delves into the role of the CEO in leading radical discontinuous change. Important actions include overcoming obstacles to change, developing a shared direction, building a new strategy, redesigning the organization,

aligning strategy and culture, building a new senior team, and engaging senior leadership in sustaining the change. The book ends with important principles for CEOs leading discontinuous change, including ensuring appropriate involvement, exercising committed leadership, providing valid information, making informed choices, and constructing integrated change.

In *Executive Teams* (1998), David calls once again upon his colleagues to write about the unique nature of working at the top of complex enterprises, this time with a focus to how teams at the top differ. Since any executive team is a reflection of the CEO, the book begins with a look into the complexity of the role of the CEO and the many stakeholders and interests which the CEO, and by implication the senior team, must contend. In cases where a COO position exists, another article explores the different forms of relationships the COO holds to the CEO and to other members of the executive team. Following that, one of the most read pieces that David and his brother Mark ever wrote together is offered, entitled *Performance on the executive team: When to Pull the Trigger*. The subject is when to dismiss an underperforming member of the executive team. The criteria offered and advice on the process touches an area that has been an emotional sinkhole for many CEOs – making the call regarding a long-term team member and often personal friend who is no longer the right person for the job. Additional topics include trust and conflict among members of the team, providing feedback to the team on its performance, and the work of the executive team around strategy, culture, change and governance.

Several of David's later works were completed with his brother Mark, who joined Delta Consulting after a successful career in journalism. Mark remembers that David was always interested in making a reputation through his writing. While still an undergraduate student, David wrote a piece called the "New Orientation to Work" that was later published by ASTD in 1971. The premise was that baby boomers would be flooding the job market and that they would need to be managed differently than their predecessors, a conversation strikingly similar to that concerning millennials today. Mark said that there was never any doubt in David's mind that he would become an academic. David knew that before getting his MBA but felt that the MBA would better prepare him to work with executives and write about business. Mark speculates that had David been granted tenure at Columbia, the story of his career would have been different. His intention was to model his career after Lawler, Levinson, and others; he would have remained in academia rather than moving into consulting full time.

Mark said that David's writing was driven by a desire to translate practice into strategy. He was good at "connecting the dots." He would observe different clients as they struggled with similar issues and distill common themes and patterns. It was a gradual process of accumulating information and turning it into knowledge, not waking up in the middle of the night with a "flash of brilliance." As the pieces fell into place, the whole picture would gradually emerge. Mark helped David's thinking by pushing back on him, challenging him to think differently about the varied business issues his clients encountered. David had a tendency to "rediscover" the same idea several times, and Mark helped him to move past what he already knew to discover new insights. One example of this was the breakthrough that resulted in

David's *Harvard Business Review* article, "The CEO's Second Act" (2007), which was an entirely new perspective on what happens to CEOs who are hired to do one thing, accomplish that, and then are forced to do something they are not prepared to do.

The more they worked together, the more David took on the role of deciding the topic while Mark did a greater share of the writing. David found it increasingly difficult to find time to sit and write, with so much going on in the firm that demanded his personal attention. He told Mark that it was like his chair had springs; no sooner would he sit down than the chair would pop him back up. David did the consulting that provided the real-life examples that made the work come alive and invented the abstract concepts. Mark, using the talents he had honed in journalism, made the writing easily accessible to an executive audience.

David built a large research team at Delta Consulting and commissioned researchers to work with practicing consultants on projects that resulted in white papers on leading strategic combinations, CEO succession, and a variety of other topics. David maintained personal quality control on these publications, since each represented the Delta Consulting brand that David had worked so passionately to build and maintain. I can recall being assigned to a joint project with Mercer Management Consulting and Mercer HR on the topic of pre-merger assessment. After a year of collaboration, an article was published, but the assessment itself, which was the goal of the work, was scrapped because it did not meet David's standards. He knew what he wanted and was not afraid to say no to contributions that did not deliver to his specifications. It was an important lesson for me about not accepting the product of difficult collaboration with peers as the best that could be accomplished. David may have left academia, but he never lowered his standard for publishable work.

The research group, led by Carlos Rivero and later David Wagner and myself, produced tools and thought pieces that facilitated the work of the firm's consultants. These included a tool for assessing the effectiveness of executive teams (Executive Team Assessment Questionnaire), a tool for assessing lateral relationships (The Lateral Relationships Questionnaire), a tool for analyzing interview information (MIDAS), and material for the books and articles mentioned previously.

David's closest writing connections throughout his career were Michael Tushman and his brother Mark Nadler. Professionally, he teamed with Tushman, Noel Tichy, Don Hambrick, and Warner Burke while at Columbia and with Dennis Perkins, Carl Hill, Chuck Raben, David Bliss, Rick Ketterer, Elise Walton, Janet Spencer, Dan Plunkett, Rosalinde Torres, Terry Limpert, Peter Thies, Carlos Rivero, David Wagner, and others while at Delta Consulting.

As mentioned previously, David's thinking was most strongly influenced by Katz and Kahn (open systems), Harold Levinson (diagnosis), Ed Lawler (quality of worklife), Jay Galbraith (organization design), and Rensis Likert and David Bowers (survey feedback). David prided himself on translating behavioral science theories into understandable guidance to executives. In the process, he created the congruence model, a unique approach to organization design, novel thinking about boards, new approaches to succession planning and strategic planning, refined methods for

approaching discontinuous change, tools for post-merger integration, ways to measure executive team effectiveness, and fresh perspectives about the CEO's role. While the congruence model and feedback remained at the core, David never stopped exploring frontiers and adding his own thinking to issues of interest to senior executives. The research team at Delta and his brother Mark did a lot of the heavy lifting as the years went by, but David always filled the role of chief scientist in addition to his other duties. He provided direction for the work, guided it along, and approved the final product. While many professors have the advantage of working with bright doctoral students, David had his own shop full of PhDs, and they were among the best and brightest. Many have since joined other consulting firms or started ventures of their own.

As Ed Lawler observed when reflecting on David as a graduate student, David was preoccupied with business and not as enamored with basic research. He did not build basic research into the agenda at Delta. Most of the thinking that he conceived was based on his own work in the field with executives and his personal creativity. While he was quite comfortable with advanced statistics, he recognized that executives would not understand them and therefore did not devote attention to publishing in rigorous academic journals. Practicality and impact outweighed empirical evidence in determining what was important to say. As a field, we continue to struggle with the relevance-rigor issue in much of what we publish. Are we writing for one another just to achieve tenure or academic credibility? David, after his time at Columbia, no longer struggled with the debate. For him, it was all about what would help executives achieve success.

## Contributions to Practice

David initially wanted to create an ISR-like research consulting entity that he could run while maintaining a full-time faculty position at Columbia. Dennis Perkins remembers the initial organizing meeting for Organizational Research and Consultation (OR & C) held at the Delaware Water Gap hotel, where David outlined his vision for the firm. David recognized that his genius was in taking complex things and making them simple, which executives liked. He also felt that his own high need for control would resonate with executives. As an example, David often used the metaphor of a captain at the wheel of a sailing a ship that he was trying to steer through a storm, only to find that the wheel was not connected to the rudder. In this, he captured the deep fear that many executives have regarding their success being dependent upon others who are beyond their immediate control. David would then introduce the congruence model as a way to bring order to chaos.

In his consulting, David told executives that they were the architects of their organizations, from strategy to design, culture, talent, and work processes. He helped executives think about the changes they needed to make to align their organizations with their strategies and thereby achieve the critical outcomes by which their legacy would be measured. Over the years, David developed interview guides and surveys connected to the congruence model, making the connection between his research,

change consultation, and organizational performance stronger and stronger. As he worked with the CEOs of notable companies, beginning with Xerox and continuing with many more over the next 30 years, his reputation and that of his firm grew.

David was one of the few founders of a successful consulting firm who recognized almost immediately that his own impatient, perfectionistic, low-tolerance-for-stupidity style would need to be buffered as he worked with clients who needed more coddling than David preferred to provide. He partnered with Carl Hill and later with David Bliss, who left Xerox to join David's consulting firm after having been David's client. Carl and David Bliss were like Tontos to the Lone Ranger, according to Perkins.

As is the case with many startups, the firm almost failed before it succeeded. During a meeting with a client, the firm's accountant burst in and announced that there was not enough money in the bank to meet payroll. Soon thereafter, Carl Hill surprised David by mortgaging his home to provide the working capital the firm needed to survive. A large contract with Xerox turned the tide and David never looked back.

At some point, David recognized that he was doing work with CEOs and that it would make sense to position the firm as one that was focused exclusively on CEOs as clients. This raised the visibility of the brand, attracting clients and top talent. It also allowed Delta Consulting (the "Delta" was the Greek symbol for change) to charge premium prices for its services. Unlike McKinsey and other competitors, Delta did not use a leveraged model in which senior partners sold the work and junior partners carried out the projects. Delta hired senior partners exclusively, and the partners themselves did the work. A few projects would require teams of senior people to work together but the norm was for the work to be carried out by one or two partners, working very closely with the CEO client and sometimes the head of HR.

By the time I joined the firm in 1997, David had most things down to a science. I, along with my eight new-hire classmates that year, spent a full 6 weeks in New York learning the "Delta Way" at the firm's expense. Senior consultants took responsibility for sharing their experience with us, following a curriculum designed by David that covered the firms intellectual property, approach to consulting, the world of the CEO, various tools, technology, and the right colors and fonts to use in creating documents. While no one "flunked out," it was clear that the expectations we were to meet were very high. In return, we became members of an elite community that enjoyed challenging work, excellent pay and benefits, and four offsite events a year at five-star resorts where we spent time learning from and teaching one another.

The work covered a variety of topics. Organization design was a staple, based upon the congruence model and a detailed methodology outlined in *Competing by Design* (Nadler 1997). Succession planning, board effectiveness, change leadership, change communications, executive team effectiveness, and post-merger integration were also frequent assignments. Later, Delta purchased CDR, a firm founded by Peter Cairo, David Dotlich, and Steven Rhinesmith to get into the leadership development business.

Most of the consulting work started with in-depth interviews of the executives involved, often based on questions that David had framed around the congruence

model. These data were analyzed according to a rigorous process that was the secret to Delta consulting's success. Part of the "Delta Way" was learning how to analyze and then construct a detailed feedback report that pulled no punches when it came to telling executives exactly what work needed to be done.

When I think of David's contributions to practice, they consist of a combination of the business model that Delta was built to deliver, the intellectual property that positioned the brand on the forefront of practice, maintaining the highest standards of quality in serving clients, and employing methodologies that combined rigor with down-to-earth practicality. Yes, the topics of feedback, change, organization design, and boards are the ones for which David is known; as with his writing, it was his systems perspective that made him the great leader and practitioner he was. The pieces were important, but the way in which he combined them was the "secret sauce."

Executives appreciated the all-senior trusted advisor model and the seemingly 24/7 availability of their consultants who worked on a project-retainer model rather than daily or hourly rates. The logic was simple and appealing: the highest-level expertise at premium rates, delivered through a confidential trusted advisor or small team. In the time I was there, while the name of the firm was rarely mentioned, we saw plenty of the results of our work appear prominently in the Wall Street Journal. David was thrilled to see his picture included on the cover of Business Week among a short list of other consulting gurus. It was external validation of what we all knew to be true.

## New Insights: Disruptive Change

As David's brother Mark noted, David had a knack for seeing what was important to executives and connecting the dots. He was constantly drawing upon his early thinking and later experience to offer new thoughts. He did not stand still but rather kept exploring new topics and challenges. Part of his personal brand was remaining in tune with business developments, always ready to offer a fresh perspective and provocative insights.

There are far too many things one could learn from working with David to record here. Some of these things are carved into my memory – the congruence model, strategic organizational design, and the CEO succession process – and others have simply become part of my scholar-practitioner DNA, no longer observations of David but part of who I am. For the moment, I will focus on his work on the topic of disruptive change.

Around 1997, David became concerned with helping leaders understand that not all changes were equal. Some changes were more far reaching and complex than others. Therefore, he argued, a different approach was needed for disruptive change as compared with more limited or straightforward change. This approach called for more direct sponsorship by the CEO, the creation of change structures to guide the transition and ultimately, fundamental changes to the organization's design. Little did David know in 1997 that disruptive change would move from the exception to

the norm 20 years later. Yet even in 1999, he and Michael Tushman (Nadler and Tushman 1999) wrote about organizations of the future and the core competencies that would be needed for the twenty-first century. How on target were they with their projections?

Here are the major trends that they observed: (1) the effects of globalization, including increased competition and access to markets; (2) fully entering the information age; (3) the shift from manufacturing to knowledge work in the postindustrial economy; (4) continuous innovation and more rapid change; and (5) the fragmentation of consumer and business markets into specialized groups (mass customization). So far so good. Then, as a result of these trends, Nadler and Tushman called out six strategic imperatives:

1. Increasing strategic clock speed
2. Creating a business portfolio that contains varied business models
3. Abbreviated strategic life cycles
4. Go to market flexibility
5. Enhanced competitive innovation, including skills in innovating in strategy and organization design
6. Managing intra-enterprise cannibalism (replacing existing products with new ones)

These imperatives would require that organizations increase their strategic clock speed, adopt a variety of business designs simultaneously, focus on the right number of critical linkages to other organizations, accelerate the organizational design process, open up hybrid distribution channels, and construct conflict management processes. Although Nadler and Tushman could not fully appreciate the digital revolution that was yet to come, their precognition was not far off.

Today, the word "disruption" is included in almost every discussion of business trends or strategy. Clayton Christenson's work on *The Innovator's Dilemma* (1997) helped us understand that large, successful organizations are the least likely to disrupt their industry; rather, smaller, more nimble firms with little to lose are the ones that will push radically new products and solutions. Michael Tushman and Charles O'Reilly described the "ambidextrous" organization in their book, *Winning at Innovation* (2002), and more recently updated their thinking to address leading through disruption (O'Reilly and Tushman 2016). The number of books and articles on disruption is growing at an exponential pace. It is clear that disruption has caught our attention and will be with us as a topic of study and applied practice for some time to come.

Disruption is a topic that is keeping executives up at night and certainly would have been something that David would have addressed. In keeping with my learning from him that it makes more sense to study things that are important to leaders than ideas that are academically appealing but of little interest to CEOs, my own work on disruptive change has taken me on a learning journey. While I have always been a student of change, I think David was right about disruptive change being different. In my latest book, *Leading Continuous Change* (2015), I explore how models that have

been helpful in leading single changes have broken down under the pressure of complex, continuous change. Currently, I am learning all I can about what is happening with disruptive change in Silicon Valley as well as its impact on organizations everywhere.

So far, I have come to understand that different kinds of disruption are taking place. Like David's thinking back in 1997 that all changes are not the same, I am seeing differences in the source of disruptions and in responses to them. Disruptions that are caused by technological innovation are different than disruptions caused by new business models, new organizational configurations, generational shifts, climate change, and global competition. These changes require different responses, although each type of change is still inherently disruptive, meaning that incremental adjustments will fall short of responding to the challenges or opportunities they present. Business model disruptions require shifting resources from previously successful but soon to be extinct products and services to something new and largely untested. Technical disruptions will demand new talent or new alliances to acquire expertise that can help frame technical opportunities. Organizational design disruption will force consideration of shifting leadership patterns, power distribution, and organizational culture. Since each of these disruptions involve radically different ways of working, all of the elements in the center portion of the congruence model will need to change and then realign with one another. This degree of change is rare and often unsuccessful as leaders find it difficult to throw out what is known in favor of what is unfamiliar. The fact that the people resisting the change may not be the right people to lead through the disruption is why the CEO's personal involvement is critical. Those with power will use it to hold for as long as they can if they feel threatened. CEOs need to understand this and make the tough calls regarding how to proceed in the face of this resistance. Responding to disruptive change is inherently risky. Disruptive change evokes extremely powerful politics and emotions, inside and outside the organization. Few CEOs and their senior teams are aware of what is truly required of them to lead through disruptive change.

When several disruptive forces converge and change becomes complex and continuous, extraordinary leadership is required to lead change of the magnitude that is required. The first thing that is needed is an openness to question the status quo. Options need to be explored and learning will be required. Design thinking and continuous rather than periodic strategy-making should be adopted in the face of uncertainty.

As new alliances and partnerships are formed, the importance of work outside the formal organization takes on increasing significance. To access expertise, a "staff on demand" model leveraging external talent may begin to replace the predominant full-time employment model. In this type of organization, leadership is very different; it has certainly less command and control and more influence by appeal to a common vision.

Thus, as we encounter disruptive change, we are exploring David's interests in leadership, change, and organization design. While the nature of the challenges have changed, the insights David offered continue to influence how we think and practice.

## Legacies and Work Left Unfinished: Improving Boards

Near the end of his life, after retiring from his position at Marsh McLennan, David and his brother Mark created Nadler Advisory Services with a focus on CEOs and Boards. They were able to acquire the intellectual capital that had been created over the years at Delta Consulting from Marsh McLennan and continued to add to it. It was clear that David intended to stay on course for the remainder of his career. The wheel of the ship was firmly connected to the rudder.

Had David survived, the issues that we continue to see in the failures of boards to fulfill their oversight responsibilities would have attracted his attention. His interest in organizational design would have been peaked by the discussions that are occurring around organizations of the future, whether they be teal Laloux (2015) or holacracies (Robertson 2015), or something else. His love of technology would have drawn him into advising executives about our digital future and its implications for enterprise strategies, transformation, talent, and design. Wherever he went next, the congruence model and data feedback would have followed along. A stable core would provide the launching pad for continued exploration of the unknown.

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# Jean E. Neumann: The Consultant's Consultant, Working Through Complexity in Organizational Development and Change

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**Abstract**

Jean Neumann is senior fellow in scholarly practice at The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR), London. She works as both a practitioner and academic in the field of organizational change and development and provides professional advice and development to managers, leaders, consultants, and other organizational change practitioners. Her work is focused on integrating theory and practice to develop more realistic and sensible approaches to the organizational change. While the academy is still accustomed to split theory and practice, research, and action, Jean Neumann's contribution stresses the intimate and profound connection between them; as she demonstrates through her consultancy practice, it is not enough to try to explain things (as the traditional research methods do); the challenge is also to try to change them within a process of understanding and inquiry that involves all members of a given social system. In this sense, her (systemic) consultancy model for organizational change and development offers a learning architecture for a change process that challenges complex issues and supports participative solutions to entrenched problems enabling people to work with uncertainty.

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## Introduction

One of the most important changes in thinking organizational change in the last years has been the gradual acknowledgment of the importance of participative and bottom-up driven approaches with an emphasis on "processes."

The literature on organizational change is dominated by two conflicting approaches, the planned and emergent change approach (Burnes 1996). The planned change approach was initiated by Lewin who developed his general framework for understanding the process of organizational change at level of behavior change. Even though it was criticized, a significant number of scholars still continue to consider it a useful reference for promoting and supporting change; they tried to develop his work in an attempt to make it more practical specially looking at the role of change agent (Lippitt et al. 1958; Bullock and Batten 1985; Schein 1964, 1969).

Jean Neumann is one of those scholars and practitioners who was interested to Lewin's legacies, the cornerstone of the TIHR's tradition. She searched and wrote on the practical application of his principles for carrying out action research and, at the same time, for supporting scholarly practitioners and organizational consultants to expand the perspective from which they engage with their client system. These lewinian principles seem to echo with the emergent approach to organizational change – of which complexity theory is undoubtedly a conceptual evolution. This is the critical link which marks her approach. Jean's consultancy work interrelates the planned and emergent approaches, and doing so recomposes the debate showing how is possible to consult with such "dualities." She is aware that (a) change is a continuous and open-ended process of adaptation whose premise is the uncertainty and the complexity of the external and internal environment, (b) it is no more an hetero-directed but a self-directed process that emerges through the involvement and commitment of the various stakeholders, (c) and the consultant is an expert of the organizational processes and can help the client to develop diagnostic and intervention skills.

Her consultancy approach emphasizes participation, aims for organizational awareness and of the wider context, encourages empowerment process, and allows the experimentation of new intervention methodologies and organizational modalities. In other words, by supporting capacity building and providing "space" and "time" for reflection, Jean's approach is in its essence a learning process. Because the aim is to allow and make accessible "space for experimentation" through the involvement of all peripheries of the system (from "top-slice" to "whole system"), her "cycle of planned change" for organizational change and development can be understood as a support and "containment" process to enable the system the transition from the present to the future.

Much of Jean's seminal work is dedicated to integration: between theory and practice, organizational theory and psychodynamic, and organizational theory, system psychodynamics, and consultancy competences. A such integration echoes her specific intellectual and professional "tension" toward the development of the ability to work "across categories" that is the real challenge of the advanced organizational consultant.

This chapter will discuss her professional background looking at those influences and motivations that have shaped her theories, researchers, and practices in the field of organizational change and development, her specific contributions to the development of organizational change theory and practice, and her major intellectual legacy. One section, in particular, will be focused on the intellectual and inspirational impact of her work on the conceptualization of the organizational development and change approach, consultancy work, and organizational consultant's advanced competences.

## Influences and Motivations. "How Can Human and Social System Change?" Professional Evolution Between Epistemic Issues and Consultancy Commitment

Jean Neumann works as an organizational development and change consultant, researcher, and educator. She entered the field of organizational development and change through the discipline of adult development and educational psychology in 1976. She graduated from the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities (a federal social experiment designed to encourage adult learners into postsecondary study, based in Ohio at the time) with a bachelor's degree in educational sociology and psychology. She later went on to achieve a master's degree in adult education, psychology, and learning theory from the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, Rhode Island. This first university experience played a profound role in Jean's vocational education. As an undergraduate student within the experimental "university without walls" program (a government program), she also worked as a registrar in the university management center where she became familiar with the sociopsychological challenges of flattened hierarchies and consensual decision-making. Positively influenced by that experience, she became inclined to learn more in order to develop herself professionally. For that purpose, she attended several

residential workshops (associated with NTL Institute), the first of which was titled "Educational Design and Program Planning," which combined group processes and experiential learning. These experiences were so enlightening for her that she chose to write her undergraduate dissertation on "Facilitating self-direction in adult learners."

Thus Jean was also introduced to organizational development and change (OD&C) techniques. From her point of view, the educational design process, combined with other applied behavioral science, was a ground on which to build advanced competences in data feedback and planning, team building, problem-solving, and short-term OD&C interventions. The master's degree in adult development and education provided her a broader and deeper theoretical and practical base for OD&C. By extending and improving her knowledge and competences, Jean identified a connection between professional development and academic studies. After receiving her MA, she worked as part-time internal change agent for the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, addressing issues of motivation and cooperation within community organizations, universities, and government agencies with the purpose of implementing social policy.

In 1982 Jean Neumann started a PhD program in Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio to improve her practice competence. After nearly 5 years of extensive and broad study, she emerged with an enhanced understanding of theories and methodologies underlying OD&C. During her doctoral studies, theories of open system and organizational design expanded her awareness of strategic change. Neumann was influenced greatly by three authors: Chin and Benne and their article on strategies for changing human systems, Kolb and Frohman and their contribution on the cycle of planned change, and Argyris and his three directions for professional diagnosis.

The central question at the core of her reflection on her consulting experience is "how can human and social system change?" She found that such systems can be understood and changed only through the participation and commitment of the people involved in the process of learning and change. From here, she was thrilled at the idea of change as a reeducative process (concept already present in Lewin's ideas, but rarely acknowledged) and her preference for action research as a strategy for changing.

Lewin saw a strong connection between action research and reeducation. He considered action, research, and training a triangle solidly unified and the participation as a way through which people can learn to plan and evaluate strategic action (Peters and Robinson 1984). Although Lewin has not explicitly talked about action research in terms of reeducation, in the essay "Forces behind food habits and methods of change" (1943), it is quite evident that his action research, whose goal was exploring and supporting ways through which people change their eating habits, has been a reeducation process itself: the result of this experiment led Lewin to state that people change when they develop a need for change (unfreezing), when they try to move toward the new values and behaviors (moving), and when they stabilize and solidify that new behaviors as the norm (refreezing). As Coghlan and Jacobs (2005) state, the Lewin's work on reeducation has received little attention even if "(...)

much of what he understood to be central to the complex process of reeducation is critical to the process of change and underlies the philosophical principles and practice of action research (p. 444)." Going back to this paper, they explore the ten general observations about the process of reeducation in order to demonstrate the profound transformational meaning of the action research process that Lewin had in mind.

In her approach to OC&D, Jean Neumann refers to Chin and Benne's chapter "General Strategies of Effecting Changes in Human Systems" (1969), in "The Planning of Change" (Bennis et al. 1985) which is for her one of the best contributions that helps organizational consultants conceptualize both the philosophical assumptions and the actual practices of the change process. Their work systematizes several approaches to organizational change into a theoretical and conceptual framework which helps to identify three main strategies for changing (Fig. 1).

While the empirical-rational strategy is prescriptive and focused on rational solutions to problems and the power-coercive strategy seeks to accumulate and maintain political and economic power behind the change objectives, the normative-reeducative strategy is diagnostic, so based on collaborative learning solutions that, in facilitating the process of change, result in (Chine and Benne 1969, p. 32):

- A dialogical relationship between client and consultant.
- The consultant's awareness that the client's problem cannot be defined a priori and unilaterally or solved through a technical intervention; it requires a psychosocial approach that facilitates cognitive and perceptive change.
- The necessary collaboration between client and consultant in defining and solving the client's problem as a basis for diagnosis and intervention.

The assertion of Chin and Benne that OD&C can be understood as a "normative-reeducative strategy" for changing human systems was for Jean meaningful for its
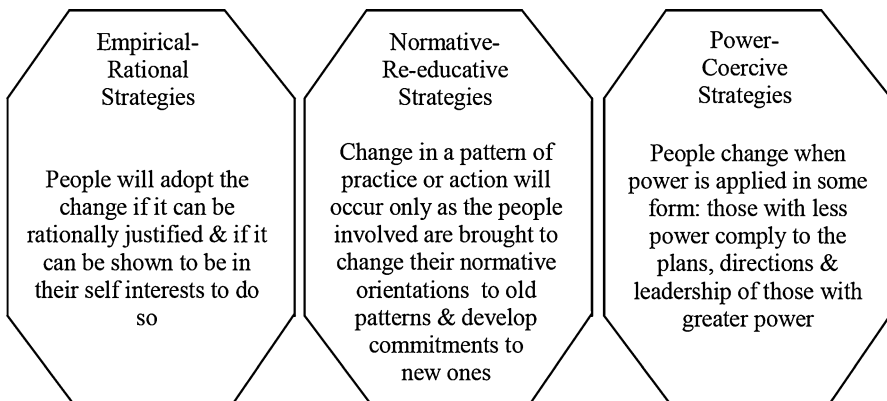


**Fig. 1** Three strategies for change (Chin and Benne 1969, in Neumann 2013c)

emphasis on experience-based learning as an ingredient of enduring changes in human systems. Through this reading she felt that "learning for progress" (Neumann 2016) could be a methodology in OD&C practices. Some years later, her "Advanced Organizational Consultancy" program at the Tavistock Institute (which was a practice-based program) became the vehicle through which the principle "learning together for progress" (Ibid., p. 111) was enacted within practical scholarship for organizational consulting.

Jean Neumann's initial OD&C training was focused on the concepts of "contracting," "intervention," and "evaluation" as main phases of a "cycle of planned change" (the beginning, the middle, and the ending of the intervention) without any degree of awareness about other phases of the cycle as "scouting," "entry," and "mutual negotiation of intervention." In the same way, she did not ground her consultancy practice on a well-established diagnosis technique; the short duration of her initial consultancy work (one entire cycle of organizational development) required a small diagnosis aimed to a general understanding on how to proceed in the process of OD&C.

As the consultancy process became more complex with project work that required two or three rounds of the OD cycle, she felt that her OD&C techniques needed to be revisited and reinforced. She read a paper written by Kolb and Frohman on "An Organization Development Approach to Consulting" (1970) in the Sloan Management Review which still represents one the most accredited models in the field of organizational development.

Their model is focused on two important and interrelated issues: the relationship between client and consultant and the nature of the consultancy work through seven stages (scouting, entry, diagnosis, planning, action, evaluation, termination).

This OD&C approach and methodology was enlightening for Jean as it offered her a progressive approach to interacting with an organizational client and enabled a virtuous cycle where the professional application of theory was connected to practice. She found the "cycle of planned change" particularly useful in conceptualizing the first two stages (scouting and entry), and some aspects of the third (diagnosis), as constitutive of the early stages of crossing boundaries and building relationship with a client system (Neumann 1994). It must be said that for Kolb and Frohman in the phase "entry" "contracting" is implied. They maintain: "Once the entry point has been selected, the consultant and the client system, through the entry representative, begin to negotiate a contract. In its use here, the word "contract" implies more than a legal document agreed upon at the outset of the project" (1970, p. 55). In Neumann's terms, "crossing boundaries" means stepping across the geographical and social boundaries that constitute the organization and "building a working relationship" with the client that requires a negotiation about a formal agreement to work together and an informal one aimed to negotiate the role of both consultant and client to explore meanings and concepts that make sense of the situation (Neumann 1997). Having the entire cycle in mind, she learned to handle scouting, entry, and contracting in a way that diagnosis is the outcome, followed by a "mutual negotiation of intervention" which is an integral part of the intervention and as such needs to be faced at each round of OD&C (Neumann 2016).

Going back to the phase of diagnosis, during her OD&C training, Jean Neumann learned some techniques of data gathering drawing on the educational design process from both adult learning theory and practitioner books on data feedback and planning as alternative approaches for diagnosis. In this time span, she became more sensitive to the ethical dimension of data feedback and the reporting process. Reading Argyris on practical and ethical standards for applying theory was a further inspiration. She accepted Argyris' three conditions for professional diagnosis (1970) which form an integral part of any intervention activity. Making change in human system with integrity for Jean means (Argyris 1970, pp. 15–20; Neumann 2013c):

- *Generating valid and useful information*. Valid information describes factors and their interrelationship that create the problem for the client system. It is based on a diagnosis that represents the total client system and not the point of view of any subsystem and it includes variables that can be influenced by clients for effective change to follow.
- *Guaranteeing free and informed choice.* To have free choice, the client has to clarify a cognitive map of what he or she wishes to do. Free and informed choice implies voluntary and proactive decision-making by the client through a process of selection of alternative actions. In such a way, decision-making is placed in the client system which is responsible for any agreed upon choices of action.
- *Supporting internal commitment to the choice made*. The client's internal commitment to the choice and action (of change) has to be enduring and strong to be internalized by each member so that they feel the responsibility of the choice and its implications.

Two additional essential sources of knowledge and skills in Neumann's professional evolution were the Tavistock Group Relation Conference and the National Training Laboratory (NTL) program for OD&C specialists. Group Relation was a new and an unusual experience in which she felt to be in a "foreign land" (Neumann 2016, p. 117) where nothing seemed to be familiar and nothing made sense for her in the "here and now." What she experienced in the Group Relation event was how psychodynamics is applied to groups and organizations and concepts such as power, authority, leadership, boundaries, social differences, compliance, and resistances. Although at the beginning she was very confused about the methods used, she started to make sense of boundaries and authority relations and developed an intellectual and practical capability to use this approach, integrating it with socio-technical system theory in her consultancy work. In particular, she was able to identify the points where these two Tavistock Institute literature traditions can be used together in the wider OD&C process – the diagnosis, the design, and the delivery of cross-boundary interventions (Ibid., p. 118).

Focusing on power and influence during the change process and combining theoretical inputs with experiential learning, the NTL program was enlightening and reinforced Jean's notion of experiential learning. It gave her useful insights for the comprehension of the interconnections between different levels of analysis and for facing issues that may have an influence on the individual's capacity to

participate effectively in the process of change (Ibid., p. 116). In London, Jean Neumann attended the Leicester Conference on authority relations and organizational behavior, where she expanded her awareness on the connection between psychological phenomena and political dynamics and sensed the power and influence of organizational culture during each stage of the change process (Ibid., p. 116).

As participant and staff member for the Group Relation Conference, she became even more aware of the literature and practices of applied psychodynamics. Jean began to work with categories and processes of system psychodynamics in her OD&C practice combining them with the socio-technical system theory. Thinking specifically at the issues characteristic of the initial stages of crossing organizational boundaries and building a working relationship, she states "there is no theory better than psychoanalysis applied to groups and organizations to help illuminate messy, stuck relationship. And, finally, organizational theory and sociology which explain resistance to organizational change strike me as a necessary piece to this puzzle" (Neumann 1994, p. 15). In her opinion, psychodynamic theory applied to social systems helps to understand "difficulties" and "confrontations" produced by unconscious reasons that explain messy dynamics between consultant and client (Ibid., p. 20).

The tension toward the integration between organizational theory and system psychodynamics even in practice pushed Jean Neumann to conceptualize a practical conceptual framework. With the "Advanced Organisational Consultation" (AOC) program within the Tavistock Institute, her challenge was to bring the Tavistock Institute of Human Relation School of thought together with the NTL Institute's practice theory and other contemporary organizational studies (Fig. 2).

The discussion of her background suggests how Jean professional development has been characterized by increasing degrees of theoretical and methodological complexity and highlights three ethical and professional "tensions" as invariable constants of her work: an authentic interest for integrating action research and human
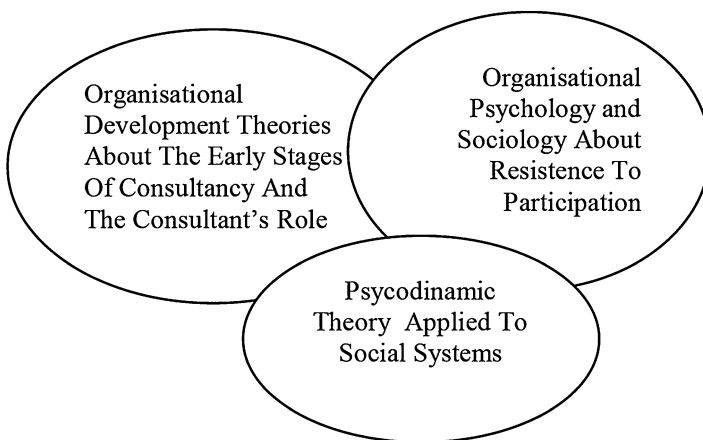


**Fig. 2** Accumulated knowledge of logical relevance to difficult beginnings (Neumann 1994, p. 16)

system change, a preoccupation with the integration between theory and practice for more realistic and consistent approaches to organizational development and change, and a continuous commitment in a process of learning where challenging practice, reflecting and writing on the own professional experience, and going back and forth between theory and practice are an essential attitude to became an "advanced" consultant.

In the next session, Jean's key contributions will be presented and discussed in order to understand the essence of her work which consists in innovative and useful theoretical advancements in the field of organizational development and change and innovative and practical methodological approaches for the consultancy work.

## Key Contributions. Integrating Conceptual and Practice Domain

Jean Neumann has made some very important practical and theoretical contributions to organizational change and development. Four interconnected aspects of her research and development can be specifically useful to organizational consultants and change managers:

1. Participation as a technique in order to reduce resistance to organizational change
2. The (reinterpreted) employment of the "Cycle for Planned Change" as a container to work with action research
3. The relevance of integrating psychodynamics and organizational theory in the early stages of the consultancy work
4. Education of the organizational consultant as a scholarly practitioner

## Why People Do Not Participate in Organizational Change

Participation has always played an important role in Neumann's work, both as a subject of inquiry and a method of working. She defines participation as a "process-of-choice for overcoming resistance to change" and a "goal of the change effort in itself" (Neumann 1989, p. 182).

Although participation is considered essential for the development of human systems, and the willingness to participate is taken for granted, Jean notices that very often people chose not to participate in the processes of change. Her contribution is focused on nonparticipation, which has preeminently been explained in terms of personality study. Researches on organizational change and employee participation have assumed that the act of nonparticipation stems from some lack in the individual, denying the complexity of the participative behavior.

Influenced by Kurt Lewin's formula, which states that behavior is the result of the dynamic interaction between personality and environment, Jean challenges the historical emphasis on personality and shifts her focus to the working environment in order to understand why people choose not to participate in decision-making processes. She identifies three categories of explanations that are structural,

relational, and social explanations. Structural explanations comprise organizational design, work design, and human resources management. These factors refer to "predetermined systems which shape human behavior by requiring specific socio-technical boundaries, flows of information, connections between subsystems, sanctions for activities, and strategies for motivation" (Neumann 1994, p. 24). From this point of view, Jean demonstrated that people do not participate in the process of change when (Neumann 1989, pp. 185–190):

- *Real decisions are made outside participative fora.* Most participative scheme runs parallel to the decision-making process of the organization. In these parallel processes, significant choices about strategy, organizing mode, and individuals are made. They represent the solution for managers or organizational leaders to deal with controversial issues via less formal political channels, bringing decisions to channels of formal participation simply for ratification (Ibid., p. 186).
- *The task does not require participation.* It can be said that when an invitation to participate appears to be legitimate or relevant for the nature of the individual's task, the individual perceives that participation as more effective. However, highly repetitive tasks tend to discourage people to be involved in decision-making process; they know that due to the nature of their task, their participation is not relevant. In case like this, an invitation to influence could meet disinterest (Ibid., p. 188).
- *Participation is not reinforced through mechanisms of human resources management conveying the fundamental norms of organization*, i.e., required behavior.

Relational explanations for nonparticipation include the management of participation, the dynamics of hierarchy, and the individual's stance toward organization. These factors refer to "relationship between individuals and groups which pose contradictions and dilemmas by introducing emotionally laden issues" (Neumann 1994, p. 24). From this point of view, people are less willing to participate when (Neumann 1989, pp. 191–196):

- *Participation is managed in a ways that discourage participative competences.* A participative scheme is defined by (a) properties (degree of formality, degree of directness, access to participation, content of decisions, and social range of participators), (b) organization's "participation potential" (values, assumptions, and goals of those who implement the participative scheme), and (c) dilemmas in managing participative scheme (dilemmas about beginning, procedures and rules, choice of issues, team work, connections between participative fora and the rest of organization). These factors shape the structure of the participative decision-making, and the ways through which that structure will be managed will encourage or discourage to participate (Ibid., pp. 191–192).
- *Rank and status are more important than competence at task and role.* Here the starting point is hierarchy as a dysfunctional approach to organizing authority and participative decision-making as a corrective to its (negative) dynamics – i.e., competition and conflict among organizational members. Successful

implementation of participative decision-making implies changes of hierarchy, but feelings and conflicts generated by hierarchy may block its successful implementation. Participation and hierarchy have to do with issues of authority in organization, but they differ in the way they conceive it; the former grounds the authority on competence, the latter defines authority as based on position and sees the competence as a threat for the organization. The hierarchical assumptions are so profoundly embedded in organizational life that any little progress toward participation provokes resistance. In a such situation where rank and status matter more than competences, it is more likely that individuals tend to disregard participation unless they are sure they can improve their rank and status through participation (Ibid., pp. 192–194).

- *Participation conflicts with nonwork role and need.*

Social explanations consist in primary and secondary socialization, ideology of work, and the social history of politics. These factors "exist prior to and outside the boundaries of a specific enterprise. They impact on organizational life through a steady, sometimes imperceptible influence on the individuals who make up the workforce. This cluster of explanation captures how individuals make sense of the structure and relationship in an organization" (Neumann 1994, p. 24). According to Jean, people might resist participation when (Neumann 1989, pp. 196–201):

- *They have been socialized successfully to avoid behavior which threaten hierarchical authority.* The secondary socialization to which young members are subjected tends to constrain the expression of those personal capacities that represent a threat to hierarchical authority. This means that such process makes them more passive and dependent, and in doing so, it negatively affects the willingness to participate unless the individual was socialized for a level of stratification which usually involves making decision. The larger the number of people who have learned to operate successfully as subordinate, the bigger the resocialization task required to convince them to participate (Ibid., p. 197–198).
- *Participation challenges values and beliefs.* Ideology of work is made of beliefs and assumptions about organizing work. Sometimes organizational members hold conscious attitude and beliefs about work: how work should be organized, how members should behave, or what kind of reward should be given for the good work. Generally speaking, some profound aspects of ideology are not always conscious and expressed. As an integral part of the own culture and the culture of reference group, they are a way of life and have to do with "what is real and what ought to be." In this sense, every choice an individual makes has to be congruent with his belief system. The ideology of work is not different. Members very often experience participative schemes as serving managerial ideology or as challenging their own ideology of work. By using a participative scheme, members might experience a mismatch with their socialized ideology, and instead of seeing it as something of positive for them, they could see it as a manifestation of a managerial ideology to which they have to adapt. Although participative decision-making requires individual autonomy, certain types of ideology (such
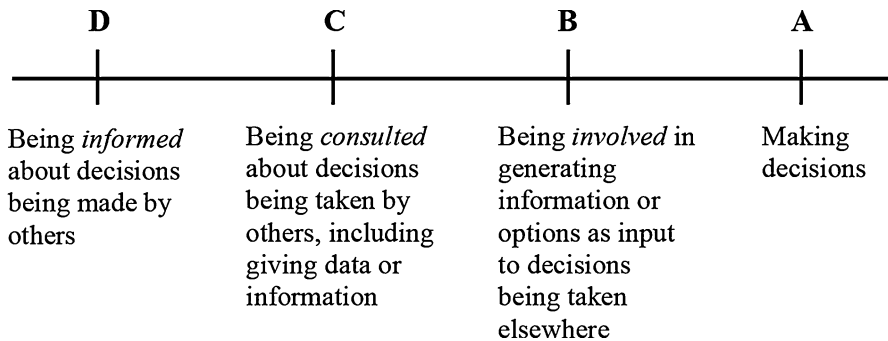
Fig. 3  A way to think about involvement and participation (Neumann 2000, p. 318)

as the dynamics of hierarchy) tend to support and reinforce not-autonomous stances. The decision to use participative scheme is usually made by top managers, so any kind of stance, not-autonomous or semiautonomous, is in its essence hierarchical. Hierarchy is a form of ideology and as such carries beliefs and assumptions perceived and experienced as natural, "the way things are." In this sense, ideology could increase or decrease willingness to participate (Ibid., p.198–199).

• *Adversarial politics, both in the past and present, have resulted in and continue to support protection of self and others.*

Later, Jean Neumann (2000) attributed two specific features to participation. Participation must be *genuine*: this means that managers, employees, or external stakeholders will be involved in the decision-making depending on the degree with which their participation will really produce changes (Ibid., p. 317).

The concept can be graphically summarized as follows (Fig. 3):

The range starts with a lower involvement (D), which is mere information about the decisions generally made by a person or a group at the higher level of the hierarchy. Slightly more managers and employees can be consulted about decisions taken by others (C) through the expression of some reactions to the proposal or mechanism for giving data or information. Active involvement (B) aims to generate information or make some proposals which will be used as input for the decision to be taken elsewhere. At the extreme of the continuum is the decision taken by people involved (A): their decision could be ratified at some other organizational level, but they have the power to decide.

According to Neumann, involvement is genuine if the level of participation of people corresponds to the real authority managers and staff have based on their hierarchical position. This is a critical point, since – as Neumann has demonstrated – one of the main reasons for which people do not participate in the process of change, despite having been given the possibility to, is that they perceive their participation will not be real and their opinion will not be taken into account.
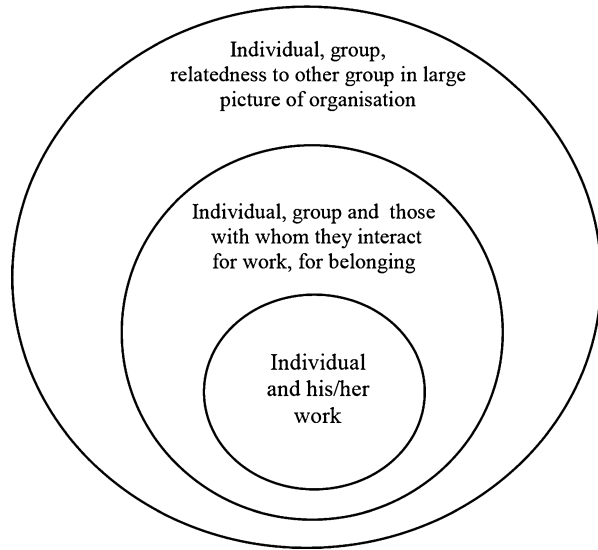
The second feature of participation is *appropriateness*. It refers to the degree of participation that makes sense according to the "content" of the decision and its effective pertinence for individuals and groups who are asked to participate (Ibid., p. 318). Jean Neumann considers that appropriateness develops on three levels, starting from individuals and their tasks up to the group and its issues (Fig. 4).

The definition of the issues and the identification of the potential solutions have an impact on individuals, and their tasks will probably be "areas" where individuals would like to have a say, so that such decisions are appropriate to specific areas of involvement. As a next step, working very close with other people, individuals develop a sense of concern for the group with which they work. Then, any change in the structure of the organization or in the models of interactions among individuals requires a significant degree of participation and involvement. As a final step, individuals desire appropriate participation when their position within the organization is affected by a specific decision. According to Jean, "position" does not just referred to occupational identities or status levels, but it can also include the "relatedness" (Miller 1990 – in Neumann 2000, p. 318) of groups to each other. In her opinion, some change decisions have an impact on relatedness, defined as "fantasies and projections that groups have about each other in a complex social system – those perceptions, feelings and opinions that are not necessarily based on face-to-face interaction but have to do with symbols and stories" (Ibid.). Because some issues connected to structural aspects of the organization can have implications for the relatedness affecting the individuals' morale, appropriate participation in a wider organizational perspective needs to be considered.

## The Cycle of Planned Change in Organizational Development

Jean Neumann is one of the few authors who has expanded and deepened Kolb and Frohman's formulation (1970) of the seven basic stages of the "cycle of planned change." From her perspective "the cycle of planned change in organizational development" is the "container" where action research is implemented (Neumann 1997). Her model has a double goal, as Kurt Lewin stated: producing changes and developing knowledge within a reference context. In approaching action research, she has been influenced both by Lewin's assumptions, of which she evokes a reappraisal, and by the lessons of scholars and organizational consultants, such as Argyris, on the ethical-professional dimension and the operating modalities that facilitate and support changes in human systems.

As for the first point, Jean Neumann underlines that in the consulting practice, the principle-value of integrity drives the behavior of the consultant. In this case, integrity refers to professional reliability, fairness, and objectivity. All of these elements contribute to support the processes that the consultant should facilitate. In practical terms, she considers the three operational indications mentioned by Argyris – valid and useful information, free choice, and internal commitment – as indispensable tools for consultants aiming to give a professionally accurate diagnosis.

By making reference to Kolb and Frohman's model, Jean Neumann conceptualized a first model of planned change in organizational development (1997) made of six stages (scouting, entry and contracting, diagnosis, planning and negotiating interventions, taking action, evaluation), each of which has a set of activities that need to be undertaken by the client and consultant (Fig. 5).

The figure shows the cycle readapted from Kolb and Frohman's model adding two possible options: the termination of the consultancy relationship or the start of another iteration of the consultancy process as a result of the evaluation phase (Ibid., p. 10).

More recently, through a reflection on her consultancy experience, she has gone into detail of her model in order to emphasize the principle of (internal and external stakeholders) participation and involvement (Neumann 2013c). In this deepening and expanding, Jean brings both nonlinear STS and project-based working to bear on the OD&C cycle (Fig. 6).

This model outlines the interactive and dynamic stages through which both consultant and clients experience their shared research and action processes. Such a cycle is both a *process* and a *product* of learning for both of them. The learning process stemming from the model generates working hypotheses that are always temporary and negotiable. Jean believes that the problem-setting and the framing of the work hypotheses are generated and shared within some "points of mutual adjustment" (the stars depicted in the cycle). There are points where consultant and client come together to make sense of the difficulties and the organizational situation. They can be metaphorically understood as "time" and "space" of "meaningful conversations" (Neumann 2013c) that emerge as a result of a continuous and shared learning process.
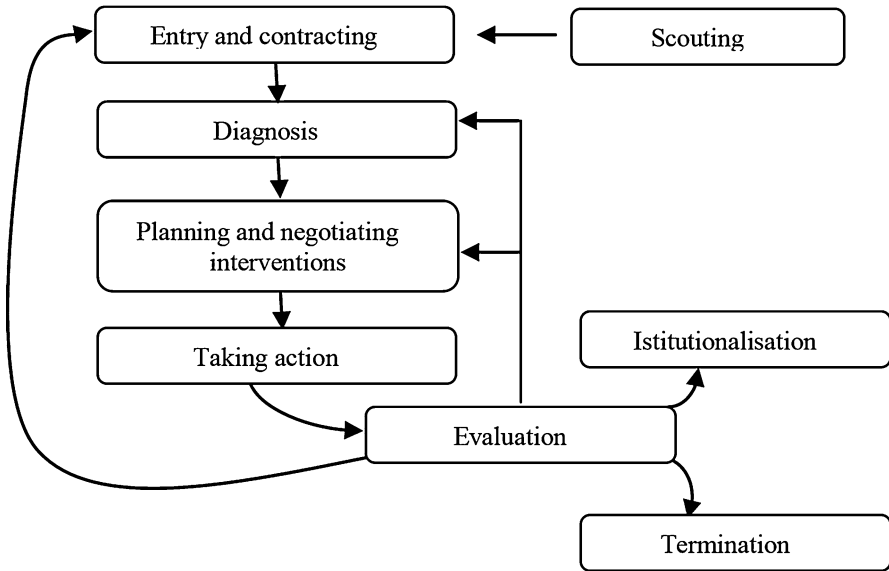
**Fig. 5** The cycle of planned change in organizational development (Kolb and Frohman 1970) Adapted by Neumann 1997, p. 10
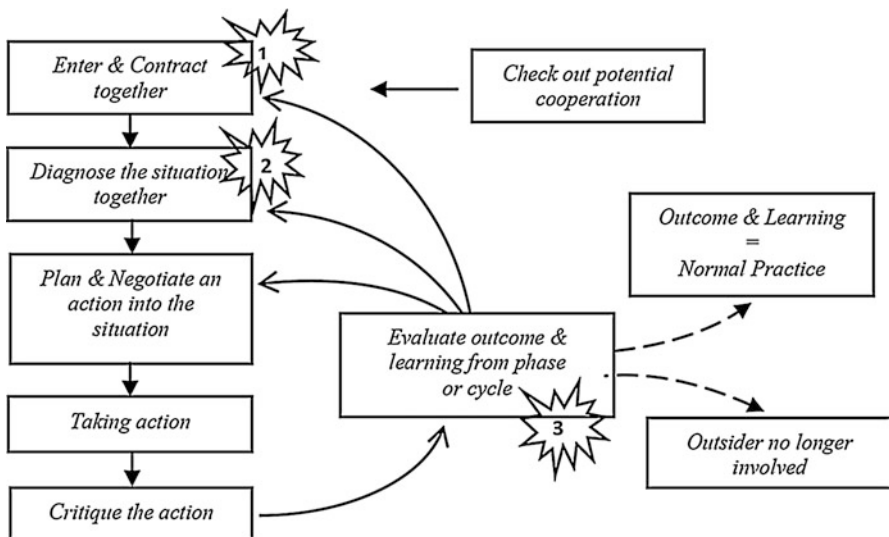


**Fig. 6** A cycle of insiders and outsiders cooperating to plan and make changes with necessary points of mutual adjustment (Neumann 2013c)

In her approach, Jean bases the cycle of planned change on four of Kurt Lewin's principles/rules, which she has revised in order to make them practical and relevant for organizational consultants, who are facilitating and supporting the change processes (Neumann 2011a, b, 2012, 2013a).

*The dynamic approach rule.* Lewin's dynamic approach rule states that the "elements of any situation should be regarded as parts of a system" (Neumann 2011a). It implies a global approach and refers to the necessity of discovering multiple forces at work in each situation (Ibid.). According to Jean, when leading an organizational intervention, it is important to assume that all parts of the system as interrelated and forming a complex whole. For the organizational consultant, the challenge is understanding how these parts are connected with each other and how the nature of such interrelations affect the modalities through which a system reacts to changes.

*The field theory rule.* Lewin's field theory rule states that "analysis starts with the situation as a whole" (Neumann 2011b). It assumes that a person and his or her environment are closely related – "*one* constellation of interdependent factors" (Lewin 1946 – in Neumann 2011b). Drawing on Lewin, Jean Neumann clarifies that the concept of "field" includes all aspects of individuals in relationship with their surroundings and conditions that influence the behaviors and developments of concern at a particular time (Ibid.). In terms of an organizational intervention, Jean Neumann states that a representation of the field and of any forces at work in it is a worthy instrument of analysis for consultants, since such forces are able to facilitate or to slow down the process toward the goals of learning and changing.

*The contemporaneity rule.* Lewin asserted that "only conditions in the present can explain experience and behavior in the present" (Gold 1992 – in Neumann 2012). During an organizational change, this rule helps to understand the concrete elements within the time and field that may be influencing people in their environment (Ibid.) According to Neumann, the consultant should take into account the elements of the current situation (stay focused on the "here and now") that motivate people and their environment that make small steps of change possible.

*The constructive method rule.* According to this rule, the understanding of an organizational situation is possible by "making a proper translation from phenomena to concepts" through "the process of conceptualization" (Lewin 1997 – in Neumann 2013a). Jean asserts that the constructive method encourages the creation of the concepts necessary to explain a situation. The explanation and the conceptualization in itself provide a representation and a rich description of the total situation as it is experienced by the people involved (Ibid.). Conceptualization is the tool that allows consultants to formulate working hypotheses.

Jean Neumann has made a practical point and a diagnostic tip for each rule that can be useful for organizational consultants who are in the developmental steps of the change cycle (Neumann 2013b) (Table 1).

In particular, the first and the second rule, in conveying the concepts of "wholeness" and "interaction," introduce a precise working approach for the consultant, which Jean Neumann defines several times as "inclusive" (Neumann 2013b).

**Table 1** Four principles for carrying out action research from Kurt Lewin (Neumann 2013b)

|  | Dynamic approach rule | Field theory rule | Contemporaneity rule | Constructive method rule |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lewin | *"All elements of any situation should be regarded as parts of the system"* | *"Analysis starts with the situation as a whole"* | *"Only conditions in the present can explain experience & behavior in the present"* | *"Create concepts however intangible, that seem necessary for explanation"* |
| Practice pointer | Describe the broad picture of group, inter-group, organizational and inter-organizational relationship that relate to issue under consideration | Keep in mind multiple causal conditions and interaction effects among causal elements | Identify what, within the present situation, contributes to behaviors and attitude held by clients; expressing empathy and understanding | Aim for useful conceptualization of the problem or challenge facing the client system |
| Diagnosis tip | Ask: *"What motivates this person or group to behave like this? From where is energy coming?"* | Ask: *"From whom or where does someone get a concern or help? Then what happens? To whom or where do they pass their work on next?"* | Ask:(in the face of historical stories) *"How does that show itself now and in what ways?"* | Ask: *"How are the environment and the people in this situation inseparably bound together?"* |

For her, action research is a methodology that ultimately depends on individuals' participation and involvement. These elements underline the very democratic and empowering nature of this methodology, but also the specific feature of being able to better face the resistance to change that naturally emerges from the process.

Jean is the promoter of a systemic idea of change, where participation and involvement are considered as leading and unavoidable principles-values. The following is Jean's graphical representation of the process (Fig. 7):

The concentric circles indicate *who* should be involved in *which activities* in the starting, progression, and extension phases. The assumption is that the people involved in a specific circle should indicate, in turn, the people who should be gradually involved in a change. At any circle/level it is possible to proceed as follows:

- *Upward* (to a hierarchical and geographical level) and *outward* (horizontally toward departments or internal organizations or also toward powerful external stakeholders);
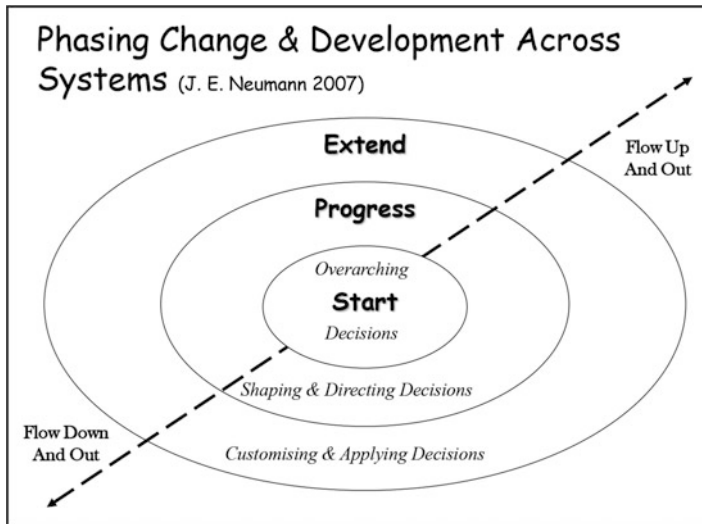
**Fig. 7** The phasing model (Neumann and Sama 2009)

- *Downward* (toward usually excluded individuals) and *outward* (toward individuals whom the system refers to, such as clients, groups, and communities)

The practical implication of this "phasing model" is undoubted. It allows to "populate the space" (Neumann 2013c) identifying individual, groups, or organizations who ask to be heard and involved and that are usually excluded. The overall aim is to locate the stakeholders within each phase of the change process proceeding through multiple cycles where each interaction gets information from the previous one.

### Conceptualizing Multiple Cycles

The cycle of planned change (in both versions – Figs. 4 and 5) describes an entire cycle of organizational development from the first contact with the client system to the end of the intervention. Jean asserts that, specially for short-term interventions, one single cycle is a rapid movement through the stages (Neumann 1997). She highlights a specific element in the cycle of change for organizational development – multiple and repeating cycles, one after the other, in a developmental and logical approach, where the end of each phase leads to knowledge and the new information instructs the next cycle. For this reason, consultants, besides supporting the relationships and decisions with the client at any phase of the process, must be able to conceptualize and develop multiple cycles through which change develops. Since the prerequisite is that the knowledge necessary to identify the problem and trigger changes is embedded in the organizational context and practice, conceptualizing, negotiating, and developing multiple cycles encourage "situated and outcropping" (Neumann 2013c) learning processes that support people in the discovery of original solutions to their organizational problem and foster the development of a "learning to learn" ability.
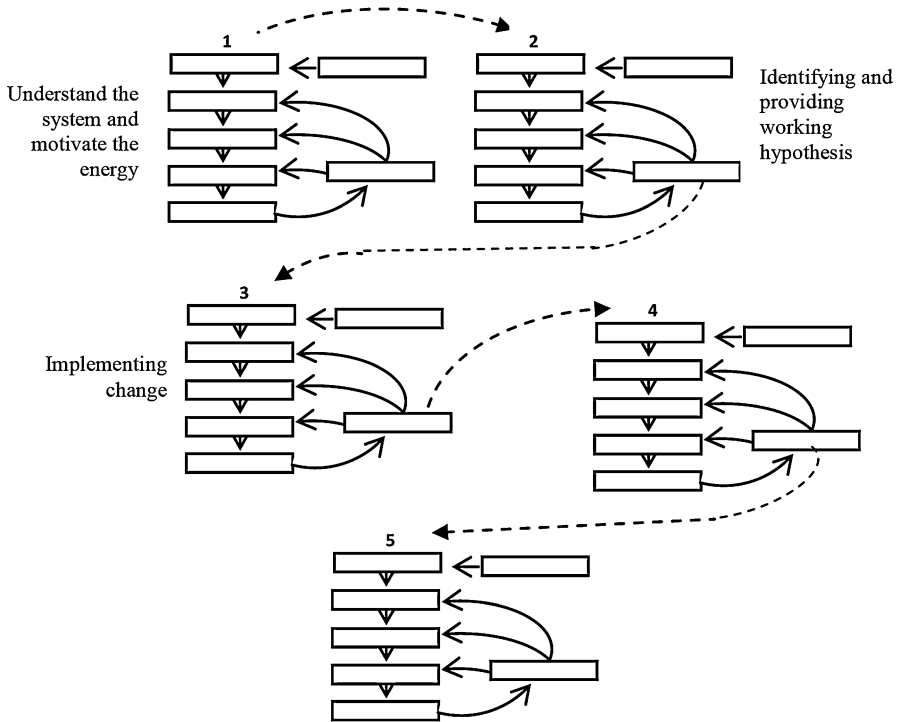
**Fig. 8** Multiple iterations of action research (Neumann 2013c)

If the organizational change is seen within an incremental development perspective, few actions (of change) can be concluded within a single cycle. Jean Neumann asserts that it is necessary to conceptualize at least three cycles as part of the initial entry and contracting process (Ibid., p. 18). The first may generate significant learning for consultants since it allows them to understand how the system works (through what modalities and organizational processes) and to monitor the energy necessary to motivate people and the organization to change. The second may lead to the identification of some working hypotheses. Finally, the third cycle starts to implement (small) changes.

Therefore, after the first cycle, consultants should make sure that they have set the basis for the subsequent cycles of organizational development (Fig. 8).

## The Relevance of Integrating Psychodynamics and Organizational Theory in the Early Stages of the Consultancy Work

Jean Neumann has paid much attention to the issue of integration between psychodynamics and organizational theory in relation to the "difficult beginnings" of a new consultancy relationship. Building a consultancy relationship requires a process of

negotiation about the roles, phases, and activities of the change process. These negotiations, which can be a source of anxiety for both the consultant and client, certainly concern roles and responsibilities, but they also deal with crucial issues that have to do with the nature of authority and leadership in organizational change (Neumann 1994).

Scouting, entry, and contracting (with some elements of the diagnosis) constitute the initial stages of the consultancy process which often lead to difficulties and confrontations. Scouting is the phase in which the consultant decides whether to proceed with entry and contracting. To make this decision, the consultant needs to hear the presenting problem, identify the type of consultation requested, and assess the source of authorization of the client representative. If the decision is positive for both, an agreement needs to be reached in the next phase. The aim of entry and contracting is to negotiate a formal agreement to work together and an informal psychological contract of mutual needs and expectations (Neumann 1997).

As initial steps of crossing boundaries and building a working relationship, scouting, entry, and contracting are tricky phases in terms of expectations, roles, and responsibilities. Sometimes, despite formal and informal agreements that are reached, a renegotiation that takes the form of a confrontation may be necessary. Literature on organizational development consultancy addresses the client's expectation and identifies ways with which consultants and managers work together (Steele 1975; Block 1981 – in Neumann 1994). The attention and the amount of writing on such topics suggest that these early stages of the consultancy process provide the foundation on which these "difficult beginnings" may arise.

For Jean Neumann, the application of psychodynamic to the social system becomes the keystone to understand and identify the unconscious dynamics between consultant and client and try to work through them to advance the change. The concepts she finds relevant include task anxiety, individual and group defenses, transference, and countertransference (Neumann 1994).

One of the most important implications of the application of psychodynamic theory to the study of groups and organizations is the shift of attention from the individual to the group or organization as a whole. Lewin stated that the group to which the individual belongs is the ground on which his perceptions, ideas, and actions arise and develop. From such perspective, the individual acts not as an individual but as a member of the group. As Jean asserts, the group (and the group's behavior) has a pivotal role in shaping the individual's behavior because it is an important element in the working "life space" of the person (Ibid., p. 20). Since individuals search for a connection between their inner world and the organization to which they belong (Menzies Lyth 1989 – in Neumann 1994), Jean maintains that the result is an organization made of people with a strong tendency to join with others to create some socially structured defenses against shared feelings of threat (Ibid., p.20).

As Isabel Menzies Lyth demonstrated (1960; 1989), a group or an organization creates and enacts defense mechanisms when it is experiencing anxiety, fear, or uncertainty; they try to protect themselves by eliminating those situations, tasks, activities, and relationships that provoke, or evoke, anxiety. Following this seminal work, Neumann focuses her attention on the anxiety arising from the nature of the

work. "Task anxiety can be understood as those policies, routines, structures and rituals which allow members to avoid fears, anxiety, doubt, guilt and uncertainty" (Neumann 1994, p. 21). It concerns the implementation of all those activities necessary for the primary task of the organization. If the group defends itself against this anxiety in a way that threatens its psychological survival, then its primary task is neglected.

Bion's definition of "basic assumption group" offers a useful interpretation to understand the socially created defenses between a group representing the client system and a consultant. The basic assumptions constitute "mental activities that have in common the attribute of powerful emotional drive" (Bion 1961 – in Neumann 1994, p. 21). Members of a group influenced by basic assumptions assume a common attitude toward the authority figure or consultant, "acting 'as if' such and such were the case" (Ibid., p. 22). The basic assumption group shares a joint fantasy of which the consultant needs to be aware.

An additional complex process at the beginning of the consultancy work is the interpersonal process of transference and countertransference that blocks and confuses the working relationship between client and consultant. As Jean points out, it is not unusual that the client, through a psychological unconscious process, transfers from the past to the present something of an unresolved experience (Ibid. p. 22). He or she can perceive and respond to the consultant "as if" the consultant were an important figure form the past – "an unconscious intrapsychic fantasy that distorts an individual's perceptions and interactions" (Kets de Vries and Miller 1984 – in Neumann 1994). The challenge for the consultant is not only to recognize this dynamic and the power of the transference but also to be aware of the countertransference, which is the same process from the consultant toward the client in reaction to the client projections (Ibid., p. 23).

Even individual defenses can come into play. According to Neumann, they are patterns of psychological behavior which are not necessarily caused, or evoked, by the presence of the consultant (Ibid., p. 23). Some of them, such as denial and reaction formation, are critical in the difficulties and confrontations of the early stages and appear in the members in relation to task anxiety.

If psychodynamic theory makes understandable what is happening "beneath the surface" of individuals, groups, and organizations, organizational theory addresses some issues that are significant for consultancy work. In order to understand confrontations and difficulties, Jean refers to some specific organizational variables on which she researched and wrote. She stated "My work focuses on those organizational changes which result in increased individual autonomy, greater group responsibility, and more effective system-wide influence" (Neumann 1994, p. 24); these three are areas of great interest in her research on (non)participation in organizational change, which identified three categories of explanations (structural, relational, and social – see above) for why people might resist participation in organizational change (Neumann 1989). It must be said that within the wider organizational theory, Jean's approach to consultancy competence is rooted in socio-technical system theory and socio-ecological perspectives of TIHR's tradition. For the purpose to understand potential conflicts and difficulties in the early stages of

**Table 2** Grid for analysis of "difficult beginnings" (Neumann 1994, p. 26)

| | Socio-psychological aspects of early stages | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Issues to be negotiated during the early stages which might be resolved | | Mismatch between consultants' and clients' expectations of consulting relationship | Organizational issues relevant to consultancy brief | Psychodynamics |
| | Scouting<br><br>Entry and contracting<br><br>Initial phase of diagnosis and working with findings | Expert<br>Pair of hands<br>Collaboration<br>Neutral observer<br>Mutual engagement | Structure:<br>  Organizational design<br>  Work design<br>  Human resources<br>    management<br>Relations:<br>  Management of<br>    participation<br>  Dynamics of hierarchy<br>Culture:<br>  Primary and secondary<br>    socialization<br>  Ideology of work<br>  Social history of politics | Task anxiety<br>Group defenses:<br>basic assumption<br>Transference and<br>counter-<br>transference<br>Individual defenses |

consultation process, she focuses on such explanations as significant data which challenge and make more complex the consultancy remit.

Neumann's contribution about the integration between psychodynamics and organizational theory in the initial stages of the consultancy relationship develops a practical framework for making sense of "what is going on" between client and consultant and for understanding "why" and "where" difficulties and confrontations arise. Combining them, she builds the following matrix as a "tool" for organizational consultant (Table 2).

The matrix summarizes, and makes visible, all those issues that need to be negotiated at the beginning of the consultancy: the client's expectations, the psychodynamics enacted in the interaction between client and consultant, and the organizational issues that are the "raw materials from which organizational change must be crafted" (Neumann 1994, p. 25).

Jean identifies three working hypothesis which are embedded in the matrix (Ibid., p. 26):

- Confrontation arises between client and consultant around overt and covert decisions in building the working relationship.
- The specific psychodynamics beneath difficult beginnings enact both client's expectations about the consultancy relationship and the organizational issues relevant to the consultancy process.
- From confrontations concerning diagnosis and roles, significant data emerge about the organizational issues which are relevant of the consultancy process.

- Successful working through difficult beginning requires the consultant to address every single aspect of such difficulties: the client's expectations of the consultant's role, the organizational issues, and the psychodynamics of the interactions.

## The organizational Consultant as Scholarly Practitioner

Jean Neumann has been one of the first scholars to conceptualize the idea of the organizational consultant as a scholarly practitioner. In reflecting on the nature of the work of consultant, starting from her own professional experience, Jean considers the ability to learn from practice as crucial for the consultancy competence. Her starting point is that knowledge originates from (and is rooted in) experience and experience is built into knowledge within a cyclical relation of integration between theoretical and practical experience. So, in her professional evolution, she faced the practical necessity to commit herself in "self-directed learning" (Neumann 2007) to develop a high degree of consultancy competence. Considering the consultant as a "self-directed learner" means moving from consulting technique to scholarly practice (Neumann 2016). Jean acknowledges the importance of self-reflexivity as a crucial skill to support the process of professional growth. In her terms, self-reflexivity can be understood as having an ongoing conversation with oneself about what one is experiencing as one is experiencing it.

To be committed to a continuous learning process helps consultants to make sense of the situation in which they consult in relation to their working relationship and consultancy activities with clients. They fill the gap between what they are able to do or actually do and what they need to know or do. In this perspective, a consultant is a scholarly practitioner, an "advanced organizational consultant" (Neumann 2007; 2016) who is able to integrate theory and practice in his/her work to support both consultancy domain, which is the combination of organizational sectors, issues, and portfolio of approaches for which one offers one's services (Neumann et al. 1999, p. 220) and clients' requests.

In terms of professional development and organization-oriented consultancy, Neumann considers consultants' progress as an essential element – moving away from organizational consultancy as the sole application of known methods toward active self-study and development of new methods to address new organizational challenges (Miller 1993 – *cit.* in Neumann et al. 1999). This is the position of scholarly practice. Such transition is possible through a continuous and dynamic movement that combines theory and practice and that Jean Neumann graphically represents by means of an hourglass (Fig. 9):

Such a metaphor explains the process that generates learning (and changes) and makes the activity of consultant more mature. If theory allows the practitioner to learn methodologies, then practice becomes the "place" where (Neumann 2013c):

- "Good questions" are asked , i.e., those that allow to reflect on practice.
- Awareness is (re)generated.
- New abilities, linked to theory and practical experience, are developed.

**Fig. 9** Hourglass metaphor
(Neumann 2013c)
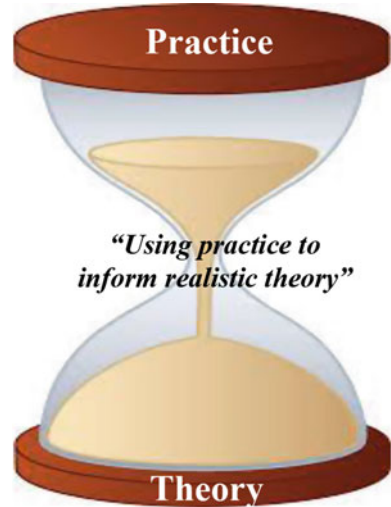


However long-life learning, (self)reflection, and writing from experience as a sensemaking process – the use of "self" as a source of data – (Neumann 2017) are, according to Jean Neumann, equally significant components in the learning process for the development of the consultants' advanced professional skills. All these elements may help the organizational consultant to relearn "how" to do things – such as to describe and explain what happens in his/her role, how to analyze the professional experience from the point of view of several theories, and how to identify practical challenges not understood before.

## New Insights. Consultancy as Scholarly Practice Through a Paradigmatic Shift

The reappraisal of Lewin's ideas by Jean Neumann and her explicit commitment to integrate the former with organizational and psychodynamic theories both pave the way to new approaches to organizational change and consultancy processes. In particular, the practical application of Lewin's principles provides consultants with tools of analysis that are useful to understand the system and its processes. It also highlights that through the consultancy process, rooted in action research principles (from diagnosis, through working hypotheses, to shared action planning), the clients' perspectives can be widened and their understandings increasingly enhanced. At the same time, clients can be more motivated toward change.

Jean Neumann's key insights about the consulting process can be described along three intertwined dimensions:

1. Moving from a top-slice to a whole system (consultant's approach)
2. Global configuration and interrelation among events (consultant's tool)
3. Space differentiation (consultant's skill)

The representation of the client system as a whole, the description of the factors and their interrelationship that create the problem for the client system, and the support of clients' reflection and growth through a sensemaking process of his organizational experience are three essential factors of the consultant's activity in all phases and iterations of the planned cycle of organizational change. Employing these factors is a challenge for consultants at an ontological, epistemological, and methodological level.

## From a Top-Slice to a Whole System (Change) Approach

One of the major impacts Jean Neumann has had on the philosophies and practices of organizational change is the paradigmatic and methodological framework wherein she locates the process of consultancy: action research. In epistemological terms, action research introduces great changes in the way people "look at the world" and "are involved in researching". This goes beyond the positivist tradition by acknowledging the close link between theory and action and the natural and unavoidable interaction between the individual and the world – "the environment and the people involved are inseparably bound up together" (Lewin 1935 – in Neumann 2013a). In methodological terms, action research is a kind of social research that aims for changing the social system through the researcher/consultant acting on or in the social system and the participation and involvement of people in an immediate problematic situation (Neumann 2013c), a democratic and empowering action by definition.

The re-elaboration of Kurt Lewin's formula applied to action research that has been developed by Neumann in her models challenges the traditional approaches to organizational change and highlights how change should be (re)considered within a paradigmatic shift moving from a top-slice approach ("how to plan successful organizations?") to a whole system approach ("how to make sense of what we are experiencing?"). In the former, managers usually identify the necessary changes and plan them adopting incremental actions along with some defined and ad hoc control measure. In the latter, the leading principle for the consultant's action is "system thinking". Consultants must consider the whole system and the interdependence among each single component.

The rule of the dynamic approach by Lewin (i.e., to look at the elements of any situation as a part of the system) leads consultants to identify the complexity of the system and to consider the diversity of the "voices" populating it. A wider perspective is a critical diagnostic tool for the organizational consultant. It allows a better understanding of the (problematic) situation through the general description of the relationships and the identification of the practical points of inquiry that could be useful for the organizational intervention. The whole system approach, thus, positions consultants in a holistic perspective that is crucial, since complex issues cannot be fully understood if they are considered as detached from the wider system to which they belong. Whatever change occurs in a subsystem has an impact on other subsystems in the system and, in turn, is influenced by the changes occurring in other subsystems in ways that are not often initially easy to understand. The following is
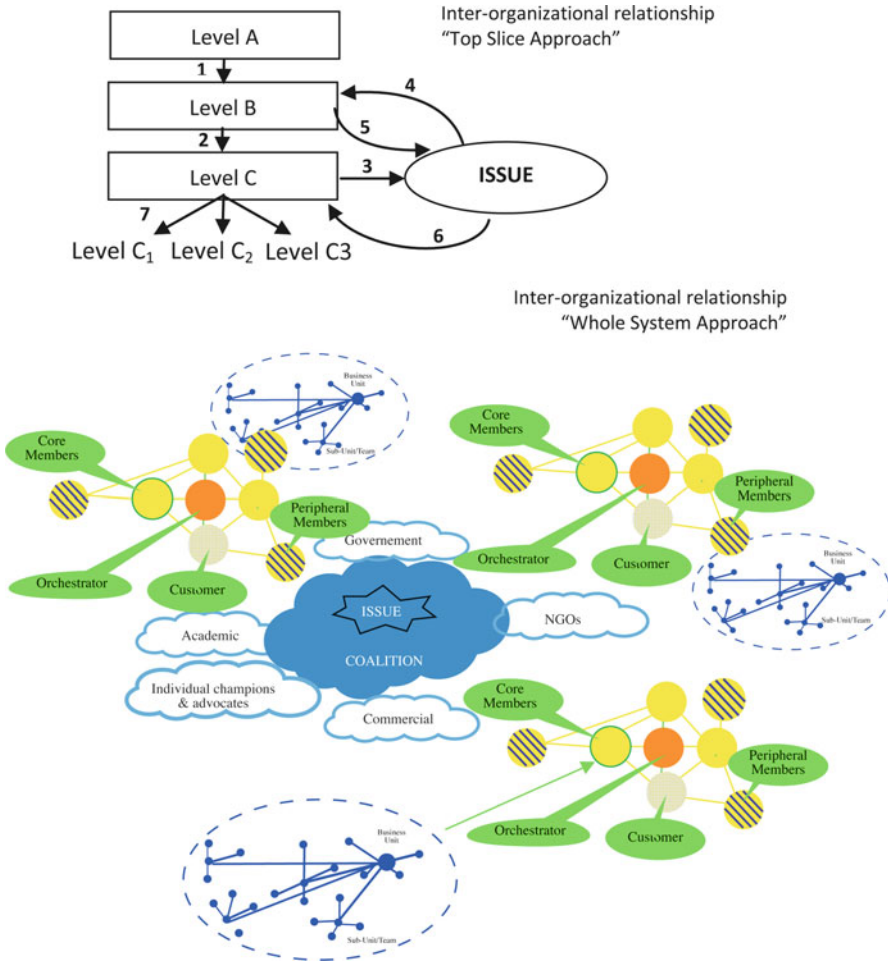
**Fig. 10** Comparison between top-slice and whole system approaches

useful, graphical representation that simplifies the rules of the dynamic approach and makes the whole system approach immediately visible (Fig. 10).

Such a graphical representation is useful for consultants to approach the situation "as a whole" and seek meanings in the complex interrelational models among subsystems. The picture that shows the "whole system approach," which is named "issue-based ecosystem" (IBES), comes from the study of the STS Roundtable working group and was presented at the *STS Roundtable Annual Meeting*, in Canterbury (UK) on October 2012. What this comparison suggests is the challenge of "keeping in mind" the voices of the whole system that are part of the conversations and decisions of change.

In other words, the picture highlights dynamics that are not always visible if consultants focus on the analysis of interactions at an individual level. This is crucial for consultants since very often results (either positive or negative) are more linked to the interrelation among actions than to the effects of a single action.

## Global Configuration and Interrelation Among "Facts" as a Tool for Consultants

Looking at the situation as a whole allows consultants to have a total representation of the field. Having a global configuration means being able to identify the forces at work that can support, hamper, or slow down the process of change.

In applying the rule of the field theory by Lewin, Jean Neumann introduces a new level of analysis for consultants: the close interdependence between the individual and the environment. If both are bound together, and they influence each other, then consultants need a clear representation of the field, i.e., they need to focus on the interaction between environmental and personal forces to understand why people, groups, or organizations behave in certain ways.

In the process of consultancy, force-field analysis can be conceived as an analytical tool employed by the organizational consultant within the problem-setting and problem-solving activities with the client. Force-field analysis can deepen a consultant's awareness of how tasks and relations are pivoted on a given problem or issue. From a graphical point of view, the following (synthetic and analytical) representations may help both consultants and clients to concretely describe several elements affecting a given situation, thus warning them that there is not a single cause to a certain event (Fig. 11).

Such a representation undoubtedly has practical value since it allows consultants to generate a comprehensive and exhaustive description of the whole situation and to see how single components are intertwined. In addition, it can be used to check the power of the forces at work and support clients in a process of "local sensemaking," which, in turn, helps them in the processes of decision-making, action planning, and implementation.

## "Differentiation Space": A consultant's Ability

Once again, in considering Kurt Lewin's assumptions, Jean Neumann applies the topological concept of "life space" to organizational consulting. Drawing on Lewin's work, for which it was important to represent what is allowed in an individual's life space, Jean advances that "advanced" is that consultant who is aware of the degrees of free movement in a space populated by boundaries that could be trespassed.

Lewin proposed the formula B=f(P,E) – **B**ehavior is a **f**unction of the **p**erson and his environment (1936) – to indicate that a person's behavior can be understood and explained by considering person and environment inseparably bounded. In Lewin's
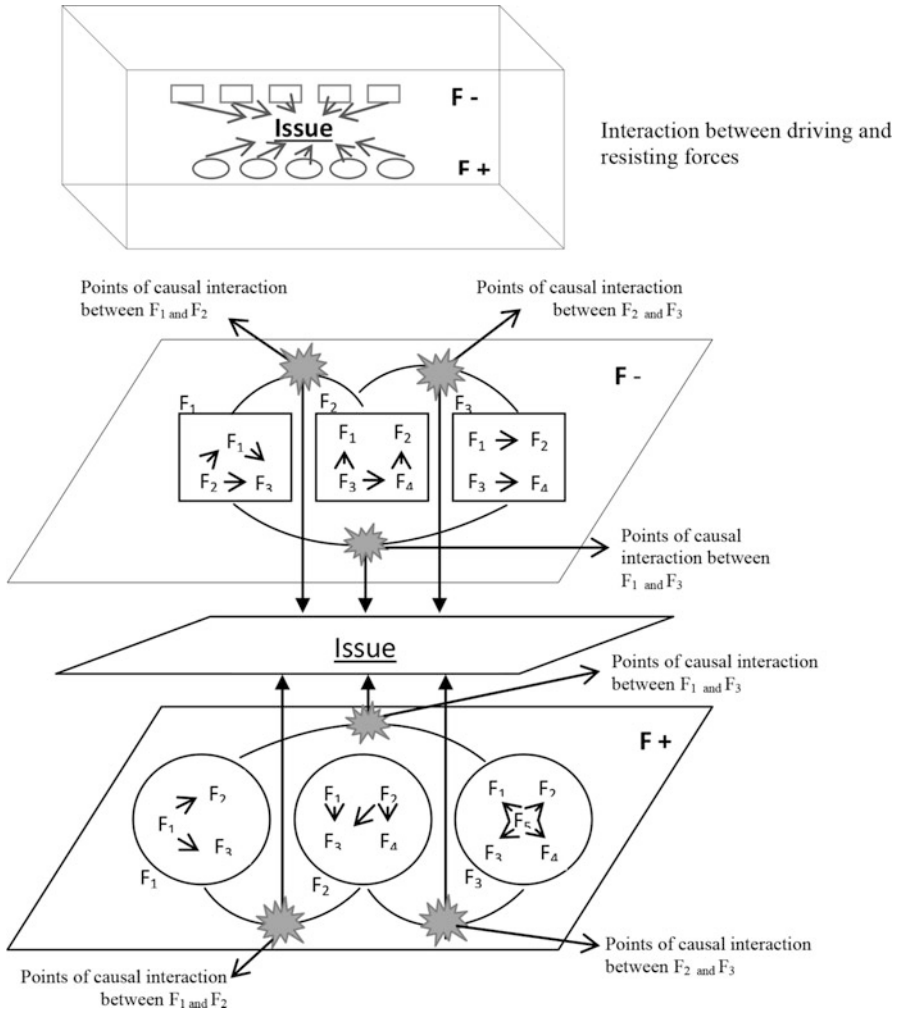
**Fig. 11** Revisited force-field analysis model [author's own elaboration]

terms, they are interdependent and inseparable; in fact, he also created the eqs. E=f (P), according to which the environment is considered a function of the person, and P=f(E), which explains the person as a function of the environment. Such combination creates a complex and dynamic psychological field, defined as a totality of coexisting and mutually interdependent psychological facts. They are life space, environmental factors, and boundary zone. The life space is the person's subjective psychological representation of the environment; the environmental factors refer to what is objectively happening in that moment with no any influence in the person's life space; boundary zone is the point where life space and environment meet, and in

this sense it is the boundary between objectivity and subjectivity. Lewin believed that objective facts are psychologically relevant as they have a subjective meaning. It is the person's subjective world and his personal perspective that shape the reality of psychological significance, and such reality includes the life space – that is, the totality of the elements that are personally significant in the external environment and in the person's internal world (Rummel 1975). The psychological field, or life space, has to be represented as it exists for a person, so including both physical settings and his needs, desires, and dreams. Needs, in particular, are crucial in Lewin's ideas as they organize the behavior and affect the space's cognitive structure (Ibid.). They are satisfied when the person achieves his goals. Goals are related to needs by a positive or negative valence (that is the degree of attraction or repulsion). According to Lewin, people tend to move psychologically toward goal in their life space that has a strong positive valence and away from it if a high negative valence is associated to it. "Locomotion" is the word used by Lewin to call these movements. It refers not just to a physical movement through the space but a movement through the psychological environment within the person's life space.

Because life space is divided into regions by boundaries, locomotion through the life space may be prevented by barriers. Barriers may be physical (i.e., a wall between oneself and the desired goal) or psychological (the goal or desired object is forbidden). To Lewin a barrier is anything that the person perceives as a block or resistance to locomotion toward goal. If barriers are impenetrable, the space of free movement can be limited; the more permeable a barrier is, the easier it is to perform locomotion through it. A change in a person's position is represented as a locomotion from one region to another.

In Neumann's perspective, freedom of movement is not only physical (i.e., moving around a concrete social space) but also psychological, i.e., reaching a goal, though the movement is not physical, it is a movement in space. The application of this concept to the role of the consultant not only expands the abilities of the organizational consultant but, more specifically, shows that growth consists in a progressive expansion of the life space in terms of possible movements toward boundaries to be crossed and barriers to be overcame.

In practical terms, the concept of life space poses a question: "what happens to consultants when, together with the client system, they try to reach a goal (of change)?" (Neumann 2013b). This is the crucial point: consultants find several different obstacles along the process. They are multifaceted and complex, and they can be perceived and experienced as positive and/or negative, according to the emotional condition that affects their capacity to see and choose one direction rather than another. According to Jean, the perception of an obstacle stimulates and enacts in the individual the sensory and perceptual skills, which produce insights, ideas, and plans aimed at overcoming it. Such capacity of overcoming or bypassing obstacles, i.e., choosing one direction instead of another, represents the consultants' ability to "differentiate space" (Ibid.). This ability allows to build new modalities of "being in" or "being related to" reality, and, thus, to reorganize and reconsider it, as well as to rebuild their own system of strategies and behavior (Fig. 12).

**Fig. 12** Differentiation space and freedom movement (Neumann 2013c)



The graphical representation by Neumann simplifies the concept so well that it has become a heuristic tool through which consultants can imagine and represent their "space" and "movement": the *person* (i.e., the consultant) willing to overcome obstacles to reach the goal; the *hat*, as a metaphor of the role one has, or of the roles one has to face; the *drinking glass*, as a greater of lower ability to being propositional toward an intervention (the half full, half empty glass logics); the *spectacles* as a symbol of learning; and the *wall* as the greatest obstacle to be overcome. The other elements scattered in the diagram are obstacles that can be found along the path toward the goal. The practical aspect of such an approach lies in the ability to identify those void spaces among the elements in the space that are "spaces in motion" and allow consultants to make a choice or another, depending on the positive forces leading to action and/or negative forces inhibiting it. In these "spaces in motion" or of differentiation of space, there is the discovery of degrees of freedom of movement that allow consultants to slightly progress toward the change goal.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Advanced Organizational Consultancy

The most important intellectual legacy by Jean Neumann is the concept of the "advanced organizational consultant" which aligns with the concept of the organizational consultant as a scholarly practitioner. She assumes that organizational consultants need to enhance and reinforce their own consultancy abilities and competences through professional training that relies on experiential learning methodologies. To address contemporary organizational challenges, consultants need to develop a wider theoretical and practical approach. This could originate both from the integration of the three specific pillars of applied social sciences (the

organizational theory, the consultancy competence, and the system psychodynamics perspective) and from the consultants' domain.

As for the first point, by integrating the consultancy work in a wider theoretical perspective, organizational consultants avoid the risk of being hyper-specialized in a single field and of assuming their approach as the best in absolute terms. As for the second, increased knowledge about organizations, system psychodynamics, and the consultancy practice in organizational sectors and issues, as well as about the system of their own approaches, makes organizational consultants more responsive and innovative vis-à-vis the peculiar features of the client system. In other words, according to Jean Neumann, the width and depth of a consultant education determine his/her "professionalization," which is an increased ability to understand and work with those organizational complexities that represent challenges to be faced.

With the aim to guarantee a complex and holistic approach to the profession of the organizational consultant, Jean Neumann directed academic studies for the Advanced Organisational Consultation (AOC) program for the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (Neumann 2007). For the AOC, this was a double challenge: educating consultants at a higher level and designing and providing a learning environment that encompassed approaches and methodologies from applied social sciences (Neumann 2017). Such a challenge has pragmatically solved the conceptual and professional issue that privileged the psychodynamic approach as a leading theory-methodology for some communities of practice. Merging organizational theory, psychodynamic approach, and consultancy competence (i.e., the TIHR schools of thought with NTL Institute's practice theory and contemporary organizational studies) was Neumann's practical solution to an unresolved issue. The term "advanced" represents for Jean Neumann the practical need to integrate theories and practices in a way that could be operationally useful for both consultants and clients. This need leads the consultant to engage in a continuous self-directed learning toward the development of a cognitive approach able to "bridge" disciplines and conceptual categories.

Offered by TIHR between 1993 and 2009, the AOC was organized into seven modules, each incorporating five modalities of experiential learning: curriculum and module design, experiential activities and reflection, consultancy experience and reflection, vicarious learning, and institutional reflexivity. For Jean Neumann, this practice-based program enacted the principle of "learning together for progress," but at the same time, it tested practice as a source of knowledge for organizational consultancy (Neumann 2017).

## Conclusion

Jean Neumann is not just a "change thinker," but she is scholarly practitioner and consultant's consultant.

Her approach to the OD&C theory and practice and organizational consultancy can be defined as "dynamic," since it is rooted in a learning process aimed to identify and evaluate solutions to practical organizational problems, and "systemic" in

consideration of the relevance of stakeholder participation and involvement in any stage of the change process. By integrating "learning for progress" with deep reflection, Jean's consultancy approach holds the promise of an embedded learning process that can simultaneously inform and create change.

Jean's seminal work connects complexity, organization, and change and offers a holistic approach to changing complex social and organizational systems showing how complex issues cannot be properly understood in isolation from the wider system of which they are a part. In terms of organizational change, the concept of "whole system" that emerges from her contribution suggests the idea that there are not actions (of change) that can be centrally planned and outcomes exactly predictable.

From a methodological point of view, Jean's theoretical and practical framework helps practitioners, action researchers, organizational consultants, managers, or change agents to reconceptualize the organizational change as a process of collaborative and in-depth inquiry where all stakeholders are involved and practical knowledge is produced for the express purpose of taking action to promote change; in this sense, her systemic consultancy approach increases the ability of the involved organizational members, or external stakeholders, to research, understand, and resolve problems of mutual interest, and it opens up the possibility for them to meaningfully engage with the complexities of the real-life organization. From a theoretical point of view, "complexity" becomes a new paradigm that poses new challenges and new working hypotheses for organizational consultant. Complexity theories provide a conceptual framework, a way of thinking and of seeing the organizations. Although Jean Neumann does not make any explicit reference to it, her work precisely gets the point: the organizational consultant needs to understand social and organizational systems in terms of heterogeneity of their structures, (inter) relationship, and properties that emerge from local interactions. Complexity, then, means "taking into account the whole" and seeks meanings in the complex pattern of interrelationship between people, groups, and organizations as they emerge. The organizational consultant has to be able to see "enough" and understand "enough" to make sense of the situation such that he can act meaningfully and purposefully within it.

Jean's extensive work also identifies an implicit connection between complexity and her consultancy process based on action research principles. It could be said that "complexity" provides a valuable theoretical support for action research, which, in turn, provides a valid methodological approach to the study of complexity. The capacity of action research to address complex issues or to manage complex situation is undoubted, as several definitions on action research literature asserted. The principles Jean speaks of, and the work she cites (Kurt Lewin's four practical principles as guideline in her "cycle of planned change in organizational development"), have relevant point of (inter)connection with some principles of complexity theories. A such connection poses new organizational challenge about how enhancing change in human systems and offers new paths for reflecting on the nature of organizational consultant's role.

The two concepts that make explicit such connection are global configuration and interrelation system. Lewin asserted that the study of social facts requires a dynamic

and global perspective to analyze the situation at the level of the interdependence of the factors working in that situation; he strongly believed in an in-depth analysis of social phenomena and rejected the mechanical, positivistic ontological models, which assume linear causality between events and effect. Lewin formulated the "field theory" where the field is understood as both "whole dimension" – in which factors coexist in their interdependence (*global configuration*) – and "dynamic dimension," characterized by a circular causality produced by relationship among the factors present in the field (*interrelations system*). The field is not the container of bodies and forces but is defined by the people (bodies) and relationships (forces) that it contains; so, the field is a global, dynamic, and nonlinear system defined by the person, environment, and behavior, whose structure changes continuously according to the changes of the individuals and their relationships.

With reference to the consultant role, the challenge is evident: shifting in thinking about how change happens implies a reflection on new ways of working and engaging with organizations. It is within this context that Jean's consulting approach can be seen as the more appropriate methodological "landing place" that allows emerging processes through a local sensemaking process, the reformulation of mental schemes, and the ability to "contain" the contradictions and the ambivalences of complexity. Her key contributions and her professional commitment show how her approach to OD&C can be framed as an emancipatory endeavor, capable of supporting and achieving individual and social change in today's complex environment which is demanding a move toward paradigms that are able to hold holistic, dynamic, and systemic views.

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# Debra A. Noumair: Understanding Organizational Life Beneath the Surface

Frank D. Golom

**Abstract**

Debra A. Noumair is Associate Professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Founding Director of the college's Executive Masters Program in Change Leadership. A contemporary leading voice in organization change and development, Dr. Noumair's key intellectual contributions can be found in her work applying psychodynamic and systems theories to group and organizational behavior. This chapter reviews her intellectual contributions to change research, theory, and practice, including the application of group relations to organizational settings, the integration of group relations and organization development, the creation of a systems psychodynamic framework for organizational consultation, and the development of executive education in leading and managing change. The chapter also reviews the early influences and motivations that led to her career as an organizational psychologist, as well as the impact of her teaching, writing, and professional practice on thousands of students, clients, and colleagues over the last two decades. The earliest outlines of her intellectual legacy in the field are also considered.

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## Introduction

Several years ago, administrators at Teachers College, Columbia University (TC), embarked on a new development campaign centered around tribute scholarships for the institution's greatest "teacher-scholars." The campaign allows alumni and other individuals to donate significant funds to create endowed scholarships in honor of the many great thinkers, teachers, and scholar-practitioners to walk the hallowed halls of Columbia University's graduate school of education, the first and largest graduate school of education in the United States. Given TC's rich 100-year history in education, psychology, and health, it is not surprising that such social science luminaries as Morton Deutsch, Jack Mezirow, Maxine Greene, and Donna Shalala all have scholarships in their honor. In fact, a quick perusal of the list of endowed scholarships reveals that many of those chosen to participate in the inaugural campaign are preeminent thinkers in their field, some of whom are at the twilight of their careers, while others, long since passed, continue to captivate all of us with their scholarly legacies.

    Yet one of the names on the list of tribute scholarships is not like the others. At the top of the scholarship website sits an endowed scholarship fund in honor of Debra A. Noumair, Associate Professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, who is neither at the end of her career nor long passed her prime, but whose impact has certainly been substantive, steadfast, and profound. The founding director and creator of one of the premiere organization change and development training programs in the country and current coeditor of the annual volume *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Debra Noumair has contributed such insight and thought leadership to the field of organization change and development through her teaching, mentoring, writing, and professional practice that alumni of the college took it upon themselves to create a tribute scholarship in her name and honor a legacy to the field that is very much still being written. As the introduction to her scholarship fund indicates, Debra Noumair is the guiding force behind the college's Executive Masters Program in Change Leadership, where she is known for flouting conventional, rational thinking about change and organizational life. What the introduction and her articles, chapters, and books do not tell

you, however, is that Debra Noumair is also the guiding force behind decades of thinking, training, and organizational consulting from a systems psychodynamic perspective, the heart of where her scholarly and applied contributions reside. This is her story.

## Influences and Motivations: Nontraditional Roots and Routes

Today, Debra A. Noumair is an accomplished teacher, scholar, consultant, and executive coach, having served on the faculty at Teachers College, Columbia University, since 1991. In addition to her work as founding director of the college's Executive Masters Program in Change Leadership, Debra is also on the faculty of the graduate programs in social-organizational psychology, where she was in charge of the practice component of masters and doctoral training from 1999 to 2011. Originally trained as a counseling psychologist, Debra's route to organizational psychology and change leadership has been equal parts preordained and circuitous. And, like any great thinker in any field, she is, through her uncanny abilities for reflection and self-insight, the sum total of the influences and experiences that have led her to this point.

Debra was born in New Jersey to a working-class family of mixed Italian and Lebanese backgrounds. Her father was not particularly keen on her going to college, instead wanting her to do something that could be perceived as more useful to the family restaurant business. The irony that she would, decades later, become an organizational psychologist is not lost on her, and it is fair to say that she came to be the organizational psychologist she is not because she learned about the field in some textbook or because her parents studied it in college, but because she saw firsthand, through her own formative experiences, the significant complexities and irrationalities of group and organizational life. She did for a time try to please her father directly, enrolling in a junior college and majoring in retail until her experiences in a group dynamics course and an internship working with the severely drug addicted in a community mental health clinic led her to attend Boston University (BU), where she would start down the path of becoming the psychologist and thinker many of us know her to be.

At BU, Debra would major in rehabilitation counseling and would find herself heavily immersed in clinical work despite lacking any advanced education in the fields of clinical and counseling psychology. As a result, she sought strong theoretical and conceptual graduate training, which led her to apply to the counseling psychology program at Teachers College, Columbia University, an institution known for its emphasis on the scholar-practitioner model and on promoting theoretically grounded and social justice-minded application, intervention, and practice in the real world. It was at Teachers College that Debra first became exposed to dueling theoretical frameworks for understanding group and organizational life, particularly the interpersonal approach advocated by the National Training Laboratories and a psychodynamic approach based on the work of Wilfred Bion and Melanie Klein and promoted by the Tavistock Institute in the United Kingdom. It

is fair to say that the Tavistock approach to group dynamics better appealed to the human complexity and irrationality that Debra witnessed through her lived experience and her counseling psychology background, and she adopted this psychodynamic framework as her lens of choice for understanding group and organizational behavior.

Her accomplishments as a graduate student in the counseling psychology program at Teachers College earned her a spot on the tenure-track faculty shortly after completing her doctoral work. Not surprisingly, she began teaching courses in group dynamics, which she had developed into both a passion and an area of expertise since her time at the junior college. Debra credits her involvement with the A. K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems with fine-tuning her psychodynamic understanding of groups and organizations and launching her as a national expert in the field of group relations. "The world made sense," Debra said of her experience with her first group relations conference, which is now a curricular staple and key differentiator of the organizational psychology training received by thousands of graduate students at Teachers College, Columbia University, over the years.

In the early 1990s, the various programs in psychology were housed in the same academic department at Teachers College, and Debra's work teaching group dynamics from a systems psychodynamic perspective caught the attention of W. Warner Burke, founder, creator, and long-serving director of the graduate programs in social-organizational psychology and, as this volume can attest, one of the preeminent leading voices in organization change and development. As the story goes, Warner asked to co-teach group dynamics with Debra to "see what she does," and together their partnership would launch a number of joint ventures that would become critical both to the training of organization development practitioners and psychologists and to the perspective each would take on organizational life in their scholarly and academic work. Warner, ever the quintessential social psychologist, would emphasize a linear, rational, and positivistic understanding of organizational dynamics that felt venerable, scholarly, and straightforward, but somehow incomplete. And Debra, with her strong counseling psychology training and her expertise in psychodynamic theory, would emphasize the chaotic, irrational, and socially constructed nature of group and organizational behavior that more reliably and validly resembled the modern workplace, but was much harder to navigate, both intellectually and in practice.

Debra, however, was up to the challenge, finding her time with the organizational psychology students to have more of a basis in actual work experience than the group therapy concerns of the counseling psychologists in training. As she put it, organizational life offered a live laboratory for the application of systems psychodynamic principles and an immediate flash point for intervention and reward that was harder to come by in a therapy context. Her belief in the immediate applicability of systems thinking to groups and organizations in the real world was further confirmed by several early experiences in executive education at the Columbia University Business School and by a burgeoning executive coaching practice. Intellectually, and personally, a career transition was complete. Debra would leave the counseling psychology program to join the social-organizational psychology faculty in the fall of 1999.

Originally, Debra joined the graduate programs in social-organizational psychology to start a practice-oriented Psy.D. program in organizational psychology. Yet rather than head a separate practice-oriented program, Debra instead supported the integration of science and practice within the masters and Ph.D. programs already in existence. She took over responsibilities for teaching the main practice courses in the organizational psychology curriculum – group dynamics and a practicum course in organizational consultation and change. She also set out to design and develop a set of new courses based on her training as a counseling psychologist, but with strong organizational applicability, including executive coaching. She became director of executive education programs in change and consultation in 2005 and, most notably, in 2011, launched an intensive, year-long masters program in change leadership that has garnered recognition as one of the leading training programs in organization change and which TC's provost has dubbed the most innovative program at the college. For nearly three decades, countless practitioners and organizational psychologists owe their training in systems psychodynamics to her intellectual vision born of an integrated understanding of the overt and covert aspects of group and organizational life. By facilitating a conceptual discussion between organizational psychology and counseling psychology in the service of deepening our understanding of leading change, Debra has trained an army of psychologists in a way that few can – hence the Debra A. Noumair Endowed Scholarship Fund.

## Key Contributions: Dynamic, Systems Approaches to Organization Change and Development

Although Debra had a successful career as a counseling psychologist, both at Teachers College and within the American Psychological Association's counseling psychology division, her key contributions as an academic and as a practitioner can be found in her work applying psychodynamic and systems theories to group and organizational behavior, as well as the related training models that she has developed and put into practice over the last few decades. Taken together, her intellectual contributions can be found in four main areas: group relations theory, the integration of group relations and organization development, the creation of a systems psychodynamic framework for organizational consultation, and executive education in leading and managing change.

### Group Relations Theory and Application

In many ways, group relations was and is Debra's first love. Originating in the United Kingdom at the Tavistock Institute and based on Wilfred Bion's (1961) work on the collective unconscious of groups, group relations theory attempts to explain the ways in which unconscious forces frequently interfere with rational group behavior and decision making (Stokes 1994; Noumair et al. 2010). According to Bion, who is also described in this volume, group behavior can be classified into

overt, task-oriented activity, which he termed the work group, and covert, task-avoidant activity, which he termed the basic assumption group. Debra's earliest writings were concerned with this basic assumption activity, the underlying psychodynamic processes that fuel it, and the interplay of psychodynamic defense mechanisms and social identity variables, including race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. In fact, the organizational complexities, authority dynamics, irrationalities, and resistances surrounding issues of difference and diversity in groups and organizations are a main foci of a number of Debra's scholarly publications, many of which seem prescient given the national climate around issues of diversity and social justice that would emerge decades later in the United States under the Presidency of Barack Obama. In her article, *The Tiller of Authority in a Sea of Diversity*, she and a colleague write, "we can expect that authentic work on diversity and authority will be challenging, will take a long time, will be a process and is likely to involve change that will be experienced as catastrophic and will be strongly resisted" (Reed and Noumair 2000, p. 27). The projections and stereotypes received by certain groups within organizations (i.e., women, gay individuals, racial minorities), the implications of those projections for dysfunctional authority and leadership dynamics, and the group and organizational interventions necessary to correct such dysfunctions are some of the key contributions Debra has made to the study and understanding of group relations (Connolly and Noumair 1997; Noumair et al. 1992; Noumair 2004; Reed and Noumair 2000). In fact, her work in this area led to her coediting the third and latest installment of the A. K. Rice group relations reader series, *Group Dynamics, Organizational Irrationality, and Social Complexity* (Cytrynbaum and Noumair 2004).

## The Integration of Group Relations and Organization Development

Given her firm theoretical foundation in group relations, it is not surprising that Debra's second contribution to the field of organization change and development is born from her expert knowledge of psychodynamic theory and principles and reflects her continued professional work to integrate group relations and organization development. As a teacher, mentor, and professional role model to decades of organizational psychologists, her many students and disciples are already practicing with the integrated approach that Debra and her colleagues continue to develop, test, and refine. Her intellectual contributions in this area began in the field when she started teaching the practicum in organizational consultation and change course at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she sought to integrate key concepts from group relations and organization development and help students use them to consult to various corporate and not-for-profit clients. Debra describes this integration in some detail in a 2013 article on organizational dynamics (Noumair 2013) as well as in her recounting of a challenging client engagement (Noumair et al. 2010) that highlighted the importance of infusing organization development with psychodynamic theory, a group-as-a-whole level of analysis (Wells 1995) and social-structural concepts from group relations (Noumair 2013). In both articles and in

her work training students as change practitioners, Debra frequently notes that group relations is necessary but insufficient for diagnosing and intervening in complex organizational systems and for leading change. In fact, to work effectively as consultants, individuals need to integrate their understanding of group relations with models and frameworks from organization development for a fuller understanding of organizational life. This integration, which is evident in her recent writings, is perhaps the hallmark of her intellectual career thus far, representing a differentiating approach to the training adopted by the graduate programs in organizational psychology at Teachers College as well as a challenge to both group relations and OD practitioners to attend to the blind spots in their respective fields (Burke and Noumair 2015). Her 2010 article in the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (*JABS*) lays out the competing foci of group relations and organization development well:

> An OD consultant true to Lewin would take behavior at face value and operate accordingly, whereas a group relations (GR) consultant would observe the same behavior and wonder what else a person was meaning but not saying... Understanding a given situation for the GR practitioner is a matter of observing behavior, then interpreting the words and actions (or silence and passivity) for deeper meaning. Understanding a given situation for the OD practitioner is a matter of asking selected questions, summarizing the responses to the questions, feeding the summary back to the client, and assuring that the client reowns the data. (Noumair et al. 2010, p. 493)

Not surprisingly, Debra's courses, executive education programming, and consulting engagements are infused with this artful blend of psychodynamic and organizational psychology principles, including training modules she developed to teach doctoral students to serve as process consultants in the tradition of Edgar Schein (1999) but with explicit, structured attention to social-structural concepts from the world of group relations, including group boundaries, authority relations, and role and task assignments (Green and Molenkamp 2005; Noumair 2013; Burke and Noumair 2015).

## Systems Psychodynamic Frameworks for Organizational Consultation

A third and related contribution Debra Noumair has made to the field of organization change is the development of an explicit systems psychodynamic conceptual framework for consulting to and navigating unconscious dynamics in organizational systems. Dually influenced by the work of Robert Marshak (2006) on covert processes and Warner Burke on rational models of organizational performance and change (Burke and Litwin 1992), this framework provides practitioners with a specific tool that can be used to understand and diagnose behaviors and emotions that may operate out of the conscious awareness of organizational members. More specifically, the tool expands the well-regarded organization development model designed by Warner Burke and George Litwin (1992) by incorporating specific psychodynamic processes thought to influence each of the factors in the model

and of which traditional organization development practitioners might be unaware. As Debra notes in the updated third edition of the classic *Organization Development: A Process of Learning and Changing*, "beneath the surface of the Burke-Litwin model lie what may be unconscious and irrational aspects of an organization. For example, an overt conflict between two individuals may appear rational on the surface but might also be evidence of competitive dynamics related to leadership succession; that is, power and authority issues and unspoken conflict beneath the surface" (Burke and Noumair 2015, p. 168). Until recently, no conceptual model in the US OD tradition has attempted to link actual overt organizational variables like leadership, management practices, and climate to specific psychodynamic and emotional processes, including splitting, scapegoating, task avoidance, and anxiety. Debra's emerging work in this area provides a level of specificity around covert process that should advance the field beyond its historical emphasis on distinctly rational and positivistic approaches, potentially bridging not only organization development and group relations but also more diagnostic vs. dialogic approaches to OD (Noumair et al. 2017).

## Executive Education and Development

For all that Debra Noumair's scholarly work has been about the application of group relations theory and the integration of group relations and organization development, its true impact remains in the executive education programs she has designed, led, and facilitated over the last two decades. In fact, not only has executive education provided her with a living, breathing laboratory to build curriculum and design pedagogy around her intellectual perspective on change and her views of organizations; it has also allowed her to come full circle in her own life. As Debra will tell you, nothing she has done in her career up to this point has afforded her the opportunity to marry her early business experiences with her love of psychology more than her pioneering work in executive education and in the design of the Executive Masters Program in Change Leadership (XMA) at Teachers College, itself the culmination of decades of teaching, coaching, and mentoring business executives from various sectors. There is much to say that is unique about the beloved XMA program, but as contributions go, its impact on the field moving forward is likely threefold. First, the program itself was a massive organization change project, requiring data-based interventions around some of the overt aspects of organizational life and a careful attention to the politics, motives, mindsets, and psychodynamic forces that often derail a change effort. The very study of how the program came into existence is a model for program development in both higher education and the corporate world. Second, the program curriculum is designed around a set of specific professional competencies culled from all of the major professional associations in change, organization development, and group relations in the United States, thereby continuing to emphasize and integrate training in both the overt and covert aspects of organizational life in ways that few other industrial/organizational psychology or organization development graduate programs have been able to do (Golom and

Noumair 2014). Finally, the program uses the latest thinking on organization change to inform the ways change is taught, relying less on didactic lecture and more on innovative pedagogical techniques and delivery formats, including cohort-based, contextualized, experiential learning (Burke and Noumair 2009). As a result, the program is as transformative to its intended audience as it is advertised, a rare feat made possible both because of Debra's intellectual vision of an integrated curriculum and because of the incredible degree of integrity with which she approaches the task of teaching about change. To date, her biggest contribution to the field may be best summarized by the tagline of the XMA program, itself a simple way to summarize her thinking on organization change and her decades of writing, teaching, mentoring, and coaching thousands of future leaders and practitioners. Effective change is not simply about clearer and more robust strategic plans or new organizational structures. Effective change is also about the covert and subtle forces that impinge upon people, often without their knowledge, that they may be unable to see or escape from. Thus, as the tagline goes, how you see it will set you apart.

## New Insights: Organizational Life Beneath the Surface

The new insights that have been generated by Debra's approach to organizational consultation and change are many and varied, but they reside most notably in the minds, hearts, and works of the many clients, colleagues, and students who have been fortunate enough to learn with and from her over the last few decades, many of whom also had the great fortune of studying traditional models of organization development and organizational psychology under her esteemed colleagues, Warner Burke and Bill Pasmore, both featured in this volume. What many of these individuals will tell you is that Debra's perspective on the power of covert processes and her ability to integrate objective, overt, and rational data with subjective, discursive, and often symbolic information related to unconscious dynamics is significantly responsible for the ways in which many of us now frame, understand, and navigate our own client systems. At the start of the chapter on covert processes in her recent organization development text, Debra writes: "OD models and frameworks alone are not always sufficient to surface underlying forces that influence the behavior of individuals, groups and entire systems" (Burke and Noumair 2015, p. 161). Although this perspective is not particularly surprising for anyone who has been exposed to her integrated training models or her ability to traverse and link the overt and covert aspects of organization life, the realization that traditional organization development may be insufficient continues to slowly dawn on organization change and development practitioners (Bushe and Marshak 2009), and there is a growing acknowledgment that supplemental frameworks may be necessary (Burke 2011). Perhaps this is why Warner Burke decided to coauthor the new addition of his esteemed organization development text with her, for as Debra says, behavior in organizations may not always make rational sense, but it will always make psychological sense (Burke and Noumair 2015). What she has illuminated for many of us is the idea that all organizational behavior is "rational" in some way, even when it is not.

Of course, Debra Noumair is not the first thinker, in this field or otherwise, to point out that many of our organizational behavior models are overly rationalized and linear, while the organizations of the real world remain anything but. For example, in 1987, Howard Schwartz wrote an essay on the meaning of teaching organizational behavior to his students. In the essay, he contrasted the clockwork model of organizations, which dominated his textbooks and his classrooms, with the snakepit model of organizations, which he believed was a much more accurate depiction of organizational life. Despite nearly all of his students saying that the snakepit was a more accurate metaphor for the organizations they knew personally, all of them reported wanting to learn the rational models and strategies for textbook clockwork organizations. As Schwartz noted:

> The snakepit that each of them knew was not an exception to the rule, it *was* the rule. We could forget about the clockwork picture presented by the texts – organizations aren't like that. So now we could turn to the study of the snakepit with a clear conscience. We were, after all, there to study organizational behavior... In this case, though, the feelings did not take long to come out. This demonstration, impressive enough to me, had no impact on the bulk of my students. Facts be damned. They wanted to know the techniques for managing clockworks. (Schwartz 1987, p. 20)

Although Schwartz' speculation as to the reasons for his students' wishes are entirely psychodynamic, one could make the argument that the students wanted to learn the techniques for managing the clockwork because no parallel frameworks existed for understanding the snakepit. The insights Debra Noumair has generated, in her writing, her practice, and her work with students and colleagues, rest almost exclusively on providing us with such frameworks.

Because not many individuals are as facile with the integration of psychodynamic theory and organization development as Debra, to truly see her insights in action is to read her case work where she describes what consulting from a systems psychodynamic framework looks like, feels like, and entails. Her work with the Luminary Institute (a pseudonym) described in Noumair (2013) and in Burke and Noumair (2015) is a case in point and would remind anyone who has ever had the pleasure of working with Debra about the many layers of data, hypotheses, and interventions, both overt and covert, that she is able to hold and synthesize in her mind at the same time. These sources are worth a perusal for anyone interested in experiencing the insightful and simultaneous application of the components of her systems psychodynamic framework, namely, psychodynamic theory (Gould et al. 2006), a group-as-a-whole lens (Wells 1995), and social-structural aspects of group life (Green and Molenkamp 2005). Yet the real lesson in the chapter can be found in Debra's postmortem after her case analysis. Ever the consummate educator and mentor, she ends the chapter with a call to personal change and growth for those who wish to use this systems psychodynamic framework and see organizational reality as she sees it:

> Consulting to an organization, using this framework, requires a core capacity to reflect on one's emotional experience, interrogate that experience, make meaning of it, inquire about

the emotional experience of others, and trust that emotional experience constitutes valid data (Argyris 1965). The issues a consultant faces at the outset of a consultation may not make immediate rational sense. Once the consultant experiences the underlying reasons she was hired in the first place, her experience becomes perhaps the first useful data point in the discovery process. (Burke and Noumair 2015, p. 182)

Everything is data, I hear the former counseling psychologist in her say. And the field of organization change and development is better for it.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Mapping the Unconscious Terrain

Writing about the legacy of someone very much midcareer is like judging a movie when you are only halfway through it. There is clarity around what you have already seen and, of that, what you have found novel, insightful, and worthy of continued discussion, but beyond that, you have no certain idea how it ends. Nevertheless, the work of Debra A. Noumair and her contributions to the field of organization change and development thus far have left an indelible enough impact on those of us who have worked with and been trained by her that the earliest outlines of her legacy are certain. Without question, the key contribution of her work in all its forms is the integration of group relations and organization development, which has resulted in countless organizations, practitioners, and fellow colleagues experiencing and witnessing organizational reality in profoundly unique and powerful ways. Her students are convinced that the group relations and practicum components of their training differentiate them from other consultants and practitioners, making them both better diagnosticians of and effective locksmiths for the intractable dynamics deeply embedded far under the surface of most organizations. And her clients, whether they be individual C-suite executives, corporate leadership development programs, or national nonprofits, have all benefited greatly from her ability to surface undiscussable and deeply psychological processes in the context of the strategic business frame that the rational side of organization development routinely provides.

While those who have worked with her continue to think, write, and teach about organizations steeped in her legacy, Debra continues to examine the unconscious processes underneath traditional organization change and development frameworks, exploring the issues of power, authority, and social identity that appeared in her earliest scholarship and seeking additional specificity and precision in linking the overt and covert aspects of organizational life. To that end, Debra recently coedited a special issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* that attempts to frame diversity and inclusion from an organization change perspective, and she and her research team are planning a series of papers aimed at exploring and validating more thoroughly the covert organization development model she proposed in her recent article in *Research in Organizational Change and Development* (Noumair et al. 2017). As she seeks additional specificity and precision in linking overt and covert organizational factors and as she and her research team apply clinical and qualitative

research methods (Schein 2015) to map the hidden psychodynamic terrain of organizations more completely, Debra's model will likely gain additional validity in scientific and practitioner circles, and her intellectual contributions to the field of organization change and development will only grow.

As she says in her most recent paper outlining the development of this model, "it is our stance that a thorough exploration of the covert dynamics at play in the past and present, when coupled with overt data, will yield a deeper understanding of the organization, as well as the potential future direction(s) it may take" (Noumair et al. 2017, p. 42). What Debra has not said, but we can, is that this is the view she has cultivated now for three decades, intellectually and in practice, from her father's restaurant to the hallowed halls of Teachers College and so many classrooms and executive training centers in between. How she sees change in organizations has certainly set her apart, and as she continues to share that view through her teaching, mentoring, writing, and professional practice, as she works to integrate the fantasy of organizational rationality with the reality of our diverse, chaotic, and irrational times, her wish is that this view sets all of us apart and makes us better thinkers and change leaders, now and into the foreseeable future. Were the story to conclude with that as her legacy, I believe it would be the only tribute that Debra A. Noumair would ever need.

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Marlene Walk

**Abstract**

Shaul Oreg contributes to contemporary thinking in organizational change research in significant ways. In his early research, Shaul established the construct of dispositional resistance to change, which captures affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of individuals' personal orientation toward change. Building on this work, Shaul shows that dispositional resistance to change predicts reactions to specific change, which are subsequently related to individual- and work-related outcomes. Overall, his research provides an in-depth view of reactions to change and an integrative approach to understanding the antecedents and consequences of these reactions. Through the holistic approach that characterizes his research, Shaul is able to uncover nuances at play in the interactions between individual and contextual factors and, thus, contributes to a better understanding of the complexity involved in recipients' responses to change. This chapter describes Shaul's personal background and motivation for this line of research, discusses the key contributions of his research and how it impacted other scholars, and outlines his future research trajectory.

**Keywords**

Dispositional resistance to change • Reactions to change • Change recipients

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## Contents

## Introduction

Shaul Oreg's research focuses on the interaction between personality characteristics and contextual factors, with a particular interest in the theme of organizational change. In his early research, Shaul contributed to contemporary organizational change theory by establishing the construct of dispositional resistance to change, capturing affective, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of individuals' personal orientation toward change. Building on this work, Shaul shows that dispositional resistance to change predicts reactions to specific change, which are subsequently related to individual- and work-related outcomes. More broadly, his research has helped uncover the complexity involved in recipients' responses to change. The holistic approach, which characterizes most of his work, combines individual and contextual factors and thus provides an integrative understanding of reactions to organizational change.

## Influences and Motivations: Personal Background and Research Companions

Shaul holds a PhD in Organizational Behavior from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations (ILR) at Cornell University (2003), an MA in Clinical Psychology from Ben-Gurion University (1997), and a BA in Psychology and Computer Sciences from Tel-Aviv University (1994). After receiving his PhD in 2003, Shaul moved back to Israel and started his career as Lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Haifa. He worked at the University of Haifa until 2011 (since 2008 as Senior Lecturer with tenure) before moving to The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he is now Associate Professor at the School of Business Administration. Between 2015 and 2017, Shaul has been on sabbatical as a Visiting Associate Professor back at Cornell University.

When asked how he became interested in change research, Shaul says "my interest in this field was entirely coincidental" and begins to tell the following story, with which he had opened his first job talks, back in 2002: Shortly after having moved to Ithaca, New York, from Be'er Sheva, Israel, in 1999, Shaul's parents back in Israel have begun to experience problems receiving emails. It soon became clear that the problem was related to their Internet service provider and so, Shaul urged his father to switch providers. His father, however, was very reluctant about switching providers; in fact, he adamantly resisted the idea, giving a series of excuses that seemed irrational to Shaul. As this was not the first time Shaul has come across these kinds of responses from his father, he became very curious about the reasons for his behavior. After realizing that "resistance to change" was an actual field of study, Shaul approached his PhD advisor, Professor Tove Hammer, about the possibility of taking on an independent study on this topic. During his research for the independent study, Shaul grew increasingly surprised that despite the fact that a lot had been written about the topic, a significant psychological explanation of resistance seemed to be missing. As is the case in some of his later work, Shaul often uses dispositional approaches to tackle research questions relying on his background in clinical psychology. Because only a few research studies came close, but not close enough, to how he conceptualized the notion of "resistance to change," Shaul, encouraged by Dr. Hammer, had not only found a topic for his dissertation but also an important construct – dispositional resistance to change – that helps researchers and practitioners to better understand the notion of resistance to change.

Shaul identifies a few key scholars that helped shape his research and thinking in various ways. Two of Shaul's early mentors while at ILR were Tove Hammer (from the department of Organizational Behavior) and Daryl Bem (from the Psychology department), who – besides many other things – taught him the craft of writing. Both of them, Shaul says, "were artists and had impressive writing skills . . . stressing the importance of simple writing." Further, when asked about who and what influenced his thinking, Shaul mentions being impressed by Tim Judge's (Ohio State University) work, especially with respect to the dispositional approach and its application to a large variety of phenomena. Upon starting to consider a broader approach to the study of reactions to change, Shaul was especially inspired by Jean Bartunek's (Boston College) emphasis on the change recipient's perspective. Even though he had always thought about change from the recipient's perspective, it was only through Jean's (and others who adopted a similar approach) work that this perspective became explicit. The inspiration Shaul drew from her work is mutual as Jean points out that she had "been impressed with his resistance to change scale . . . and his leadership about change" (Bartunek, personal communication).

After starting to collaborate with others, Shaul felt particularly inspired by two of his collaborators: Yair Berson (Bar-Ilan University) and Noga Sverdlik (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev). Yair describes their collaborative work as focusing "on interactions between personality and situations as well as work that highlighted the personality of the leader and its manifestations in organizational processes and outcomes" (Berson, personal communication). Both scholars describe a very strong

mutual influence their collaboration and friendship has had on them over the past 10 years. Whereas Shaul "learned everything he knows about leadership and broader contextual approaches to explain behavior from Yair," Yair says "until I met Shaul, personality has been mostly a control variable in my research ... however, Shaul's greatest impact on me has to do with how he approaches science. The strictly rational, methodical, and meticulous approach to research and writing makes him not only a great colleague but also a mentor. Planning, conducting, and, in particular, writing with him has always been a source of learning for me" (Berson, personal communication). The collaborative work with Noga Sverdlik has focused on the interaction between personal values and type of change. According to Shaul, Noga taught him to appreciate new complexities in phenomena, well beyond those he had considered. This sentiment is mutual as Noga describes: "Whenever we work together I learn from and with him something new about theory, methodology and writing. He is the perfect partner for development and exploration" (Sverdlik, personal communication).

It will become clear in later sections of this chapter how these influences and motivations impacted Shaul's research.

## Key Contributions: Disentangling the Complexity of Recipients' Responses to Organizational Change

Shaul's work broadly falls into two clusters: "Reactions to Change in Organizations" and "Effects of Personality and Values on the Behavior of the Self and Others." Given that the main focus of this handbook is on organizational change, I will emphasize contributions within the first cluster. Specifically, I will be highlighting three contributions to the organizational change literature and some observations that are relevant across research clusters.

### Holistic Perspective of Individuals and Their Environment

Throughout most of his research, Shaul applies a holistic focus while integrating individual characteristics alongside social and contextual factors, which provides rich insights into the particular area of study. For instance, Shaul considers the combined role of individuals' dispositional resistance to change and the organizational environment as factors that predict individuals' attitudes to change (Oreg 2006). Similarly, in research with Karen van Dam and Birgit Schyns, the authors establish that the characteristics of the daily work context (operationalized through leader–member exchange and perceived development climate) are related to change process characteristics (such as information, participation, and trust in management) and that these, in turn, significantly predict individuals' resistance to change, alongside the influence of individual characteristics on resistance to change (van Dam et al. 2008). Moreover, in a review of studies of change recipients' reactions to organizational change, Shaul, Maria Vakola, and Achilles Armenakis consider

change recipients' characteristics, the organizational context as well as specific aspects of the organizational change, such as the change process, perceived benefit/harm, and the change content as predictors of reactions to change (Oreg et al. 2011). Similar trends can be found in work within Shaul's second cluster of research. For instance, in a study with Yair Berson and Tali Dvir, the researchers investigate organizational culture as a mechanism that mediates the effects of CEO dispositions on organizational outcomes (Berson et al. 2008). In other research with Oded Nov, Shaul explores both dispositional and conceptual antecedents of motivations to contribute to open source initiatives (Oreg and Nov 2008).

## Dispositional Resistance to Change

A significant contribution to theory and research on organizational change is the notion of dispositional resistance to change due to the explicit focus on the role of personality in shaping responses to change. Whereas most of the earlier scholarship on resistance to change has focused on the organizational context, Shaul emphasizes the individual as source of resistance and conceptualizes the construct of resistance to change as a personality trait (rather than an attitude) consisting of multiple dimensions (affective, cognitive, behavioral) (Oreg 2003). This theorizing has been appraised as one of four influential theories since the earliest and most prominent work on the topic by Coch and French (1948) (Burnes 2015).

After reviewing the literature on sources of resistance that originate in an individual's personality, Shaul engaged in a thorough scale development process as a means of uncovering the nature of dispositional resistance to change. In seven studies, he developed and validated a scale that is "designed to tap an individual's tendency to resist or avoid making changes, to devalue change generally, and to find change aversive across diverse contexts and types of change" (Oreg 2003, p. 680). Dispositional resistance to change, and its corresponding RTC scale, consists of four factors: Routine-seeking (behavioral component) pertains to individual's inclination to adopt routines, emotional reaction (affective component) encompasses the degree to which individuals are uneasy and experience stress when faced with change, short-term focus (a second affective component) reflects the extent to which individuals focus on the short-term inconveniences rather than long-term outcomes of change, and cognitive rigidity (cognitive component) taps onto the frequency and ease with which individuals change their minds. The construct's content and structure has been validated across 17 countries in subsequent work (Oreg et al. 2008) and both the trait as a whole and its separate dimensions have been shown to predict change-related outcomes. The construct is particularly valuable in predicting individuals' reactions to specific organizational changes (Oreg 2006; Sverdlik and Oreg 2009). For example, dispositional resistance to change has been linked with affective and behavioral responses to an organizational restructuring (Oreg 2006). Moreover, leaders' dispositional resistance to change is associated with followers' intentions to resist change (Oreg and Berson 2011). Even outside the area of organizational change, dispositional resistance to change provides useful insights into occupational

choices (Oreg et al. 2009) as well as the adaption of innovations (Oreg and Goldenberg 2015).

## Conceptualizations of Reactions to Change

Another contribution of Shaul's research has been to the conceptualization of change recipients' reactions to change. Here, two distinct angles are especially noteworthy: (1) reactions to change as multidimensional attitudes and (2) inter-attitude conflicts and complex responses to change.

First, part of Shaul's earlier work addressed the conceptualization and measurement of reactions to organizational change as multidimensional attitudes. Shaul built on Piderit's (2000) three-dimensional conceptualization of these reactions to develop a measure of negative attitudes toward change, and empirically tested the antecedents and consequences of affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions to change (Oreg 2006). The three-dimensional construct adds nuance to the understanding of individuals' reactions to organizational change. Especially notable is that the individual components are related to different change outcomes, highlighting the importance of a multidimensional view. Specifically, the affective component of attitudinal resistance to change relates to an affective outcome (job satisfaction), the behavioral component to change to a behavioral outcome (intentions to quit), and the cognitive component to a cognitive outcome (continuance commitment). This particular contribution has not only conceptual but also strong managerial implications as it provides managers with a better understanding of the relationship between employees' reactions to change and subsequent outcomes. As such, this perspective emphasizes the need for an in-depth approach to understanding and addressing organization members' responses to organizational change.

Second, in research with Noga Sverdlik, Shaul focuses on the interaction of the type of change (voluntary vs. imposed), change recipients' predispositions, and the orientation toward the change agent on individuals' responses to change (Oreg and Sverdlik 2011; Sverdlik and Oreg 2009, 2015). The underlying assumption is that voluntary changes provide individuals with opportunities for self-expression and autonomy, whereas imposed change inhibits these opportunities and, thus, restricts self-expression and autonomy. Imposed change therefore leads to value conflicts such that "individuals who emphasize openness to change are predisposed to support imposed change because it presents opportunities for renewal, but at the same time are predisposed to resist it because it threatens their sense of autonomy" (Sverdlik and Oreg 2009, p. 1441). As such, individuals tend to experience internal conflicts, as manifested in the experience of ambivalence, when change is imposed. Feelings of ambivalence are especially likely to occur in situations of conflict between the orientation toward change and the orientation toward the imposing change agent (Oreg and Sverdlik 2011). Specifically, the relationship between dispositional resistance to change and ambivalence is weaker among those who hold a negative orientation toward the imposing agent. Moreover, the nature of change influences the relationship between personal values and organizational identification, especially

in cases where anxiety levels are high (Sverdlik and Oreg 2015). When change is imposed and when change recipients experience anxiety due to the change, individuals' conservation values are positively, and their openness values are negatively, related to their organizational identification following a change.

Building on this, Shaul and his colleagues (Oreg et al. 2016) have recently proposed a model in which they outline the main mechanisms through which individuals' responses to change emerge, with a particular focus on emotional episodes (that include appraisal, affect, and behavior). These emotional episodes map onto two dimensions of valence and activation that comprise four response types. This circumplex of recipients' affective and behavioral responses to change highlights the variety of potential responses to change, ranging from change resistance, through change disengagement and change acceptance, to change proactivity. Based on their initial theorizing, the authors discuss the mechanisms through which recipients form their responses to change. Here Shaul and colleagues draw on appraisal theory, describing how primary appraisals (evaluation of the relevance of the change to the self) and secondary appraisals (evaluation of the ability to cope with the change) predict the valence and activation of recipients' affective and behavioral responses. Specifically, they argue that goal congruence, a form of primary appraisal, influences the valence of recipients responses, and goal relevance, a second form of primary appraisal and coping potential, a form of secondary appraisal, influence the activation of recipients' responses. With this particular work, the authors (1) highlight the role of activation, in addition to the valence of recipients' responses (which dominated past research), (2) integrate the role of emotional episodes during change into a holistic view, incorporating affect, cognition, and behavior, and (3) critically evaluate the assumptions that change recipients are passive and that resistance to change is solely negative.

Overall, Shaul's research provides an in-depth view of reactions to change and an integrative approach to understanding the antecedents and consequences of these reactions. The cumulative effect of his work on change recipients provides a richer understanding of why and when individuals resist change. Whereas earlier views of reactions to change tended to be monolithic, Shaul's research helped to uncover the intricacies involved in recipients' responses to change and to demonstrate how personal and contextual factors interact in shaping these multidimensional responses.

## New Insights: Inspiring Others

It is a challenging task to fully capture the impact that a scholar has on others. The approach I have chosen attempts to provide both a quantitative and qualitative indication of the new insights generated based on Shaul's research. For the quantitative evaluation, I considered articles that cited Shaul's works using his Google Scholar citation count (Google Scholar – Shaul Oreg 2016). Table 1 displays the citation counts of the five most cited articles in each of the two research clusters (see section "Key Contributions: Disentangling the Complexity of Recipients' Responses

**Table 1** Top 5 citations per cluster

| Cluster 1: Reactions to change in organizations | | | Cluster 2: Effects of personality and values on the behavior of the self and others | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Article** | **Citation count** | **% of articles extracted** | **Article** | **Citation count** |
| (Oreg 2003) | 736 | 13.59 | (Oreg and Katz-Gerro 2006) | 298 |
| (Oreg 2006) | 529 | 18.90 | (Oreg and Nov 2008) | 251 |
| (Oreg et al. 2011) | 234 | 32.86 | (Berson et al. 2008) | 246 |
| (van Dam et al. 2008) | 213 | 29.91 | (Oreg and Berson 2011) | 112 |
| (Oreg et al. 2008) | 90 | 44.44 | (Herzog and Oreg 2008) | 47 |

Source: Google Scholar – Shaul Oreg (2016)

to Organizational Change"). As indicated earlier, Shaul's work on dispositional resistance to change (Oreg 2003; Oreg et al. 2008) and the development and test of a model with antecedents and outcomes of multidimensional attitudes to change (Oreg 2006) have received the most attention.

Beyond the degree of impact, as is assessed by looking at number of citations, I also aimed to gain some insights into the content of the impact that Shaul's work has on others. I therefore reviewed those articles that are based most heavily on his work. To do this, I used Google Scholar's "cited by" function. Google Scholar's ranking algorithm sorts citations according to relevance, whereby articles with higher citation counts are listed in higher positions than those that have been cited less frequently (Beel and Gipp 2009). Moreover, according to their *About Us* page, Google Scholar "aims to rank documents the way researchers do, weighing the full text of each document, where it was published, who it was written by, as well as how often and how recently it has been cited in other scholarly literature" (Google Scholar 2016). Unfortunately, it is less clear how much weight Google Scholar puts on any of these individual criteria.

Given the focus of this handbook on organizational change, I limited my review to articles falling into cluster 1 "Reactions to Change in Organizations." For each of the articles I proceeded as follows: First, I sorted articles that cited Shaul's work according to relevance (rather than date). Second, to account for the time since publication, I weighted Shaul's more recent work more heavily. For research with a citation count of >500, I extracted the first 100 citing articles; for articles with a citation count of >200, I extracted the first 70 citing articles; for articles with a citation count of >100, I extracted the first 50 citing articles; for works with a citation count of >50 I extracted the first 40 citing articles; and for articles with fewer than 50 citations I extracted all citing articles (see Table 1). This resulted in a total of 242 articles that have cited Shaul's articles, which I then perused for their content (see below). It is important to note that I limited my search to academic

**Table 2** Citation distribution within cluster

| Citation count | Cluster 1 (n=242) | |
|---|---|---|
| | # | % |
| ≥20 | 7 | 2.89 |
| 10–19 | 17 | 7.02 |
| 5–9 | 36 | 14.88 |
| 2–4 | 67 | 27.69 |
| 1 | 115 | 47.52 |

articles in English; as such, I did not consider books, book chapters, dissertations, conference papers/proceedings, or working papers. I also excluded self-citations.

As the extracted articles differed immensely in how often they cited Shaul's work (1 to 59), I focused on articles that build off Shaul's work in a substantive way. Specifically, these were articles in which Shaul's work has been referenced more than five times within the article (see Table 2).

After engaging in an inductive review of the extracted articles, the areas of impact largely mirror the identified main contributions: (1) dispositional resistance to change, (2) holistic approach of individuals and their environment, (3) conceptualizations and measurement of reactions to change.

## Dispositional Resistance to Change

The diversity of applications of the dispositional resistance to change construct is notable. Besides being used in organizational change contexts (e.g., Michel et al. 2013; Turgut et al. 2016), dispositional resistance to change has also been incorporated in various other contexts such as technology acceptance (Laumer et al. 2016; Meier et al. 2013) and technology use (Mzoughi and M'Sallem 2013; Nov and Ye 2008, 2009), and innovation resistance (Heidenreich and Spieth 2013). It was also used among different sets of participants, including students (Michel et al. 2013; Nov and Ye 2008), public sector (Battistelli et al. 2013; Michel et al. 2013) and private sector employees (Mulki et al. 2012), as well as customers (Mzoughi and M'Sallem 2013). As part of these research efforts, the RTC scale has been used and further validated in other languages such as Russian (Stewart et al. 2009), Turkish (Saruhan 2013), Chinese (Hon et al. 2014), and German (Kunze et al. 2013).

In the various models proposed, dispositional resistance to change has been conceptualized as an independent, moderating, and mediating variable. Across studies, it has been identified as a reliable direct predictor of various reactions to change, such as emotional exhaustion in a longitudinal study (Turgut et al. 2016), affective commitment to change (Michel et al. 2013), felt stress (Mulki et al. 2012), perceived ease of use of digital libraries (Nov and Ye 2008) and mobile health services (Guo et al. 2013), and individual (Kunze et al. 2013) as well as creative performance (Hon et al. 2014).

In a few studies, dispositional resistance to change was used as a moderator. For instance, Michel et al. (2013) investigated the moderating role of dispositional

resistance to change on the relationship between change characteristics (benefit and extent of change) and commitment to change among four samples drawn in the German context, but only found evidence for the trait's moderating effect in one sample. Similarly, Lamm and Gordon (2010) were unable to support the moderating role of dispositional resistance to change between psychological empowerment and behavioral support for organizational change among US MBA students.

Dispositional resistance to change was also conceptualized as a mediator in one study. In particular, Kunze et al. (2013) found that dispositional resistance to change mediated the relationship between age and individual performance. In addition, occupational status and tenure served as moderators for the age-dispositional resistance to change relationship.

All the cited papers in this subsection use the RTC scale in some form. Most often, scholars use RTC as a summated rating scale with all (e.g., Battistelli et al. 2013; Michel et al. 2013; Saksvik and Hetland 2009) or a selection (Guo et al. 2013; Mzoughi and M'Sallem 2013) of the initial 17 items. Researchers have also used RTC as second-order construct where the four dimensions load on a latent factor representing the overall RTC disposition as initially conceptualized (e.g., Mulki et al. 2012). Whereas most of those studies reported good fit using US American (Foster 2010) and Indian (Mulki et al. 2012) samples, some studies report lack of salience of the cognitive rigidity factor using samples from Germany (Michel et al. 2013) as well as Russia and the Ukraine (Stewart et al. 2009). Moreover, other scholars have incorporated individual dimensions of the RTC scale as variables into the models (Dyehouse et al. 2017). Finally, recent research in the domain of innovation adoption has suggested and empirically demonstrated that dispositional resistance to change can be part of a higher-order "passive innovation resistance" construct (Heidenreich and Handrich 2015; Heidenreich and Spieth 2013).

Besides its influence on theory in the area of organizational change (Burnes 2015) and empirical investigations of the construct as discussed above, dispositional resistance to change was frequently used to establish conceptual arguments in other management topics (e.g., Boohene and Williams 2012; Talke and Heidenreich 2014), as well as in political science (Owens and Wedeking 2012) research. For example, Owens and Wedeking (2012) draw on the notion of cognitive rigidity to argue that justices who show that cognitively rigid justices are less likely to suffer from ideology drift as compared with those who are more cognitively flexible.

Even though this analysis focused on academic articles, one paper – targeted to inform organizational change practice – referred to the value of dispositional resistance to change research for practitioners (Erwin and Garman 2010).

Overall, this brief discussion illustrates how the notion of dispositional resistance to change contributes to a better understanding of the complex nature of resistance to change.

## Holistic Approach

Most of the articles I reviewed emphasize individuals as the main source of resistance rather than focusing on contextual factors (Burnes 2015; Michel et al. 2013).

However, organizational change and reactions to change have also been said to be context dependent (Burnes 2015), which has led Shaul and his colleagues to argue for the incorporation of both individual and contextual aspects for explaining responses to change (Oreg et al. 2011). This more holistic approach is not as prevalent among the papers I reviewed; there was only one study that considered both individual level as well as contextual factors when investigating dispositional resistance to change. In particular, Hon et al. (2014) in their study of working adults in Chinese companies show that dispositional resistance to change is negatively related to creative performance but that this relationship is moderated by organizational modernity, supportive coworkers as well as empowering leadership.

The holistic nature of the conceptual framework Shaul and his colleagues have offered (Oreg et al. 2011) has also sparked recent research independent of the interest in dispositional resistance to change. Specifically, van der Smissen et al. (2013) explored how organizational change and the attitudes toward change impacted psychological contract fulfillment, operationalizing four of the five proposed antecedent categories in (Oreg et al. 2011) model. Using a series of hierarchical regression models, the authors show that transformational changes are negatively related to affective attitudes toward change and, subsequently, affective attitudes toward change are positively associated with psychological contract fulfillment. The framework has also been used to generate new research in areas that have been understudied. Holten and Brenner (2015), for example, aim to better understand the intermediate phases of change (i.e., change antecedents and explicit reactions to change) by applying a change process perspective in their study of followers' attitudes and reactions to change. Finally, Ghitulescu (2013) draws on the Oreg et al. (2011) framework to investigate the impact of the work context on change-oriented behaviors such as adaptive and proactive behavior among special education teachers during organizational change.

My own work has also been influenced by Shaul's holistic approach to organizational change. My coauthor, Femida Handy (University of Pennsylvania), and I adopt the conceptual framework of change recipients' reactions to organizational change. Specifically, we conceptualize job crafting as reaction to change in a proactive and participative fashion and, by doing so, provide an alternative to most of the contemporary research that focuses on resistance to change. Building on (Oreg et al. 2011) theoretical framework, we investigate the relationships between the individual, interpersonal, occupational, and organizational antecedents of job crafting as well as subsequent work-related and individual outcomes during organizational change. We find support for our conceptual model using multilevel data from a recent radical change affecting the German education sector (Walk and Handy 2016).

## Conceptualization of Reactions to Change

Besides Shaul's work on dispositional resistance to change, the notion of attitudinal resistance to change as discussed above also gained attention in the literature. For instance Georgalis et al. (2015) find that perceived justice (interpersonal,

informational and procedural) can be conceptualized as a mediator between the organizational context in the form of LMX, information, and participation and attitudinal resistance to change. Similarly, in two papers, van den Heuvel and colleagues investigate psychological contract fulfillment and attitudinal resistance to change (van den Heuvel and Schalk 2009; van den Heuvel et al. 2015). Findings indicate that psychological contract fulfillment is related to affective resistance to change, but not to behavioral or cognitive resistance (van den Heuvel and Schalk 2009). Moreover, the authors confirmed the mediating effect of psychological contract fulfillment, trust, and perceived need for change between change information and the three dimensions of attitudinal resistance to change (van den Heuvel et al. 2015).

As indicated in this section, Shaul's scholarship has inspired researchers to venture into new areas of organizational change. However, the approach I have chosen has some distinct limitations. First, it establishes the academic impact of Shaul's work, but might not adequately reflect the impact that his work has had on practitioners. Second, even though this method accounts for some of the "time since publication"-bias, newer works, especially articles that were recently published (e.g., Oreg et al. 2016), are not reflected here.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Future Steps and Research Trajectories

So far, I have addressed Shaul's inspirations and influences, summarized his key contributions, and assessed the impact of his work on others. This final section is dedicated to possible future trajectories for these lines of research.

Some of Shaul's ongoing work further builds on the notion of dispositional resistance to change. For instance, together with Noga Sverdlik, Shaul translates the individual-level resistance to change disposition to the cultural level, exploring the dimensionality of societies' orientation toward stability versus change. They use this societal concept to predict national indexes of economic, technological, and social change (Sverdlik, personal communication). In another, ongoing, project Shaul is focusing on the conceptualization of context and has adopted a lexical approach for identifying the fundamental dimensions of psychological situations. One particular direction this line of work could take would be to explore the core attributes of change situations (rather than of the responses to change). Moreover, as noted above, Shaul and colleagues (Oreg et al. 2016) developed a new conceptual framework in which they present a circumplex of responses to change. Moving forward, this conceptual model sets the course for several future avenues for exploration and testing.

This most recent work also exemplifies Shaul's development as a critical thinker. In his earlier work he has used the term "resistance to change" which corresponded with how the literature had discussed responses to change at that time. Over the years, however, inspired by other scholars (Bartunek et al. 2006; Dent and Goldberg

1999; Ford et al. 2008), Shaul adopted other terms such as "attitudes toward change," "reactions to change," "ambivalence toward change," and more recently, "responses to change," to account for the possibility change recipients are not simply passive "reactors."

A fascinating aspect of Shaul's research trajectory is the fact that his father's resistance to change Internet providers constituted the initial spark for his research career. And Shaul confirms, "Despite my belief in the role of personality, clearly so much of what happens to us is determined by luck and circumstances." When asked how his father scored on the resistance to change scale, Shaul responded: "He has not taken the RTC, but maybe he should."

## Conclusion

This chapter outlined how Shaul Oreg's theorizing and research significantly contributes to contemporary thinking in organizational change research. Shaul is a promising emerging thinker and I am sure that his curiosity for understanding individual behavior during change processes will continue to drive him to explore organizational change research in creative and innovative ways.

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Abraham B. (Rami) Shani

### Abstract

William "Bill" A. Pasmore's journey to date is all about the joy of navigating
between academy and industry. Since completing his B.S.I.M at Purdue Univer-
sity in 1973, he held positions and had appointments in both universities and
firms. As this chapter is written, Bill holds a professor of practice, organization,
and leadership appointment at Teachers College, Columbia University, and senior
vice president and advisor to CEOs, boards, and executive team position at the
Center for Creative Leadership. Bill is recognized by scholars and practitioners
alike for his continuous contributions. His contributions during the past four
decades to the field of organizational science, applied behavioral science, and
managerial practice are both extensive and deep. The first book that he co-edited
with Jack Sherwood *Sociotechnical Systems: A Sourcebook* (1978) was one of the
first books to clearly define the field of sociotechnical systems. In 1988 and 1994
he further advanced his contribution to sociotechnical system theory and practice
by completing two books titled *Designing Effective Organization: The Socio-
technical System Perspective* and *Creating Strategic Change: Designing the
Flexible Hugh-Performing Organization.* The annual volumes Research in Orga-
nization Change and Research that were co-edited by Bill and Dick Woodman
(the first volume was published in 1987) established a special platform for
scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners to share new thought-provoking
research-based insights that continue today (with Volume 25 planned to be
published in 2017). He continued his contribution by serving as the editor for
the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 2011–2016. Bill has devoted the last

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forty years to studying change, assisting with change, and leading change in organizations as a scholar-practitioner. This manuscript captures Bill's past and present trajectory with some promising future milestones as he continues to navigate in the borderland of academy and industry.

## Contents

## Introduction

The contribution of William "Bill" A. Pasmore, a professor of practice, organization, and leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University, and senior vice president and advisor to CEOs, boards, and executive teams for the Center for Creative Leadership, is recognized by scholars and practitioners alike. The first two articles that he published in Decision Sciences on group decision making and the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* in 1976, a comparison of the effectiveness of different approaches to change, established the trajectory for Bill's contribution and impact that continues. The annual volumes Research in Organization Change and Research that were co-edited by Bill and Dick Woodman (the first volume was published in 1987) established a special platform for scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners to share new thought-provoking research-based insights that continue today (with Volume 25 planned to be published in 2017). Bill continued his contribution by serving as the editor for the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 2011–2016. Bill worked and collaborated with many colleagues and CEOs of global Fortune 1000 firms on a wide array of challenges such as change, leadership, senior team development, and organization design. Throughout his career he traveled and worked in the border between academy and industry and as such had an impact on both. His contribution to the field was recognized recently by the Academy of Management that institutionalized an Annual Pasmore-Woodman Award in honor of change scholars who have exhibited exceptional collaboration in their work together.

## Influences and Motivations: Collaboration as the Source of Learning and Change

Great thinkers in the field of organization development and change have had diverse connections, experiences, and academic backgrounds that triggered and influenced their motivation. In Dr. William (Bill) A. Pasmore's case, the initial attraction was the desire to do something to address the quality of work life for people in manufacturing in the 1970s. In his first organizational behavior class, his professor and later mentor Don King taught a session that delved into life on the assembly line and pointed out that it did not have to be that way. Bill was moved by the issues and felt compelled to do something to help if he could. Eventually, it led to his study of sociotechnical systems and the groundbreaking work of Eric Trist and his colleagues in the UK who had explored alternatives to traditional work arrangements.

Bill has devoted the last forty years to studying change, assisting with change, and leading change in organizations as a scholar-practitioner. Following the completion of his Bachelor of Science in Aeronautical Engineering and Industrial Management at Purdue University, the invitation to join Purdue's doctoral program provided the early exposure to the field of organization development (OD) theory, practice, and consulting. Bill received his doctorate in administrative sciences from the Krannert Graduate School of Management at Purdue University in 1976. Early on, Don King, a professor at Purdue active in OD consulting, and Jack Sherwood became Bill's mentors, close colleagues, and collaborators. For the next 15 years, Jack and Bill published together, designed, and led sociotechnical systems (STS) workshops and worked on a variety of change efforts in organizations.

As part of his early exposure to the field of STS, Bill also made a number of trips to visit the Tavistock Institute in search of more information about the research that Eric and others had done. Eric, by then, had moved to the USA, where Bill met him in a project they were both involved in at General Foods. At the Tavistock, Hal Murray and others were helpful in explaining the dual focus of the Tavistock on groups and sociotechnical systems. By the time Eric departed, it seems the group side, initiated by Bion, had "won out," and there was little to be found in writing about the early research on work systems. Fortunately, Eric filled this gap by publishing two volumes on the work-related research of Tavistock which tell the story.

Eric Trist became an intellectual inspiration. In Bill's words, "Eric Trist was a mentor, although I didn't get to spend as much time with him as I would have liked." Learning with Eric Trist and Fred Emery about the history and ideas behind STS established the theoretical foundation for Bill's work over the next four decades.

Joining the faculty at the Department of Organizational Behavior, Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), served as a key milestone. Professor Suresh Srivastva was an early influence on Bill's writing (his advice was quality, not quantity) and consulting. Suresh saw "the potential in me and supported me in his role as chairman." Other colleagues were also influential: especially Frank Friedlander from an OD perspective and Dave Brown from a global social change perspective. The collaboration with Frank resulted in a milestone

study about an action research project at GE that was published in Administrative Science Quarterly (ASQ) (Pasmore and Friedlander 1982). Later, David Cooperrider and Bill began to work collaboratively on both appreciative inquiry and social innovation (see Cooperrider and Pasmore 1991a, b). Partnership with Paul Tolchinsky (a colleague from the Purdue days; see Pasmore and Tolchinsky 1989), Al Fitz, Gary Frank, Barry Morris, and Bob Rheem evolved in the formation of consulting firms that led to inventions of change and development interventions, such as the "Fast Cycle Full Participation Process," to transform workplaces. Two sabbatical periods at INSEAD, Fontainebleau France, and Stanford University provided additional insights about the role that OD can play in transforming the workplace. At INSEAD, Bill taught a course with forty students from twenty-five different countries but not a single American. At a time when everyone was writing about taking businesses global, it was clear that American MBA students were missing the opportunity to *be* global. Learning from people who lived a different cultural experience became a passion for Bill. At Stanford, Bill taught a T-group-based course in human relations with David Bradford, which was the most popular elective in the MBA program at the time. It was interesting to Bill that the extremely bright students at Stanford were interested in developing self-awareness, while his Midwestern students at Case tended to view self-reflection as torture. Bill realized that there are people in the world who are ready for change and there are those who are not. The same applies to leaders in industry, of course, and Bill sought to work with leaders who were change oriented versus change resistant whenever he could.

Following twenty years as an academic at CWRU, Bill embarked in 1997 on a transition from mostly academic-based to more consulting-based work (see, e.g., Carucci and Pasmore 2002a, b; Pasmore and Torres 2004, 2006a, b). Ten years with the Delta Consulting Group, where David Nadler became a friend and mentor to Bill, then led to taking on a new challenge in 2008 as senior vice president and global organizational practice leader for the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). Former Admiral John Ryan, CCL's president, supported Bill's efforts to build the new practice there (see, e.g., Pasmore et al. 2010; Cross et al. 2013).

Later, ongoing conversations with Warner Burke, a friend and a mentor who was instrumental at several points in Bill's career, resulted in an invitation to return to academia. In 2010, after a brief negotiation with his boss at CCL that allowed him to keep his position there on a part-time basis, Bill joined the faculty at Teachers College at Columbia University as a professor of practice. Bill claims, "Now, I'm fortunate to have great colleagues like Debra Noumair and Warner Burke at Columbia, and Rami Shani at Cal Poly." Throughout the last four decades, Dick Woodman (another friend from Purdue) has remained Bill's closest writing/publishing colleagues.

## Key Contributions: Sociotechnical Systems and Beyond

Bill started out in the area of sociotechnical systems design. "The sociotechnical system perspective considers every organization to be made up of people (the social system) using tools, techniques and knowledge (the technical system) to produce

goods or services valued by customers (who are a part of the organization's external environment" (Pasmore 1988, p. 1). His concerns for quality of working life issues have drawn Bill to explore insights from the applied behavioral sciences (see, e.g., Pasmore 1976; Pasmore and King 1978; Pasmore and Nemiroff 1975; Ford et al. 1977; Pasmore et al. 1978). His vast contributions to the field can be clustered into six categories: his contribution to STS thinking and practice, the theory of action research, the theory of non-routine/knowledge work design, leadership strategy and leading complex organizations, training students in OD at different levels and in different institutions, and editorial work on the *Research in Organizational Change and Development* series (20 volumes, 1987–2012; see Pasmore and Woodman and Woodman and Pasmore 1987–2012) and the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (2011–2016; see Pasmore 2011–2016).

The early work of Kurt Lewin regarding change and planned change, coupled with the work of Eric Trist, Fred Emery, and Lou Davis on sociotechnical systems, served as the foundation and point of departure for Bill's work. His contributions to STS theory and practice provided both empirical rigor and practical relevance. For example, the comprehensive comparative review of 132 STS experiments provided an empirical illustration of the impact of STS interventions (Pasmore et al. 1982); the compilation of STS manuscripts as a source book provided a conceptual map of the field. The source book was organized into six sections: organizations as socio-technical systems, working with the organization as open system, STS theory, STS diagnosis, STS change, and STS studies – what do we really know and perspectives on STSs (Pasmore and Sherwood 1978). Pasmore's book *Designing Effective Organizations: A The Sociotechnical Systems perspective* provided conceptual clarity of STS theory and practice and made the concepts accessible to a wider audience while summarizing the research evidence to demonstrate its effectiveness (Pasmore 1988).

The emerging challenges of knowledge work resulted in the need to develop a new theory of organization, management, design, and change. Building on the basic notion that social plus technical change is more powerful than social change alone provided a platform from which the design of non-routine/knowledge work can be explored. Dr. Pasmore illustrated in a set of studies that by applying STS thinking to the design and redesign of knowledge work enhanced collaboration and outcomes (see, e.g., Pasmore and Gurley 1991; Pasmore and Woodman 1997; Pasmore and Purser 1993; Purser and Pasmore 1992; Purser et al. 1992; Pasmore 1994a).

For Bill, the evolution of STS, action research (AR), and collaborative management research (CMR) theory and practice have a lot in common. The STS school was heavily influenced by Lewin's approach to action research, with Bion's theories about leaderless groups and Bertalanffy's work on system thinking. As such, Pasmore contributed to STS, AR, and CMR both theoretical and practical development by making the links and the interplay clearer (see, e.g., his article titled "AR in the workplace: The STS perspective," Pasmore 1982a, and other works (Pasmore 1982b, 1983, 1994a, 1998; Pasmore and Khalsa 1993; Pasmore 2001). The study that Pasmore and Friedlander conducted at GE also illustrated the fact that AR is a foundational pillar of an STS intervention (Pasmore and Friedlander 1982). In collaboration with Rami Shani, Pasmore also advanced a theory of the AR process

(Shani and Pasmore 1985). This collaboration served to trigger the quest to gain new insights about "collaboration" and "action" while conducting an engaged research process. In an STS change effort, a high level of engagement occurs between the scholar-practitioner and the system. Staying true to AR and collaborative management research (CMR), this collaboration means that researchers and practitioners co-design, co-implement, co-evaluate and engage in joint sensemaking, and co-generate knowledge (Coghlan 2011). Researchers and practitioners are both co-researchers and co-subjects, in that they research together as partners, and what they research is their collaborative endeavor. This orientation was further crystalized in the commentary that Dr. Pasmore wrote describing ten different change effort partnerships between industry-academia based on a variety of collaborative approaches reported in the *Collaborative Research in Organizations* book (Pasmore 2004) and the *Handbook of Collaborative Management Research* that he co-led and co-edited (see Pasmore et al. 2008; Shani et al. 2008).

Bill's continued fascination with change and leading change led to the development of major contributions with new perspectives about the development of organizational agility capability, leadership strategy, and most recently, leading complex, continuous change. His shift to the application of sociotechnical systems thinking to non-manufacturing settings, involving knowledge work and non-routine tasks like R&D, also led to a book on organizational agility called *Creating Strategic Change: Designing the flexible, high-performing organization*. This contribution was intended as a resource to guide thinking about evolving organizational forms. Pasmore claims that building the capability to create flexible, high-performance, learning organization is the secret to gaining competitive advantage in a world that will not stand still (see, e.g., Simendinger and Pasmore 1984, Pasmore 1986, 1994a, 2011; Rao and Pasmore 1989). After joining The Center for Creative Leadership, Pasmore authored a paper on leadership strategy that argued that leadership development efforts had to tie directly to an organization's future strategy. Today, this assertion has become widely accepted across the leadership development industry (Pasmore and Lafferty 2009; Horney et al. 2010).

More recently, Bill wrote a book on leading continuous change and how that requires different approaches than classic OD (Pasmore 2015). The book presents a "4D" framework (discovering, deciding, doing, and discerning) that can enable leaders and their organizations to deal with multiple changes simultaneously.

His most recent publication is a measure of change leadership behaviors that can be used to provide leaders with feedback and development (Stilwell et al. 2016). He is currently working on a book about how organizations can use technology to enable collaboration in the digital age, with two colleagues from the French consulting firm Theano, Michel Zarka, and Elena Kochanovskaya.

One of Professor Pasmore's major contributions to the field and a common thread of the past four decades is his high level of engagement in training, developing, and mentoring students in OD – both in university-based programs and executive education. For example, he was the director of the masters in OD program at CWRU and director of undergrad education in management for two years at CWRU. Pasmore also supervised over 25 doctoral theses and served on the committees of over
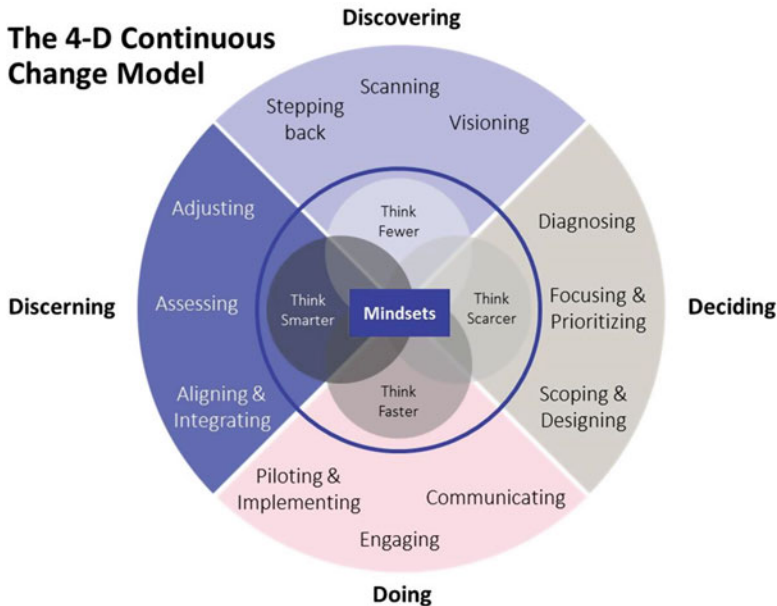
**Fig.1** The 4D change model (From Pasmore 2015)

50 doctoral theses. He taught in the MBA and executive program in organizational change at Stanford and the MBA program at INSEAD. Bill organized and led many seminars and workshops, for example, the NTL Senior Managers' Conference with his colleague John Carter for four years (1987–1992), the Sociotechnical System Design for Total Quality workshop that was offered over 50 times (1979–1994), and the Fast Cycle Full Participation STS Design workshop (1993–1996). Pasmore also co-led seminars on collaborative research methodologies at the Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden, and the Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy (Fig. 1).

Many of his doctoral students and colleagues have extended Dr. Pasmore's work. For example, Ram Tenkasi, today a full professor, is producing work around knowledge work; Professor Ron Purser conducted research and produced a book on search conferences with Merrilyn Emery; Jean Neumann has continued to publish on work and organization design and enhancing meaningful participation in change; and Rami Shani, a full professor, continues to push the boundaries in STS, AR, and CMR while working in the USA and the global arena. Many of Professor Pasmore's master's students and a few doctoral students are working in organizations as OD change agents. Recent students Alan Friedman (master's student) and Kate Roloff (doctoral student) are studying the traits that make physician leaders effective, and Rebecca Stilwell and DaHee Shon (doctoral students) have written about assessing change leader behaviors.

Perhaps Professor Pasmore's most influential contribution to the field is the editorial and developmental role that he has played in the creation and diffusion of

knowledge. Out of many, two major contributions stand out: co-editor of *Research in Organizational Change and Development* and serving as the editor of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*. Together, he and Dick Woodman were the founding editors of the series *Research in Organizational Change and Development* and co-edited 20 volumes over 25 years (1987–2012). The first annual research volume in *Organization Change and Development* was published by JAI Press in 1987. Since then, *ROCD* has provided a special platform for scholars and practitioners to share new research-based insights. In conjunction with the new volume every year, Pasmore and Woodman also led a symposium at the Academy of Management annual conference that has become an integral part of the ODC division program in which division members have the opportunity to meet with authors of the upcoming volume. The symposium participants ranged from 75 to 150 division members, and the sessions created lively engagement and dialogue with the authors in small groups. The "give and take" at these symposia sessions over the years has advanced our collective understanding of current issues facing the field and triggered ongoing conversations throughout the meeting. Due to Pasmore and Woodman's tireless effort, *Research in Organization Change and Development* developed a tradition of providing insightful, thought-provoking, and cutting-edge chapters. The chapters in each volume represent a commitment to maintaining the high quality of work that members of the OD&C community have come to expect from this publication.

Pasmore also served as the editor of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*. He took on the role of *JABS* editor in 2010 and served in this position between 2010 and 2016. Under Pasmore's leadership, *JABS* continued to develop, enhanced its quality and distribution, and increased its place in the journal ratings. *JABS* continues to serve as one of the leading journals in the field of organization development and change today. Being engaged as a developmental coach and mentor work while editing a journal is a complex and challenging task. Beyond the added value to the field's knowledge, according to some, Professor Pasmore has set the bar at a higher level and created a new standard.

## Emerging New Insights: The Impact of Collaboration

As a scholar-practitioner, Dr. Pasmore led a wide variety of collaborative projects. Some of the projects that shaped his ideas, theories, and future paths include a project with the Army Research Institute; the R&D Forum that included a number of companies including P&G, where a long-term study was undertaken; the USAID-sponsored Social Innovations in Global Management project with David Cooperrider; a five-year consulting project with Unilever; various CEO succession and board projects; a leadership strategy development project with Kao brands; the GE project with Frank Friedlander; and work redesign efforts at Polaroid, General Foods, and Levi Strauss.

The work with GE to understand and prevent injuries was instrumental in gaining some new insights about integrating STS thinking with AR practice (see Pasmore

and Friedlander 1982). The project funded by the Army Research carried out a study about the utilization of STS thinking in the design and redesign of military units. The Institute funded the project with the U.S. Army to experiment with STS design in an IT unit in Germany for three years. This collaborative effort also resulted in new theoretical insights on using STS in knowledge work environments (see, e.g., Pasmore et al. 1983; Pasmore 1982a, b, 1984). Some of the collaborators on the academic side included Marty Kaplan, Barry Morris, Rami Shani, and David Cooperrider (see, e.g., Pasmore et al. 1982; Pasmore 1983; Pasmore et al. 1983). The new insights about STS design for non-routine work led in part to the creation of the R&D Forum, which was established to bring together R&D firms interested in improving knowledge work. P&G was a member, and the work with them spanned 10 years and produced a couple of dissertations. Ron Purser, Ram Tenkasi, Kathy Gurley, and Bruce Hanson were engaged at various times (see, e.g., Pasmore and Fagans 1992, 1994; Pasmore and Purser 1993; Purser and Pasmore 1992; Purser et al. 1992).

The social innovation project co-led with David Cooperrider and funded by USAID took the research team to India and Africa on numerous occasions to understand how to apply a combination of appreciative inquiry and future search methods in order to strengthen NGO (non-governmental organizations) leadership (see Cooperrider and Pasmore 1991a). Using appreciative inquiry, leaders of NGOs were brought together to learn how to strengthen the aspects of their organizations that gave them life and purpose. Bill also used search conference methodologies to help NGOs in India, Africa, and Sri Lanka collaborate more effectively with government and industry partners.

The work that Bill carried out while at Delta Consulting with Unilever on organization redesign and post-merger integration evolved into a 5-year project that involved facilitating change at every level. The CEO (Charles Strauss) and head of HR (Nigel Hurst) were tremendous client partners (see, e.g., Carucci and Pasmore 2002a, b). The project involve the post-merger integration of three companies into one, which involved organizational redesign at the strategic and operational level, resulting in significant improvements in processes, product innovation, consumer insights, and profitability.

Bill also worked on various CEO succession and board projects while with Delta. This work brought Bill into the world of the executive and more strategic change. David Nadler, Rick Ketterer, Roselinde Torres, Rick Hardin, and others were guides and collaborators during these engagements. Bill helped clients understand that succession and board decisions of various kinds involved both rational and emotional elements and that to ignore either was a mistake. Today, we would use the language of covert processes to describe the emotional component of these important group processes.

Finally, while at CCL, the work with Kao Brands demonstrated the power of creating a leadership strategy that went beyond leadership development as a series of programs, but instead looked at leadership in a holistic way, and integrated work on the organization's culture and talent to adapt to evolving business strategies. A former client from Unilever (Jim Conti) moved to Kao and became Bill's client,

along with one of the CCL sales people who went to Kao to take an internal HR position (Martin McCarthy). This work allowed Kao to expand its operations globally without losing a sense of what made its leadership culture unique. In addition, the focus placed on leadership development had the added benefit of greatly increasing the retention rate of individuals hired into new leadership positions.

The common denominator across all the key projects and the diverse and numerous corporations was the commitment to gain new insights about current challenges in the workplace. Some examples of these include STS/work design projects with Levi Strauss, Polaroid, General Foods, Nabisco, and Amoco Pipeline that impacted both practice and theory development; action research with GE; knowledge work/ R&D with P&G, BMS, Goodyear, Monsanto, and Corning; organization redesign with Unilever, US Navy, United Airlines, GE, and Storage Tek; CEO succession/ board effectiveness with Massachusetts Mutual, Compuware, PepsiCo, Thrivent Financial, and Walmart; and leadership strategy with Kao, Nova Chemicals, Kauffman Foundation. Another common denominator across the projects is that they all explored alternative solutions, carried out work relevant to practice, were reflective in nature, and met scientific rigor. Bill's collaborative inquiry style, the humble inquiry orientation (see Schein 2013), and the establishment of collaborative learning communities led to projects that had major impact both on knowledge creation and practice.

Bill's practice is true to his view and definition of collaborative management research, namely, "Collaborative management research is an effort by two or more parties, at least one of whom is a member of an organization or system under study and at least one of whom is an external researcher, to work together in learning about how the behavior of managers, management methods, or organizational arrangements affect outcomes in the system or systems under study, using methods that are scientifically based and intended to reduce the likelihood of drawing false conclusions from the data collected, with the intent of both proving performance of the system and adding to the broader body of knowledge in the field of management" (Pasmore et al. 2008, p. 20).

The CMR approach refers to a stream within the action research family that has been identified as a potent method for advancing scientific knowledge and bringing about change in organizations. At the most basic level, CMR orientation claims that by bringing management and researchers closer together, the rate of progress in understanding and addressing issues such as creativity, innovation, growth, change, organizational effectiveness, economic development, and sustainable development will be faster than if either managers or researchers approached these topics separately.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: The Joy of Continuous Impact of Meaning Creation

As noted previously, Bill's unfinished work is focused on the future. Some of the issues facing many organizations today include digital disruption, a change in working arrangements to "contributors" versus employees, faster and more

significant technological advances, global competition, and the real threat of climate change. To face these challenges will require completely new thinking about organization design, which in turn will make new demands on leaders that will change the ways in which they think and behave. Working with the innovation team at CCL, colleagues in the French consulting firm Theano, and his students at Columbia, Bill is undertaking an ambitious effort to build centers for the future in both healthcare and industry. The purpose of the centers will be to promote collaborative research and practice in creating future ways of working. The centers, which operate virtually now, would become physical locations where people could gather to learn and share insights from practice if Bill has his way. Of course, he recognizes that life does not go on forever and that there is "So much to do with so little time." Bill doesn't anticipate retiring any time soon and has books, consulting projects, and research underway. He enjoys his multiple affiliations and values his colleagues above everything else with regard to his professional life. "As long as I can work on interesting projects with great people, I'm happy," he says.

## Proudest Moments as a Scholar-Practitioner

Bill identified key moments in which he was proud as a scholar-practitioner. One such moment was when an assembly line worker came to him at a conference and thanked him personally for changing his life, because of what he had written and how his company had used it to make his work more meaningful. Another was when one of his students wrote to tell him about the success they were having in their career. Yet another was when a CEO client told him that she so looked forward to their time together.

One of the standout moments was being honored by his colleagues at the Academy of Management with the creation of an annual award to be given in Dick Woodman's and his name, to researchers who do outstanding, long-lasting collaborative work together. In his words, "It's really something when your colleagues notice the effort you have put in. For me, it was like the Academy Awards, only they named the Oscar after us."

One thing that Bill hopes people would remember about his contribution to OD is that he never stopped learning, exploring what is new, and trying to add more to the field. He did not get stuck in a single paradigm or methodology. In his own words, "I think I have always been a teacher and a learner and tried not to let my success go to my head. There's so much more we need to know. Of course, I'm not finished – I'm as excited now about what I'm working on as anything in my career."

Bill believes that the challenges the field faced at the beginning are still out there. "It's hard for us to be critical about what needs improvement in organizations and the world and not have that make people in positions of authority a little nervous." He argues that people in the field can and should appreciate what's good and empathize with leaders but still have to make it better; and that's not always easy. He wishes the next generation greater resourcefulness, greater wisdom, and the continued courage to avoid taking the easy way out. The world is full of significant challenges to tackle, from global warming to peace, poverty, and hunger. "Maybe the next generation,

with its attitude that anything is possible and with the help of technology, can do what we've as yet been unable to do." Bill is working with his long-time colleague Dick Woodman on a chapter for Research in Organization Development and Change that will spell out issues the field needs to address. "Too much of what we are researching and writing about in our journals is based on questions that were asked in the 1960s. It's time we advanced our thinking to make the issues critical to the future, not the past," he says.

Of course, he is also an editor, along with David Szabla and Mary Barnes, of this volume on Great Thinkers in the field. Despite Bill's critique of the current state of the field, he believes the field has a proud history and that new students should know more about the people and ideas behind it.

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# Andrew M. Pettigrew: A Groundbreaking Process Scholar

## Harry Sminia

### Abstract

This chapter positions Andrew Pettigrew as a process scholar. It describes his work of catching "reality in flight" as he investigated the continuity and change, which is involved in subject areas like the politics of organizational decision-making, organizational culture, fundamental strategic change, human resource management, competitiveness, the workings of boards of directors, and new organizational forms. The chapter also describes the research methodology of contextualism that Andrew Pettigrew developed to capture "reality in flight." It discusses the extent to which Andrew Pettigrew succeeded and how his research program could be developed further.

### Keywords

Process • Contextualism • Strategic change • Politics • Impact

## Contents

Is Andrew Pettigrew a "change thinker"? Asking this question is not meant to start an argument whether he should be included in this book or not. It actually serves the purpose of pinpointing why he should be included. Pettigrew is not a "change thinker" in that he aimed to understand the phenomenon of "change" in its own right.

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His prime motivation was to understand "process" as it happens. His research questions are not about how or why change happens or what change is in a general sense. They are about why particular change did happen while other change did not. In doing so, he conducted research on decision-making, organizational culture, organization development, strategy formation, human resource management, competitiveness, health services, public management, corporate governance, and new organizational forms. He is interested in the larger process of continuity and change, as the subtitle of Pettigrew's landmark book, *The Awakening Giant: Continuity and Change in ICI*, aptly indicates (Pettigrew 1985a). In doing so, he generated a number of insights that are relevant for understanding change and change management. And he developed the research methodology of contextualism as a way to investigate change.

## Influences and Motivations: Close Scrutiny of Real Problems

Andrew Pettigrew's research career started properly in 1966. In the UK, business schools were in the process of being established. He had graduated with a sociology degree and a postgraduate diploma in industrial administration from the University of Liverpool. His first academic job was as research fellow on a project instigated by Enid Mumford, who had just moved from Liverpool to the newly established Manchester Business School (MBS). She also acted as his dissertation supervisor with Andrew earning his PhD in 1970. In this project, he uncovered the political nature of organizational decision-making (Pettigrew 1970, 1973).

In those early years, there were various influences that affected Pettigrew's research orientation. In fact, his first experience as a researcher was on an anthropological expedition to Uganda when the young Andrew was still at school. He helped charting cultural change among the Musopisiek people of the Sebei. It was this experience that taught him the importance of getting close to the action to understand what is going on, but also about the contextual nature of social phenomena. This was perpetuated at Liverpool, where the sociology that was being established there was theoretically informed but problem-orientated empiricism but also assumed the presence of conflict and change. It continued at MBS with Enid Mumford doing her research in coal mines and the port of Liverpool in this tradition. Pettigrew's study of managers while they were making their decisions was conducted in a similar manner. He went in and observed managers and their decision-making activity while it was going on, as Enid Mumford had done with the coal miners and with the Liverpool dockers. What he observed was far removed from the rationalistic ideal that was being propagated. He came out with a clear understanding of the inherently politicized nature of management.

Another profound influence was his time spent at Yale from 1969 to 1971, at the invitation of Chris Argyris. This he considers to be the most significant period of his career and indeed life (Pettigrew 1998). It strengthened Andrew Pettigrew's conviction that true understanding comes from being close to the phenomenon under study, as Chris Argyris always insisted that any new theoretical and therefore abstract idea

has to be explainable through concrete examples. Yale also exposed Andrew Pettigrew to a completely different research culture that was simultaneously collegial and competitive, and where status and success for an academic were indicated through a stream of journal publications.

If his PhD research taught Andrew Pettigrew about the politicized nature of management, his next project revealed the influence and importance of culture. It was set up as a study of change. It concerned the Gordonstoun School in Scotland, which changed from single sex to coeducation in 1972. He conducted a multi-method study, doing interviews with key people – including members of the Royal Family, conducting a survey among students and staff, analyzing documents, and investigating the history of the school, all to get close to the action and to find out how and why things were going on as they did. The findings pointed at the interactions between entrepreneurship/leadership and organization culture (Pettigrew 1979). Andrew Pettigrew again was ahead of the curve here, being one of the first to introduce the notion of organization culture, indicating that if we talk about organizational change, we can conceptualize it as cultural change.

One of the things that Andrew Pettigrew has urged people to do is to not only conduct research for its own sake but to also engage with and propagate the findings among management practitioners. One way of doing this is to publish articles in practitioner journals. In fact, it was a publication in a practitioner journal on the basis of his PhD thesis, which had attracted the attention of an OD consultant who was working in ICI. ICI at the time was the largest manufacturing firm in the UK, working mainly in the chemical industry. The process that Andrew Pettigrew had investigated for his PhD project concerned a succession of decisions about investing in and replacing computer systems. As part of this, he focused on the role of computer experts in the firm and their interactions with the managers who were making the decisions. One of the findings pointed at the phenomenon of the "experts" gaining influence and legitimacy on the basis of their involvement in the decisions and their effect on the outcome. The OD consultant reckoned a similar process was going on with the OD specialists and their effectiveness in ICI. OD was introduced to ICI in an attempt to make its management more effective, but the extent to which OD was taken up varied across the various ICI divisions. He asked Andrew Pettigrew whether he was interested to investigate.

The ICI project originally was about this question of how OD's influence and effectiveness varied across the various parts of ICI. It quickly grew into the larger question of how strategic change is realized. This project was eventually published in book form (Pettigrew 1985a) but with various other publications written on the back of it (e.g., Pettigrew 1987a, d, 1990). If anything, the ICI study put Andrew Pettigrew on the map. It also linked him with the strategic management field, contributing to making strategy process and strategic change research objects in their own right. Furthermore, it solidified his methodological approach of contextualism as a way to investigate change.

The "fame" and recognition that came with the ICI study allowed Andrew Pettigrew to establish a research center. After he came back from the USA in

1971, he became a lecturer at London Business School. In 1976, he took up a professorship in organizational behavior at the University of Warwick. This is where he established the Centre for Corporate Strategy and Change (CCSC) in 1985.

The center embarked upon a range of research projects, all utilizing his contextualist methodology. These projects were conducted by research teams, with many of its members going on to become well-recognized management scholars in their own right. These projects took on big questions like the usefulness and development of strategic human resource management (Pettigrew et al. 1990), competitiveness and strategic change (Pettigrew and Whipp 1991), continuity and change in the British National Health Service (NHS) (Pettigrew et al. 1992), new public management (Ferlie et al. 1996), the functioning and effectiveness of boards of directors (McNulty and Pettigrew 1999; Pettigrew and McNulty 1998), and new and innovative forms of organizing (Pettigrew and Fenton 2000; Pettigrew et al. 2003). All these projects were very timely, in effect investigating phenomena in the making but also right at the heart of what were then contemporary issues in management scholarship and in (British) society. Apart from conducting relevant research, in this way Andrew Pettigrew was also able to generate interest and secure funding.

Andrew Pettigrew expressed his eagerness of getting close to understanding what is going on as wanting to "catch reality in flight" (Pettigrew 1998). It is about getting to grips with the process by which things emerge. This implies change but also continuity. The way to do this, he reckons, is to engage with these phenomena in the making (i.e., Schwarz and Stensaker 2014). Management scholarship should not be this detached activity that just aims to explain. It should be about cocreation and engagement, about solving problems and generating insight that is relevant (Pettigrew 1997a, 2001a, 2005). This is reflected in his choice of research topics. He asks big questions. Only explicitly explained as such with the research project on innovative forms of organization (Pettigrew 2003), all of these topics were scrutinized for their progress (is the phenomenon spreading and what shape does it take?), process (how is the phenomenon coming into being?), and performance (what are its effects?). Ideally, it is about "big themes" investigated by "big teams." It is about how particular changes are brought about, instead of how change in a general sense can be achieved.

Andrew Pettigrew left Warwick in 2003, taking up the position of Dean of the University of Bath School of Management. CCSC had been dissolved in 2001. He moved to the University of Oxford Saïd Business School in 2008, becoming a Professor of strategy and organization, from which he retired in January 2016. At Bath, he would say, he had to practice what he preached. He saw his tenure there as having to reinvigorate what was essentially a good school into a world-class business school. He also became a bit more reflective, involving himself with an EFMD initiative on the future development of business schools (Pettigrew et al. 2014), as well as publishing on the relevance of management scholarship (Pettigrew 2001a, 2011b).

## Key Contributions: Contextuality in Process Courses and Outcomes

It is not easy to pick Andrew Pettigrew's main contributions, as there are so many. Yet all his works center on two interrelated themes. One is theoretical in wanting to understand the course and outcome of processes of continuity and change. The other one is methodological in developing contextualism as a research methodology to generate this understanding.

Starting with his dissertation (Pettigrew 1970, 1973), he found the process of continuity and change to be very much of a political-cultural nature. What he observed was that decision-making is an essentially social and political process. It features complexity, uncertainty, and diverging interest and demands. This he captured later with the expression "*politics as the management of meaning*" (Pettigrew 1985a, p. 44). He recognizes that people basically act to further a cause they have an interest in, but do so within the confines of an existing social structure or context. However, this context does not just act to channel people's activities. It is actively drawn upon to legitimize claims and interests, and in doing so becomes a target and subject for change as well.

Management activity is therefore stratified in that it aims to achieve certain ends – the surface layer – and in doing so confirms or changes the social structure or context, the deeper layer, within which this takes place (cf. Sminia and de Rond 2012). People who want to be effective as a change agent have to be proficient in playing this politics of meaning game. It also turns management and the ongoing process of continuity and change into a continuous contest between people who are content with how things are going on and people who favor a different way of how things could and should be going on. Recognizing that we are dealing with a struggle here, the way in which this is allowed to play out affects the outcome. For instance, a firm's competitiveness was found to depend on how it deals with this contest between change and continuity (Pettigrew and Whipp 1991). Likewise, the effectiveness of boards of directors depends on how the board process is allowed to play out, with boards that feature debate about the future direction of the firm getting better results than boards that just rubber-stamp decisions made by the executive team (McNulty and Pettigrew 1999; Pettigrew and McNulty 1998).

Andrew Pettigrew was arguing against the many management scholars who expected managers to be rational decision-makers and who saw organizational change as designing and implementing new organizational structures. The dominant understanding of how decision-making is and should be done was one of information processing and choice. He was also arguing against the behavioral approach (Cyert and March 1963; March and Simon 1958). To him, the behavioral approach put too much emphasis on the individual manager and on cognitive limitations. He observed decision-making as a social-cultural-political process, involving an organization's social structure as much as the interests and cognitive abilities of the participants.

This basic finding of continuity and change playing out within a context but also shaping the context resonates with other observations that distinguish between incremental and more fundamental and radical strategic change (e.g., Anderson and Tushman 1990; Argyris and Schön 1978; Burgelman 1983; Greenwood and Hinings 1988; Johnson 1988). Incremental change takes place within the confines of the social structure. "Real" strategic change involves alterations to the social structure. It reflects a dialectic (Van de Ven and Poole 1995) and structuration-like theory of process. It is remarkable that Andrew Pettigrew sketched out the contours of a structuration-like theory of management in his 1970 dissertation (Pettigrew 1970, 1973), well before Giddens (1976) was published. Andrew Pettigrew (1985a) later associated his stance with structuration sociologists like Giddens (1979), Sewell (1992), and Sztompka (1991).

Structuration refers to an approach in sociology that tries to marry the what appear to be contradictory explanations of social order as being a consequence of either individual initiative (agency) or collective interests and norms and values (social structure). Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984) developed the notion of "duality of structure," proposing that social structure constrains but also enables agency while simultaneously social structure only persists if the actions it specifies continue to be enacted. From a structuration point of view, agency and social structure therefore are seen as mutually constitutive.

It is therefore not surprising that Andrew Pettigrew is critical of much change research that he considers as being "ahistorical, acontextual, and aprocessual." He is wary of change methods and methodologies that claim to be universally applicable, as management in general, and therefore change management in particular, is very context sensitive and plays out as a unique concurrence of events. This is particularly apparent in his conclusions about the spread and use of OD in ICI (Pettigrew 1985a). He points at a paradox first put forward by Warmington et al. (1977) that to design an effective change program, one has to understand an organization's culture and power configuration, which one can only learn about in the course of embarking upon a change program. This is also apparent in his research into change in the British National Health Service (Pettigrew et al. 1992), where he develops the concept of a receptive context to change. In a similar vein, he contextualizes competitiveness within the way in which a firm deals with change over time (Pettigrew and Whipp 1991). The more sensitive the management of change is to the specific circumstances in which the change is playing out, the more effective the process will be.

In the course of doing his research into continuity and change – attempting to catch reality in flight – Andrew Pettigrew developed a research methodology that he labeled as contextualism (Pettigrew 1985a, b, 1987c, 1990, 1992, 1997b), a term derived from Pepper (1942). It is most succinctly described by way of the "Pettigrew triangle" (see Fig. 1). It requires the researcher to investigate the process of change over time while relating it to the context in which it plays out as well as the content of what is being changed, treating all three angles of the triangle as mutual constitutive. The methodology is longitudinal in nature, utilizing multiple methods to gather data while the process takes place, supplemented with historical data to understand where the process under observation is coming from. There is a direct link between
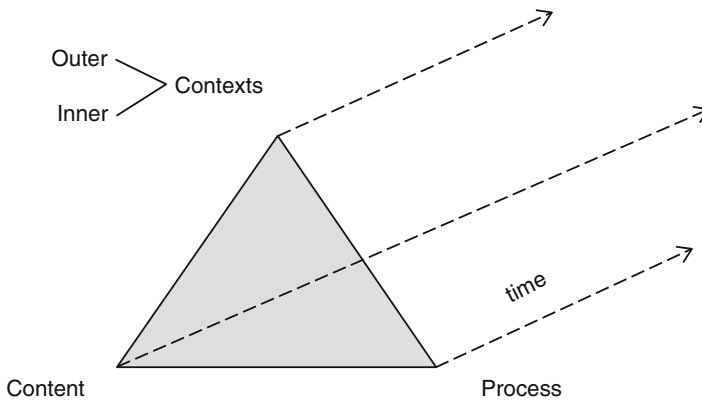
**Fig. 1** Framework for analyzing change (Source: Pettigrew lecture slides (April 2009))

contextualism as a methodology and the structuration-like process theory that Andrew Pettigrew employs.

The requirements of multisource, multi-data, and also multi-researcher teams, as the size and the scope of a project tend to exceed the capacities of a single investigator, however, are not a license to simply collect everything that comes into sight. This, as Andrew Pettigrew puts it, will only lead to data asphyxiation (Pettigrew 1990). To prevent this, firstly, data collection has to focus on the context and how it impinges on but is also affected by the course of events, on the process and how the course of events takes shape over time, and the content of what exactly is changing and what remains constant (Pettigrew 1985a, c).

Secondly, any data gathering exercise needs to be accompanied by a careful consultation of the existing literature, drawing on various different approaches to provide a first conceptual sketch about how the phenomena under study is currently understood. As was said earlier, Andrew Pettigrew prefers big questions about issues and problems that in effect refer to phenomena in the making like, for instance, strategic human resource management, new public management, or innovative organizational forms. Similarly, he is interested in how things like managerial decision-making, OD, strategic change, competitiveness, or board process actually play out while being enacted. The consultation of the literature generates a first understanding with regard to the phenomenon under study as well as expectations about its effects. It will also generate more specific questions, as it is not uncommon that the literature holds conflicting accounts, often features widely exaggerated claims about the effects, and very likely is ahistorical, acontextual, and aprocessual. These more specific questions then inform as well as limit the data collection efforts. Andrew Pettigrew favors a comparative case study design where similar processes of continuity and change but with different outcomes are scrutinized for differences in the course of the process.

A contextualist analysis consists of six activities (Pettigrew 1985a, c). To start, you are required to draft a detailed chronological description of the process under

study. Once that is done, you expose the continuity and change as it occurs in the course of the process. This then allows you to compare existing theoretical insights with the course of events to identify where current theory falls short. In the course of this, you have to distinguish between the various contextual levels at which the process plays out. As this is done, the initial chronology is redrafted to separate out what is occurring at each contextual level for the period under investigation. Finally, the outcome of the process has to be evaluated on the basis of how the course of the process has taken shape as interplay between these various contextual levels. Such an analysis is not a mechanical exercise of processing data to arrive at a conclusion. It requires judgment and skill. The criteria by which a contextualist analysis is judged center on the balance between description and analysis, whether there is new theoretical understanding, whether this new understanding is based on how the course of the process has taken shape, and how well the abstracted theoretical process account connects with the process data (Pettigrew 1985c).

These six activities then allow you to report on the findings in the way that Andrew Pettigrew normally does (Sminia 2016). For instance, in Pettigrew and Whipp (1991), the literature review in effect is a consultation of various strands of literature about competitiveness, with its limitations explained in a way that anticipates the findings of the research project. These findings and explanations in turn take shape in the form of providing short answers and long answers. The long answer here contains in-depth and mostly chronological accounts of the five cases that were investigated for the competitiveness project. This long answer illustrates, demonstrates, and justifies the short answer.

The short answer of how firm competitiveness relates to strategic change ability then introduces the new theoretical understanding that has come out. In this project, this is explained by way of a mechanism consisting of five interrelated factors (see Fig. 2; Pettigrew and Whipp 1991, 1993; Whipp and Pettigrew 1992; Whipp et al. 1989a, b). The five factors are "environmental assessment," "leading change," "linking strategic and operational change," "human resources as assets and liabilities," and "coherence." It refers to a process pattern that is shared among higher-performing firms. With regard to environmental assessment, organizations should be "open learning systems" that reinterpret the circumstances in which they operate. It should not be regarded as a technical exercise of information processing and dissemination. Leading change is about both providing small, incremental directions and generating legitimacy for change. Linking strategic and operational change is about emergent activity being embraced but linked with evolving intentions. A firm's human resource management should not treat people as liabilities but as assets. Finally coherence is about consonance, advantage, and feasibility and about safeguarding the integrity of the organization while it changes.

Another example presents a novel theoretical understanding about innovative forms of organizing (a verb) by way of a short answer in the form of a set of nine complementary activities (see Fig. 3; Pettigrew and Fenton 2000; Pettigrew et al. 2003; Whittington et al. 1999). Andrew Pettigrew found that these nine activities tend to have a mutually reinforcing effect and that the benefits of such an innovative organizational form will only be present when a firm goes for it wholeheartedly. This
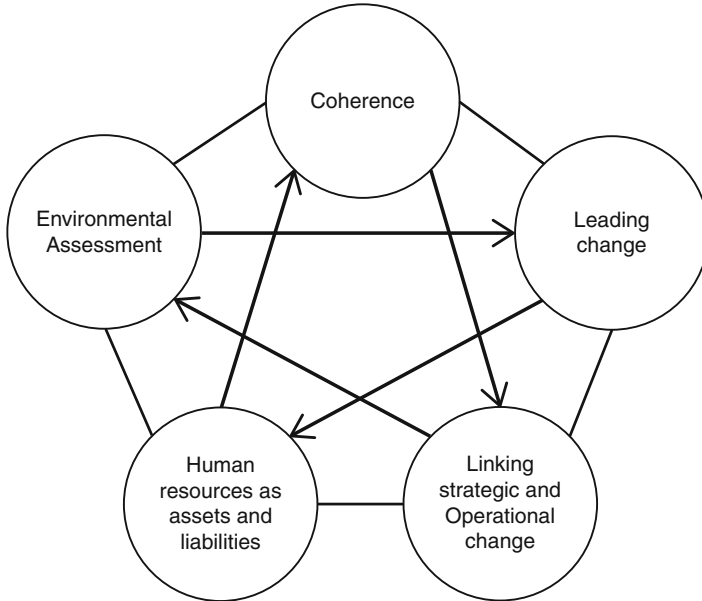
**Fig. 2** Managing change for competitive success: the five central factors (Source: Pettigrew and Whipp (1991, p. 104))

is because there is a positive complementarity, involving all of the elements of the new organizational form. There is a negative complementarity when firms limit themselves to only one or a few aspects, with the benefits failing to materialize and things even becoming worse. Again, there are also extensive long answers that provide the details of the various case studies, as well as theory reviews that consult and interrogate different strands of literature, expose their weaknesses, and to which the findings are compared.

## New Insights: Generality in the Specifics

Elaborating continuity and change in a structuration-like manner, putting (change) management forward as a process of politics of meaning, and developing a contextualist methodology that reflects the highly specific nature of each change process yield a number of new insights that on occasion contradict the prevailing orthodoxy.

The emphasis on context and the uniqueness of each process course plays down the importance of generalizability of research outcomes. There is a questioning of the presumption that management knowledge eventually will take on the form of generalizable theory and universally applicable change tools and methods. Very early on he argues against the variance approach and the expectation that "proper" research has to be about developing constructs, variables, and indicators, which have to be tested for
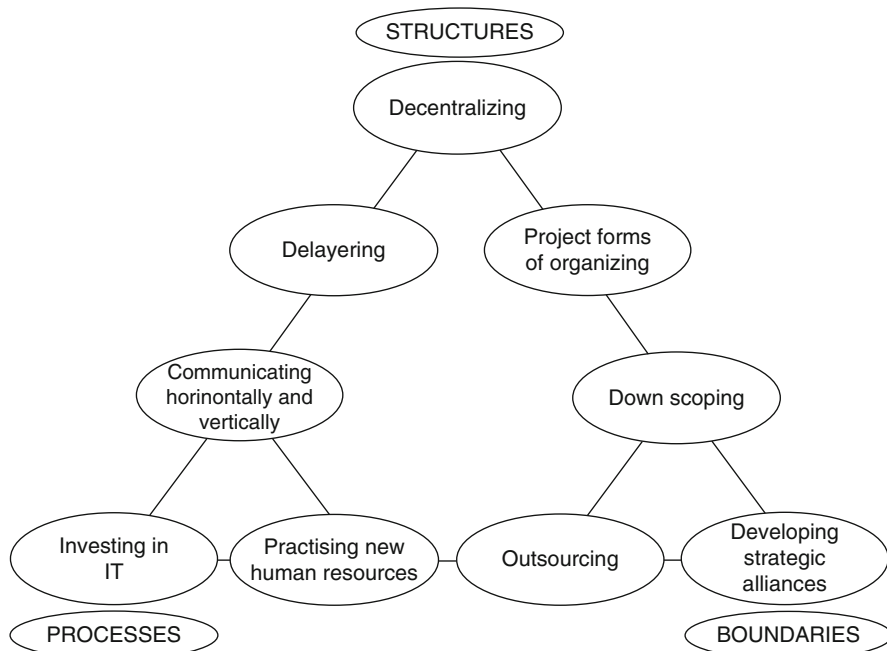
**Fig. 3** New forms of organizing: the multiple indicators (Source: Pettigrew and Massini (2003, p. 12))

their hypothesized relationships (Pettigrew 1973). Later in his career, he comments on the irony of this kind of research, not arriving at any definitive conclusions but instead prompting further research on more specific and fine-grained questions and boundary conditions, in effect validating his contextualist perspective (Pettigrew et al. 2002). It makes you wonder why generalizability is considered to be such a key indicator of research quality. Contextuality does not mean that management research is incapable of generating insights that are of relevance beyond the cases under investigation. It should be more about transferability and versatility than generalizability (Van de Ven 2007), about looking for the general in the specific than the generalizability of the specific. Some of Andrew Pettigrew's close collaborators in a number of his research projects have argued for external validity in terms of relevance for the people for whom the research is conducted (Ferlie and McNulty 1997).

It also puts the utilization of change management tools and techniques in perspective. The specific and contextual nature of (change) management means that any claim about an inherent and universal effect of a specific tool or technique has to be questioned. If there is an effect, it is a consequence of the interaction between the tool or technique, the way in which it was deployed, and the circumstances in which it was used. For instance, we found the utilization of large-scale intervention (LSI) – a bottom-up approach of realizing change throughout an organization as a whole (Bunker and Alban 1992) – in effect perpetuated the top-down culture that existed in

the organization in which it was applied (Sminia and van Nistelrooij 2006). The supposed effects inherent in LSI of generating change through dialogue were counteracted by contextual and emergent factors that shaped the course of the process. In another instance, despite carefully formulating a strategic plan as well as setting out and embarking upon the various steps by which it should be implemented, I observed that some skillful politics of meaning meant that the whole thing was abandoned within a year (Sminia 2005).

Cases like this can be easily dismissed as instances of bad management. Yet on reflection, they reveal the possibility of highly skillful change management practices by which a specific tool or technique is utilized in a context-sensitive manner (van Nistelrooij and Sminia 2010). For instance, dialogue can improve mutual understanding in an organization that is entrenched in various noncommunicating factions. The same exercise can also infuse an organization with a bit more variety and spice things up, when it is suffering from groupthink. In different contexts, with the change management tool keyed in differently, the process will generate different, albeit possibly favorable outcomes for each specific situation.

Contextuality not only refers to place but also to time. And as "times change," the problems and situations that managers have to deal with change as well. To Andrew Pettigrew, management scholarship therefore is not about uncovering universal truths. It is about engaging with the realities that managers have to deal with. He propagates engaged scholarship (Van de Ven 2007) that queries phenomena as they occur and emerge (Schwarz and Stensaker 2014) instead of filling gaps in existing theory. Scholarship therefore comes with the double requirement of rigor and relevance (Pettigrew 1997a, 2005). This he expresses by way of the five I's of Impact by offering "how to" knowledge, of Innovation in theory and method, of Interdisciplinary openness, of Internationalism through investigation and collaboration, and of Involvement with but independence from fellow researchers and users. Impact is an increasing concern in the UK because of its rising prominence among the criteria according to which university research is assessed. He claims that contextualist methodology is ideally suited to deliver (Pettigrew 2011b).

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Change Beyond the Confines of the Organization

The "Pettigrew triangle" has informed many research projects, either just as a means to clarify the object of enquiry has a process, context, and content aspect or by embracing the full contextualist research methodology. Moreover, Andrew Pettigrew's research has helped to introduce and further legitimize qualitative research, especially in the realm of strategic management. It has also helped to effectively falsify the effectiveness of too linear and objectivist approaches to management.

Yet Andrew Pettigrew is not without his critics. For instance, Cray et al. (1991) and Rajagopalan and Spreitzer (1997) criticized Pettigrew's work for its lack of generalizability, but this is beside the point for a contextualist. More essentially, he has been

criticized for not being contextual enough. Andrew Pettigrew (1985a, pp. 36–37) urges us to elaborate context as more than "*just a descriptive background, or an eclectic list of antecedents.*" Caldwell (2005) argues that this is exactly what Andrew Pettigrew has been doing. In fact, Caldwell points at a more fundamental problem that is present in all research that adopts structuration-like theory. This is the problem that it is empirically very difficult to distinguish whether specific events in the course of a process are primarily due to management agency or to the surrounding context or social structure. Moreover, by arguing, as Andrew Pettigrew has done, that change processes are to a large extent indeterministic, Caldwell reckons that a contextualist approach has become irrelevant to practicing managers. As there apparently is so much impinging on a situation, what difference can a manager make? Such impracticality is also brought forward by Buchanan and Boddy (1992) and Dawson (1994). Ironically, others have criticized Andrew Pettigrew's uncritical stance toward (top) management and the implicit assumption that they are ultimately in charge (Morgan and Sturdy 2000; Willmott 1997).

Andrew Pettigrew has also been criticized for not being sufficiently processual (Chia and MacKay 2007; Hernes 2014; Tsoukas and Chia 2002). This also relates to his structuration-like conceptualization of the change process in that these authors decline the mutual constitutive nature of agency and structure, and therefore the distinction between change and continuity. To them process is always a matter of emergence and change, with agency and structure both arising out of the inherent dispositions and logics of practice (Schatzki 2001). It is fair to say that, despite being critical of Andrew Pettigrew's elaboration of process and change, his work did pave the way for the introduction of the "practice turn" in management and organizational scholarship, specifically with regard to the strategy-as-practice movement (Jarzabkowski and Spee 2009; Whittington 1996, 2006).

Andrew Pettigrew's contextualist methodology is also in need of further elaboration in terms of contextualist methods (Sminia 2016). He provided extensive guidance in how to design and conduct a contextualist research project (Pettigrew 1985b, c, 1987b, 1989, 1990, 1995, 1997b, 2011b, 2013). Nevertheless, replicating his approach is not without difficulty because of a lack of more detailed descriptions how all that data that comes with a contextualist research project has been gathered and especially analyzed. He only indicates that this requires skill, judgment, and lots of discussion among research team members.

Andrew Pettigrew retired from Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, in January 2016. The Pettigrew project is far from finished and still worth pursuing, despite the criticism. One avenue would be to extend research in change as well as the reach of the management of change well beyond an organization's boundaries. There are at least two reasons for doing this. Firstly, as is already implied in his elaboration of context as social structure, whether its constraining and enabling effect is due to something inside or outside the organization is not a necessarily important aspect for understanding what is going on. What is important, though, is that the contextuality of the change process is taken into account.

Secondly, there is a need to be more ambitious with change management and change research in that its reach should extend beyond the organization's

boundaries. There is a somewhat implicit understanding that organizational change is about adapting an organization to changing (external) circumstances. This is notwithstanding that many change initiatives, although originating within an organization, generate effects well beyond it. This is especially apparent in studies into institutional change and institutional entrepreneurship (e.g., Gawer and Phillips 2013; Greenwood and Suddaby 2006; Johnson et al. 2000; Leblebici et al. 1991; Lounsbury and Crumley 2007). Conceptually, many of these studies share Andrew Pettigrew's structuration-like approach to process (e.g., Barley and Tolbert 1997; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Hirsch and Lounsbury 1997; Lawrence et al. 2009). Furthermore, the accounts and explanations of institutional change and institutional entrepreneurship resemble Andrew Pettigrew's "politics as the management of meaning" in that they combine politics and power with culture. It stands to reason to integrate research in organizational change and institutional entrepreneurship by treating it as one and the same process. In doing so, it would be possible, for instance, to open up strategy content research by adding considerations about how a firm can be competitive in specific circumstances with considerations about how a firm can generate and change the circumstances that are responsible for its competitiveness.

One of my current research projects takes up this challenge of investigating continuity and change well beyond the confines of a single organization. It looks at the emergence of High Value Manufacturing. Apart from being a phenomenon in the making as managers and policy makers look for a solution for manufacturing firms to find a viable way of operating in a world where competition appears to be mostly focused on price, manufacturing appears to become more and more a matter of simultaneous cooperation and competition, with continuity and change taking shape concurrently in both the intraorganizational and the interorganizational realms.

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## Further Reading

The best way to get to know Andrew Pettigrew's work is to read it, with the list of references below providing the information when and where his books and articles have been published. To get 'inside the man', there are a few occasions where he reflected on his own work (Mintzberg, Waters, Pettigrew, & Butler, 1990; Pettigrew, 1998, 2001a, 2011b, 2012). Apart from that, concise introductions to his body of work can be found in Sminia (2009, 2016; Sminia & de Rond, 2012). Finally, two of his major publications, his dissertation project (Pettigrew, 1973b) and the ICI study (Pettigrew, 1985d) have been re-printed recently as Pettigrew (2001b) and (Pettigrew, 2011a) respectively.

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# Out of the Poole and into the Ocean: Understanding Processes of Organizational Change Through the Work of Marshall Scott Poole

# 62

Paul M. Leonardi

**Abstract**

Marshall Scott Poole's research on processes of organizational change has been influential across multiple fields. Few scholars have drawn inspiration from such interdisciplinary sources and had such impact across various disciplines. For four decades, he has developed metatheoretical approaches, specific theories, and novel over a career of nearly methodologies for studying the process of organizational change. His work on group decision development, technology use, and virtual organizing has opened up new lines of inquiry for organizational researchers. In his current work, Poole continues to demonstrate that change is not something that happens to organizations, but rather that by their very nature organizations are continuously changing.

## Contents

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## Introduction

I have a friend who is a competitive open-water swimmer. He prefers to race in the ocean because he says the swift currents provide great physical and mental challenges. Although he lives just a few blocks from the beach on a fairly warm part of the coast, he does the bulk of his training in a local swimming pool. I found it curious that he did not train in the ocean given that he lives so close to it and that it is the site of his favorite competitions. So 1 day I asked him about his choice. He replied:

> When you train in the ocean there's too many things to worry about. It's too cold. The current is pushing you this way and that. And, you're always wondering about your distance and speed. I can focus in the pool. I work on my strokes and my breathing and my timing. When I train in the pool it makes be a better competitor in the ocean because it really allows me to focus on the process of how I can change my approach to get better.

Just like the ocean, organizations are always moving and changing. It is hard to understand their dynamics while we are working in them. In much the same way that it makes sense for an open-water swimmer to train in the pool to prepare for competition in the ocean, to understand the dynamics of organizational change requires a removal from them that provides the perspective to understand the processes by which those change occur. Once we understand the processes of organizational change, we can then go into organizations while their swift currents are pulsating and make them better.

To understand and prepare for the process of organizational change, organizational theorists have been very lucky to have a pool of their own: Marshall Scott Poole. Since the late 1970s, Poole's interdisciplinary work on organizational change has helped scholars across a number of fields to conceptualize, measure, and theorize about change as a communication process. Poole's main theoretical contribution to the field has been to build an approach to organizational change that casts change not as an event or an outcome but a process. Poole's processed-based thinking about change emerged at the time when organizational theorists were developing fixed sequence models of change that treated organizational changes as if they proceeded in a lock-step fashion in predetermined directions. Poole's legacy has been to demonstrate that change processes can occur in multiple sequences, that they are often recursive, and that they typically produce as many unintended outcomes as they do intended outcomes. Beyond this important contribution, Poole has developed specific theoretical frameworks for building process-based models of organizational change and various methodological techniques for capturing and assessing

it, and he has done so in a variety of empirical contexts whose study has sparked the entire new areas of research.

To develop such thinking, Poole has drawn on ideas and concepts from across disciplines. Not surprisingly his work not only evinces and enviable interdisciplinary character, but it is also used widely across disciplines including management, organization studies, communication studies, information systems, and network science, just to name a few. His research exemplifies some of the best theoretical and methodological work across these various disciplines. To understand how his contributions emerged and what we can learn from them for the study of organizational change as a process, let's dive into Poole.

## Influences and Motivations

### Early Years

Marshall Scott Poole (known by his friends and colleagues as Scott) grew up in Amarillo, Texas. In the eighth grade, Poole became interested in a career in science after becoming inspired by his biology teacher. Always ambitious, a young Scott Poole decided that he wanted to become a biochemist. To learn more about biology, he began to compete in science fairs, and as a high school student, he competed in an international science fair with a project that involved synthesizing peptides. The project caught the attention of the US Department of Agriculture who offered him a prestigious internship that allowed him to work on an odiferous project: analyzing manure samples.

Poole enrolled in Michigan State University to study chemistry. This was the era of massive student revolt, and outside of the classroom, Poole became involved in protests of US intervention in Vietnam and the Michigan State debate team. His friends and mentors on the debate team encouraged him to take classes in the Department of Communication, which was, at the time, arguably the top Communication department in the country. Sitting in his communication classes, Poole began to realize that solving problems involving people was much more difficult than solving the hardest problems that he experienced in his biochemistry classes. Donald Cushman was a professor of Communication and Poole's debate coach. On long drives to and from tournaments, he would talk with Poole and the other debaters about philosophy, science, ethics, rhetoric, and its place in public affairs. These conversations led Poole to become so intrigued by the challenge of predicting human behavior and furthered his desire to make the world a better place in a time of global turmoil. Cushman told Poole that if he wanted to become a strong social scientists, he needed to first study rhetoric. But Michigan State's Communication department had purged all their rhetoricians. Cushman advised Poole to transfer to the University of Wisconsin and complete a Communication degree there so he could gain a solid foundation in rhetoric. Poole decided to follow Cushman's advice and he moved to Wisconsin.

After completing his Communication degree at Wisconsin, Poole moved back to Michigan State to study with Cushman for a master's degree, then we went back to Wisconsin to complete his Ph.D. in Communication with an all-star committee of Joseph Cappella, Dean Hewes, and George Huber. He also took classes with Andre Delbecq in Wisconsin's business school. During his time at Wisconsin, Poole read French structuralists like Levi-Strauss (1976) and Barthes (1975) who wrote about deep structure. He also read rhetoricians who treated argumentation as an inventional system (Thompson 1972). These influences led Poole to conceive of structures as phenomena that were at the surface level, maintained through communication, but that also existed at a deeper cultural level that had long-lasting impacts on the way groups and organizations operated.

## Multiple Sequence Models of Group Decision-Making

Upon moving to his first faculty position in the Department of Speech Communication (now the Department of Communication) at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, Poole began to publish a series of papers (1981, 1983a, b) that were among his first attempts at creating a process-based theory of change. These papers focused on the phenomenon of group decision-making. In them, Poole explicitly compared existing unitary and multiple sequence models of group decision-making through an analysis of decision development in student and physician groups. The first paper in this series (Poole 1981) found that different groups followed different phases of development. Even though most groups did share ideas and clarify information, invite others to participate, attempt to reduce tension, muddled around in uncertainty and ambiguity, antagonized each other, developed and critique ideas, and finally reinforced each other and integrated ideas, they did so at different moments in their history and also took varying amounts of time to do so. The second paper in the series (Poole 1983a) attempted to show why different phases in the development emerged by identifying breakpoints that pushed one phase into the next. This study also showed that groups often repeat phases rather than progress through them linearly as most unitary sequence models suggest. The third paper (Poole 1983b) set forth a series of propositions that pointed to a contingency theory of multiple sequences. This paper argued that a variety of environmental factors affect each group differently, thus causing certain breakpoints, which lead to the progression toward a new phase or the repetition of a previous phase. Taking these three studies together, Poole (1983b: 340) suggested that there are "two sets of explanatory factors representing fundamental parameters of group activity: the group's task and its historical context."

This set of studies laid the early groundwork for the foundation Poole would later build around process-based change. Poole demonstrates that this phenomenon of group decision-making is fundamentally communicative. In other words, decision-making begins and ends with communication among individuals. Poole also explains what communication does – it structures sequences of decisions – and how it does so, through the cumulative structuring of tasks and the accretion of prior

communication activity into implicit and explicit rules that guide future communication. In developing his theory of decision development, Poole did not attempt to hive off communication as one part of decision-making. Rather in making clear the importance for scholars to study decision-making and how decisions develop in groups and organizations, Poole's theory of decision development has had a major impact. It has set the foundation for many other studies, not just in the field of Communication but in other disciplines as well (e.g., Gersick 1988). At this same time, Poole worked with David Seibold and Robert McPhee to explore the dialectical processes of deep structure and surface structure in changes in group decision-making over time. Drawing on Giddens' (1979, 1984) work on structuration theory, Poole et al. (1985) argued that change took place as the agency of actors, and the structure of the group decision environment implicated one another in a dialectical process, over time. Their structurational theory of group decision-making offered an alternative to accounts of structure in the social sciences as fixed. Engaging with Giddens' work allowed the authors to demonstrate that structure was produced in action – through communication – and that change was, therefore, a natural property of the organizing process.

In 1985, Poole left the University of Illinois to join the faculty of the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Minnesota. In addition to continuing to refine his studies of group decision development (Poole and Roth 1989a, b), Poole began two new collaborations.

## Adaptive Structuration Theory

The first collaboration was with Gerardine DeSanctis in the Management Sciences department. Poole and DeSanctis began to work together to develop a group decision support system (GDSS) technology that would aid groups in the decision-making process. What is most notable about this collaboration was its attempt to bring a design science orientation to theories of change. Poole had been working on his theories of decision development in groups and had amassed a weight of evidence suggesting how groups might make better decisions. The GDSS was built following these theories and evidence. In more contemporary theoretical parlance, one might argue that rules for good decision-making were inscribed (Holmström and Robey 2005) into the technology. In this project, theory informed technology design.

But, things did not go quite as planned. In early work, Pool and DeSanctis and their students studied undergraduate students using the Software Aided Meeting Management (SAMM) system, the non-chauffeured (there was no moderator) GDSS system they developed (Watson et al. 1988). The authors found that the use of the system led to several intended outcomes for which the system was implemented including enhancing post-meeting consensus as compared with groups that did not use the technology, but also to some unintended outcomes including the fact that compared to the control group, users of the system did not experience more equal influence from across the group in terms of the final solution.

The results of these studies, coupled with similar results generated by other researchers studying GDSS systems (e.g., Dennis et al. 1988), led Poole and DeSanctis to the conclusion that the presence of intended and unintended effects of the use of the technology were "attributable to the fact that various groups use the GDSSs differently" (1990: 176). This observation served as the basis for their formulation of adaptive structuration theory (AST), a variant of Giddens'(1984) structuration theory that took seriously the interactions between the deep structures that constitute technological artifacts, organizations, and work groups. The main insight of this theory was that "advanced technologies bring social structures which enable and constrain interaction to the workplace" (DeSanctis and Poole 1994: 125). As the authors argued, a new technology can be described in terms of its structural features and the general spirit of the feature set. Structural features are the specific types of rules and resources or capabilities offered by the system. The spirit is "the 'official line' which the technology presents to people regarding how to act when using it, how to interpret its features, and how to fill in gaps in procedure which are not explicitly specified" (DeSanctis and Poole 1994: 126). To sum succinctly, the authors argued that individuals who use a technology directly experience its "spirit." They appropriate the features of a technology in ways either that are consistent with the spirit in which it was designed and implemented (a faithful appropriation) or that are inconsistent with this spirit (an ironic appropriation).

To provide empirical support for their propositions, Poole and DeSanctis (1992) embarked on a slightly modified program of study. Rather than looking simply for effective use, they began to explore the process by which the appropriation of group structures led to changes in how the technology was used and how appropriations of the technology's features led to changes in group structure. Using micro-coding techniques, they found support for nine types of appropriations of the features of the technology: direct appropriation, substitution, combination, enlargement, constraint, contrast, affirmation, negation, and ambiguity. The findings indicated that 11 of the 18 groups were faithful appropriators of the technology. The groups that appropriated the features faithfully – in-line with the spirit with which the technology was designed and implemented – had a higher consensus in group decisions than those that did not. Further analysis by the authors (DeSanctis and Poole 1994; Sambamurthy and Poole 1992) confirmed that simply using the technology did not guarantee improvements in decision-making within a group, but that improvements were directly tied to *how* the groups appropriated the technology into their ongoing stream of interaction. More specifically, DeSanctis and Poole (1994) found that although the same technology was used by different groups, its effects were not consistent due to differences in each group's appropriation moves.

## Metatheoretical Accounts of the Processes of Innovation and Change

The second collaboration was with Andrew Van de Ven in the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota. Poole was introduced to Van de Ven by

Andre Delbecq who was Van den Ven's dissertation adviser. Poole showed his methods on process research that he had been developing in his studies of group decision-making, and also in the early stages of GDSS use to Van de Ven, Van de Ven observed that they could be quite useful for analyzing case studies of innovation.

Whereas Poole's studies of change so far had focused on specific empirical contexts, his work with Van de Ven attempted to build metatheoretical insights about studying the process of change within groups and organizations. Drawing on Poole's training in inventional systems and topoi from rhetoric, he and Van den Ven began to conceive of various theoretical toolkits for the study of innovation and change. Paradox emerged as an early way to begin this metatheoretical conversation. Drawing from work on tensions and paradoxes from rhetorical studies, Poole and Van den Ven (1989) outlined a set of theory-building strategies that would help researchers take advantage of, rather than fall victim to, theoretical tensions. Their work proposed four modes of working with paradoxes: (1) accept the paradox and use it constructively; (2) clarify levels of analysis; (3) temporally separate the two levels; and (4) introduce new terms to resolve the paradox. Not surprisingly, given Poole's prior work, he and Van de Ven illustrated these approaches by interrogating a theme core to Poole's previous process studies of change: the action structure paradox – the relationship between communication structures and deep structure in organizing.

As he and Van de Ven continued to collaborate in building theory about the process of organizational change and innovation, they also began to develop new methodological techniques to study change processes within organizations (Van de Ven and Poole 1990). The continued interplay between metatheoretical stances on processes of innovation and change, the development of methodological toolkits with which to study process, and Poole and Ven de Ven's own empirical work brought them to a view that organizational change and development had to be explained by multiple theoretical perspectives in order to capture the multiple motors that powered change at multiple levels of analysis. Much like he had done when advocating for a move from unitary to multiple sequence models of group decision-making, Poole, now together with Van de Ven, argued that the search for a unitary theory of organizational change was a fool's gambit; instead, the most trenchant insights about organizational change would arise from a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives because change itself was a multifaceted process. Together, Poole and Van de Ven argued that change could occur in different units – such that change could include multiple entities of a single entity of change and that change also could occur across different modes – change could either be prescribed in advance or could be constructed out of the ongoing interaction between various events and processes. The now famous two by two that resulted from these contrasting dimensions evinced four types of theories that exemplified change as a process: (1) evolutionary theories that modeled change as a process of variation, selection, and tension; (2) dialectic theories which held that change was the results of the synthesis of conflict produced by theses and

antitheses; (3) life-cycle theories that depicted change as a cyclical process of birth, growth, harvesting, and termination; and (4) teleological theories that charted a recursive course from search for alternatives, to the creation and implementation of goals, to dissatisfaction with certain processes, which resulted in new opportunities for search (Van de Ven and Poole 1995).

It is clear that Poole's influences stretched back to his early days at the bench in his biochemistry classrooms. The hard sciences taught him that the world is not at rest but always moving and changing and that to understand and describe that change, the investigator had to work constantly to develop new methods. His study of communication and rhetoric taught him the value of exploring a phenomenon from multiple view points and through multiple theoretical lenses and that the outcome of this epistemological flexibility was a realization that important phenomena in the world happened at unique levels of analyses and in distinct temporal orders. As Poole learned early in his education and throughout the formative years of his career as a professor, an embrace of paradox and of interdisciplinarity can go a long way to building insights about change that have lasting impact.

## Key Contributions

At the time that Poole began publishing his most influential papers on adaptive structuration theory and on the processes of innovation and change, he moved to Texas A&M University where he held appointments in the Department of Communication and the Department of Information and Operations Management in the Business School. Poole began applying the theoretical lenses he had developed in his prior work to understand the change process in a variety of areas, including brainstorming (Jackson and Poole 2003), virtual collaboration (Brown et al. 2004), and telemedicine (Deng et al. 2005). In 2006 he moved back to the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, where he also became the director of the Center for Computing in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Science (I-CHASS). As director of I-CHASS, Poole began to collect and analyze a number of extremely large data sets of virtual organizations. With several colleagues, he created the Virtual Worlds Exploratorium – a collection of large data sets of virtual gaming communities that would allow him to chart the process of change in groups and organizations as it occurred in the moment-by-moment interactions that were captured on the digital gaming platforms (Williams et al. 2011). With such data in hand, Poole and his colleagues had to create and refine new methods, such as relational event modeling (Pilny et al. 2016) to make sense of the processes of change occurring in them. Poole remains at the University of Illinois to this day.

Throughout his distinguished career of groundbreaking empirical research and theoretical advance, Poole has made many contributions to the theory and methods associated with studying the process of organizational change. From among the many, I highlight four key contributions here.

## Conceptualizing Organizing as a Process of Continuous Change

Perhaps his greatest contribution is that Poole has altered the field's understanding of organizational change through his work showing that change is not an event that happens in organizations, but that organizing is itself a process of change. Although today with perspectives like structuration theory and practice theory so widely diffused, the idea that organizing is a process that is continually in flux may not seem new, this was not always the case. Poole's work has been among the most influential in making the case that organizing is a process. In Poole's view that process is driven by communication. Individuals, groups, and collectives communicate in particular ways and that not only respond to but also produce the demands of their communication environments. As communication patterns shift, so to do the surface and deep structures that underlie them.

When organizations are seen as always in the making, change becomes a matter of course. For this reason, Poole has argued that a process-based approach to the study of organizational change provides a strong ontology for understanding organizing. Of course, as Van de Ven and Poole (2005) have argued, change processes take on different forms and different temporal trajectories and are of different magnitudes at different levels of analysis and as different elements become involved. But, these differences notwithstanding the process of organizational change never stop so long as organizations continue in their existence.

## Processes Are Driven by Generative Mechanisms

Poole has always been a strong advocate for using multiple theoretical lenses for understanding the change process. His reason for this stance is simple. When a researcher studies processes of change, they collect a prodigious amount of data over time. Those data are dense and complex. A traditional solution to the problem of process complexity was for researchers to focus on one part of the process in their analysis, or one specific time frame (Monge and Poole 2008). But by reducing the focus in this way, researchers run the risk of missing the multiple forces that push organizing in one direction rather than another. As Poole has argued, processes are driven by various generative mechanisms, or what he and Van de Ven have called "motors" (Van de Ven and Poole 1995). To understand how these motors operate requires a broad rather than a narrow focus. Poole's strong belief is that when studying a complex messy process like change, a research cannot let theory dictate what data are collected or analyzed or else the researcher may find him or herself producing a self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, Poole argues that researchers must collect and test their data with multiple theoretical schemas to see which are generative.

Although this approach may sound common when dealing with data collected inductively, it is a radical departure for data analyzed from a deductive vantage point – as most of Poole's work has done. Poole's early influences in rhetoric taught him that although theory should drive the analysis of data, there is no guarantee that any one

theory is correct. Thus, one of Poole's major contributions to the study of process has been to model an ability to explore multiple generative mechanisms simultaneously by interrogating the data with multiple theories. As Poole and his colleagues have recounted (Poole et al. 2000), this catholic approach to theoretical analysis is one of the reasons that the Minnesota Innovation Research Program was so successful.

## Methods for Studying Organizational Change Processes

In studying organizational change processes, Poole and his colleagues have developed a variety of methods for capturing change in action and charting it as it occurs. At the broadest level, Van de Ven and Poole (2000: 31) have described four requirements for process analyses of longitudinal event data:

1. A clear set of concepts for selecting and describing the objects to be studied
2. Systematic methods for observing change in the objects over time
3. Methods for representing raw data to identify process patterns
4. A motor or theory to make sense of the process patter and a means of determining whether the theory fits the observed patterns

What is novel about this set of four steps is the constant interplay between theory and method. As Poole's work has shown over the years, the development of theory and methodology go hand in hand. Without theories to inform methodological choices, researchers who study the process of change would be grasping in the dark. But without the appropriate data analyzed into consistent temporal patterns, researchers would be unable to test theories and identify their generative potential for explaining processes in the data.

At a more granular level, Poole's work on sequences in group decision development and on GDSS use has led to more fine-grained methodological innovations for studying the process of organizational change. These include but are not limited to (Van de Ven and Poole 2000: 38–48):

1. Producing a chronological listing of qualitative events
2. Coding chronological events into conceptual tracks
3. Analyzing process patterns or cycles in activity tracks
4. Developing a vocabulary of describing processual progressions, which includes types of relations between developmental events, and an understanding of whether the progression was simple or unitary, cumulative, or conjunctive
5. Identifying causal relationships among event tracks
6. Making an assessment of tracking methodology

Together, these broad and granular recommendations drawn from nearly three decades of work on processes of organizational change have provided researchers with a sophisticated set of tools with which to examine and explain their phenomena of interest.

## The Role of Technology in the Process of Change

Another key contribution of Poole's work has been to show how new technologies contribute to the processes of change that occur in organizations. Poole's research has shown that certain structures for use are built into a technology and that when individuals encounter those structures, they appropriate them in ways that are consistent with existing organizational and group requirements. According to Poole and DeSanctis (1990: 184), the concept of "appropriation" may be defined as "the mode or fashion in which a group uses, adopts, and reproduces a structure." In this stream, a technology is socially constructed as organizational members appropriate its features to support or change group and organizational dynamics. His work developing adaptive structuration has shown that technologies play a key role in the change process because they provide capabilities to organizational actors as their features are appropriated in the context of use. Most current studies of technology use in organizations build on these foundational insights (for review see Leonardi and Barley 2010; Rice and Leonardi 2013).

It is hard to overestimate the influence of this line of research. Scholars who study organizational change have long considered new technologies to be ancillary to the change process (for more information see Jackson et al. 2002). But in showing how new technologies provide motors for change, his work has helped to legitimize and catalyze research and theory about technology's role in the change process. As new technologies continue to infiltrate organizations at an increasing pace, Poole's contributions in this area become more salient.

## New Insights

Poole's contribution to scholarship has taken many forms. From his important contingency models of decision-making to theories of adaptive structuration, to developing frameworks and methods for the study of change processes, and to his current work on networks and evolutionary theories of change, Poole's work continues to inspire scholars across multiple disciplinary domains. In the field management, his work on change processes continues to influence the way that scholars conceptualize, measure, and theorize organizational dynamics, especially as they approach them longitudinally. In the field of information systems, Poole's work on adaptive structuration and its attendant concepts of appropriation and spirit are continually discussed, tested, and revised as scholars attempt to grapple with understanding the role that technologies play in the organizing process. And, in the field of communication, Poole's work on decision-making and group dynamics is inspiring fresh thinking about how teams form, operate, and dissolve in various contexts, including virtual organizations.

Poole's work has been extremely influential in my own development as a scholar. Since I was a graduate student, Poole's work has served as a source of ideas that have led me to ask important questions and to which I have reacted. I first got to know Poole's work on adaptive structuration theory because I was trying to understand

how designers and managers influenced the way that workers interpreted new technologies and used their features to change the way they worked. One of my first published papers (Leonardi 2007) drew on Poole and DeSanctis' notion of appropriation to argue that as individuals make different kinds of appropriations of a new technology's features, they activate information available in the technology in different ways. As new information become available, workers then shift their patterns of interaction in ways that create changes that lead to new appropriations – and the cycle continues. These same insights led me to consider that the features of technologies themselves mattered a great deal for the interpretations people made about a technology's functionality (Leonardi 2009b) and to develop theory that the development and use of a new technology were not two separate periods in the life cycle of technological and organizational change; rather, that new technologies and organizations co-evolved through a series of activities that rendered them mutually constitutive (Leonardi 2009a).

Paying so attention to Poole's work on adaptive structuration, I began to notice important differences in the way that Poole articulated technology's role in the organizing process from other scholars. Steve Barley and I (Leonardi and Barley 2010) showed that Poole's work on adaptive structuration theory respected the materiality of technology to a greater degree than most other theories and that it was likely to lead to better predictions about the affects technology would have on organizational changes than other theoretical perspectives. Building on these insights, I developed a theory of imbrication, which suggested that the human agency of actors and the material agency of technologies became interlocked (or imbricated) in sequences of changes in routines and artifacts that define the organization process (Leonardi 2011a, b, 2012). Based on this work, I have attempted to show how theorizing the affordances of new technologies can help organizational scholars to take seriously the role of technology and material agency in the unfolding of organizations without falling victim to the tendency to resort to inadequate deterministic or constructivist stances on technologically induced organizational change (Leonardi 2013b, c; Leonardi et al. 2013; Leonardi and Vaast 2017).

Reflecting on Poole's program of research on group decision development has also allowed me to articulate a number of guidelines for how scholars who study organizational communication might develop deeper, better theory about the role of communication in the organizing process (Leonardi 2017a). As I examined the way that Poole constructed his program of research and developed theory about group decision development, I began to realize that this set of studies clearly follows a strategy of discovery. Poole demonstrates that this phenomenon of group decision-making is fundamentally communicative. In other words, decision-making begins and ends with communication among individuals. Poole also explains what communication does – it structures sequences of decisions – and how it does so (through the cumulative structuring of tasks and the accretion of prior communication activity into implicit and explicit rules that guide future communication). In developing his

theory of decision development, Poole did not attempt to hive off communication as one part of decision-making. Rather in making the importance for scholars to study decision-making and how decisions develop in groups and organizations, Poole showed that decision-making is a phenomenon that is nothing more than sequences of communication. Poole's theory of decision development has had a major impact. It has set the foundation for many other studies of group decision-making both within and out of the discipline. And outside of the discipline, especially, it has lead scholars to understand that decision-making is communication, plain, and simple.

A final idea with which I have been working over the past several years has arisen by combining Poole's work on technology use in organizations with his meta-theoretical writings on process. One way to think about the role of materiality in organizational life is to suggest that materiality is itself a process (Contractor et al. 2011). This idea may seem strange because we (myself included) tend to think that materiality is something that exists as a substance – even in those instances where it is digital (Leonardi 2010; Leonardi and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2012). Poole's work suggests that from a radical process perspective, one might even think of materiality as a process. He recommended to me that I read the work of the process philosopher Nicholas Rescher to consider how one might theorize materiality as a process. Blending Poole's work with Rescher's has led me to begin theorizing how materiality is itself an organizing process (Leonardi 2013a, b) that organizational scholars should take seriously in their accounts of organizational change. I view this radical shift to a process-centered view of materiality as an exciting new area for theory building that is inspired by the combination of several areas of Poole's incredible body of work.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business

Scott Poole has spent his career developing metatheoretical frameworks, specific theories, and methodological tools for studying organizing as a process of change. The tremendous number of citations to his articles, the awards he has one for his work, and the ways that his theories and methods have diffused across multiple disciplines provide evidence of a strong legacy in studies of organizational change. But just like the phenomenon he studies, Poole is ever in motion. In conversation with me, Poole outlined three areas of unfinished business that continue to draw his effort and that he hopes will capture the interest of other change researchers.

### Identifying Basic Structural Forms

Poole claims that most of the work on the process of change over the last 30 years has been devoted to discovery – attempting to uncover and describe how and why

organizations change as they do. Yet there is little formalization of knowledge into basic structural forms. Poole would like to see change researchers develop an algebra that formalizes and expresses change processes in a way such that they can be easily compared, contrasted, and expanded.

## Create More Opportunities for Action

To develop metatheoretical perspectives on organizational change, Poole acknowledges that his work and the work of others has had to move to high levels of abstraction. The downside of such abstraction is that much of what we know about processes of change is not actionable. Vocabularies for describing change do not often help managers and leaders of organizations to directly change or deal with it effectively. Throughout his research into processes of change and the forces that drive them, Poole has become aware of how relatively powerless managers actually are. They often try to create methods or techniques that counteract natural processes of organizing. Helping to unveil these processes and their motors might help managers and leaders to ride the wave of changes much better than they can attempt to alter its course.

## Articulate Multiple Possibilities

Poole's career has played out against a strong belief that scholars need to adopt multiple perspective to understand phenomena as complex as the change process. If one believes that there is no single truth out there to be discovered, then the smartest move is to articulate multiple possibilities about how process unfolds and compares and contrasts them. Approaches like structuration theory are attractive precisely because they allow ways to integrate various perspectives simultaneously. One goal for future work is to create and identify other approaches that will allow researchers to articulate multiple possibilities for how change unfolds and to test those possibilities through processes of comparison and abstraction.

## Conclusion

Marshall Scott Poole has developed an inspiring program of research on the process of organizational change. Organizations are difficult to study because they are always in motion. But it is their very motion – the continuous process of change – that makes them exciting and dynamic and makes researchers want to dive in. But before we dive in, we might take a tip from my friend the open-water swimmer: To most effectively navigate the waves in the ocean, we'd better spend some time at the Poole.

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# Joanne C. Preston: Integrating Disciplines, Expanding Paradigms

Jeanne D. Maes and Kenneth L. Wall

**Abstract**

Motivated by her father at an early age to be her best, Joanne C. Preston has emerged on the forefront as a scholar-practitioner in her quest to "make the workplace healthier." Building on her Russian, French, and German language skills and her solid foundation in developmental psychology, she has pushed the boundaries of traditional organization development and change (ODC). Preston has taken the best of family therapy practice and applied its interventions to small business and workplace problems, producing results sufficiently substantial to catch the attention of international business owners. Her interventions in large systems change and her astute ability to create superordinate goals were instrumental in South Africa's transformation from apartheid and in Poland's change from communism to a free market society. Her work with governmental leaders has improved Kenya's educational system. On the home front, Preston has introduced an international dimension to ODC education. She has cut across the typical discipline boundaries of psychology, business, and education and, by using technology, she has created new models of education for graduate students, linking global teams in workplace settings. Similarly, she has been influential in the creation of new types of business and professional network organizations. Preston has the rare gift of blending theory into practice on six continents, affecting academic audiences, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and governments.

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## Introduction

Great thought leaders share several common traits. They are approachable, transparent, and collaborative – and they make things happen (Brosseau 2016). This description epitomizes Joanne C. Preston, who has taken the theories of several disciplines and integrated them to "reach beyond the traditional scopes of influence to guide the growth of organizations (Boyer 1990; Ghani 2006, p. 246; Gordon 2007)" in multicultural settings. She has also advanced the whole-person paradigm (Covey 2006) in her research and consulting for more than four decades. Building on her language skills and her solid foundation in developmental psychology, she has pushed the boundaries of traditional organization development and change. Preston has the rare gift of blending theory into practice on six continents, affecting academic audiences, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and governments.

## Influences and Motivations: Early Challenge to Excellence

Strongly influenced by her family and her father's encouragement, "Be the best that you can be, whatever that is," Preston sets out as an undergraduate to major in foreign languages but quickly fell in love with psychology. She graduated from

Louisiana State University with one of the first doctorates in the discipline of developmental psychology ever earned in the United States and one of the first women accepted in the program. In 1973, she and her husband, David, arrived in Richmond, Va., where Preston became affiliated with the University of Richmond, her new home from 1973–1991. It was during this time that she evolved from the psychologist frame of mind into a fully engaged management and organization development (OD) specialist. Her training in psychology provided a solid foundation in individual and group work, experiential design and analysis, and developmental approach to healthy adults, and the clinical studies enabled a better understanding of conflict management and complex problem solving (Watson 1968).

Her desire to make the workplace healthier for everyone became insatiable, and she poured herself into learning everything she could about organization development and change. She soon realized that she needed to gain experience as an ODC practitioner, and she began attending the annual information exchanges of the Organization Development Institute (ODI) in Williams Bay, Wis., where she met many of the friends who would influence her life's course. One of these, Don Cole, O.D. Institute president, candidly spoke about his experiences applying ODC to social change and motivated Preston to participate in interventions to create nonviolent social change in communist Poland, Russia, and eventually South Africa.

During this time, Preston's husband decided to change his career focus and return to school. Preston took a sabbatical to join him and received a visiting professorship at Pennsylvania State University. There, she spent the entire year handling family therapy groups, little realizing that this experience would commence her practice of organization development and change. To illustrate, in one of her family therapy groups, Preston worked with the owner of a medium-size business. When this man saw improvements in the way his family functioned, he decided to hire Preston to help make improvements in his business.

Upon returning to Richmond, she acquired a large multinational corporation client with an assembly line problem. The lines were extremely aggressive toward each other to the point of one team's sabotaging another that was doing well. After careful listening, Preston suspected that competition was rewarded instead of cooperation. She suggested two interventions: (1) a one-day team-building session for all three lines simultaneously and (2) changing the reward system so that half of Group A was paired with half of Group B; the other half of Group B was paired with half of Group C and half of Group C was paired with half of Group A. In this way, all lines and shifts were paired, and cooperation was the only route to rewards.

The client was so pleased with Preston's work that he sent her to a supply factory in communist Russia, one that also had an assembly line problem. Preston spoke to the factory director, explaining her need to be able to interview the line bosses alone, in order to receive better information. The director would not allow it; he wanted to hear what his employees were saying, and Preston interviewed the line bosses with the director present. This experience was a turning point for Preston. Rather than viewing the director's behavior as a client problem, she discovered her own cultural blinders as a consultant regarding democracy and confidentiality.

With the Russian factory experience fresh in her mind, Preston developed a presentation (later an article) for the International O.D. Institute Conference in Zeist, the Netherlands (Preston 1987). She shared the stage with Ed Schein and assumed that everyone would leave after his presentation concluded. Instead, the audience gave Preston a standing ovation for her disclosure of learning of her own consulting blinders, evidently a rare thing for an American to admit. At the Zeist conference, she met two other consultants, Ian Barber from Spain introduced her to Louw DuToit from South Africa. These relationships turned into long-standing friendships and led to much of Preston's international work. She was impressed by DuToit's genuine belief in ODC values and ethics, coupled with his love for his country, and especially his willingness to personally fund ODC interventions.

DuToit invited Preston and a colleague, Terry Armstrong, to participate in an intervention in South Africa. Recognizing this as an opportunity of a lifetime, Preston requested backing from the president of the University of Richmond. He fully supported this and many other trips during her tenure there. Interestingly, meanwhile a dean told Preston that she would have to stop her work in South Africa for two reasons – first, it was not hard science, and second, it would ruin her reputation as a psychologist "working in such a horrible place that condoned apartheid."

With her practice of OD underway, Preston decided to transfer from psychology to business management. In 1991, she became chair of management and entrepreneurship at Kennesaw State University. There, she polished her leadership skills and basked in the stimulating intellect and mentoring of her friend, Bob Golembiewski, an OD practitioner and researcher, at the University of Georgia.

Kennesaw opened a new area of involvement for Preston – the Family Enterprise Center – and she began applying ODC skills to business and family dynamics (Preston 1993a). While there, she helped found the Organization Change Alliance (OCA) along with Golembiewski, Don Carter, Joel Finlay, and Tom Myers. This group accomplished much for ODC. It became a well-known forum in the greater Atlanta area for ODC professionals, regularly bringing in recognized ODC academics and practitioners to speak. It also provided opportunities for its members to give back to the community as well as hone their skill sets in workplace settings.

In 1994, three occurrences influenced Preston's career. First, she met Dean Bob Canady of the Pepperdine School of Business, who recruited her to become director of the MSOD program and to develop a doctorate in OD; second, Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa; and third, she received the prestigious O.D. Consultant of the Year Award from the Organization Development Institute for her work in international social development. This award was doubly special, as her husband David lived long enough to know about it before he lost his battle with brain cancer.

In 1994, Pepperdine was a Mecca of ODC and offered a unique opportunity for Preston to lead this group into the future – redesigning the MSOD program to include engaging master's degree students in international ODC work in France, Mexico, and China. Development was challenging, as many of the business faculty did not want a PhD program; additionally, there were difficulties with accreditation.

Only a limited number of the faculty was publishing, and the ODC program turned into an EDDOC because the Graduate School of Education and Psychology already had doctorates. There were many conflicts causing hard feelings all around, and those years at Pepperdine were a mixture of opportunity and political battles. Despite the challenges, the EDDOC doctoral program had its first cohort in 1995.

Preston's days at Pepperdine ended in 2000, and in early 2001, she went to the University of Monterrey in Monterrey, Mexico, to work with Daphne DePorres and Nancy Westrup, two graduates of the Pepperdine EDDOC program. At Monterrey, she taught, encouraged the faculty to write, and supported the extended Pepperdine doctoral program begun at the University of Monterrey.

From Monterrey, Preston briefly returned to California before moving to New Orleans to open a bed and breakfast, Chateau du Louisiane, and continue her international consulting. With her late husband's family there, Preston viewed New Orleans as the closest culture to Europe. She provided some consulting work for the City of New Orleans and Mayor Ray Nagin. In one planning meeting, the mayor asked if there was anything that could be done with the gangs, drug dealers, and prostitutes near the French Quarter. Preston remarked that something needed to come along and implode the entire system. That implosion came 2 weeks later, with Hurricane Katrina (J. Preston, personal communication, October 29, 2016).

Forced to evacuate, Preston left New Orleans for a few months. Upon her return, she became involved in the hurricane recovery efforts with Carolyn Lukensmeyer and the United New Orleans Plan. Several citywide town hall meetings were televised to cities all over the United States and Alaska, where New Orleans residents had been evacuated. This was an exciting project and many of the evacuees did return. However, for Preston, it was bittersweet, as her bed and breakfast was the only house destroyed in the Garden District, and she knew that she needed to look for new opportunities. Meanwhile, she taught in several university master's degree and doctorate programs.

That opportunity came when she received an email from Colorado Technical University (CTU) in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Though Preston had had no previous contact with CTU, the person running the program requested that she teach a hybrid class and serve as keynote speaker for one of its residencies. She enjoyed the experience so much that she accepted the fulltime position as Dean of the Doctorate of Management Program in 2007 and moved to Colorado Springs. This was a new start.

## Key Contributions: International Change, Organizational Innovation, ODC Education, and Academic Journal Editor

Four areas in which Preston has made significant contributions to the field of ODC stand out. These include applying ODC to large-scale country change, improving ODC education, founding new types of organizations, and serving as editor of the *Organization Development Journal*.

## Brought New Sensitivity to International ODC

Although she participated in many other international and domestic interventions, Preston's greatest contributions were in South Africa, Poland, and Kenya. The interventions in South Africa were of major bottom-up nature, while those in Poland and Kenya were top-down.

**South Africa** Louw DuToit created a bottom-up intervention that helped move South Africa out of apartheid, and his message made South Africa an obsession for Preston. To be successful, this intervention had to address the following issues: (1) There would never be a top-down intervention because leadership did not want it; (2) Government could not control the power; (3) Government was resistant to change; (4) Blacks were not involved; (5) Communication was both ineffective and lacked credibility; (6) Foreign pressure made the existing government more reactive; (7) There was a lack of understanding about democracy; and (8) There were too few behavioral scientists to help bring about the needed change (Preston 1996).

Taking the initiative for change upon himself, DuToit established a group, the Leadership for the Future, to train leaders about democracy and its benefits for South Africa. Additionally, he conducted workshops focusing on peaceful change, and established a group of community, educational, and government leaders called the Community and Development Association of Africa (CDMAA), targeting the white, black, and colored (race designation then), a group needed to build a super-ordinate goal of multi-nationality. DuToit knew that it would take a strategic meeting of this group to build momentum.

In 1986, DuToit invited Preston and Armstrong to a meeting, but did not reveal the nature of the meeting (Preston 1996). When they got off the plane, DuToit asked them to speak to a small group of people about cultural synergy (Preston and Armstrong 1987). They did not know that they were going to be the keynote speakers for the CDMAA meeting until they arrived at Johannesburg on the Sunday evening of the event. Upon their arrival, DuToit announced that Armstrong and Preston were in charge of a 300-person meeting. Not only were attendees strangers to each other, but also because of their tribal backgrounds, they hated each other (Preston and Armstrong 1991). This was a complicated situation. Because the government defined the participants as "multiracial," it was actually against the law for such a group to assemble. More importantly, these attendees were going to plan strategies for eliminating apartheid nonviolently.

Even though this was a time before large group interventions were used in ODC, Armstrong and Preston decided to use basic OD rather than lecture about cultural synergy. They needed to find a positive superordinate goal immediately and framed it as "creating a safe South Africa for our children." The atmosphere became electrified with enthusiasm and strangers became friends through this discussion. Later, Preston reflected that had they used something like "do this for the love of your country" nothing would have worked (J. Preston, personal communication, October 29, 2016).

The Johannesburg meeting was both serious and volatile as were many others that involved, DuToit, Barber, Armstrong, and Preston. Conflict could arise from anywhere, and during this time, some were hurt and others killed. DuToit's home was burned down and Tammy Saloma, a leader of the CDMAA, was stabbed 30 times by a rival tribe for his involvement in nonviolent ODC work. Every intervention meant walking the line between violence and nonviolence, and the remaining ODC practitioners had to use power and politics carefully (Preston 1988; Preston and DuToit 1991). Although using power and politics was habitually avoided in ODC work or had negative implications in those days, the situation in South Africa made its use imperative since the culture was authoritarian, and aggressive behavior was endemic (Preston and DuToit 1993). There was a very clear hierarchy in the tribal culture that dictated what its members should do. It did not afford tribal members the opportunity to learn or develop and practice problem-solving skills under parental guidance; instead rigid, inflexible behaviors developed as members reached adulthood. Therefore, many of the planned interventions were entwined around workshops that helped participants develop sorely needed problem-solving skills, conflict resolution skills, flexibility, and an understanding of democracy (Preston and DuToit 1991; Preston, DuToit, Van Zyl and Holscher 1993; Preston et al. 1996; Preston 1993b).

DuToit and associates even taught conflict resolution skills to high-ranking tribal leaders to minimize aggressive behaviors. One such incident was at a school in Pietermaritzburg in the heart of Zululand. When colleagues arrived to conduct the workshop at the hotel, they saw a note that a school was under attack. Without delay, they went to the school and saw the school director trying to protect the building, the fathers and sons Toi-toing (performing a tribal threat dance), and the police surrounding the group, guns drawn and ready for action. The tribal leaders had a megaphone and were trying to control the crowd. Immediately, the consultants split their efforts between the school leaders, the police, and the crowd.

One example of using power and politics in this event stood out in Preston's memory. While the threat of violence was at its peak, Van Zyl was told to go into the school building rather than try to reason with the fathers and sons – who likely would have harmed or killed him. Zulu tribal leaders and the Zulus respected their regular consultants, and consequently it was better that a non-Afrikaner go with the outside group. This action worked (J. Preston, personal communication, October 29, 2016).

During the summer of Mandela's inauguration (1994) as the new head of South Africa's government, Preston was invited to return to work with DuToit and Barber on projects involving the government, major organizations about to become independent from the government, and nonprofits evolving to help assist the new government. Many interventions and meetings took place with the eventual outcome of a South African democracy.

**Poland** Preston's experiences in Poland stemmed primarily from team interventions led by Don Cole. Cole had at least two general interventions and Preston was invited to participate on several others. The first of these was a trip to communist Russia to determine if social scientists from the USSR and other countries could

work together. The session was held on a boat and the scientists enjoyed a cruise on the Volga River. The participants met in the morning, and though Preston never saw the Russians meet, she suspected they somehow managed to do so as they spoke with one voice. After a few days, she spoke to the steward in his own Russian language and inquired how the Russian scientists got organized. He told her that they met in the bar "with the good vodka" after the bar closed. That evening, Preston stayed after closing and spoke Russian the entire evening. In the morning, she had breakfast with the rest of the participants and shared her information. Her ability to fit in culturally gave her consulting a tremendous advantage (J. Preston, person communication, October 29, 2016).

This advantage was demonstrated in another dramatic example of the importance of cultural acceptance. Preston and Cole were invited by the National Academy of Sciences to help resolve a conflict between Russian communists, Polish communists, and Solidarity scientists. Cole, the more experienced consultant, was on stage with the president of the National Academy of Science, and Preston was relegated to the back of the audience. Each division chair felt it imperative to tell the entire history of his respective division, beginning in 900 A.D. From 8 a.m. until approximately 11 a.m., the stories droned on until Cole became impatient. Wanting to start an intervention and have the participants discuss how they could cooperate, he stood up and announced, "Enough wasting time. I want you to get into groups and talk about how to cooperate with each other." Immediately, the scientists walked out. The president approached Preston, saying, "You are on." "Can you convince them to return?" she asked. "Only if I order them," he said, and did just that. Once the scientists returned, Preston continued the stories until lunch break at 1 p.m. By working through the existing authoritarian culture structure rather than using the more informal approach of open participant discussion commonly associated with ODC interventions in the United States, Preston was able to have the president ask the group to work on the issues, which they did (J. Preston, personal communication, October 29, 2016).

After the Academy of Sciences meeting with Cole, Preston was invited to facilitate a meeting between Russian communist leaders, Polish communist leaders, Solidarity leaders, Lech Walesa, and Walesa's interpreter (Preston 1989b). The meeting's purpose was to identify how these groups could cooperate effectively, if there was a change in the government from Russian domination to a Polish government. For years, each of these groups had considered the others' nuisances, especially Solidarity. In this typical ODC intervention, that of – discussing goals and visions for the future and strategizing how the groups could work together – Preston sensed the existence of an "elephant" in the room, some issue that was impeding communication and which everyone recognized but no one would directly address. She asked the group to air the issue, but no one would say anything. Finally, through the translator, Walesa told Preston to keep going because she was doing fine. Preston realized that she was going to anger Walesa and the others if she pressed the issue any further and continued the facilitation. However, she left the meeting feeling like the overall intervention was a failure because although some communication had occurred along with a few possible strategies for working together, the groups never surfaced the mysterious underlying issue. It was not

until she left Poland and reached her next destination that she realized what had transpired during the intervention when she read in the newspaper that Solidarity had taken over the government and Walesa was leading Poland (J. Preston, personal communication, October 29, 2016).

Afterward, Preston returned to Poland several times, conducting workshops for small business owners and influential community members on changing to a free market economy and developing transformational leaders using ODC training. On one trip to Warsaw, she worked with a small hotel owner to develop more effective business strategies; she taught others how to set up small business. On another trip to Warsaw, she worked with teachers and other influence leaders to identify skill sets and specific action items to help their communities (J. Preston, personal communication, October 29, 2016).

**Kenya**  On several occasions, Preston worked with governmental leaders on strategies to improve the Kenyan educational system. On her first trip to Kenya, she provided strategy training for business and nonprofit owners in Nairobi. During the training for the nonprofit group, a woman arrived very late and Preston spent some personal time updating the woman. On the second day of training, the woman mentioned that Preston knew her husband who wanted to meet with Preston after the session. The woman's husband was Dr. Taatia arap Toweet, past Prime Minister of Education for Kenya and a participant in the meetings to make Kenya independent from England.

Another significant meeting for her was a meeting with President Mwai Kibaki. Preston asked him to outline his vision for Kenya. When his response was a non-corrupt government, Preston explained that a non-corrupt government was not a vision. She noted that since Kenya had one of the highest education levels for an African country, it could become the think tank of Africa. The president liked the idea and engaged her in helping to create more strategies for education (J. Preston, personal communication, October 29, 2016).

Arap Toweet also introduced Preston to Daniel arap Moi, his friend and co-tribal leader. Although arap Moi had a negative reputation during his presidency, he desired to leave a positive legacy through education and wanted to build his university into one of the best in his country. Preston discussed ways he could achieve his goals. Today, Moi University is one of the best in Kenya.

Since arap Toweet's death, Preston has returned to Kenya a few times working with arap Toweet's son and encouraging women to stay in school. She also dealt with community issues, tribal conflict, and educational issues.

## Designed New Models of ODC Education

Preston has left a distinct footprint on the very nature of ODC education, both in the United States and internationally. For many years, the literature regarding the effectiveness of formal ODC education programs, along with training new ODC practitioners, has been controversial. An early study by Head et al. (1996) showed

that graduate education is a major component for the development of ODC skills, but it ranked second to personal growth evolving from professional workshops, mentoring, and team consulting. These authors believed that universities needed to design programs that included courses teaching ODC skills, providing opportunities to participate in ODC research, offering opportunities to test character and promote personal growth, making available team consulting and mentorships, and requiring students to attend ODC conferences.

**Adding Global Focus: Expanding the Pepperdine MSOD; Constructing the EDDOC** In 1994, Pepperdine University's MSOD was one of the few university programs with a focus on personal growth. As Preston launched a redesign, she made sure to retain the program's best parts: personal growth, sensitivity groups, teamwork, a thesis, and mentoring. Since the program offered little to no international experience, three trips were added to help students develop a global perspective. These included working with organizational clients and faculty members in France, Mexico, and China.

In Monterrey, Mexico, MSOD students worked with a glass company client, an experience providing special language challenges for the primarily English-speaking students. During the week, the students observed the production line, interviewed designated employees, analyzed the data, and presented their findings to the senior management team with recommendations for the future. This was a significant step forward in ODC education because the redesigned program included international consulting experience with seasoned faculty.

With the MSOD program a success, Preston, with the help of Kurt Motamedi and Chris Worley, developed an OD doctorate program featuring an international aspect. The program designers knew that many students would come from the MSOD and further build on their existing skills. Therefore, they inserted a required team-building experience for all doctoral students prior to starting classes and that included a high ropes course, a sensitivity group, and a team-choosing exercise.

The Pepperdine doctorate program was designed for working adults rather than typical traditional OD programs existing in 1995. Throughout the calendar year, students worked individually or by the Internet with their team; additionally, they had a seven-day meeting once a semester. This design was an extension of the already classic MSOD experience and included international activities to provide these advanced students with the same global skills in their consulting experience.

Monty Miller, a member of the first Pepperdine Cohort in EdD Organizational Change, observed of Preston, "She inspired, motivated and set the bar, all in a matter of minutes. It started with her deeply inspiring story of conducting a teambuilding-program with the group from the National Academy of Sciences." He continued, "We were motivated to excel. The more we invested into the program, the more exponential multipliers we would receive out of the program; that was true. And her final words were, 'You are not done till you have published'" (M. Miller, personal communication, April 4, 2016). The program was so successful that Peter Sorensen invited Preston to consult with him when he was designing his PhD program for Benedictine University. She also taught in the program for him several times.

**Designing a New ODC Model for Working Adults: Colorado Technical University (CTU)**   As a major contribution to its ODC education process, Preston became Colorado Technical University's Dean of the Doctorate of Management. This program was totally designed for working adults as a hybrid program (Preston 2014). For a time, it was a diamond in the crown of ODC education. While primarily online, this hybrid program had a required residency – the powerful heart of the program (Preston 2014).

The purpose of the first residency was socialization into the program. Students met as a group to get to know each other and their first faculty member. From the second residency onward, half the cohorts attended at any one time. Students were required to attend three residencies a year, but many came to all four because of their desire to learn. At the program's peak, there were 240 new students every year – 30 to 60 students every quarter – and the residencies were filled with class time, famous keynote speakers, workshops, and a large town meeting to discuss issues. Online education has had a very poor reputation, especially at the doctorate level, but during its glory days, this program was far superior to any doctoral online program or even full residence program available.

The program degree was business management and incorporated 12 classes. It also consisted of a solid ODC background as a base for all students (Preston 2014). Additionally, there were specializations (composed of four classes) in such areas as ODC, Global Leadership, Environmental and Social Sustainability, Homeland Security and Emerging Media. Mike McCoy and Preston interviewed major constituencies for these specialties and designed them based on constituency needs and requirements. According to  Preston et al. (2012), Homeland Security is one such example.

The most popular specialty was ODC, followed by Global Leadership and then Environmental and Social Sustainability. The Global Leadership specialty was the first doctoral program in this area. It was a combination of ODC skills, social media, culture, international/global business, and environmental and social sustainability (Preston 2014). For the ODC, Global Leadership, and Environmental and Social Sustainability specialties, an advanced research class taken outside the United Stated was required and included a major team project within the host country.

To illustrate, Kenneth Wall and Preston took a large group to a location near Beijing, China, and worked with the human resource department in a major sporting goods corporation. In order to be ready for their action research project, the students refreshed their knowledge of action research and learned about Chinese culture and the specific business organization's culture prior to their departure to China. During their brief stay, they were officially introduced to the culture, gathered one cycle of data, analyzed it, and prepared a report for the HR senior staff.

The CTU online hybrid program is the only one that ever attempted such an extensive project. Other students conducted interventions in several countries, including South Africa and India. The faculty ultimately made this program special (Preston 2014). Each faculty member was a star in ODC in his or her own right, and they came to this program because it was like a mini-academy of management meeting. They were stimulated, not only by the teaching but also by each other

outside the classroom. While these well-known faculties came worldwide to CTU residency, the program's powerful component was that they themselves designed and taught the online classes. Moreover, they came because they truly enjoyed seeing each other four times a year and felt stimulated with the new ideas from the information meetings with their professional colleagues. The same faculty were mentors of the dissertation committees. (To be a mentor, a faculty member had to have at least 20 peer-reviewed publications, although many far exceeded the requirement.)

One of Preston's former students, Tonya Henderson, said, "Dr. Preston made sure her students learned several different methods. Not only did she fill our consulting toolboxes, but she shared her network in a way that gave us direct access to some of the great thinkers in our field. You simply can't put a price on that kind of learning, or the confidence that comes with it" (T. Henderson, personal communication, April 5, 2016).

Thus, the program design, the residency, and the faculty were the factors moving ODC education forward in a major way for several very meaningful years. Unfortunately, CTU was a for-profit university, and its corporate leadership made the decision to standardize classes and eliminate the faculty-designed ones, shorten residency, reduce the number of residencies, and vary the faculty brought for residency. The program exists today, but it is not the same.

## Founding Sustainable Organizations on ODC

Three new types of organizations exist today partly because of Preston's influence. These include the Organization Change Alliance (OCA) in Atlanta, bed and breakfasts of New Orleans, Louisiana (BBNOLA), and the International Society for Organization Development and Change (ISODC).

**The Organization Change Alliance (OCA)**  The OCA came into existence when Preston moved to Atlanta. It was formed officially on January 11, 1993 (Preston 1993b), and grew out of several concurrent forces. First, there was a lament by Golembiewski (1993) that the national training labs no longer had the influence needed to help train new professionals in the field and that there was no platform or good way to transfer basic ODC values to newcomers. Additionally, not many university programs were available in which to train ODC professionals, − especially in the South.

At that time, there was a cadre of OD academics and practitioners in the Atlanta area who wanted to do something about this inability to socialize new people to the profession. Finlay, Carter, Golembiewski, and Preston became a steering committee for a new OD professional organization and were supported by initial members like Myers.

The visioning process developed the basis for this new organization and included mentoring, affiliations, service, improving professional skills, certification, OD research, OD marketing, and "what is in it for me" (Preston 1993b, p. 80). Its

foundation was learning and service, something that made this organization unique. The members all participated in community projects and assigned designated mentors for new people in the field. Workshops were conducted at regular meetings to reinforce or learn new skills, theory, and/or practice. This organization continues today.

**Bed and Breakfasts of New Orleans, Louisiana (BBNOLA)** When Preston arrived in New Orleans in 2002, many bed and breakfasts and small family restaurants existed in the French Quarter, Garden District, and surrounding tourist areas (Preston 2012a, b). These groups were not organized nor were they motivated to join forces.

Preston bought a bed and breakfast (B&B) and quickly saw a need for working together. Most of the B&Bs could manage quite well during the high season, as could the family restaurants. During the hot, sticky summers, the larger corporate hotels and corporate restaurants had all the customers. By joining forces, there was an opportunity to get some of the business for the smaller hotels, B&Bs, and family restaurants through joint marketing, coordinating meals with stays, and discounts on tourist attractions. The problem was that these owners were fiercely independent entrepreneurs who thought first about competition, rather than working together.

Preston decided to develop a network organization to combat the problem (Chisholm 1998). By using a network, owners of these organizations could remain independent and yet work together for their mutual interests. Thus, in 2002, after much negotiation and compromise, the BBNOLA was born (Preston 2012a).

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans. With the subsequent failure of their businesses, many of the BBNOLA group members left. Preston was among them. Upon her return, playing the consultant facilitator once again, she convinced BBNOLA members to persist and try new techniques to attract tourists and save their businesses (Preston 2012b). The group developed a website that showcased the B&Bs, small hotels, and restaurant locations. Tourists could view pictures of the location, prices, and rooms and even register online. This positive energy was generated from establishing a network organization that still exists today (Preston 2012b).

**International Society for Organization Development and Change (ISODC)** This professional organization was founded by Terry Armstrong, Jeanne Maes, Lena Neal, Peter Sorensen, and Preston. Prior to its formation, numerous discussions occurred about the future of the *Organization Development Journal*, founded by Joseph Cangemi in fall 1983 and owned by the Organization Development Institute (ODI). Cole was quite ill by now and it seemed clear that if the ODI dissolved, something needed to be done to save the journal or let it go.

Thus, the International Society for Organization Development came into being in January 2011. Two years later, the word "change" was added to its name.

While the ISODC emerged from the ODI, it was an entirely new entity. Its founders realized that to serve a truly global constituency, it had to become a network organization (Chisholm 1998). These founders wanted to develop an organization that would not have chapters, but rather be a joining force for the many splintered

groups in the field. They wanted people from disciplines beyond ODC and the social sciences to join and help the field grow and change.

**Editor of the *Organization Development Journal*** Cole's encouragement to write for the *Organization Development Journal* attracted Preston to follow the track to eventually becoming its editor. From 1988 to 1990, she served as its peer review editor under then-editor Armstrong's tutelage. During this brief apprenticeship, Preston developed the peer review system for manuscript review – something that was previously missing.

In 1991, Preston assumed the editorship for the first time. As of this writing, she has served as editor three times. Under her editorship during the years, she has tried to keep the journal balanced between theory, practitioner, case study, experimental research, action research, and how-to articles. Her goal has been twofold: (1) provide the field with solid theory and research and (2) feed the practitioner with new ways to increase practice effectiveness.

In its life cycle, the *Organization Development Journal* is currently in the early maturity stage, and it now is one of the best international journals in ODC. It is Preston's goal to maintain that position while she remains editor. In finding writers, selecting appropriate articles for issues, encouraging guest editors for special issues, and maintaining a top-flight editorial staff, she realizes that she has had an impact on the ODC field and its thinking.

## New Insights

As a scholar-practitioner, Preston's focus has been consistent in applying ODC theory to the field, integrating and expanding it through her practice and writing. Her keen ability to penetrate situations has resulted in greater understanding using superordinate goals, creating cultural change democracy, designing sustainable organizational structures, and applying new models to ODC education.

### Superordinate Goals: Alleviating Hostile Situation in Large South African Groups

In her work in South Africa, Preston was able to draw from her experiences in her family therapy groups and later, entrepreneurial family business consulting to address often hostile situations and work with large disparate groups. In one visit to South Africa, Preston and Armstrong were surprised to learn that they were responsible for bringing together a 300-person meeting, and lecture was out of the question. They somehow had to use the group to create the needed cultural synergy to move forward. On the spot, Preston and Armstrong crafted a superordinate goal to unite the groups, "creating a safe South Africa for our children." It worked and

Armstrong and Preston received a standing ovation and were invited to facilitate the remaining few days in the same manner.

These two pioneers used OD in large groups before it became conventional. They also created positive superordinate goals to unite groups before there was Appreciative Inquiry (Cummings and Worley 2015).

## Cultural Change Democracy: Visioning Possibilities in South Africa

Analyzing the impacts of culture and the potential of conflict as a catalyst for change, Preston has focused on helping leaders understand the dynamics of their situations and what is possible.

For example, South Africa's culture was quite rigid with no opportunity to learn, make mistakes, or develop problem-solving skills (Preston, DuToit, Van Zyl and Holscher 1993). Children were raised with strict obedience to their parents and authority figures, and tribal culture consisted of a distinct hierarchy producing rigid, inflexible behaviors. To address these cultural challenges, Preston and Armstrong conducted workshop interventions helping participants develop an array of needed skills: problem solving, conflict resolution, flexibility, and an understanding of the use of cultural change democracy, a foreign concept at the time (Preston, DuToit, Van Zyl and Holscher 1993; Preston et al. 1996; Preston 1993b; Preston and DuToit 1991).

## Creating Sustainable Organizational Structures

Preston has educated and helped others to navigate changing organizational structures and natural disasters and changing economic conditions (Pierce 2006). One striking example mentioned above was the network organization, BBNOLA. Building on a superordinate goal, that of attracting more business for everyone, Preston persuaded the small business owners that working together was truly beneficial. She used the concept of trans-organizational change, due to the owners' alliance as under-organized systems (Brown 1980). She knew that they would go through the process of identification, convention, organization, and evaluation (Brown 1980). Then, she established a design team to create the structure of BBNOLA. Using the work of Rupert Chisholm in some of his community work in Pittsburgh as a model, Preston encouraged the group to explore the environment, identify the current community structure, vision a desirable future, plan broad action steps, and follow through with additional work (Chisholm 1998).

Daphne DePorres and Steve Fazio both recounted her amazing ability to "get to the heart of a matter" and create spaces in which forward movement can occur (DePorres, personal communication, April 6, 2016; S. Fazio, personal communication, April 8, 2016). BBNOLA illustrates one of these instances.

## New Models and Applications for ODC Education: Preston's Mark on Theory and Practice

Preston's forward thinking in requiring international experiences of ODC students ensured that global thinking will be solidified in the literature. Her many articles regarding the importance of self-knowledge and culture have provided the basis on which others have continued to build.

She realized the importance of integrating conflict resolution skills into her practice very early on. Her reports of this use in South Africa have been foundational in applying conflict-handling skills to create change in other areas.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business

### Legacies: Potential Model for Transformational Change – South Africa

During Preston's career, she has demonstrated the use of self-as-instrument, far ahead of its popularity in the literature (Cheung-Judge 2012). Additionally, she has labeled her ability to observe herself, an organizational (or situational) culture, its leaders, its people, and any interventions simultaneously as "synergistic action research" (Preston 1989b).

Her ability to engage in synergistic action research is exemplified by her work in South Africa, using Dick Beckhard and Harris's organizational transition model (Beckhard and Harris 1987) and realizing the need to modify it. The model focused on five specific areas in the change process: (1) evaluating the need for change, (2) defining the desired future state, (3) describing the present state, (4) moving from the present to the future, and (5) managing the transition.

For example, while working in South Africa, Preston's team became aware that the Beckhard and Harris model did not explain everything that was going on in the situation. They observed that the "organization" did not make this transition by its own efforts, but that the people had a great deal to do with it (Preston et al. 1996). The team observed the "present state," and within that present state, the people had an old reality that contained the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors necessary to be successful *in the present state* of the organization. As the leaders developed a new organizational vision and desired future state, in order to be successful, the people would have to change their reality to fit the future. Thus, they would go through a transition, while the people – the real catalysts for helping the organization reach the future state – would go through a transformation stage.

Preston had the opportunity to meet Beckhard at an academy of management meeting and discuss the article about the South Africa situation. Beckhard appreciated the new thinking and recognized the need to modify the model.

In the potential model of transformational change applied to South Africa, the people and the organization go through eight corresponding substages of change, to move from the present state with its old reality to the future state and its new reality

Potential Model of Transformational Change Applied to South Africa
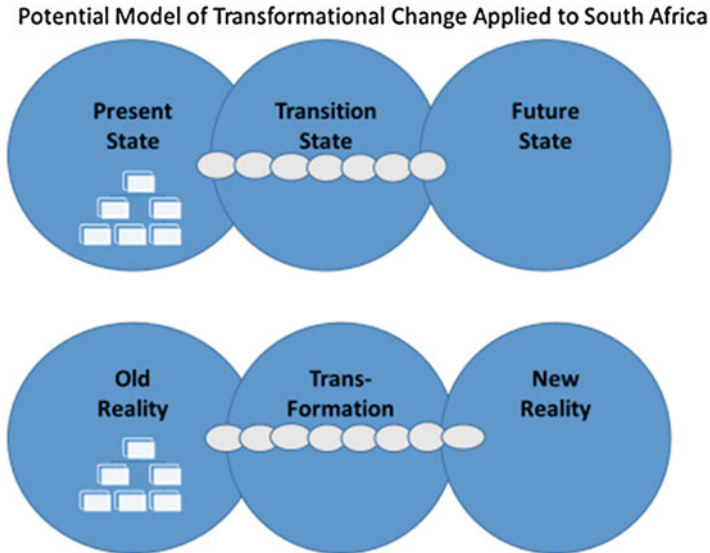


**Fig. 1** Transition and transformation: A vital interdependency (Preston et al. 1996) (Reproduced with permission)

(Preston 1996). The leaders envision a desired new future and begin the transition (see Fig. 1 below).

The leadership needs to plan interventions in stage 1 of transition to help develop the people in the first stage of transformation. Next, the organization moves to the second state of transition and the leaders plan interventions to bring the people along to that new level of reality. This process continues with each step in the transition in which the people must be brought along. If this process is consistently followed, the people in the organization would have the thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and behavior appropriate for the new organization's success when the future state is obtained.

In South Africa, the organization made the transition successfully to the *new* South Africa, but the people were left behind. While Mandela realized what was happening, he felt that it was necessary to change the country. This decision may have been appropriate at the time, but in retrospect, the cultural training in problem solving and conflict resolution should have reached all segments of society instead of the leaders only.

## Unfinished Business: Using Social Media in Traditional OD Practice and Education

Preston's intellectual curiosity continues to seek new applications to the field of ODC. She is currently interested in social media and its untapped potential in three areas: (1) exploring more about using social media in traditional ODC practice, (2) how it might be applied in social change situations, and (3) how can it enhance

ODC education. For example, social media could be used to build global Internet teams and could also make interesting interventions and enhance mentoring new people in the field.

In recent years, Preston has harnessed the power of webinars in traditional ODC practice and research. Between 2013 and 2015, she produced popular webinars for the Academy of Management Consulting and organization development divisions on the topic of preparing manuscripts for submission to the academy. She has also used webinars to address such topics as consulting skills (with Armstrong and David Jamieson), and how to break into global consulting, using stories and audience questions to make skills more transferable. She is exploring their use in small groups to promote personal growth.

She has postulated about the power of using social media as an intervention to promote social change. Her interest was piqued when she attended an ISODC conference in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, in 2014. There, she made a presentation on the history of OD as applied to social change and lamented that there is not much of this being done today, even though there are opportunities. A young couple that had just returned from Ukraine was in the audience. Instead of delivering their planned presentation, they shared what they did in Ukraine to promote peace, revealing how they used social media to design the intervention, to train facilitators, and to attract people in Ukraine to participate in the intervention (later written as an article in the *Organization Development Journal* (Fursman and Fursman 2014).

Preston immediately saw the possibilities and wondered what else could be done in other situations. As she continues to explore this area, she will encourage others to become involved.

Finally, there is a use for social media in formally educating and training future leaders. At present, there are master's programs in this specialty area, but no full PhD programs. As an example, the Global Leadership specialty area created at CTU is filled with use for social media as a combination of organization development and change, cultural awareness, environmental and social sustainability, and global business. This program can prepare leaders for business, international corporations, government, nonprofit, nongovernmental, and Internet organizations. Students gain much experience by interacting with thought leaders across the world. It is Preston's dream to further such a program; it only needs a university home that realizes the need for global leaders, coupled with an appreciation for social media as a tool for education.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, great thought leaders make things happen through their approachability, transparency, and collaborative style. This description characterizes Joanne C. Preston who, over the course of her career, has integrated the theories of several disciplines into practice. With a foundation in developmental psychology, she set forth to make the workplace healthier. To date, she has influenced the growth of

organizations and left her imprint on academia, nonprofits, businesses, and governments on six continents.

Echoing her father's encouragement to "be the best that you can be, whatever that is," Preston felt the exhilaration of exploring and experimenting. This has become her mantra to her students and clients as she moves ahead to greater contributions. Certainly, as the world becomes a smaller place through globalization, it will take great thought leaders like Preston to persevere integrating and applying interdisciplinary theories to new horizons of practice with the goal of making the workplace healthier.

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# Inspiring Positive Change: The Paradoxical Mind of Robert E. Quinn

# 64

Gretchen M. Spreitzer

**Abstract**

This chapter focuses on the work of Robert E. Quinn. He has devoted his professional and personal life to developing himself and others into understanding what it means to be an inspiring change agent. From his life lessons as a child to his unconventional insights as a college student to his work in church life, and especially in his scholarship, Quinn has used key life experiences to learn and grow. Every step of the way, he has sought to understand, document, and ignite transformational experiences. In this way, he is an exemplary applied behavioral scientist, continually integrating scholarship and practice. Quinn's major contributions include (1) the development of the competing values model which embraces the role of tension and paradox to understand organizational life, (2) articulating the essential role of self-empowerment in inspiring positive change, and (3) challenging the assumption that leadership is less about having a position of authority and more about having a mind-set (the fundamental state of leadership). In the last decade, Quinn has brought these different contributions together as a cofounder of a new field of organizational studies, named positive organizational scholarship, which focuses on the science for bringing out the very best in organizations, teams, and individuals. Quinn's contributions extend beyond these content areas as he is also a masterful teacher and mentor who helps others envision their full potential. For all of these reasons, Quinn's personal vision to inspire positive change has been fulfilled on many dimensions.

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## Contents

## Introduction

In this chapter, I consider the work of an empowered and empowering man Robert E. Quinn. To transform an individual is to bring about a deep change in meaning, awareness, and capacity. Transformed individuals take on a new identity. They become more empowered and empowering. Something similar is true at the collective level. To transform a group or organization is to bring about a deep change in the culture. In this case numerous people become empowered and empowering. Exercising transformational influence also results in another kind of change. The change agent, who inspires and facilitates the transformational process, also engages in deep learning and becomes more empowered and empowering.

Quinn has dedicated five decades of his life to understanding, documenting, and igniting the process of transformation. As an applied behavioral scientist, Quinn has an unusual ability to integrate scholarship and practice and to inspire positive change in students, executives, and organizations. This distinctive capability has been the foundation for Quinn's major academic contributions, which I preview below:

- He has introduced and developed the Competing Values Framework and the paradoxical approach to understanding and pursuing excellence in social systems.
- He has articulated the deep change or slow death dilemma in human systems and the essential role of self-empowerment and moral power in inspiring positive change.
- He has challenged the assumption that leadership is about position, knowledge, or skills and has introduced the notion that leadership is a fundamental state of being that each of us can learn to enter.
- He is one of the cofounders of the new and growing field called positive organizational scholarship which researches what brings out the very best in organizations, teams, and individuals.

In this chapter, I share some crucial developmental experiences that have shaped Quinn: I outline his core contributions, capture key elements of his legacy as a

change thought leader (as seen through the eyes of prominent change scholars), and share the direction of where Quinn's work is going next.

## Influences and Motivations

I interviewed Quinn to learn more about his early life experiences, and how they shaped him and his orientation to change. Quinn's early experiences profoundly shaped his eventual choice of study. His father died shortly after he was born, and he was raised in a blue-collar neighborhood in Newport, Rhode Island. His mother remarried, and his relationship with his stepfather was often trying. Throughout his childhood, he felt like he was on the outside of every group, trying to get in, whether in the family, classroom, or on the sports field. Like many people operating on the edge, he became an informal student of social dynamics.

When he was in eighth grade, his parents and sister joined the Mormon Church. He considered this decision appalling but gradually came to value the Mormon lifestyle as he began to see how it enriched lives. As a freshman in college at Brigham Young University (BYU), he made the decision to join the church. Nine months later he began serving a 2-year mission in Hawaii, which had a profound influence on his ability to understand himself and others.

The task of finding and converting people seemed impossibly difficult. Despite intense effort, he initially had little success. After a year of struggle, he received help from a young man named Stephen R. Covey who would later become known for his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*. Quinn was touched by a speech Covey gave, and Covey later coached him in a long, disciplined process of spiritual self-surrender and personal purification.

The result was a transformation in which Quinn describes being filled with the "pure love of Jesus Christ." Centering himself in a higher power, he began to operate at a level of influence he could not have previously imagined. As he transcended his own ego, and became more virtuous, he discovered moral power, or choosing to empower oneself to do the right thing, regardless of external forces. As he taught with love, he began to operate with vision, individual consideration, and constant challenge. He was then able to engage and facilitate the conversion of other people.

At 20 years old, Quinn had experienced deep change and discovered an important key to transformational influence; knowledge and skill were necessary but insufficient. He learned that to change to others, one must also undergo deep self-change. Transformational change agents must transcend the ego and the transactional assumptions that structure conventional thinking and normal social life. Transformational change leaders must continually enlarge their own moral power and live from it. This discovery would have lasting impact.

After the change, Quinn was less driven by the assumptions of survival he learned as a child in a tough neighborhood. He learned that while survival is necessary to life, the purpose of his life is to grow and progress and help others do the same. Given this orientation, he made the important discovery that he wanted to dedicate his professional and personal life to inspiring positive change.

After his mission, Quinn returned to BYU and found the usual choice of majors to be limiting and uninspiring. So, he created his own major in "change." He improvised a major by seeking out professors and topics related to change, no matter what department they happened to be in. He formally graduated with a degree in sociology, but, in fact, he was "a change major." He continued his education with a master's degree in Organization Development at BYU. He then went on to complete a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior and Applied Behavioral Science at the University of Cincinnati.

In reflecting on his education, Quinn told me, "I studied change constantly. If I took a course on X, I would turn it into a course on X and change. I read about change, I practiced change, I did research on change, I wrote about change and I taught about change. That one word integrated everything in my life. It created enormous synergies."

When I asked him about specific individuals who shaped him along the way, he mentioned his mission president and two faculty members at BYU. Orin R. Woodbury, his mission president, was a potent role model who Quinn sought to emulate. At BYU, Reed Bradford was a teacher of the purpose-driven life. Keith Warner introduced him to literature on organizational effectiveness. While these men were most influential, Quinn told me that the biggest influence on his intellectual development came from two of his peers – Kim Cameron and David Whetten. "We supported and cared for each other, professionally and personally. We made sacrifices for each other." All three eventually became fellows of the Academy of Management and today remain very close friends.

In 1975, Quinn finished his Ph.D. and took his first academic job in the Department of Public Administration at the State University of New York in Albany. After receiving tenure, he took on a leadership role as the Executive Director of the Institute for Government and Policy Studies. Kim Cameron invited him to spend 2 years as a visiting professor at the University of Michigan, School of Business in 1988. It was such a good fit that Quinn joined the Michigan faculty. He became a gifted teacher of executive education, and his research program thrived.

These life experiences powerfully shaped the change scholar Quinn has become over his 40-year career. In the next section of the chapter, I outline the key contributions of his work related to change.

## Key Contributions

Some scholars have made their contributions in one or two related areas of inquiry. Quinn is unique. He has made contributions in a number of different areas of inquiry, yet, all of his work ties back to the question of how to inspire positive change. In this section, I fast forward to examine key contributions that have emerged from the pursuit of his life purpose, inspiring positive change.

## Contribution 1: The Competing Values Framework (CVF) and the Paradoxical Perspective

Quinn became interested in organizational effectiveness while pursuing his master's at BYU. In the early 1980s, organizational effectiveness was a hot topic. Working with John Rohrbaugh, the two decided to shift the focus of study from the analysis of how people in organizations observed effectiveness to the study of how academic experts thought about effectiveness (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983). After the two gathered data, Rohrbaugh did a multidimensional analysis which produced a spatial map of the criteria of organizational effectiveness. He dropped it on Quinn's desk and asked, "Does this make any sense to you?"

Quinn recounts "I couldn't take my eyes off the printout. I headed off to vacation that afternoon, and I couldn't stop thinking about it. I was consumed by it. I was deeply joyful, because I knew we're onto something profoundly important."

The spatial map, which became known as the Competing Values Framework, juxtaposes two dimensions (internal/external and stability/change) to create four quadrants that reflect the key set of values that are often assumed to compete with each other in organizational life (see Fig. 1). The human relations (or collaborate) quadrant with its values of community, teamwork, and trust is often viewed as conflicting with the rational goal (or compete) quadrant, with its values of performance, speed, and competition. A second tension is reflected in the other two dimensions. Here the adhocracy (or create) quadrant, with its values of innovation, transformation, and change, is often viewed as contrasting with the hierarchy (or control) quadrant, with its values of efficiency, process, and systems.

All four quadrants contribute in important ways to organizational effectiveness, yet each is in tension with the others, especially the quadrant diagonal to it. A highly effective leader or culture transcends or even embraces those tensions. An ineffective leader or culture overemphasizes one or two of the quadrants and gives short shrift to the others. It is the interplay between the competing values across the quadrants that unleashes the potential of a system or a leader.

The four-quadrant framework has been applied by Quinn and colleagues to understand and improve organizational culture (Quinn and McGrath 1985; Cameron and Quinn 1999), organizational effectiveness (Quinn and Cameron 1983), communication styles (Quinn et al. 1991a), management information systems (Quinn and Cooper 1993), and teaching effectiveness (Quinn et al. 2015).

In each of the above areas the framework is an attractive tool because it allows people to easily and efficiently differentiate. To say, for example, "This organization is high on the values of the compete quadrant and low on the values of the collaborate quadrant," is to communicate a very complex observation in a very few words. When the culture framework, for example, is introduced to a team of executives, and they profile their organization, they immediately gain new insights. The clear categories make it easier to talk about where the organization is and how they might move in new directions.

**THE COMPETING VALUES FRAMEWORK
FOR CULTURE, LEADERSHIP, EFFECTIVENESS, AND VALUE DRIVERS**

**Long-term Change**        **Individuality Flexibility**        **New Change**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Culture Type:** CLAN | **Culture Type:** ADHOCRACY |
| **Orientation:** COLLABORATE | **Orientation:** CREATE |
| **Leader Type:** Facilitator / Mentor / Teambuilder | **Leader Type:** Innovator / Entrepreneur / Visionary |
| **Values Drivers:** Commitment / Communication / Development | **Value Drivers:** Innovative outputs / Transformation / Agility |
| **Theory of Effectiveness:** Human development and high commitment produce effectiveness. | **Theory of Effectiveness:** Innovativeness, vision and constant change produce effectiveness. |

**Internal Maintenance**                                    **External Positioning**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Culture Type:** HIERARCHY | **Culture Type:** MARKET |
| **Orientation:** CONTROL | **Orientation:** COMPETE |
| **Leader Type:** Coordinator / Monitor / Organizer | **Leader Type:** Hard-driver / Competitor / Producer |
| **Value Drivers:** Efficiency / Timeliness / Consistency & Uniformity | **Values Drivers:** Market Share / Goal achievement / Profitability |
| **Theory of Effectiveness:** Control and efficiency with capable processes produce effectiveness. | **Theory of Effectiveness:** Aggressively competing and customer focus produce effectiveness. |

**Stability Control**        **Incremental Change**        **Fast Change**

**Fig. 1** Competing Values Framework (Reprinted with permission of the publisher. From Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework, copyright© (2011) by D. B. Szabla, W. Pasmore, M. Barnes, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, CA. All rights reserved. "http://www.bkconnection.com")

So the model helps people clarify their intentions and clarify how to pursue them. This means the Competing Values Framework is similar to many other tools that can assist with analysis and decision-making. Yet the Competing Values Framework has two characteristics that make it different from other frameworks and can greatly elevate conventional thinking.

First it helps users understand and avoid the major vulnerability of conventional thinking, which Gregory Bateson (2002) referred to as schismogenesis which means
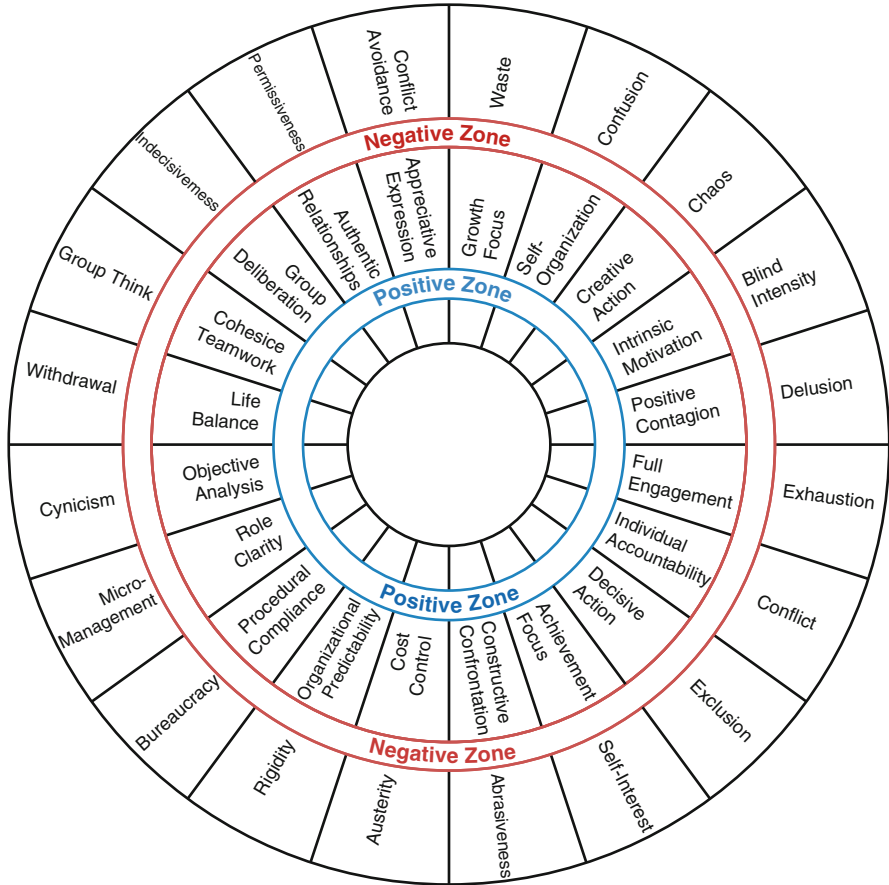
**Fig. 2** A framework of organizational tensions (Borrowed from Quinn (2015))

split at birth (See Cameron et al. 2014, pp. 60–61). When people develop an intention of any kind, such as the pursuit of achievement, they often do so at the cost of some positive, opposite value, something that is completely ignored like the maintenance of authentic relationships. At the genesis of the intention, achievement and authentic relationships can become mutually exclusive. One is pursued, while the other is ignored or even denigrated. The actor cannot see that the opposing, positive values can operate together.

As a given value is pursued, it often leads to initial positive outcomes, but then, paradoxically the effort become dysfunctional. The pursuit of achievement, for example, results in a culture of self-interest, and trust and collaboration both collapse so that the pursuit of individual achievement also collapses. The point is that all positive values, pursued in a monistic fashion, turn negative. Figure 2 illustrates some positive values and the negative values that may arise when one positive value is pursued in isolation.

The second characteristic of the framework is that it makes the complex ecology of positive and negative values explicit and invites the actor to do something that is unconventional, that is, to think in both/and terms and pursue the integration of differentiation. In nature interpenetration of differentiated systems, like an acorn and the soil, or a sperm and an egg, can give rise to the emergence of a new and more complex system. Likewise in social action, major breakthroughs emerge from insights that integrate unlike categories (See Cameron et al. 2014, pp. 52–53).

People who master the Competing Values Framework begin to see organizations and other systems, not as nouns but as verbs; they see others, not as nouns but as verbs; they see themselves, not as nouns but as verbs. In other words, they begin to see the dynamic complex whole. When they do, they also recognize the paradoxical nature of excellence in the social world and the importance of integrating differentiation (Quinn et al. 1995a). When asked about how this actually works in organizations, Quinn provided this example:

> Organizations and people become excellent when they operate across the categories in the model. Great leaders, for example, are high on task and high on people, they maintain stability while leading change. They integrate differentiated categories. While conventional thinkers are trapped into the use of mutually exclusive categories, generative leaders are bringing about the integration of differentiated categories. Generative people accept and use the conventional perspective. Yet, they also embrace the more complex and dynamic integrative perspective. They become bilingual. They become able to see and integrate paradoxical tensions.

Such notions come into play in research on the development of leaders. While there was an existing stream of work on cognitive complexity in the literature, Quinn and his colleagues developed the notion of behavioral complexity (Quinn 1984; Quinn et al. 1991b, 1995b; Quinn and Hooijberg 1993; Quinn and Hart 1993; Lawrence et al. 2009). Behavioral complexity is the ability to exhibit contrary, opposing, or competing behaviors and roles as managers and leaders while still having coherence and integrity.

A person with high behavioral complexity is able to engage in a wider and more complex array of behaviors than a person with low behavioral complexity. A behaviorally complex leader both maintains continuity and leads change (one dimension of the CVF). A behaviorally complex leader also is able to look bidirectionally to embrace internal and external demands (a second dimension of the CVF). As leaders display complex behaviors from across the quadrants of the framework, their effectiveness goes up.

The framework has not only had an impact on scholarship but also on the world of practice. The competing values assessment of culture, first created by Kim Cameron and further developed together with Quinn, has been used in interventions for organizational culture change by hundreds of consultants and change agents (Cameron et al. 2014). The book (Cameron and Quinn 1999) that published the assessment is now in its third edition (2011). Quinn (along with Michael McGrath, Michael Thompson, Sue Faerman, Lynda St. Clair, and David Bright, 2015) also produced a textbook, now in its sixth edition, using the Competing Values

Framework to help students develop competencies associated with each dimension, in order to become more effective leaders.

Quinn's paradoxical insights led to a number of new efforts on paradox. In 1988, he published the book, *Beyond Rational Management: Mastering the Paradoxes and Competing Demands of High Performance.* In it, he began to articulate the link between the Competing Values Framework and excellence. That same year, he and Kim Cameron published a book called *Paradox and Transformation*: *Towards a Theory of Change in Organization and Management*. In it, they brought together leading organizational theorists and began to articulate the role of the paradoxical perspective in organizational theory. Today, organizational theorists show much interest in the paradoxical perspective, and much of the work ties back to these early efforts.

## Contribution 2: Deep Change, Self-Empowerment, and Moral Power

Many of Quinn's research and writing efforts take root in his efforts to bring change in individuals and organizations. In the late 1980s he began to believe that both individuals and organizations are constantly confronted by something he called the "deep change or slow death dilemma." People and organizations are constantly required to change in various ways. Some of the pressures are ignored or denied. The unwillingness to face reality leads to increasing dysfunctional behavior patterns. Energy is lost, and the process of slow psychological death sets in. Psychological death is more than emotional exhaustion or burnout; instead, it involves being worn-down and disillusioned to the point of making a conscious choice to let an unaddressed organizational problem fester. His book, *Deep Change* (1996), articulated the difficulty and how to deal with it. The volume has been a long-term best seller for Jossey-Bass publishers.

After the publication of *Deep Change*, hundreds of people sent Quinn accounts of how they used the book to make deep change in their lives or in their organizations. These accounts ranged from people indicating how they used the book to reframe how they were managing a painful divorce to how they were using the book to alter how they were leading the transformation of the Army.

The authors of these accounts particularly described how the book inspired them to act courageously. The reader's stories of moral power became the foundation to three other books: *Change the World: How Ordinary People Can Accomplish Extraordinary Results* (Quinn 2000); *A Company of Leaders: Five Disciplines for Unleashing the Power in Your Workforce* (Spreitzer and Quinn 2001); and *Building the Bridge as You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change* (Quinn 2004). In the first, Quinn examined the lives of Jesus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. and shows how self-examination and personal change give rise to moral power and social change. In the second, he and Spreitzer reviewed the empirical work on empowerment and show that self-examination and personal change lead to empowerment and impact. Empowerment begins with the self and involves a clear sense of meaning or purpose about one's work. In the third volume, Quinn used numerous

cases to show how deep change leads to increased behavioral complexity, and he provides a language of paradox for helping observers to see and describe that complexity.

The common theme in the three books is that as people learn to fulfill and transcend the need for independence, and become effectively interdependent, they begin to see relationships more deeply and the sense of accountability changes. For example, when an authority figure encounters a resistant employee, the conventional assumption is that the employee is a problem to be fixed. A key insight from these books is that instead, if an employee is resistant, the problem is not in the employee but in the authority figure. He or she is not providing a vision inspiring enough to attract the employee into the process of commitment, learning, and change. To do so the authority figure must go through an episode of learning and change in order to understand that people are not merely objects. They have agency. Empowered leaders are empowering to others because they have learned to empower themselves and create effective interdependence.

## Contribution 3: The Fundamental State of Leadership

The literature on leadership is extensive, and most of it focuses on the need for knowledge and skills. In the conventional view of leadership, a leader tends to be a person in a position at the top of some hierarchy. Effectiveness is a function of expertise and the ability to act competently. In the book, *Building the Bridge as You Walk On It: A Guide for Leading Change* (2004), Quinn began to argue that leadership is influence and that everyone has the capacity to act as a leader. The key is to move oneself into an elevated state of influence called the fundamental state of leadership.

A paper on the fundamental state of leadership was published in the *Harvard Business Review* (Quinn 2005). It quickly became a classic and was included in the *HBR's Ten Must Reads in Managing Yourself in 2011*. With his son Ryan, also an organizational behavior/change scholar, Quinn published a book called *Lift: Becoming a Positive Force in Any Situation* (Quinn and Quinn 2009). It provided an extensive discussion of the concept and the scientific foundations.

The essential argument is that it is natural for all of us to be comfort centered, externally directed, self-focused, and internally closed. In each case we can learn to move ourselves to a more positive orientation. When we clarify the result we want to create, we move from being comfort centered to being purpose centered. As we take ourselves into a self-determined and challenging intent, we more fully focus our attention and we increase our own energy; this also signals the importance of the purpose to others (See Quinn and Quinn 2015, Chap. 4).

When we move from being externally directed to being internally directed, we clarify our values and find the courage to live our values. We experience increased dignity, strength, and capacity to act for ourselves, and we operate from increased moral power (See Quinn and Quinn 2015, Chap. 6).

When we move from being self-focused to being other focused, we transcend the transactional assumptions of social life, and we orient to people and relationships with empathy. Genuine consideration builds trust and helps others to overcome self-justifications, increase their energy, and feel secure enough to explore, learn, and innovate (See Quinn and Quinn 2015, Chap. 8).

When we move from being internally closed to being externally open, we embrace a growth mind-set. We are willing to hear from, learn from, and cocreate with others. Externally open people invest more effort, persist longer, look for and use feedback, believe in themselves, and have higher aspirations (See Quinn and Quinn 2015, Chap. 10).

The personal change process is executed as people learn to ask four questions:

- What result do I want to create?
- Am I internally directed?
- Am I other focused?
- Am I externally open?

By focusing on some ordinary future event, and asking these questions, a person can become more purposive, more authentic, more empathetic, and more humble. In the process, the mind opens to new strategic alternatives. By proactively selecting and implementing a given new alternative, the leader creates a positive variation of the old self. By engaging in new experiences, the leader also accelerates personal learning and growth. Learning the concept can be enhanced by a number of individual and collective processes and tools (the tools can be found in Quinn and Quinn 2015, Chaps. 11–13).

## New Insights: Positive Organizational Scholarship

In 2001, Quinn collaborated with his colleagues to address an important gap in the field of organizational studies. His frequent collaborator and friend, Kim Cameron, had returned to the University of Michigan after several years away as the Dean at Case Western Reserve University and was starting a research program on organizational forgiveness. Another Michigan colleague, Jane Dutton, was beginning a new research stream on compassion organizing. She and colleagues define compassion organizing as a "collective response to a particular incident of human suffering that entails the coordination of individual compassion in a particular organizational context" (Dutton et al. 2006, p. 61).

The three began to have conversations about the limitations of conventional organizational research. They began to argue that the bias in social science is toward the examination of normal patterns. People are normally found to be self-interested, reactive, and alienated. Organizations are naturally filled with conflict and distrust. The gloomy messages of social science turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The findings become implicit justification to pursue results while treating people poorly.

The natural outcome is that the other people act in self-interested, reactive, and alienated ways, creating organizations of conflict and distrust. The three began to argue that there is value in examining individuals, relationships, groups, and organizations at their very best. Findings from such studies would raise alternative views of how to lead.

In December of 2001, the three organized a research conference of like-minded academics at Michigan and beyond. Their edited book, *Positive Organizational Scholarship: The Foundations of a New Discipline* (Cameron et al. 2003), put a stake in the ground. Many researchers began to adopt the "positive lens." Thus was born a new discipline within organizational studies. Soon after, the three founded the Center for Positive Organizations at the Ross School of Business, and momentum grew. Today, the Center has eight fully engaged senior faculty members. There are more than 25 faculty at Ross associated with the Center and over 300 individuals listed in the Center's Community of Scholars.

In 2006, Quinn left the Center for 3 years to serve as a mission president in Australia. There, he applied the principles of positive organizational scholarship to the administration and leadership of the mission. He put great emphasis on the notion of engaging and changing others by first changing self. Young missionaries proved quite capable of understanding and internalizing the message. He says that the transformation of the mission became "one of the highlights of my life."

He returned to Ross in 2009, and published *Lift: Becoming a Positive Force in Any Situation* (Quinn and Quinn 2009) with his son Ryan. In 2014, he and his colleagues published a book about excellent public school teachers, *The Best Teacher in You: How to Accelerate Learning and Change Lives* (Quinn et al. 2014). It turns out that the best teachers are people who internalize the basic principles of transformational influence. Their classrooms become positive organizations, where students can flourish and exceed expectations. The book received the Ben Franklin Award, naming it the best book in education for 2015.

In 2015, Quinn published *The Positive Organization: Breaking Free from Conventional Cultures*. It documents how some executives evolve from operating within the conventional mind-set to operating within the positive mind-set. In doing so, they gain the capacity to create a sense of purpose, nurture authentic conversations, see possibility, embrace the common good, and trust the emergent process. These capacities seep into others, and they give rise to positive organizations. His research in positive organizational scholarship has been one of the most fulfilling and impactful parts of his more than 40-year career as a change agent and researcher.

## Quinn's Legacy as a Thought Leader on Inspiring Positive Change

I invited several scholars, including some being profiled in this volume, to share their thoughts on Quinn's legacy as a change scholar: Jean Bartunek, Phil Mirvis, and Dick Woodman. I also drew input from two more junior scholars who have been mentored by Bob: Ryan Quinn (University of Louisville) and Ned Wellman

(Arizona State University). The responses corroborate the contributions noted above but articulate some additional insights on the legacy Quinn has created.

1. *Competing Values Framework*: "This work is groundbreaking, in that it provided a complex and dynamic foundation for examining and transforming organizations." The original 1983 article has been cited almost 3,000 times, and the related book with Kim Cameron is now in its sixth edition and has been cited almost 4,000 times. Scholars and consultants around the world use the Competing Values Framework to study and transform organizations to become their best.
2. *Paradox*: "Quinn can be viewed as a forefather of the role of paradox in organizational studies, particularly building on Gestalt psychology and Janusian thinking." Today, we see notions of paradox embedded in many scholarly theories, such as ambivalence, ambidexterity, and exploration/exploitation. Rather than seeing paradox as something negative that requires immediate resolution, paradox is a tension that can be harnessed for more creative, innovative, and transformative solutions.
3. *Deep Change*: "The thinking in *Deep Change* not only led to many individual and organizational transformations, it also became one of the taproots for the emergence of positive organizational scholarship and the fundamental state of leadership concept." The *Deep Change* book made it clear that nature pulls human systems toward decay. We can expect it; unless work is done to the contrary, people and organizations break down. The work to the contrary is called leadership. Leadership of self and of organizations surfaces conflict and transforms it. Effective leaders unify and energize. They bring life to others and to the organization.
4. *Positive Organizational Scholarship*: "Positive Organizational Scholarship is a movement that has successfully shone light on areas of organizational inquiry that have been ignored or given short shrift." In just over 10 years, positive organizational scholarship has moved from a fringe perspective to a key stream of research in organization studies. There have been special issues of prominent journals, like the *Academy of Management Review*, dedicated to positive organization scholarship and related themes. The *Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* (Cameron and Spreitzer 2012) was published by Oxford University Press. At the Academy of Management, every year, more than 150 interested scholars come together to share insights, and at least two themes of the annual meeting have been on topics related to positive organizational scholarship: compassion and meaning. The Academy of Management has even bestowed its award for Most Impactful Research Center on the Center for Positive Organizations, and the faculty were awarded the "Joanne Martin Trailblazer" recognition, by the Organization and Management Theory (OMT) Division of the Academy in 2010. Moreover, many classes in the Ross School of Business curriculum, and around the globe, are grounded in positive organizational scholarship.
5. *Cultural Transformations*: "Quinn has an uncanny ability to integrate scholarship and practice." His personal mission of "inspiring positive change" brought transformation to numerous corporations, universities, and governmental

agencies. Over the years, he was a major force in extended cultural transformation efforts at places like Ford Motor Company, Prudential, Reuters, Whirlpool, and the US Government. In addition, he has played a lead role in shorter change efforts at hundreds of companies and agencies through Ross Executive Education and in his own consulting engagements.

6. *Student Transformations*: "Quinn is not only high in demand by executive audiences but also by degree students." He has taught a very popular course entitled *Becoming a Transformational Leader*. It attracts students from around the campus and has a perpetual waiting list. Many describe the course as life changing. In executive education, he has worked with thousands of professionals, and many of them claim similar impacts. He is also a highly sought-after guest speaker in classrooms around the university and the world. Students often come back to share their gratitude for how Quinn's teaching has transformed them in important ways.

A former doctoral student offered the following about how Quinn had impacted him: "I enjoyed working with Bob for two reasons. First, he is very thorough and thoughtful. When he addresses a question he looks at all possible angles of the question and is open to revising his thinking over time as he gets more information. The second thing is that I always got the sense that our relationship was personal – that he really cared about me as an individual and what I thought. For that reason, I always felt like I could trust his advice and that I could open up to him about things that I found confusing or frustrating. I always left our meetings feeling better about being a doctoral student then I did before."

7. *Developer of Teaching Tools*: "Quinn has a knack for innovative pedagogies for transformation that engage people in deep ways, very quickly." In his educator role, he has developed many teaching tools; some have turned into widely used products.

*Reflected Best Self Feedback*: With Jane Dutton, Laura Morgan Roberts, and Gretchen Spreitzer, he developed a transformational tool called the Reflected Best Self Exercise (HBR paper) that helps people see glimpses of their own greatness: (http://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/cpo-tools/reflected-best-self-exercise-2nd-edition/). The exercise has individuals solicit stories of when they have added value or made a positive difference, from 10 to 20 individuals, who know them well from different aspects of their lives (work, family, friends, etc.). Students then go through a process to weave themes drawn from their stories into the best self-portrait that coalesces their unique strengths, talents, and passions (Roberts et al. 2005b). The tool is now used widely around the globe for leader development in courses and corporations, to help individuals see pathways for becoming extraordinary (Roberts et al. 2005a).

*Positive Leadership Game*: Quinn also created a tool called *The Positive Leadership Game* with Gretchen Spreitzer (for more information on the game and where to purchase it, see this site: http://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/cpo-tools/positive-leadership-the-game/). The game engages small groups in a collective helping

exercise, to release new ideas inspired by principles of positive organizational scholarship. The card game has more than 80 idea cards, each drawing from research-based findings. Players each make a request on something they would like help with, and then the players use the cards to generate new ideas relevant to the issue. Once they experience it, executives, in particular, show enthusiasm for the game and tend to suggest other ways the cards could be used.

*Positive Organization Generator*: In executive education classes, Quinn began to observe that participants would deeply resonate with the concepts from positive organizational scholarship. Yet on the last day, Quinn would ask what they were going to do at home and do differently, and the majority would look mystified. As he began to investigate the consistent pattern, Quinn concluded that the mature executives were like fearful high school students. In high school, the prime objective is to never be seen as uncool. The executives were fearful of embarrassment. They knew that taking new positive practices back to a conventional culture was dangerous. Quinn concluded that the problem did not belong to the participants as students but to him as a teacher. So he invented the positive organization generator (Quinn 2015).

The positive organizational generator provides 100 positive practices from real organizations. Participants have to review the hundred select the few that are most interesting and then "reinvent" them to their own context. In the process of reinvention, the executives come to "own" their ideas. They walk away with a small list of practices in which they are fully invested. They are willing to go home to implement, fail, learn, revise, and implement again.

## Unfinished Business

Most recently, Quinn has been focusing on the role of purpose in the transformation of people and organizations. He and Anjan Thakor, an economist at Washington University in St. Louis, have worked on an issue that is central to the process of creating a positive organization. Economists assume that a narrow focus on value creation produces wealth. An emphasis on relationships and culture is a distraction that reduces the creation of wealth.

At the heart of microeconomics is the principal-agent problem in which a principal, or employer, contracts with an agent or employee. The amount of pay and the amount of effort are specified. If the principal is present to observe and control, then the effort is rendered. If the principle is not observing, the agent underperforms the transactional contract.

The two authors created a mathematical model of an organization based on conventional, transactional assumptions. They then introduced a higher purpose into the model. The organization was transformed. As the agent embraced higher purpose, they became principles or owners, and the organization produced more wealth. The paper provides an economic argument for the role of higher purpose in wealth creation.

Writing this paper led the two authors to question how CEOs think about purpose and wealth creation. This led to interviews of CEOs who head purpose-driven

organizations. One of the surprising outcomes was the discovery that a sizable subset of the CEOs, when they entered the role, did not believe in purpose, people, or culture. As result of some crisis or life trauma, they discovered the power of purpose while serving as a CEO.

Quinn and Thakor are currently working on a book based on the analysis and on the interviews. The book is being written to assist the reader in bringing higher purpose to their life, their leadership, and their organization.

Given the many things Quinn has done, there are numerous areas where researchers can extend his work. When I asked Quinn what he would most like to see done, he replied as follows:

> My major concern is with the creation of a theory of positive organizing. I would like to see researchers extend the competing values model and empirically create an atlas of values. This would particularly include negative values. Without including the negative we cannot have a theory of positive organizing. All possible positive and negative values would be included in the analysis. The final result would be a comprehensive model that greatly expands the theoretical Fig. 2 that is shown in this chapter. With such a product, we could more clearly see how too much emphasis on any given positive value is likely to turn the organization in a negative direction and we could see what positive oppositions we need to simultaneously embrace. This would produce a framework that could guide much research and a framework that would guide more thoughtful practice.

## Conclusion

I was honored to be invited to write this chapter for a person who has been my mentor for almost 30 years. I have benefited in so many ways by Quinn's paradoxical mind. When I first met him, his warmth and humanity shone through in all of our interactions. He is the kind of person that makes time to really listen to understand a person's perspective and mind-set. He wants to know you as a human being not just as a professional colleague. These behaviors epitomize the collaborate quadrant of the CVF. But here is where the paradox comes in. Quinn isn't just warm; he also sets very high expectations and seeks to help develop people into their best selves. When I asked him to chair my dissertation committee, he was constantly pushing me out of my comfort zone. Sometimes I wanted to take an efficient route or would sell myself short in terms of what I might be able to accomplish, but he would have nothing of it – he nudge me to keep aspiring for more and making a bigger contribution. This is the essence of the compete quadrant of the CVF, the polar opposite of the collaborate quadrant qualities and behaviors. Quinn is a master at transcending these opposites in his own behavior and interactions.

And it's not that he treats me specially, this is how he operates with all of his students (even executive education participants) or colleagues. We are better people for having Quinn in our lives, empowering us to be our best selves. And rather than keeping the secret to this ability to operate in paradoxical ways, he has conducted the research and developed the teaching pedagogies to help others learn how to become

more paradoxical themselves, transcending and integrating the competing tensions in their own lives. If you are not already familiar with Quinn's work, I encourage you to start with one or two of the readings highlighted below. But beware, you will likely become a different, better person for having been exposed to his ideas.

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# Reginald Revans: The Pioneer of Action Learning

# 65

Mike Pedler

**Abstract**

This chapter describes the philosophy and approach of Reginald Revans (1907–2003), a UK scientist and educational innovator. It traces the influences on his thinking, from his early imbibing of Christian and Quaker traditions to the later impact of world philosophies especially including Buddhism. His contribution to our understanding of change management processes gives a central place to learning, both personal and institutional. Revans' approach emphasizes the practical and moral significance of personal involvement in action and learning, as a means of resolving the intractable social and organizational problems that we find around us. Over a long life, Revans was ceaselessly active in testing his ideas which were always in a state of emergence. He leaves a rich heritage of proposals and possibilities for present practitioners. Five of the legacies of his work are discussed in this paper: Virtual Action Learning, Critical Action Learning, The Wicked Problems of Leadership, Unlearning, and the Paradox of Innovation.

**Keywords**

Action learning • Leadership • Wicked problems • Innovation • Unlearning

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## Contents

## Introduction

Reginald Revans (1907–2003) was successively an Olympic athlete, a nuclear physicist, an educational administrator, and one of the UK's first professors of management. He is best known as the pioneer of action learning (Revans 1982, 2011), an approach to social and organizational development through engaging people in learning from their attempts to change things. Drawing on ancient sources of wisdom and more recent forbears such as Dewey and Lewin, action learning is aimed at the improvement of human systems for the benefit of those who depend on them (1982, pp. 280–286). It is a pragmatic but moral philosophy with a strongly humanistic view of human potential that commits us, via experiential learning, to addressing the intractable problems of organizations and societies.

This chapter traces Revans' early influences and the sources of his personal and professional motivation, before summarizing his contributions to our understanding of change management and learning. After a description of his ideas and insights, the legacies of his work are discussed along with recent developments in practice.

## Influences and Motivations: Understanding the Difference Between Cleverness and Wisdom

Revans was born into Edwardian England, a short age basking in post-Victorian achievement and surety but darkened by a growing anticipation of turmoil and change. If there were war clouds over Europe, then there was also political change

afoot at home with the rise of working class awareness and the Labor movement. His early memories included meeting a delegation of seamen with his father as part of the inquiry into the sinking of the Titanic. It particularly impressed him that some of the seamen had bare feet. When he later asked his father what had been the most important lesson learned from this disaster, the reply was "What I learned from the Titanic inquiry was to discriminate between cleverness and wisdom" (Boshyk and Dilworth 2010, p. 50). Revans held this as one of the most important incidents in his life, and his father's insight became a touchstone of action learning. (NB Detailed descriptions of Revans' early life and influences and also of the historical development of action learning can be found in Boshyk and Dilworth 2010, especially Chaps. 2, 3, 4, and 6, which include contributions from some of his family and friends. Chapter 3: "Reg Revans: Sources of Inspiration, Practice and Theory" is especially useful.)

He was driven by strong values which included Christian and Quaker influences. In old age, he could still recite long passages from the Bible, read to him as a child by his mother. He attended Society of Friends meetings during his years at Cambridge University (1928–1935), and the Quaker influence was important in terms of his beliefs and practices. As a researcher in nuclear physics in the Cavendish Laboratory, but also a pacifist connected to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Revans was troubled by the military implications of the work at the Cavendish and eventually gave it up. Quaker practices can also be seen as influencing his ideas about action learning as it emerged over the next 30 or 40 years. The emphases on the fundamental equality of people, the importance of private indwelling or reflection, the centrality of inquiry, and the tradition of the "clearness committee" to help members with difficult problems and dilemmas are all visible in most current action learning practice (Dilworth and Boshyk 2010, pp. 54–59).

Yet Revans' moral and ethical influences are not limited to Christianity and Quakerism. In making it clear that he did not see himself as the inventor of action learning, which he regarded as ancient wisdom, he drew widely from many world philosophies: from Aristotle and Sophocles to the Enlightenment philosophers and Marx and in the teachings of Confucius and the Buddha. The mature Revans was "struck by the astonishing similarity between Buddhism and action learning" (1982, p. 529) and thereafter quotes the Buddha on the causes of suffering and how they can be eased. Revans wanted to heal the split between thinking and doing that he identified as toxic in the social structures of businesses, hospitals, and universities. In presenting action and learning as enjoined with each other, he proposes both a therapeutic process to encourage people to overcome the problems that immobilize them and as a means of invigoration and renewal through grasping the opportunities and challenges of social and organizational change.

Revans carried many of these beliefs and practices into his own life. He was uninterested in money and famously willing to go anywhere to talk to anyone "for the price of the bus fare." He lived simply and ate sparingly and did not own a car and preferred to walk, including on journeys between Manchester Airport and his Altrincham home, carrying his small suitcase. A man of great humility, always willing to listen and to learn, he was also iconoclastic, impatient, and critical of

those he saw as exploiting rather than helping their fellow humans. This put him often outside establishment institutions, sometimes made him enemies, and perhaps contributed to a lack of the wider recognition of his work.

## Key Contributions: Putting Learning at the Heart of Managing Change

Revans' contribution to managing change through action and learning is deceptively simple and not easily encapsulated. There is no single theory, no "hierarchy" or "universal model" to convey his message. Action learning is not presented as an organizational change model but as a practice for bringing about desired changes including in oneself. What he taught is that change and learning have to be practiced and cannot be learned secondhand. In placing learning at the heart of his ideas, Revans questions the predictability and linearity of change models that follow Lewin's unfreezing – moving – refreezing perspective. He rejects as illusory the many models and recipes which propose that change can be managed successfully this way or that, whatever the context. Change is an inevitable and natural condition of human organization; the question is: will we be overwhelmed by it or can we learn our way through so as to improve things?

Revans is a radical and his writings are based upon a moral philosophy, involving:

– *Honesty about self*
– *Starting from ignorance* – from not knowing in order to find fresh questions
– *Action as imperative for learning* – not just thought
– *In a spirit of friendship*
– *For the purpose of doing good in the world*

The essential preconditions for learning are honesty with self and the admission of ignorance. Action learning is not for the resolution of *puzzles* "or difficulties from which escapes are thought to be known" but for *problems* and *opportunities* "about which no single course of action is to be justified" (Revans 2011, p. 4). If we know how to proceed, then we just follow the recipe and little new learning takes place. Action learning on the other hand does not offer recipes, but starts from the acknowledgment of being lost or stuck, and from not knowing what to do next. For the big challenges in work and life, learning starts in first being able to admit to ignorance and loss of direction.

Revans' key contributions to learning theory consist of a network of elements which are bound up with each other. As action learners start with questions based on not knowing what best to do next, I started this chapter by asking some of my practitioner and academic colleagues for their views and with their help produced the following principal elements of his theory. These are, as discussed below, as follows: Action, Learning, The Principle of the Insufficient Mandate, Problems Not Puzzles, The Risk Imperative, Questioning, Sets, and The Ambiguity of Facilitation.

## Action

> There can be no learning without action, and no (sober and deliberate) action without learning

Revans used this epithet, perhaps, as a conscious alternative to Lewin's dictum "No action without research; no research without action," to emphasize the interdependence of action and learning. Learning comes about through doing and "is cradled in the task" (2011, p. 3), but equally all learning is for the sake of action. The power of action learning stems from its philosophy of action and emphasis on the practice of change; no one can say they have learned anything until they have tried to change or improve something.

## Learning

Revans used an equation to show that learning was the key to managing change:

$$L \geq C$$

holds that, in any organism, including individuals and organizations, the rate of learning has to be equal to, or greater than, the rate of change. Unless we adapt through learning, we become extinct. A colleague remembers hearing this "ecological equation" for the first time: "*It was simplicity itself – even obvious in retrospect – but it certainly made a major impact on me at the time (1970s)*" (Personal communication). Revans' second learning equation:

$$L = P + Q$$

holds that learning (L) is a combination of P, *programmed knowledge* or traditional instruction, and Q, *questioning insight*, the insight that comes from fresh questions and critical reflection. The Q factor is of particular importance because action learning is intended for work on difficult problems without known solutions.

## The Principle of Insufficient Mandate

> Those unable to change themselves cannot change what goes on around them.
> (Revans 2011, p. 76)

Revans insisted that learning was always a voluntary activity. Managers and other people change their observable behavior only when they wish to; they may be "cognitively aware of the need to behave differently and yet remain determined not to do so in practice" (2011, p. 5). The *Principle of Insufficient Mandate* is another simple proposition with profound implications because it means that the starting point

for any change management is with each individual. Everyone, regardless of rank or experience, becomes responsible for their own self-development in this process. It also means that there is a direct connection between the development of people and the development of organizations and that the former is a necessary condition of the latter. Linked to this insight is another: that a person's past experience, however wide, is of limited relevance in periods of rapid change. More than this, the "idolisation of past experience" (Revans 2011, p. 42) is a potent block to new learning.

## Problems Not Puzzles

Action learning is not intended for puzzles – "difficulties from which escapes are thought to be known" – but for addressing problems or opportunities, "about which no single course of action is to be justified by any code of programmed knowledge, so that different managers, all reasonable, experienced and sober, might set out by treating them in markedly different ways" (2011, p. 4). Action learning is for intractable or novel situation where there is no single right answer. The biggest danger in such situations is to act on the basis of thinking we know what to do or to act on the advice of those who think they know, instead of starting from a process of inquiry. Revans reserved much of his scorn for experts (as distinct from expertise) who treat problems as if they were puzzles and for prescribing formulae in situations where learning is the first essential (Revans 2011, p. 8).

## The Risk Imperative

Action learning is to "attack real problems . . .. or fertile opportunities" which "carry significant risk of penalty for failure" (Revans 2011, p. 6). Without this element of risk, no significant learning is likely to happen. In contrast to the emphasis on cognition in many learning theories, heart is as vital as head in Revans' thinking. His *Risk Imperative* is a recognition that people who tackle situations with no known solutions must essentially risk failure. To take risks in order to learn demands personal courage and is helped greatly by the encouragement of others, especially of fellow set members (see below).

## Questioning

> The idea of setting questioning insight alongside programmed knowledge seems so obvious now, but it remains such a powerful perception about learning with peers. (Colleague – personal communication)

The importance of Q, or *questioning insight*, links to the distinction between puzzles and problems. While puzzles have "best" solutions and can be resolved by applying P with the help of experts, problems lack known answers and are best approached through the search for fresh questions. For any person, stuck with a difficulty or

dilemma, or confronted by an opportunity they cannot grasp, the questions to open up new possibilities can be, once again, surprisingly simple: "What are you trying to do? What is stopping you? What can you do about this?"; and especially in relation to organizational problems: "Who knows. . .. Who cares . . .. and Who can . . ." (Revans 1982, p. 715). To provoke such questioning, and to help with new lines of thinking, action learning invokes the power of the small groups of peers or Set (see below). Questioning or the Q factor also informs Revans' broader thinking about organizational learning, which he sees as depending upon "the upward communication of doubt" (1982, pp. 280–286). In his discussions with managers, he would often restate this principle as: *"doubt ascending speeds wisdom from above"* – an aphorism that undermines the hierarchical assumptions that underpin so many change models.

## Sets

As a small group of colleagues meeting regularly over time to help each other act and learn, the set is "the cutting edge of every action learning programme" (Revans 2011, p. 7). Sets are made up of volunteers who help each other to address difficult tasks, by listening, questioning, both supporting and challenging, exploring alternatives for action, and reflecting together on the learning from these actions. The peer group of the set is a deliberate strategy to encourage us to trust our own judgments and resist putting our fates in the hands of others (including facilitators see below). As an autonomous unit, the set can also be seen in the broader context of organizational change management: it "*provides the core process. . . where change is understood in pluralistic terms rather than as the will of one or a few people; in this way action learning can ensure the consideration of many voices and a dynamic for alignment*" (Colleague – personal communication).

## The Ambiguity of Facilitation

Because action learning is about self-development (as part of social development), and because its aim is to encourage people to act on their own challenges, it is vital to avoid dependency on any external authority or expert. Facilitators can be classed as experts in this context, as unlike the set members, they do not put themselves at risk by carrying "personal responsibility for real life problems." Revans does allow that some "supernumerary" may be needed to get action learning programs started, but he is always very wary of what he refers to as "ambiguous facilitators" (2011, p. 9).

## New Insights: Against Facilitation for Autonomous Learning

In the professional world of management and organizational development, nothing has caused more resistance to Revans' ideas than these strictures on facilitation. It is one of his most contentious claims and the one most often ignored in practice. Most action learning programs have facilitators, operating with varying degrees of expert

power and control. Those who find themselves in this role and who wish to follow Revans' teaching should remember his injunction that it is the action learner who is important: the facilitator is dispensable.

As a developmental innovation, action learning emerges in the late 1960s, especially through initiatives undertaken in a consortium of London hospitals (Clark 1972; Wieland and Leigh 1971; Wieland 1981) and in the UK engineering conglomerate General Electric Corporation (GEC) (Casey and Pearce 1977). Though not limited to either organization development or management education, action learning gained prominence through its opposition to expert consultancy and traditional business school practice. In 1965, Revans resigned his chair at Manchester having lost his battle to make action learning the modus operandi of the new Manchester Business School (MBS). The installation of the MBA as the flagship program represented a victory for the "book" culture of the traditional university over the "tool" culture of the new College of Technology, which he saw as being more appropriate for the needs of managers (1980, p. 197).

I first heard him in the 1970s when he came to address a large group of management teachers in a newly formed Polytechnic Management Centre. Revans announced that management development was a moral practice and that we teachers were responsible for developing people and seeking to influence their conduct, their direction, and their actions. Most of those present found hard to engage with this. At that time, we were busily preoccupied with teaching marketing, operations management, and strategy and finance on business management programs, yet Revans argued that, to resolve our own problems and moral dilemmas, we should consider such questions as "What is an honest man (sic)?" and "How do I become one?" (Revans 1971, p. 69). Unsurprisingly this uncompromising prophet did not take everyone with him on that day – or indeed in the 40 years since. Still today many management teachers focus their energies instead on P, "the stuff of traditional instruction" (Revans 2011, p. 3).

Revans' practice can be traced back to the 1950s when he was Director of Education for the newly established UK National Coal Board. Eschewing the standard staff management programs with their learning from experts and lecturers, he encouraged the colliery managers to research their own problems as encountered in their pits and brought them together periodically to learn with and from each other. The term action learning did not appear in his writings until 1972 when he presented it as bringing together a number of key principles. Beyond this he resisted definition, liking instead to say what action learning is **not**: "*job rotation.... project work.... case studies, business games and other simulations.... group dynamics and other task-free exercises....business consultancy and other expert missions.... operational research, industrial engineering, work study and related subjects ...(or).... simple common-sense*" (Revans 2011, pp. 77–93).

Action learning is part of a wider growth of interest in action approaches or modalities in management and organizational research which contrast with more positivist approaches. It can thus be seen as part of a wider family of action-based

approaches to research and learning, including action research and action science, which focus on "knowledge (as) produced in service of, and in the midst of, action" (Raelin 1999, p. 117). It has been described as an unusual "nondirective" form of action research (Clark 1972, p. 119) and is distinguished by the sovereignty it gives to the problem holders and its skepticism on the views and advice of experts of all kinds, including facilitators, academics, and professional researchers. This non-directiveness reflects Revans' belief in self-help, and skepticism regarding experts of all kinds includes academics and other external advisers.

At the same time, it is a family of approaches in itself. Revans was a good listener and always wanted to hear what people had to say. He was impatient for change and social progress and wanted to see action following the words. His response to the stories of those he met would usually include the question: ". . .. and what are you going to do about it?"

Action learning is perhaps best understood as an *ethos* rather than a single method and, while there is broad agreement on the main features of the idea, there are wide variations in its practice (Pedler et al. 2005, pp. 64–65). Partly because he resisted any single definition of action learning, including how it could be practiced, Revans' seminal ideas have stimulated a variety of methods and approaches, some of which are discussed below in section "Legacies and Unfinished Business: A Rich Heritage of Ideas and Provocations".

Revans welcomed these different interpretations as long as they observed his basic principles and supported the purposes of alleviating problems and improving lives. However, some practice developments in action learning since Revans are controversial in terms of his basic principles. Different practice communities have developed their own versions of action learning which can either be construed as departures from, or as developments of, "Revans Classical Principles" or the "Action Learning Gold Standard" (Willis 2004). The most obvious example is the wide-spread use of facilitators and even – in their strong form – action learning "coaches" (Marquardt 2004; Leonard and Marquardt 2010). Many current action learning practices regard facilitation as routine and ignore the power and sovereignty issues inherent in this stance. Some programs, such as those modeled on GE's Workout in the USA (Dotlich and Noel 1998), have been critiqued for departing from Revans' principles. Dixon (1997) has suggested that such designs lack key aspects of the action learning idea such as personal responsibility for action and space for reflection and are more appropriately seen as task forces or action projects. Some practitioners have argued that facilitation is necessary or appropriate to particular cultures or in working with particular forms of action learning, such as virtual action learning (VAL) and critical action learning (CAL) – discussed in section "Legacies and Unfinished Business: A Rich Heritage of Ideas and Provocations."

Revans' writing displays a morally charged and sometimes Biblical flavor that reveals his early influences. He can be both discursive and declamatory and also dismissive. A Welsh colleague of mine, whose family background had made him a connoisseur of nonconformist thinking and preaching, used to say that Revans

reminded him of William Hazlitt, possessing the same love of words and of language filled with passion and power. This is not to everyone's taste and does not always make for accessible reading. Revans' books in fact did not sell well and are now with one exception out of print. His ideas however have spread widely through the efforts of his followers and borrowers. The ideas of action learning have had a significant effect on the practices of management, leadership, and organizational development in many different settings around the world, and Revans' words continue to offer stimulation, encouragement, and inspiration to practitioners and scholars grappling with the intractable problems of human development.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: A Rich Heritage of Ideas and Provocations

Revans left a rich heritage of ideas, provocations, and invocations. His writings and those of his successors continue to stir invention and experiment. Five of the legacies of his work are discussed below:

- Virtual Action Learning [VAL]
- Critical Action Learning (CAL)
- The Wicked Problems of Leadership
- Unlearning
- The Innovation Paradox

## Virtual Action Learning [VAL]

VAL or Virtual Action Learning (Dickenson et al. 2010; Caulat 2012a, b) is "action learning which takes place in a virtual environment... via a range of enabling, interactive and collaborative communication technologies" (Dickenson et al. 2010, p. 59). As a development of Revans' approach which he could not have anticipated, VAL is a recent response to the realities and requirements of dispersed organizations. It can be glimpsed here in an audio form courtesy of a colleague's recent experience:

> I have been working with a German bank which acquired several other smaller banks in 2012. The Bank wants the managers to reflect on their leadership practice and to identify how they can lead remotely without having to travel every week to see their employees. First I ran a Virtual Leadership training for them, specifically tailored to their needs. Then we engaged in groups of 5 to 6 participants into Audio Action Learning sessions (3 sessions of 3 hours each). During the sessions participants share the plans that they made at the end of the training (what they wanted to do differently, what they wanted to start doing and what they wanted to stop doing) and how they are progressing on their plans as well as what they learn about themselves as "remote" leaders. We are working with 50 managers in an intensive way and with a further 100 further in a lighter way, and the changes are starting to make a difference. The Bank will make a qualitative assessment of the changes resulting from the initiative In September. The audio action learning is working well because the managers realized that the Bank is serious about the

changes – the initiative was also kicked-off with an article from the Board explaining that it was about achieving concrete results – and also because it helps them to persist in their plans and to deepen their learning as small groups.

## Critical Action Learning (CAL)

As in the VAL example above, the protean nature of action learning makes it easily adaptable to local agendas, and the downside of this is that it can be employed by those in power to preserve existing conditions rather than to change them. Critical theorists such as McLaughlin and Thorpe (1993) and Wilmott (1994, 1997) have posed this challenge to action learning; given its versatility, how can action learning avoid the trap of being "selectively adopted to maintain the status quo?" (Wilmott 1994, p. 127). CAL aims to critique social and organizational conditions and in particular to question how power is distributed and used and how this influences events. An example of the CAL approach is offered by Reynolds and Vince: "Do ideas brought into action-based discussions help to question existing practices, structures and associated power relations within the organisation?" (2004, p. 453).

CAL is perhaps the most important development in post-Revans action learning. While consistent with his view that attempts to manage organization change are always political, and that any change attempt involves uncertainty and risk, a "critical turn" focuses less on individual motivations and actions toward more relational and contextual views of power. The pervasive presence of power relations applies even to action learning sets themselves; Vince (2001, 2004, 2008) shows how political and emotional dynamics can impact on sets and produce, not the desired learning in action but instead a stultifying "learning inaction."

In practicing CAL, a question arises: How can set members acquire the ideas that enable them to critique existing practices, structures, and associated power relations? Those seeking to practice CAL often find themselves providing inputs in one way or another so that set members can "get" the idea in order to use it; as a colleague puts it: in "*including critical reflection in our facilitation we probably do more than Revans might have suggested us to do, (but) it still is a central advice for me to leave the responsibility for solving problems in the set.*"

CAL also marks a shift in the epistemological basis of action learning. Pedler et al. (2005) use Lyotard's "triangle" (Burgoyne 1994) to speculate on the shifts in how action learning has been interpreted (Fig. 1). In response to the question What is knowledge for?, Lyotard has proposed three types of knowledge – speculative (S), performative (P), and emancipatory (E):

Mapped against these three types of knowledge, Revans' early work in schools, mines, factories, and hospitals was focused on resolving practical problems through scientific logic. In the 1950s and 1960s, Revans had not yet fully realized hi idea of action learning, and he was in what can be called "operational research" mode seeking rational solutions to organizational problems. By the 1970s, individual learning and personal development have become central to what is now called action
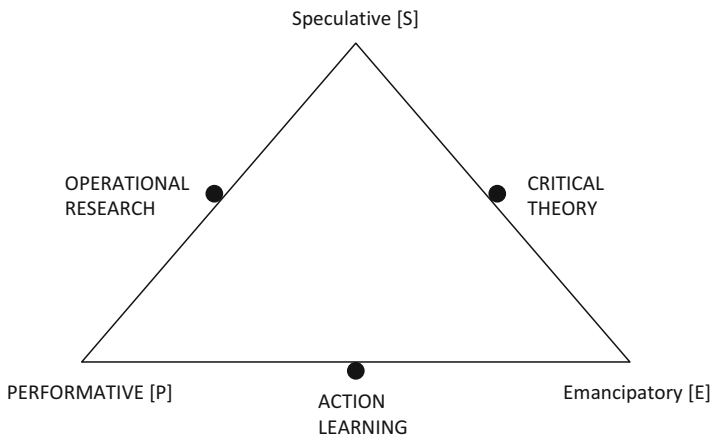
**Fig. 1** Lyotard's triangle

learning, and his personal journey can thus be pictured as starting as a physicist from the top of the triangle (S), then moving to a point between P & S as he becomes concerned with practical problems, and then moving again to a point between P & E as he becomes convinced of the influence of human action and learning in the improvement of organizations and systems.

A shift to CAL requires a move toward critical and emancipatory theory, indicated by a point between S and E. The danger here is of gaining analytical power at the expense of a focus on action and reality testing; the continuing challenge for a CAL is to be critical while also being constructive. This is not easy, because CAL is achieved not just with the aid of critical theory but in drawing on the emotional power of the experience of being dominated, oppressed, or otherwise affected by power relationships. As Russ Vince comments (personal communication) "*To put this simply, I think that it is advisable in practice to balance power relations surfaced through critical reflection with acknowledgement of the emotional experience of learning together in the face of opportunities to both make and resist change. Therefore, in addition to the questions that are evoked when listening to others, I find that it is useful to connect with the emotions that are evoked in me as I listen. My assumption is that these are not usually my emotions. . . but are rather feelings being communicated by the action learning set member that he or she is barely aware of and finds difficult to own. Such feelings always have a profound effect on learning-in-action/learning inaction. Helping set members to trust that the feelings that are evoked in them as they listen to others is as important (to me) as helping them to learn how to formulate and intervene with questions*."

This gets close to the essence of the action learning experience and illuminates the truth that while this may be a simple idea, it is a different matter to enact it. In an echo of the injunction I heard from Revans in the 1970s, Reynolds puts it thus (2011,

p. 12) "…..*these complications of a critically reflective practice should not prevent action learning professionals applying it to their work. The impact which managers and professionals have on the workplace, working relationships and the social and physical environment demand it*."

## The Wicked Problems of Leadership

CAL may be especially relevant to the wicked problems of leadership (Brook et al. 2016). First proposed by Rittel and Webber (1973) in the context of urban planning, problems of drug abuse, homelessness, or crime in a neighborhood are termed wicked because they are hard to fully describe, because actions often provoke unintended consequences due to complex interdependencies, and because they usually require complex multiagency collaborations to address them. The idea has recently been applied to leadership concerning issues such as managing change or developing innovation. Grint (2005, 2008) proposes a leadership model (Fig. 2) in which the progression from "critical" to "tame" to "wicked" problems is marked by an increase both in uncertainty about solutions and the need for collaboration:

While "critical" (used specifically by Grint as denoting a crisis) problems are the domain of *command* and "tame" problems, which can be very complex, as in timetabling a school or building a new hospital, are the natural domain of *management*, "wicked" problems defy rational analysis and are the domain of *leadership* (Grint 2008, pp. 11–18). Revans' word "intractable," used to describe the problems best addressed via action learning, conveys a similar meaning. For Revans such problems require leadership: while puzzles may yield to expertise, the task of leadership concerns the "unanswerable questions as well as the unformulated ones" (Revans 1982, p. 712).

**Fig. 2** Three types of problem



Three Types of Problem
(Grint 2008)

Uncertainty

**WICKED**
(Require learning & distributed leadership)

**TAME**
(Amenable to planning)

**CRITICAL**
(Require swift action - command)

Need for Collaboration
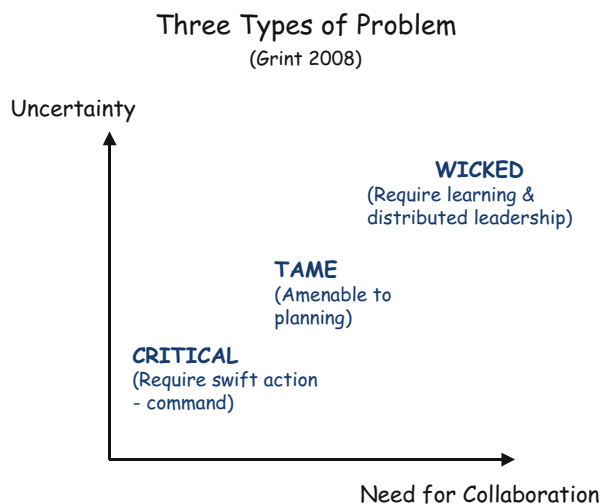
Much if not most action learning practice today takes place as part of leadership development programs (Conger and Toegel 2002, p. 332). The now widespread recognition of the uncertainty and risk of leadership decisions makes this highly appropriate. However, many leadership development programs remain largely taught, and where action learning is "tacked on" to such persuasive efforts, the warnings of the critical theorists are relevant. In such circumstances, action learning may be shaped to contribute to acculturation or "cultural doping" (Raelin 2008). In such circumstances, CAL might be of special value in managing change, although this might also be where it is least likely to be applied.

## Unlearning

Several colleagues nominated this as a key aspect of Revans' thinking. Unlearning is implicit in Revans' ideas about learning, and this is of particular interest in the context of the wicked problems of leadership. A colleague said he had learned especially "*the limited relevance of past experience as a guide to action in a period of change (especially accelerating change*" whilst another reflected on how important it was for undergraduates to unlearn what they had been taught: "*I am stunned in every semester how surprising this is for many students, who so far successfully have passed their school and Bachelor classes thinking the learning process means to be able to reproduce theories from their textbooks*."

Revans' emphasis on learning as a voluntary activity implies the possibilities for not learning. This can be because learning is painfully elusive, and also where it is doggedly resisted: "there are also those who *soberly and deliberately refuse to learn*" (2011, p. 60 original italics). Learning in adults is "more likely to follow on the re-interpretation of past experiences than the acquisition of fresh knowledge" (2011, p. 6), but the "idolisation of past experience" (2011, p. 42) can hinder this reconfiguration, resulting in stuckness, avoidance, and "learning inaction" (Vince 2008). Revans stresses the need to start from ignorance and not knowing; the position from which questions may be asked. It also explains why he is so critical of misplaced expertise and the dangers of expert approaches whereby intractable problems are turned into puzzles with solutions.

Managing change and innovation depend upon escapes from old mindsets, and action learning, and CAL in particular, can provide helpful contexts for unlearning. Awareness of not knowing also opens up possibilities of nonaction – of attending, noticing, and being present without the compulsion to act. Wicked problems may often include elements of self-causation (Brook et al. 2016), and in these situations where knowledge is insecure and the consequences of actions unpredictable, the decision not to act, especially in previous and predictable ways, might be a good idea. It is not possible to know in advance what new possibilities might attend the refraining from habitual actions. By asking different questions so as to inquire into the unknown, deciding not to act maintains an openness to the emergence of possibilities not yet apparent (Hsu 2013; Antonacopolou 2009).

## The Innovation Paradox

Unlearning thus has a pivotal role in creating opportunities for new thinking. Innovation is at the heart of Revans' thinking, manifest in his proposal of the need for "fresh questions" to match or surpass the pace of environmental change. The pursuit of innovation in mature economies is a current example of a widespread and wicked problem. The UK, for example, has a long-standing problem of low productivity, and while innovation accounts for up to 70% of economic growth, only a "relatively small proportion of firms (are) engaged in innovative activity" (BIS 2014, p. 3). The traditional way to resolve this problem is "creative destruction," the process described by Schumpeter in 1942 whereby new firms with new methods, markets, and ways of doing things drive out and destroy the old. But this is very destructive, not only of inefficient firms but of lives, communities, and economies. Moreover, the pattern of innovation in mature economies in recent years has led to lower levels of wages, either due to market forces or as a "result of employers deliberately shaping the innovative process in ways which enhance their wellbeing at the expense of workers" (Stiglitz and Greenwald 2014, p. 164). "Creative destruction" also neglects the role of government policy and the place of learning, which have a key role in increasing productivity in modern knowledge-based economies: "creating a learning society should be one of the major objectives of economic policy" (Stiglitz and Greenwald 2014, p. 6).

Revans' thinking could prove helpful to those seeking to resolve the problem of innovation through policy and learning rather than through destruction and coercion, His "Innovation Paradox" (1971, p. 75) recognizes the difficulties of overcoming inertia and resistance, especially from top managements (2011, pp. 63–62): "any new or specialist solution . . . has to be integrated back into the total system of the enterprise" (1971, p. 90). This points to the gap between invention and implementation, which is not a puzzle to be addressed through "best practice" initiatives, because "Every effort to resolve this innovation paradox must be almost entirely situational" (1971, p. 90). Knowledge can be shared and technical advances replicated, but changes in practices and ways of working have to be uniquely realized in situ. In the context of managerial and organizational routines, this views Innovation as a practice not as an event. As Bourner puts it, the question is not whether an innovation works, but, in practice, "who can work it?" (2011, p. 122).

To address the Innovation Paradox, Revans proposes a "praxaeology" or general theory of human action with three overlapping systems of organizational decision, project cycles, and individual learning (1971, pp. 33–67). Success in integrating individual with organizational learning depends greatly on the quality of management and leadership practices, including good communication, and top management support (1971, p. 176). More recent writers using Revans' ideas to address the innovation problem include Kuhn and Marsick (2005), Wyton and Payne (2014), and Olssen et al. (2010), who argue that action learning can increase "innovation capability" in an organization.

However, the problem remains intractable. Recent reliance on organizational learning and knowledge creation to fuel innovation ignores the "institutional inhibitors," because it involves risk it is often a low priority for both line and senior managements (Kalling 2007). Another recent case bears this out; Dovey and Rembach (2015) detail the resistances experienced to an action learning initiative in an Australian university, noting that "innovation is a notoriously difficult strategy to execute. Given its intention to transform the status quo, it is not surprising that in most organizations the rhetoric of innovation substitutes for its practice" (2015, p. 280). This is a very common representation of the innovation paradox: people encouraged to come up with new ideas but also warned not to rock the boat. The notion of the "tempered radical" (Meyerson 2003) suggests that commitment to the organization can be combined with being determined to change it, a concept that Attwood (2007) sees as very appropriate to action learning. Less encouraging is Vince et al.'s (2016, p. 8) manager who says of his company: "*Everyone wants to be a little bit more innovative, but not very much.*"

In the context of organizations established as stable entities, the idea of innovation is perhaps inherently paradoxical. Andriopoulos and Lewis (2010) see innovation as a process embedded, even mired, in paradoxes. Achieving it means simultaneously managing conflicting processes such as the pursuing of short-term survival and long-term sustainability. This in turn requires paradoxical approaches to managing and a certain "ambidexterity" (Andriopoulos and Lewis 2010, p. 104). Whether the innovation paradox is ever "resolved" is open to dispute. Paradox theory suggests that the contradictory elements that make up the paradox are not resolvable but persist and are enacted and re-enacted over time, as in Vince's (2008) "learning in action" and "learning inaction" which are dynamic and opposed tendencies always present as two sides of the same coin. Action learning however is both an optimistic and a pragmatic creed, and Vince et al. (2016) consider how CAL might help here, noting that the contradictory dynamics created when action learners collide with the innovation paradox provide opportunities for critical reflection. This can bring about a recognition of "the inseparability of both the transformational potential of action learning and the political purposes it serves as a process for reasserting compliance to a set of established norms" (2016, p. 12).

In response to the question: "Who can make this innovation work?", Bourner argues that "those who wish to share an innovation need to be explicit about the beliefs and values that underpin it, since only those who share those beliefs and values are likely to be able to make the new practice work well" (2011, p. 122). Innovation is – like learning – a voluntary activity, one that cannot be imposed or made mandatory. CAL is one means for addressing the innovation paradox head-on, through confronting the inherent tensions via critical reflection and allowing for some larger questions to be put. A voluntary practice of innovation means addressing those mundane but usually unasked questions at the forefront of the minds of all those contemplating any change; "Who benefits from this change? . . .and who loses? What will the new practices look like? . . . and what will be their impacts on jobs, privacy, autonomy? What is the function of the present

discourses of innovation? . . . and whose interests are being served?" Those who can make innovations work, or unwork, will make their decisions based on their estimates of the answers.

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# Otto Scharmer and the Field of the Future: Integrating Science, Spirituality, and Profound Social Change

# 66

Patricia A. Wilson

## Abstract

Claus Otto Scharmer has dedicated his life work to helping individuals and institutions collaboratively shape the emerging future for the healing of the whole – a process that unfolds through collective inquiry, holistic knowing, and co-creativity. Beginning with the question "why do our systems produce results that no one is happy with?," Scharmer has integrated systems thinking, action research, phenomenology, and inner awareness into a multidimensional matrix of processes and practices called Theory U. As a social technology, Theory U facilitates a shift in individual and collective awareness of the systems and social fields in which we are embedded. The resulting collective shift in awareness fosters collaborative action for systems change motivated by a shared sense of higher purpose.

Otto Scharmer has applied Theory U not only to systems change in teams, organizations, and institutions but also to addressing the major economic, ecological, and cultural schisms threatening the future of our planet today. Scharmer's work will likely be remembered for its guidance in the transition to a new epoch of spiritual openness, organizational fluidity, and social transformation. Theory U is more than an intervention tool – it is a way of being and doing in organizational life. Today this way of being and doing is an imperative, not only to address intensifying fundamentalism but to build the foundation of the next epoch that is already emerging.

Dr. Scharmer is a Senior Lecturer at MIT, a Thousand Talents Program Professor at Tsinghua University, Beijing, and a cofounder of the Presencing Institute.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Otto Scharmer introduced Theory U in 2004 in a coauthored volume with Peter Senge, Joseph Jaworski, and Betty Sue Flowers entitled *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*, published by the Society for Organizational Learning. The following excerpt from a review of *Presence* that I wrote in 2005 captures the essence of Theory U:

> Have you experienced that special moment in a group when the bickering and dissension stop and the impasse is broken? Suddenly there is a felt shift in the room, a new shared understanding of what needs to happen; someone articulates the sense of the whole, and everyone is on board. *Presence* aims to find an intentional and sustainable path to those moments.
>
> Beneath the conversational text lies a logical structure of a model of collective knowing, called the U model. Prying open the black box of participation, the U model addresses how wisdom emerges in a group and how a group can discern, learn, and create the emerging future together. The model is informed by extensive interviews with selected scientists, business leaders, and spiritual masters about how they create and invent, and how they discern their sense of larger purpose. The common denominator is a shift in the sense of self, from the isolated individual struggling to accomplish, to that of a lightning rod for grounding the energy and wisdom of a larger whole.

Theory U provides guideposts to link the intimately personal and experiential to large scale, even global, systems change. The key is "presencing": individually and collectively accessing the source of knowing that arises from awareness of a larger whole. See Fig. 1.

Otto Scharmer has spent the last 25 years developing, testing, prototyping, and cultivating Theory U as a means to transform leadership and inquiry in organizations around the world. His 1990 diploma thesis on *Aesthetics and Strategic Leadership* and his 1994 doctoral dissertation on *Reflexive Modernization of Capitalism as Revolution from Within* at Witten/Herdecke University in Germany sowed the seeds for the conceptual basis and structure of Theory U.
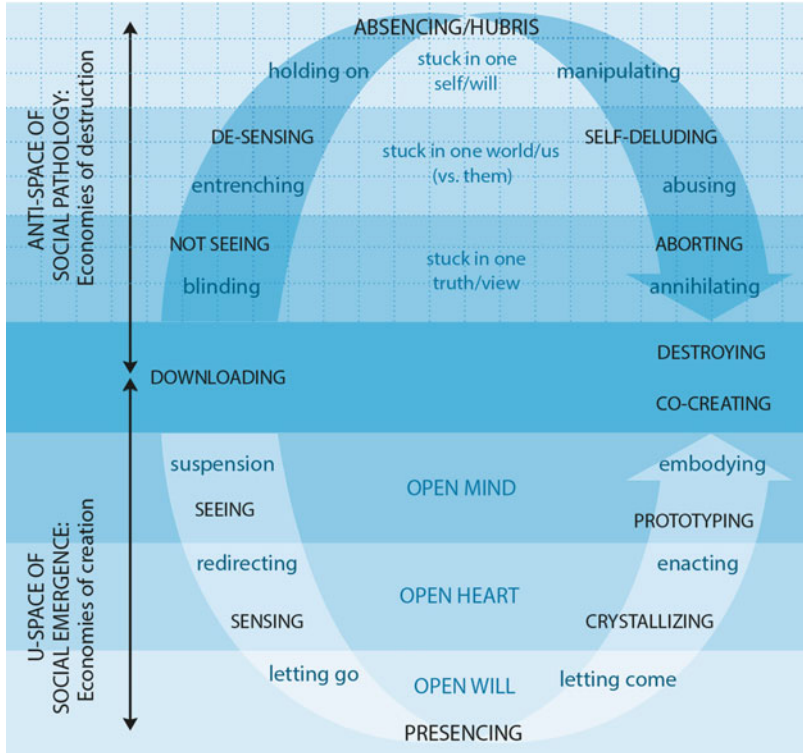
**Fig. 1** Theory U: The U curve and its shadow (Source: Scharmer 2007, Fig. 17.3, p. 282)

Over the next decade, based at the MIT Sloan School of Management, Otto observed and participated in multiple organizational change processes, developed practical tools and methods, and wrote his signature book *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, first published in 2007. Over the following decade Otto put Theory U to work prototyping action projects with global corporations, governmental agencies, international development organizations, and local nonprofits. He and his wife, Dr. Katrin Kaufer, harvested the lessons from these action projects in their coauthored book on institutional systems change at the societal level, *Leading from the Emerging Future: From Ego-System to Eco-System Economies* (2013).

Looking ahead, Otto aims to create a platform for activating large scale cross-sector change in institutional leadership. In 2015 he and his colleagues at MIT and the Presencing Institute launched this new phase with a massive open online course (MOOC) called u.lab. In its first year u.lab reached 75,000 registered users from 185 countries and spawned at least 600 face-to-face hubs. Yet this is just the beginning, Otto asserts, of a "multi-local, global eco-system of societal renewal that operates from an awareness of the whole."

Otto Scharmer and Katrin Kaufer live near Cambridge, Massachusetts, with their teenaged daughter and son. Otto gives classes in the fall, including his global

MOOCs, and chairs the MIT IDEAS program, a 9-month action learning lab with change-makers in Indonesia and China. He also engages with other action learning projects in Asia, Europe, Brazil, and the USA. Katrin is a Senior Research Fellow at MIT's Community Innovators Lab (CoLab) and executive director of the Presencing Institute, which she and Otto cofounded with other action research colleagues. Both received their doctorates in management from Witten/Herdecke University near Dortmund, Germany.

In this chapter I take you through the high points of Otto's learning journey – the pivotal moments of discovery and the formative influences. These intellectual, spiritual, and social encounters shaped not only Theory U but Otto's sense of self and purpose. I describe the five key contributions he has made to the field of organizational development and beyond. I offer a personal account of how insights from his work have influenced my own awareness as an action researcher in the civic arena. Finally, I describe the next phase of Otto's trajectory going forward and conclude with a high level appreciation of how his work fits into the historic imperative for institutional transformation that we face today.

For this chapter, Otto and I conducted four recorded conversations of one- to two-hours each from October to December of 2016. I have put verbatim quotes from these conversations in italics or quotation marks. Otto reviewed the manuscript for accuracy.

## Influences and Motivations: Otto's Learning Journey

**Spirit and purpose**  Born in 1961 near Hamburg, Germany, Otto grew up in a family guided by a clear sense of purpose with values that honored the interconnectedness and mystery of life. His parents were pioneers in biodynamic farming, an approach to organic agriculture developed by Rudolf Steiner, the founder of the anthroposophical movement for social and spiritual renewal. Otto would transfer his father's love of cultivating the field to the social and organizational terrain, along with the same sensitivity and commitment:

> *I grew up in a context where a spiritual mindset was something very normal – basically a certain wonderment and appreciation that nature is not just a dead body of material waiting to be used, but has its own being and sacredness. . . . I was blessed that my parents sent me to a Waldorf school. While Waldorf School is really not about spiritual education, it is a holistic education – a holistic orientation in terms of head, heart, and hand. (It) means you know how creative processes work. You know that when you run into roadblocks. . ., then the real process is starting, not ending. It gives you more confidence . . . to stay with it.*

**Sensing the field**  Otto's first conscious experience of a social field came in the late 1970s at age 16 as a participant in the massive antinuclear student movement. More than 100,000 protestors had gathered to fight the construction of a nuclear power plant at a site not far from the family farm. When the police blocked them a violent confrontation ensued. The protesters ultimately retreated as one body in stunned silence, Otto recounts. As shadows lengthened, the officers attacked once again

"cutting through our collective body like a knife through butter." The protestors, in unspoken agreement, offered no violent resistance to the aggressors. While Otto was not hurt physically himself, he felt the pain of the onslaught as intimately real, as his own pain, because in that moment he was *one* with the *collective body* that was being violated.

Otto came away from that experience a different person. A new sense of purpose had awakened. He had felt part of a larger whole, in this case a global generational movement inspired by a shared sense of future possibility. Moreover, he had seen "the enemy" – the old system of exclusion that needed to transform. Otto came away from that day with a deepened sense of purpose and self. He had felt the power of connection to the collective field and through that doorway had found what was his to do for the rest of his life.

**Letting go**   Later that same year (1977) came another turning point, the day he arrived home from school and witnessed the walls of his life-long home going up in flame. As three generations of his family watched their home burn down, the collective field of grief, loss, and mourning was palpable. But Otto felt something different: "an enormous inner void as though your whole self is gone except for one tiny little aspect, the self who is taking all of this in, not turning away from it, but being present and open to its unfolding."

The moment he came to that place of profound presence, he knew that life is not something to cling to and that identity (self) is not bound up in the experiences of the past nor the material context of the present. He realized that life is something far greater, that the universe is benign and will carry us, despite unimaginable apparent loss, if we simply step across the threshold to future possibility. The future was calling Otto. He let go of the attachments to his past and present identities to pass through the eye of the needle. Buoyed by that realization, while feeling almost ashamed that he was not fully sharing the field of grief, he looked forward – not back.

**The power of intention**   Otto moved to Berlin in the early 1980s to join the Green Party and the East-West peace movement. He attended the Free University in West Berlin, a mecca for student activists. By 1984, Otto was convinced that the levers to systems change in our age lay in the economy. Otto felt a strong calling to join a new experimental university near Dortmund, called Witten-Herdecke, where he majored in economics and management, and, after organizing a year-long global Peace University, returned for doctoral studies in the same field. The first privately funded university in Germany, it emphasized student-initiated learning, action research, social responsibility, and cross-disciplinary studies.

Otto invited Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung, whom he had met in Berlin, to a student-organized conference at Witten-Herdecke. The students were galvanized by Galtung's vision for his next step: to create a mobile peace university for students to witness first-hand the global system as a living whole and from multiple cultural and systems perspectives. Otto and four peers set their intention to create such a global learning journey. "I knew this was what I was meant to do."

(Scharmer 2016, p. 194). With the go-ahead from the dean, the five students pulled it all together in a few months: a consortium of twelve universities, 290 lecturers, thirty-five students from ten countries, and a half-million dollars in private sponsorships (pp. 194–195). The creative power of intention manifested in the synchronicity and flow the student team experienced in organizing the journey:

> Our joint commitment to this project empowered us in a way that none of us had ever experienced before. We felt part of a larger field, a formative field of intentional creation. When we were operating in that field, we knew that nothing would prevent us from succeeding. ... Each time we encountered a setback, we knew... some kind of door would open up or helping hand would show up and lead us onward." (ibid, p. 195)

The subsequent global study trip, led by Galtung in 1989–1990, introduced Otto to Gandhian nonviolent conflict transformation, Buddhist practices for inner peace, and Daoist and Confucian philosophies on being and change. The resulting integration of Western analysis and Eastern holism would influence his Theory U.

**European intellectual roots of Theory U**  Otto has always been an avid reader of philosophy, from classical to modern. He and his young peers formed study circles to read and discuss original texts, from pre-Socratic, Plato, and Aristotle to Nietzsche and the German phenomenologists, which included those in the tradition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Rudolf Steiner. Otto cites Goethe and Steiner as the taproots of Theory U:

> Among the philosophical sources, perhaps most influential was the work of the educator and social innovator Rudolf Steiner, whose synthesis of science, consciousness, and social innovation continues to inspire my work and whose methodological grounding in Goethe's phenomenological view of science has left the most significant imprint on Theory U. The simplest way of locating Theory U in the landscape of intellectual traditions is to identify it as applied phenomenology – a mindful phenomenological practice for investigating the social field. ...To paraphrase Steiner, we have to investigate ...our own *thought process* – but then *follow that train* of observation all the way back to its source, exactly as Husserl and Varela advocated in their work on the phenomenological method. (Scharmer 2016, pp. 30–31)

In *Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner had focused his phenomenology on individual knowing. Otto applied it to both individual and collective patterns of knowing and change, in teams, organizations, and society. Through Husserl (drawing on Goethe's holistic conception of seeing), Heidegger, Hösle, and Habermas, Otto explored the terrain of intra- and intersubjective experience. He traced the influence of awareness on perception, specifically how the structures of individual and collective attention (i.e., the source from which we operate) influence our ways of knowing and interacting.

Otto drew on Heidegger's concept of technology as applied art and *aletheia* as the opening to presence, Buber's work on dialogue (*I-Thou*), Bortoft's conception of presencing the whole, Joseph Beuys's concept of social sculpture, Nietzsche's work on aesthetics (viewing science through the lens of the artist and art through the lens

of life), and Kitaro Nishida's formulation of place as presence. These influential writers helped Otto articulate the letting go and letting come at the deepest moment in the U curve – that pivotal moment when a group lets go of limiting beliefs and opens to the call of a higher emergent possibility.

The ground-breaking work of twentieth century German-born social psychologist Kurt Lewin linking Gestalt theory, practice, and change to social fields had a major influence on Otto. At MIT in the 1940s Lewin developed the study of group dynamics and the practice of action research as a participatory approach to change management. Otto was particularly captivated by Lewin's conceptualization of field theory, which posited the existence of a social field that was created by, but different from, the individuals in it, and at the same time exerted its own influence on the members.

The work of Bernard Lievegoed, Friedrich Glasl, and others at the Dutch NPI Institute for Organizational Development during the 1960s and 1970s served as another source of inspiration for Otto, as they were among the first to apply the evolutionary thinking and processes of Goethe and Rudolf Steiner to organizational development (Lievegoed 1973, 1996; Glasl and de la Houssaye 1975; Glasl 1997).

Otto received his diploma in management (with distinction) from Witte/Herdecke in 1990 and his Ph.D. (*summa cum laude*) in 1994. His undergraduate thesis and doctoral dissertation were both published in Germany as books in 1991 and 1996. Together they carried the seeds of the future Theory U. By the time Otto left Germany for MIT in 1994, he referred to himself as an action researcher.

**Intellectual influences in the USA**   Upon completing his doctorate in management, Otto sought a way to ground his thinking in action – how could his ideas actually add value to real change makers in the world of business? He was attracted by the joint work of action researchers at the MIT Center for Organizational Learning, including Peter Senge, the founding director, Ed Schein, Chris Argyris, and William Isaacs at the Sloan School and Donald Schön in Urban Studies. So one day in 1994 he showed up to apply for a postdoc position. They invited him to come as a visiting researcher *if* he could bring his own research funding.

What seemed like a problem turned out to be an opportunity. Otto received a grant from the research arm of McKinsey, Europe, to interview 30 global business leaders and create a website making the results available to all. Those interviews were the chance to observe whether the moments of the U curve could be seen in action. His new colleagues at the MIT Sloan School of Management opened multiple doors to corporations where he could observe and participate in concrete change efforts. The McKinsey grant led to another three rounds of funded change-maker interviews, one of which was sponsored by Joseph Jaworski's Generon International, a business consulting group, to interview 150 corporate leaders and hold a thought leaders salon. Otto was now a senior lecturer and cofounder of the Presencing Institute at MIT.

Social psychologist Ed Schein was pivotal for Otto in learning how to add value to a business. First he reframed the question: how can you create a helping *relationship* with the leaders of a company? Schein helped Otto become an empathetic and

other-directed practitioner. "I have never met anyone who lives his own principles to the degree that Ed Schein does," Otto said. "He talks about building helping relationships and that's what he is doing." Otto considers Ed Schein's approach to process consultation as "the mother of Theory U." Schein offered Otto a way of transforming his intellectual learning into a helping relationship with individuals, companies, and organizations through process consultation aimed at making better decisions and learning from action.

Peter Senge, Otto's other mentor at MIT, opened the doors to systems thinking and personal mastery. Drawing on the reflective practices of Argyris and Schön, Senge also addressed the link between leadership, collective inquiry, and the co-creative process, a central theme in Otto's work.

William Isaacs, Otto's colleague at the MIT Learning Center in the late 1990s, was applying Bohmian dialogue and field theory to the creative cycle through practices of deep listening, empathic connection, and collective inquiry. Isaacs's work informed Otto's use of generative dialogue in the U curve and vice versa: Otto's four quadrant model of dialogue, from polite conversation and downloading to reflective and generative dialogue, directly informed Isaac's 1999 book on dialogue.

Through his interview projects at MIT, Otto encountered other influential thinkers. When I asked him which he considered the most impactful, he began with cognitive scientist Francisco Varela and cognitive psychologist Eleanor Rosch. With their colleague, Humberto Maturana, Varela and Rosch developed the neurophenomenology of individual consciousness on a subjective, experiential, embodied level. Varela spoke to Otto of the blind spot of cognition – the inability to become aware of our awareness. Varela then described a process of introspection and contemplative practices that could illuminate the blind spot. He described the experience as one of increasing depth and interiority, a slowing down of time toward stillness, moving from head to heart to emptiness. So there it was – a neuroscientific explanation for presencing, the same phenomenon that Otto had identified from his philosophical inquiry and practical change experiences. Rosch added an even more subtle distinction: From that place (of presencing), she said, you are not looking out at the interconnected whole around you. You are seeing it from the inside as you experience it. In other words, you **become** the social field. That is the place of real knowing, the heart of the heart, the source of wisdom.

Ikujiro Nonaka, the Japanese organizational theorist, introduced Otto to his blend of Eastern (tacit) and Western (explicit) approaches to knowledge creation. From working with Nonaka and integrating Donald Schön's concept of reflection-in-action, Otto published his 2001 article on self-transcending knowledge that distinguished two types of tacit knowing: embodied and not-yet-embodied (i.e., aesthetic).

Otto cites Brian Arthur of the Santa Fe Institute for articulating a dynamic process of discovery in three stages: "observe, observe, observe," "allow inner knowing to emerge," and "act in an instant." Otto would reframe them into the three movements of the U curve: co-sensing, presencing, and co-creating.

Starting in the late 1990s, Otto and Katrin co-hosted for several years a circle called *S3 group* that focused on reinventing the twenty-first century university by integrating science, spirituality, and social change. The small informal group included Peter Senge, Arthur Zajonc, physicist at Amherst College, Diana Chapman Walsh, then President of Wellesley College, and Dayna Cunningham, director of the MIT CoLab, and occasionally Jon Kabat-Zinn, among others. The group met alternating between Walsh's home in Wellesley and Katrin and Otto's in Cambridge. Many ideas discussed in this group became foundational for Theory U's deeper intention of bending the beam of scientific observation back onto the observing self – both individually and collectively.

## Key Contributions: Theory and Practice

Otto has noted that various experienced practitioners responded to his workshops on Theory U saying that they were deeply moved yet the content was not entirely new to them: "I just didn't know that I know." Otto takes this as the highest compliment for an action researcher, when accomplished practitioners can see themselves and their own best experiences in the mirror of the Theory U framework:

> *I'm actually just giving some lenses that allow people to make sense of something that they already have within them and among them – the living experience of some of the most significant moments of their lives, as a community, as an individual, or as a team.. What I really try to do is illuminate something that's already there – already embodied in our own best practice, where we step into some higher possibilities and begin to actualize what wasn't accessible and now it is.*

Belying Otto's modesty are five powerful contributions that Theory U makes to the field of organizational change, leadership, and action research:

*The paradigm-changer*   Theory U is a consciousness-based framework for systems change. It brings together inquiry, spiritual development, and systems change. It views systems thinking, leadership, and change from the perspective of an evolving human awareness. By bringing these domains together Theory U offers a path-breaking insight: the pivotal importance of field awareness, i.e., a social field knowing itself. This knowing does not result from simply "getting the whole system in the room." It results from deepening the interior place from which the members (or stakeholders) in a system perceive each other and the whole. The resulting collective shift in awareness is the fertile ground that enables systems change to emerge. Theory U distills these insights into a social technology reflected in Otto's trademark U curve (see Fig. 1).

*A new mode of cognition and learning*   The widely used Kolb reflective learning cycle is based on learning from the past – applying patterns from the past to future

action choices. Theory U offers an emergent learning cycle, involving accurate observation, empathic connection with the field, stillness, emptying, and allowing inner knowing to emerge, then ideating and acting immediately on that inner knowing, learning while doing. This mode of knowing integrates spiritual development – i.e., deepening the inner place from which we attend – with observation, action, and reflection.

*Integration of European phenomenology* Theory U integrates the analytical rigor and deep insights of the twentieth century European philosophical discourse and phenomenological practice to illuminate the process of knowledge creation as it relates to shifts in spiritual awareness, linking deeper levels of consciousness to greater holistic perception. Specifically, Theory U contributes a vertical spectrum for understanding consciousness characterized by four different levels, or evolutionary states, of spiritual awareness that Otto has identified: (1) I-in-me, (2) I-in-it, (3) I-in-you, and (4) I-in-we/I-in-now. For me, reading *Theory U* with soft eyes and open mind is a spiritual journey of self-discovery guided by the insights of these philosophers.

*Integration across systems* Theory U extends the phenomenological focus on individual consciousness to groups, organizations, and larger living systems. Theory U was the first to link the micro, meso, macro, and mundo (i.e., global) scales, as he calls them. In their 2013 book, Otto and Katrin extend the analysis to the current ecological, social, and spiritual-cultural systems we have created and identify the levels of awareness that perpetuate the disconnects in each. The Matrix of Social Evolution they provide may prove to be a watershed contribution, as it allows the reader to grasp the whole system we are enacting at once (See Fig. 2.).

*Tools and practices for transformation* Theory U provides a unique practical social technology with a well-organized toolbox of experiential and reflective practices. The methods correspond to each of the moments on the U curve and include both group practices for creating a generative field and individual practices for spiritual deepening. Various of the tools are inspired by Goethean-based practices used in anthroposophy and Waldorf education. Some are familiar to group process facilitators; others are familiar to spiritual practitioners. They are methods to deepen individual and group consciousness, open the mind and heart, connect with one's larger purpose and sense of Self, and build an empathic field capable of transforming itself.

An example that Otto highlights is Social Presencing Theater, created by Otto and his colleague Arawana Hayashi at the Presencing Institute. This practice blends mindfulness, movement, and participatory social science theater in a way that surfaces the invisible dynamics of a social field, revealing both its current state and emerging future possibilities. As I have witnessed it, a group roleplays the stakeholders in their system and, after a silent freeze frame, reenacts the system to collectively build the desired future they have presenced.

Sectors of the Current Institutional Transformation

| Stage | Government | Health | Schools | Companies | NGOs | Banks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.0 Traditional Awareness: Hierarchy | Dominating state | Authority and input-centered: *institution-driven* | Authority and input-centered: *teacher-driven* | Centralized: hierarchy; *owner-driven* | Program-focused: *reactive-driven* | Traditional banking; *owner-driven* |
| 2.0 Ego-System Awareness: Markets and Competition | Dormant state | Outcome-centered: *managed care–driven* | Outcome-centered: *testing-driven* | Decentralized: divisions; *shareholder- and target-driven* | Policy-focused: *advocacy- and campaign-driven* | Casino banking; *speculation-driven* |
| 3.0 Stakeholder Awareness: Networks and Negotiation | Welfare state | Patient-centered: *need-driven pathogenesis* | Student-centered: *learning-driven* | Matrix or network: *stakeholder-driven* | Strategic initiative-focused: *stakeholder-driven* | Socially responsible banking: *stakeholder-driven* |
| 4.0 Eco-System Awareness: Awareness-Based Collective Action (ABC) | D-4: direct, distributed, democratic, dialogic | Citizen-centered: *well-being-driven salutogenesis* | Entrepreneurial-centered: *co-sensing- and co-creating-driven* | Co-creative eco-system: *intention-driven* | Eco-system-focused: *intention-driven* | Transformative eco-system banking: *intention-driven* |

**Fig. 2** Ego- to eco-system awareness: *The matrix of social transformation* (Source: Scharmer and Kaufer 2013, Table 9, p. 196)

As Otto says about the practical application of Theory U tools and methods such as Social Presencing Theater:

> They help change-makers take larger systems on a journey of making the system sense and see itself and thereby shift the state of consciousness. The focus is on … looking at a situation through the eyes of another person or stakeholder in the system, something that turns your heart into an organ of perception that allows you to move outside of your own bubble.

## New Insights from Theory U: From Presencing to Absencing

Two major insights about consciousness define Theory U: presencing and absencing. Presencing refers to letting go at the deepest moment of the U curve (see Fig. 1), i.e., releasing the ego structures that block the possibilities for creativity, flow, wholeness, and love. The cycle of presencing entails deepening the place from which we listen to others, engage in dialogue, appreciate and know the larger living social field, recognize the whole in each part, and connect with our greater purpose. Presencing itself is the state of emptiness, openness, stillness, and connection to Source and Purpose, in which we can sense the highest future that is wanting to emerge through us. Presencing requires an open mind, an open heart, and the will to disregard our inner voices of judgment, cynicism, and fear, so that we can let go and let come. Presencing is not only an individual journey but a collective one of deepening connections to each other and the larger systems in which we are embedded.

Absencing (see Fig. 1) is the cycle of fundamentalism: entrenchment around one truth, denying or demonizing other, and closing the mind and heart. Social reality at the level of families, communities, organizations, institutions, and society emerges from the interplay of the two different social fields of absencing and presencing. Otto and Katrin (2013) apply these concepts to map how our economic and societal institutions could evolve toward presencing in order to address the economic, social, spiritual, and ecological disconnects facing the planet (see Fig. 2).

I first learned of Otto's work in 2003 when my colleague at UT, Betty Sue Flowers, handed me the prepublication proofs for the *Presence* book. Theory U seemed to integrate everything I was passionate about: dialogue, group process, field awareness, social change, and spiritual development. I attended Otto's 5-day workshop at the Shambhala Institute of Authentic Leadership that summer and was able to take in deeply for the first time the profound distinction between observing a system from without and sensing it from within.

It was that experience of holistic knowing and heart-connection that Otto led us toward, beyond mechanistic cause and effect to the deeper integrative mind that saw interconnected wholes, and beyond that to a felt sense of being that whole, experiencing oneness as a coparticipant in a vital living field. Emergence became not just a concept but an experience, as we witnessed it first in ourselves, in our own

lives and trajectories, then in pairs, and finally in the whole group. I saw the power of conscious connection to Purpose, the energy of a charged and aligned social field, and the collective wisdom that was possible. I saw how a group with an open mind and heart and a sense of safety and trust could generate such a field.

Perhaps the most significant insight from Theory U is the idea of "playing the macro violin" (Scharmer 2016, p. 216). A famous violinist, given his first chance to play at the Chartres Cathedral, focused on playing his violin well. His performance flopped. He learned that the secret is not to play the violin but to play the surrounding whole – in this case, the cathedral. He called it "playing the macro violin" – moving your listening and performing to beyond yourself. That is what I see Otto Scharmer doing. When I do that myself I feel a shift in my attention, an alignment with purpose, and an opening of my heart.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Activating a Global Platform for Healing the Whole

When Otto speaks of his objectives going forward, I feel the power of his alignment with higher purpose. Otto is committed to using Theory U as a catalyst for the institutional transformation he sees as necessary to heal the ecological, social, and spiritual-cultural divides threatening the planet. Since the publication of the first edition of *Theory U* in 2007 to the publication of the updated edition in 2016, Otto focused on taking the theory to practice. Through the Presencing Institute, he, Katrin, and their core group of collaborators organized workshops and learning journeys with government, industry, and civil society leaders, as well as young change makers. These efforts, such as the Global Wellbeing Lab and the MIT IDEAS program, spawned multiple pilot projects around the world: e.g., a four year project on institutional innovation with Namibian government leaders, an ongoing project on economic democracy in the Bronx, a program to regenerate local food production in Sao Paulo, a sustainable seafood industry initiative in Indonesia, and a collaboration with government and civil society leaders in China.

Otto could see that Theory U was having a practical impact in the world and developing a cadre of leaders imbued with the message and methods of Theory U. But for Otto that was not enough.

The question now, Otto said, is this:

> Can you create something that is actually a healing force for the whole? The world is full of prototypes, but more often than not they are incapable of transforming the larger systems. What is it we can do that would allow these prototypes to transform the whole? That's the question of scale and sustainability for the transformation of a larger system: a world-wide ecosystem of innovation where all the pieces, even though they are autonomous in their own element, begin to work together in a global context based on a shared intention. A shared global ecosystem where everyone, all the elements, are supporting each other. Making what we have been learning and developing relevant to our current moment of disruption

*globally, a moment where the forces of absencing and presencing are stronger than ever before – that's what this next phase is about.*

It is *our* generational imperative, he says, to be that healing force for the whole, to bring about the necessary transformational change. Toward that end Otto, Katrin, and their colleagues at the Presencing Institute launched a global enabling platform in 2015: the u.lab MOOC, a massive online course through MITx and edX.org. About 25,000 people participated in the first u.lab in early 2015 and another 50,000 newcomers in the second u.lab that fall. At least 600 local face-to-face hubs were created. Impact Hubs, a global network of hubs for social entrepreneurs, sponsored dozens of local u.labs. A few major hubs are now in the process of consolidation in Brazil, Scotland, Indonesia, and China.

In the following exchange we witness Otto's thinking in the moment about the emergent future:

O.S.    *What's emerging from this* [2 year initial effort] *is an enabling platform and a global community. Now we are consolidating the learning from last year and this year and creating the foundation for the next evolutionary jump.*

P.W.    What does that next level look like? How would the cooperation among these different self-organizing nodes or hubs show up in the world? What's the connectivity there that multiplies the leverage to a mundo level?

O.S.    *That's exactly what we need to find out! I think we have in u.lab something that works for individuals – grassroots change-makers and social entrepreneurs – and it's wonderful. But I'm not sure that we really have found the right way of bringing in the big institutions. . . . What's missing in the social change world is a platform that links social entrepreneurs outside of the large institutions with the change-makers inside the large institutions. They need each other in order to change how the larger system operates.*

        *When you go into large boring institutions and work with the younger leaders there, what do you find? It's the same type of people* [as the grassroots change-makers and social entrepreneurs who have a sense of purpose and want to make a difference]. *It's just that they made slightly different choices and ended up inside a boring institution. But in their soul, when you listen, they have the same deeper aspirations.*

        *So we must create those connections, but then also provide the learning journeys, the environments, the methods and tools that allow people to move from ego- to eco-awareness, from a siloed to a more holistic view of the system. We really need new infrastructure for that. We have done it occasionally, but we don't have an enabling infrastructure that could take that to scale. But in principle we have the elements, the components. We just haven't put them together. That's what makes me confident that we could, moving into this third stage now, actually make quite significant progress there.*

        *In my view the forces of presencing are at least as strong and present in the current moment as are the forces of absencing.* [We just don't see them.] *The public conversation in mass media and social media is all about absencing. We do not see the other side at all. That's where our role is*

*because we need a new bottom-up platform, with* [local] *community and* [a global] *ecosystem that allows this other awareness to have a genuine holding space. In a word, what's the thing that's missing in the third stage? It's a holding space for this deeper awareness-based systems change.*

P.W.    The fact you are already connecting change-makers electronically around the globe is a step in that direction, allowing people to step out of isolation and connect with others. That is big right there. Is it not helping to create that holding space?

O.S.    *Frankly, what we have had in the MIT MOOC is not even that first step. It's just a tenth of that first step. That's why we are currently working on creating something that hopefully is much better and will be launched in April 2017 to create a more adequate and appropriate online holding space that allows this kind of collective awareness to land and manifest in the way it wants. The potential is there, but we have not had the right landing spots as yet. . . . Also the electronic connection is not sufficient because we need the offline ele-ments* [local face-to-face communities] *as much as we need the online elements. Real place-based, in-person community experiences are the real holding space and landing strips for this kind of movement.* [We will want to] *leave a lot of initiative and autonomy on a local level, yet connect people to something much larger than themselves.*

P.W.    Tell me more about the nature of the holding spaces that are so key to transformation.

O.S.    *The larger holding space from which collective knowing and collective innovation can take place is the container for co-sensing across boundaries. Most institutional change processes fail because they miss that starting point: co-sensing across boundaries. Because they don't, organized interest groups go out and maximize their special interests against the whole, instead of engaging the whole system in co-sensing together. Most people, when they take learning journeys and benchmarking tours, just keep projecting their own views. Or we do sense-making in our own siloes. We don't have the co-sensing mechanisms where we as a distributed community in a city or in a larger system, begin to see reality together and then unearth the deeper mechanisms generating that reality.*

P.W.    What do we need to activate the holding spaces?

O.S.    *You need data to use as a mirror by which a system can see itself; you need dialogue; and you need heart intelligence. . . . Dialogue really is the capacity of a system to see itself. But it's not just seeing, it's also sensing – the feeling aspect* [the deep dive into the phenomenon, seeing from within it]. *And then the collective reflection and so on. Not easy to do, because you need experiential foundations, data foundations, a process, and the right kind of people. That's often where the quality is missing. With new technologies and with the new public challenges that we face in many communities, I think we have a wonderful opportunity to really create innovations there.*

In sum, Otto is focused on the long game, powered by connection to a higher purpose: large scale systems change for healing the whole, starting with the

individual and collective capacity to perceive, know, and care about the dynamic, evolving whole of which we are a part. To that end, he is developing and testing platforms to create the necessary social infrastructure using the Theory U framework and technology of awareness-based action research on a global scale (Scharmer and Kaufer 2015).

He and his team at the Presencing Institute are themselves following the creative cycle of Theory U: building the feedback loops to see and sense the results of their rapid innovations. Thus, we can expect to see more attention to rigorously documenting the outcomes and impacts of the social technology of presencing, both individual and institutional, under different conditions, by sociodemographics, and longitudinally. We may also see more of the feminine qualities of soulfulness, playfulness, love, and nurturing brought forth in Theory U. And we may begin to see how to address the conundrum between connection to Purpose and work/life balance – i.e., how to practice what we want to create.

## Conclusion: Fulfilling Our Generational and Spiritual Imperatives

To conclude I wish to put Otto Scharmer's work in the large sweep of history, looking back at its roots and looking forward to discern its potential role in history, and then bring the pendulum to rest in the present moment:

"Form follows consciousness." "As within so without." These two insightful propositions undergirding Theory U, often repeated in Otto's workshops and writing, echo the Hermetic teachings of the ancient wisdom traditions, passed down through the ages to the modern mystery schools that informed Goethe and Steiner and inspired phenomenological philosophy. Valuing spiritual knowing (*gnosis*), the phenomenological philosophers applied these insights to different domains of science and society, providing a humanizing and contemplative counterweight to the predominant Newtonian world view.

In the twentieth century, existential phenomenology gave rise to Gestalt psychology, from which arose Kurt Lewin's articulation in the 1940s of group dynamics, field theory, and action research – the foundations of organizational development. A spiritual dimension of OD with phenomenological roots started to appear in the 1950s with Lievegoed, followed by Glasl in the 1960s, Torbert in the 1970s, Cooperrider in the 1980s, and Peter Senge and Allan Kaplan in the 1990s. The introduction of complexity science and emergence, along with escalating interest in Eastern spiritual traditions, ushered in further development of spirituality and organizational development in the 1990s (e.g., Capra, Wheatley). The spiritual thread intensified in the first decade of the twenty-first century with Positive Organizational Scholarship and a panoply of popular books on holistic thinking, consciousness, chaos, and collaboration in the workplace along with practices for quieting the mind and fostering group resonance. Into this milieu came Otto Scharmer's *Theory U* in 2007, grafting OD back onto its strong ontological and epistemological roots in early phenomenology.

Looking back a century from now, people may see the first half of the 2000s as the birth canal of a new era of spiritual openness and organizational fluidity and feel grateful that our generation fulfilled its purpose to realize the future that was wanting to emerge through us, as Otto would say. Our mission was twofold: spiritual and generational. First, we had to deepen our own inner capacity to let go of our sense of a separate self and recognize our indivisible interconnectedness. This was our spiritual imperative. Only then could we learn to "co-sense" – i.e., together the needs of the whole and our future wholeness that was calling. Those needs were the three deep divides of today that threaten our future: the concentration of wealth, the ecological survival of the most vulnerable parts of the planet, and the cultural/political schisms that divide us. Addressing those needs could not be postponed. This was our generational imperative: to activate the collective field to address the deep divides.

The field is fertile for Theory U and other approaches that recognize our spiritual and generational imperatives to take root. With unwavering intention, Otto Scharmer has provided theoretical precision, practical rigor, and a nuanced language for spiritual and organizational transformation that, while complex, is entering the global discourse of transformation through a platform for electronic and face-to-face hubs across multiple systems and cultures.

Otto Scharmer's Theory U, like Cooperrider's Appreciative Inquiry, is more than an intervention tool – it is a way of being and doing in organizational life. Today this way is an imperative, not only to address the absencing and fundamentalism intensifying today but to build the foundation of the next epoch that is already emergent.

Otto Scharmer reminds us that the real change starts with paying attention to our attention: "Experience is not what happens to us but what we do with what happens to us." This doing can be performed from a mind and heart that is closing (absencing) or from a mind and heart that is opening (presencing). The call of our time is about waking up to this source level of choice and agency that every human being is engaged in – moment to moment. Theory U is a mirror that facilitates that awakening both individually and across systems.

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# Edgar H. Schein: The Scholar-Practitioner as Clinical Researcher

# 67

David Coghlan

**Abstract**

Edgar H. Schein's contributions to the field of organizational studies are far reaching. He was one of the first to formulate the field of organizational psychology in 1965, and he led the development of the field of organization development (OD) through his editorship of the pioneering Addison-Wesley OD series in 1969. He framed a philosophy of being helpful through process consultation and humble inquiry, articulated the experience of the organizational career, and framed a model of organizational culture and how it operates in complex systems.

**Keywords**

Edgar H. Schein • Organization development • Clinical research • Scholar-practitioner

## Contents

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## Introduction

The contribution of Edgar H. Schein, Society of Sloan Fellows Professor of Management Emeritus and Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Sloan School of Management to the field of applied behavioral science is both extensive and deep. The first edition of his *Organizational Psychology* (1965) was one of the first books to define the field. In 1969, along with Warren Bennis and Richard Beckhard, Schein cofounded and edited the seminal Addison-Wesley series on the then emerging field of organization development. Between 1969 and 2000, over 30 books were published in that series by many of the leading figures in the field. His *Process Consultation* books (1969, 1987a, 1988, 1999) and their successors, *Helping* (2009a), *Humble Inquiry* (2013a), and *Humble Consulting* (2016a) are best sellers and widely used and cited. He is the founding editor of *Reflections*, the journal of the Society for Organizational Learning. Schein is a Fellow of the Academy of Management and of the American Psychological Association and has received many awards, including the Lifetime Achievement Award for Workplace Learning and Performance from the American Society of Training Directors; the Marion Gislason Award for Leadership in Executive Development, Boston University; the Everett Cherrington Hughes Award for Career Scholarship, Careers Division of the Academy of Management; the Academy of Management Scholar-Practitioner Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Leadership Association. He has an honorary doctorate from the IEDC Bled School of Management in Slovenia.

A notable feature of Edgar Schein's life is that he has penned several autobiographical reflections (1993, 2006, 2016b) and has been generous in giving interviews about his life and work (Sashkin 1979; Luthans 1989; Quick and Gavin 2000; Lambrechts et al. 2011; Mike 2014). What he has said about himself and how he understands his personal and professional development are readily available.

Schein was born in Zurich, Switzerland in 1928. His father was a physicist. The family moved to Odessa for 3 years, and then to Prague and in 1938 to Chicago where his father obtained a faculty position at the University of Chicago. As an undergraduate in the University of Chicago, he heard about Carl Rogers which sparked an interest in psychology. He attended Stanford where he wrote a master's dissertation on social influence. He did his Ph.D. in social psychology at the Department of Social Relations at Harvard. At the same time, as part of his 5-year military service, he entered the clinical psychology program of the US Army, which required him to complete a 1-year internship at the Walter Reed hospital as a clinical psychologist.

When he had completed his doctorate and military service Schein joined the MIT School of Industrial Management in 1956. Schein remained at MIT until his retirement in 2008. Between 1968 and 1971, he was the undergraduate planning professor for MIT, and in 1972 he became the chairman of the Organization Studies Group of the MIT Sloan School, a position he held until 1982.

## Influences and Motivations: Institutions and  Mentors

Schein joined the Department of Social Relations in Harvard for his doctoral studies. This was a powerful interdisciplinary program where he was exposed to Gordon Allport, Richard Solomon, Freed Bales, George Homans, Jerome Bruner, David McClelland and Talcott Parsons, among others. Each of these was engaging in pioneering social psychology research. At a daily sandwich lunch Schein (2016b, p. 81) reported that he was "thrilled to eavesdrop as different faculty members from different departments engaged in lively discussion and debates during these lunches." Through the interdisciplinarity of the group, he developed an eclectic view of social psychology. Allport was his first important mentor who taught him to locate issues in their historical context and who emphasized the adage that if you can't write about something, then you don't know it. Solomon taught him about good experimentation and the value of following interesting problems that affect theory and practice. Bruner's research on the effect of social class on perception taught him how the perceptual system is an active process of seeking out and attending to things that concern us. During his doctoral studies, Schein took a course in group dynamics at MIT that was delivered by Alex Bavelas. Bavelas's ability "to stimulate excitement and his creativity in the design of experiments were unbelievable" (Schein 2016b, p. 95). Schein was exposed to the famous Bavelas and Leavitt communication experiments that mapped the effects of different communication patterns on task performance. Schein (2016b, pp. 97–98) reflected "I became aware that the field of group dynamics was flourishing and that much of the work of people like Festinger, Schachter, Thibaut, Back, and Deutsch were actually conducted in and around MIT. This was experimental psychology at its best. Alex Bavelas became then and has remained one of my all-time heroes in the field. But alas I was in the army and committed to at least 3 years of service as an army psychologist. Kurt Lewin and his theories stayed very much on my mind even though I had never met him. I would continue as an experimental group dynamics researcher and I resolved to pursuit the Bavelas or Leavitt types of experiments in the future." In 1952, Schein completed his Ph.D. in social psychology under the direction of Allport and Solomon. His interest in social influence had led him to conduct an experimental study of imitation, on the question that if people learned to imitate someone performing one task, would they to continue to imitate that person on other tasks. His results demonstrated clearly that that people would learn to imitate someone who was shown to be correct on many trials of an ambiguous task and would continue to imitate that person on a similar other task, but not on a different one. He had access to army inductees in the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and was able to conduct his experiments and his analysis readily.

From 1952 to 1956, Schein spent four postdoctoral years at Walter Reed where he joined an interdisciplinary team led by the psychiatrist, David Rioch. Rioch who was his second most important mentor and the one who taught him that if he wanted to find out something not to ask directly about it but to invite a story that would reveal

what he wanted to know. This maxim became a central approach in process consultation and humble inquiry. Schein reflects that Rioch believed in stimulating his staff with other points of view, and he regularly invited Leon Festinger, Fred Fiedler, and Erving Goffman to consult with them on their projects. These were pioneering researchers in the field of social psychology. Festinger was developing his dissonance theory. Fiedler was engaging in leadership studies and Goffman was studying socialization. Schein notes that Goffman's "influence was deep and lasting" (2006, p. 291).

In 1953, during his tenure in the military psychology service, he was assigned to a project that evaluated and treated military personnel who had been captured by the North Koreans. These personnel were considered to have been indoctrinated and had allegedly collaborated with the enemy. Repatriates were returned to the USA from Korea by ship, and on the voyage, they were assessed psychologically and given therapy by psychiatric teams. Schein's ship was delayed for 3 weeks, and during that time, he set up a booth and interviewed repatriates about their experiences in the prison camps. Here he followed Rioch's maxim and essentially asked the soldiers to tell the stories of their imprisonment. They described very sophisticated techniques for manipulating the prisoners, controlling information, and using cellmates, who unbeknownst had already confessed, as apparent friendly persuaders. From these interviews and subsequent research, he framed his sociopsychological model of coercive persuasion that described the methods in terms of Lewin's model of change and influence (Schein et al. 1961). Schein described coercive persuasion as a process of physical and psychological unfreezing and how the unfreezing forces changed some of prisoners' beliefs and attitudes toward themselves and the Communists and make a sincere confession in the manner desired of them by the Communists.

Schein's decision to join the MIT School of Industrial Management (later the MIT Sloan School of Management) in 1956 came from an invitation from Douglas McGregor and through meeting and being impressed by Alex Bavelas. McGregor had built up psychology at MIT and been instrumental in bringing Lewin to MIT in 1945. Through his choice to join a professional school rather than a traditional psychology department, Schein was opting for a focus on applied research rather than one of experimentation, the then favored research model in social psychology.

As a young academic starting out at MIT, Schein's mentor was Douglas McGregor who encouraged him to bring his social psychology to the field of management. As Schein wrote up the work he had done with the prisoners of war, he reflected how these coercive persuasion methods were similar to those used in religious training and organizational socialization. He published his reflections in a provocative article titled, "management development as a process of influence" (Schein 1961). McGregor was what Schein later came to understand as a "clinical researcher." He was a careful observer of the situations in which he found himself and drew out ideas that he tested in the field, rather than by survey or by experimentation. McGregor also pushed him to be a teacher of executives.

In Schein's first year at MIT, McGregor suggested that he attend a T group at the National Training Laboratories (NTL). There and subsequently, as he became a staff member at NTL, Schein was exposed to a new approach to learning by being in an

unstructured group that studied its own process. He reports on several insights from these experiences. One insight was the notion of experiential learning and its emphasis on the here-and-now and direct interpersonal feedback, which was so different from his academic training and teaching background in social psychology. Another insight came from his experience as a T group trainer whose role was not to offer expert advice but to facilitate participants' own understanding of themselves and what was going on in the group. This insight led to the articulation of process consultation, an approach to consulting that aimed to help client help themselves. A third insight was the use of the "lecturette," a short input that laid out some key process issues that participants could relate to their experience. His 1965 book with Warren Bennis on learning in groups became one of the classics on the subject of laboratory learning (Schein and Bennis 1965).

From his base in MIT and his experiences in NTL and encouraged by McGregor, Schein learned to consult with organizations and to focus on process as a way of trying to be helpful. From a caustic remark made by an academic colleague to the effect of asking him when he was going to do real research instead of teaching pop psychology to managers, he wrote *Process Consultation* (1969) to articulate the underlying philosophy of his work. Schein defines process consultation as the creation of a relationship with a client that permits the client to perceive, understand, and act on process events that occur in the client's internal and external environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client. Over the following 60 years, Schein engaged in organizational consulting around the world and reflected on his experience and on the articulated learning of his clients.

As Schein engaged with two particular companies, Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC) (2003) and Ciba-Geigy, he received insights into the structure and role of culture in organizations. His framework of artifacts, espoused values, and tacit basic assumptions developed from his clinical observation of these firms and what emerged as he was trying to be helpful to them. He later consolidated these insights in other settings.

At NTL and then at MIT, Schein became acquainted with Dick Beckhard, with whom he developed a close relationship. Beckhard taught him that being a consultant, a teacher, and a researcher was about intervening to improve and to enable change. From Beckhard, he learned the practice of an "educational intervention," a dialogue with managers in an organization that would stimulate managers' thinking and possibly lead to a consulting relationship.

Schein engaged in a study of how organizations socialize their employees and began an analysis of the careers of MIT master's graduates. Out of this study came the construct of the career anchor, which captures what might be termed the "inner career," a set of self-identified competences, motivations, and values that guide occupational and role choices. He designed a method of self-assessment and interviews to identify an individual's career anchor. Interestingly, Schein identified his own career anchor as autonomy.

To try to summarize what Schein says shaped his academic life and to map those influences, his early life and the influences of Allport, Rioch, McGregor, and Beckhard are significant. About his early life, he (2006, p. 288) notes that "by the

age of ten I had learned Russian, Czech, and then English and had made four cultural transitions. I also learned how to adapt quickly to new situations, a skill which I now realize was essential to doing effective consulting with organizations. This adaptive capacity shaped my career in many ways." During his doctoral studies, he learned from Allport to understand the history of his own field and to engage in good writing. Rioch taught him to inquire through story. McGregor brought him to MIT and changed the direction of his life from becoming an experimental social psychologist to becoming an applied organizational psychologist. McGregor also mirrored a method of working that was grounded in observation and engagement with the world of management practice. Finally, Beckhard taught him to be a consultant, and his many clients, especially in DEC and Ciba-Geigy, taught him the complex dynamics of organizational culture.

## Key Contributions: Organizational Culture, Helping, Clinical Inquiry/Research, Career Dynamics, Organizational Change, Scholar-Practitioner

Schein's contributions to the field of organizational studies are far reaching. His formulation of the field of organizational psychology in 1965 and his lead in developing the field of organization development (OD) through his editorship of the pioneering Addison-Wesley OD series in 1969 opened up new fields of study. He framed a philosophy of being helpful through process consultation and humble inquiry that has become mainstream in both the academic and practitioner literatures. Schein articulated the experience of organizational careers and articulated a model of organizational culture and how it operates in complex systems. Each of these contributions is treated in his books. Other contributions that are found in articles, book chapters, and interviews are his notions of organizational therapy, organizational socialization, dialogue, and the role of anxiety in organizational change.

Many of his concepts are seminal in several fields.

- Organizational culture: Schein's *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (five editions), the two editions (with a further one in progress) of *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide*, and numerous articles and book chapters have shaped much of the understanding of this notion. In these writings, he challenges simplistic notions of culture that are portrayed in the popular literature. His insight is that culture shapes organizations much like personality does the individual and that therefore it needs to be taken seriously as it shapes how an organization survives and thrives. He provides a method for researchers to decipher an organization's culture, a method that takes explicit account of the different schools of research from which researchers operate (Schein 2017). Schein's study (1996) of the Singapore Economic Development Board demonstrates an account of a detailed inquiry into how that board that transformed Singapore into a world economic power.

- Helping: Schein's work on the process of helping, whether in the normal process of everyday living or in a role as a manager or consultant, has been formulated across seven books – the four *Process Consultation* books, *Helping, Humble Inquiry*, and the recent *Humble Consulting*. These books are best sellers and are widely cited. Through the notion of process consultation and humble consulting, he challenges and offers an alternative to the dominant prescriptive helping mode (which he calls the doctor-patient model) used by consulting companies. In theoretical terms, the notion of process consultation is a standard inclusion in books on organization development and change and is part of the construct of organization development. In the world of practice, process consultation is widely practiced in the field of consulting. He developed the notion of process consultation as clinical inquiry/research that has been influential in the field of action research (Schein 1987b). Here, he locates the process of trying to be helpful as the heart of organizational research.
- OD as clinical inquiry/research: In the third edition of *Organizational Psychology* (1980), Schein discussed action research within the context of OD as being grounded in Lewin's two dictums – there is nothing so practical as a good theory, and if you want to study an organization, try to change it. He also emphasized that "before a researcher can justify any particular research intervention in an organization that researcher should be able to justify that particular intervention from a consultant or therapist perspective" (1980, p. 242). In a substantive paper (2008), he located clinical inquiry/research in relation to other research approaches in terms of levels of researcher and system initiation of and involvement in the research, and he elaborated the clinical perspective of the researcher as focused on helping the system. Schein (1989/2010) explored the question of whether OD is a science, a technology, or a philosophy. Here, he put Lewin's work in the perspective of being rooted in the practical social science that Lewin practiced. Schein explores how action research is one of the distinctive features of OD and one of its core origins. Action research was based on two assumptions which are the cornerstones of OD. One is that involving the clients or learners in their own learning not only produces better learning but more valid data about how the system really works. The other is that one can only understand a system when one tries to change it, as changing human systems often involves variables which cannot be controlled by traditional research methods. Accordingly, as Schein argues, a central element of the OD approach is a reflexive approach which goes with the story as it evolves, rather than imposing predefined programs. Schein concluded that OD is a philosophy, and he points to his own articulation of process consultation/clinical inquiry as a philosophy of helping and later refers to it as organizational therapy (Schein et al. 2010; Schein 2013b).
- Career dynamics: Schein has written extensively on the dynamics of careers and job planning (1978, 1987c, 1995). His 1971 article in the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* was one of the first to define the field (Schein 1971). As described above, he analyzed the careers of MIT master's graduates from which he developed the construct of the career anchor. His workbook on career anchors is in its fourth edition (Schein and Van Maanen 2013).

- Organizational change: After his coercive persuasion research with the prisoners of war and his work on organizational socialization, Schein extended Lewin's social change and learning model to the field of organizational change. He found that change begins with some sort of disconfirmation, a disconfirmation that has to be accompanied by a concern, such as anxiety or guilt and that a sense of psychological safety needs to be created. The process of changing can work by scanning multiple sources of information or through a relationship with a single source, such as a tutor, therapist, or a consultant who acts as a facilitator of learning and change. Change then needs to be consolidated into the personality and into significant relationships. Lewin's three-step model of change is often criticized as being an oversimplification and irrelevant in the contemporary age of constant, discontinuous complex change. On the other hand, Cummings et al. (2015) argue that how the change management literature has adopted Lewin's stages, including Schein's, is not what Lewin himself developed and that the adoption, rather than what Lewin himself wrote, is the point of the contemporary criticism. Nevertheless, Schein's presentation (1979) of his model of learning and change enabled through interpersonal relationships, as derived from Lewin, holds a consistency with organization development, process consultation, and humble inquiry as a philosophy and as an intervention practice.
- Scholar-practitioner: For a special issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* in 2009 to commemorate Schein's 80th birthday, Rami Shani and I, as the special issue coeditors, wrote to him to draw him into the process. We asked him if he preferred any of the areas of his contributions to be the theme of the special issue. Schein replied that his preference was the scholar-practitioner. He noted (2009b) that scholar-practitioners represent two subcultures, straddling what is science and what is practice. Enabling dialogue between the two worlds to cocreate knowledge that is useful for practice and robust for scholars is the challenge for the scholar-practitioner.

## New Insights: Humble Inquiry

If I were ever asked to contribute to a series on books that changed people's lives, I would have little hesitation in selecting *Process Consultation* (1969) as one that changed mine. That little book opened up a perspective of working with people on task-focused issues in a manner that allowed them to understand what was going on and develop their own actions to deal with them. It provided insights that led me into OD and action research. After over 60 years of emphasizing process, Schein has moved to emphasizing the disposition of being "humble," which he defines as "the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person" (2013a, p. 2). His focus on humble inquiry brings together the threads of his previous work in being helpful and in building collaborative relationships.

At the same time, as focusing on building a helping relationship with a client, Schein also focuses on the need for self-reflexivity by the consultant/inquirer. He

provides practical tips for the helper to enable self-awareness to unlearn old habits to develop the skills of "humble inquiry" (2009a, 2013a).

Process consultation/humble inquiry/humble consulting and its expression as clinical inquiry shapes my work as an OD/action research scholar-practitioner. Clinical inquiry is an orientation to research that views the researcher as one who helps clients understand their organizational challenges and works with them to help address those challenges. In doing so the clinical researcher is helped by the clients to generate the relevant data and build relevant theory that is useful to both practice and scholarship. Clinical inquiry provides a theoretical and practical philosophy for those who engage in OD through action research and collaborative management research (Coghlan 2009).

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: Clinical Inquiry/Research

In 2011, Schein was asked what he considered to be his most important contribution (Lambrechts et al. 2011). He replied that, while he didn't think that he had a single thing that he considered to be the most important, "I've always been obsessed with the relationship between the individual and the system, the individual, and the organization. You can say that the career anchors idea is all about the individual, culture is really about the organization, and process consultation and helping are about the relationship. So the contribution is the total package rather than one element of it" (p. 141).

From my perspective, the unfinished business is clinical inquiry/research. Through being in a helping role, clinical inquiry/researchers bring a research attitude to the process as they collaborate with practitioners in sharing projects and fostering mutual inquiry that aims to cocreate knowledge that benefits both the scholar and practitioner. It characterizes doing research *with* people rather than doing research *on* or *for* them. This approach generates practical knowledge, a form of knowledge that has been largely excluded from the academy (Toulmin 1990; Coghlan 2016). While the links are not generally made explicitly, clinical inquiry/research provides a solid philosophical grounding for action research (Coghlan 2009, 2011) and collaborative management research (Werr and Greiner 2008). It frames a notion of authentic organization development as a philosophy as it engages with both elements of the dual identity of OD as a professional field of social action and an area of scientific inquiry.

Understanding the researcher as an engaged helper is a radical alternative to the research philosophies that dominate management and organizational research. Schein has been stridently critical of the research paradigm that dominates business schools and how that paradigm is increasingly irrelevant to the world of practice in its focus on predetermined questions and emphasis on quantitative rigor. In his view, he accords with the many critiques of how research is viewed and enacted in the field of management and organizational studies. He suggests that "inquiry" be a preferred term rather than "research," as research in OD undermines the powerful, basic assumptions about what science is – assumptions that dominate business schools'

research and so enable the emphasis to shift to being helpful. In that vein, Schein suggests that, as part of their research training, organizational researchers do internships in organizations where their task is to be helpful and that they learn observational and interviewing skills, rather than focusing on learning to analyze surveys.

On this subject, Schein is not listened to and his voice is not heard. He made following astute observation: "We are still uncertain whether we should (1) be scientific and rigorous, allying ourselves with our academic colleagues who are concerned with knowledge production or (2) be helpful, allying ourselves with our clients and with other practitioners for whom data production is secondary to learning and change" (2008, p. 421). This observation continues to hold, and there is little evidence to suggest that those who lead doctoral research programs in business schools are addressing or even posing this question.

## Conclusions

As this chapter has explored, Edgar H. Schein's contribution to the field of applied behavioral science is both extensive and deep. For over 60 years, he has creatively and systematically shaped theory and practice in areas such as organization development, career dynamics, the cultural dynamics of complex systems, leadership, process consultation, and clinical research. Now in his 88th year, he continues to be creative and reflective. A recent book, *Humble Consulting* (2016a), provides not only a rich reflection on the consulting process out of his extensive experience but is also creative in providing a new framework for developing theory and practice. In that book, he promises that there are other books to come.

I conclude with Schein's own words that capture his stance as a scholar-practitioner and which provoke our field to continue to reflect to on itself.

> After 60 years in this arena, I am convinced that we are still at a Darwinian stage of searching for constructs and variables worth studying and are still waiting for some Mendelian genius to organize the field for us. In other words, I still think that good observation, phenomenology, fieldwork, ethnography, and careful case analyses are more important than quantitative statistical hypothesis testing. Clinical analyses of cases come naturally from our work as consultants and interveners, which led me to propose clinical research as an important method in our field. I believe that good theory is still to be discovered by careful observation and analysis. (2015, p. 3)

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# Learning and Change in the Work of Donald Schön: Reflection on Theory and Theory on Reflection

# 68

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**Abstract**

Donald Schön was a deeply original thinker working on change, education, design, and learning. He is perhaps best known for his work on the reflective practitioner, in which he formulated a new epistemology of practice founded on knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action, a theory which has had considerable impact. He also made huge contributions to the field of organizational learning, working with Chris Argyris on theories in action and on single/double loop learning. Underlying all these contributions was a theory of change grounded in Dewey's theory of inquiry and deeply concerned with how institutions and professionals deal with a world beyond the stable state. An educator as well as a theorist and practitioner, Schön was highly interested in how professionals can be taught in ways that reflect the reality in which they work rather than the traditional forms of technical rationality. This chapter examines Schön's key contributions, the influence of philosophy and music upon his work, and the many ways his work has been used.

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## Introduction

Donald Alan Schön (1930–1997) was an extraordinarily original thinker, working at the boundary between the theory and practice of change, design, and education, and constantly pushing those boundaries. He is perhaps now most widely read as the originator of the concept of the "reflective practitioner," a concept that he originated in urban planning and design but has been extremely influential in education, management, social work, law, and many other fields. Indeed, the concept of reflective practice is now so well known that it risks eclipsing Schön's other conclusions; yet it sits within a set of other ideas that are just as important and influential.

Just a few of those other contributions included: his work on change and the idea of the stable state; the concept of learning systems; his development with Chris Argyris of the concepts of organizational learning, and of Model I and Model II change; his work on generative metaphor; and his work with Martin Rein on frame reflection.

Underlying all this work was a fascination with the epistemology of practice: of how professionals learn and make sense of the world, and how they might do it better. One of Schön's long-time collaborators, scholar of music and education Jeanne Bamberger, wrote in a reflective piece after his death of the notes she had made over 23 years of conversations with him:

> And running through all of these was a continuing search which I can now see as one way of grappling with that "persistent image". If one must give up, go beyond the stable state, one must also ask: How do we learn anything really new? How do we come to see in a new way? (Bamberger 2000, p. 10)

If those sound like theoretical concerns, for Schön they were deeply practical, and it was his life's work to show their practicality to others. In the process he shaped more than one field of practice as well as theory in very profound ways.

## Influences and Motivations: Philosophy, Practice, and Music

Given his influence on concepts of practice, it is appropriate that Donald Schön blended both theory and practice throughout his working life, combining academic rigor and practical grounding. He began his academic life with a strong philosophical training, studying that field at Yale, the Sorbonne, and Harvard. Indeed Waks (2001, p. 37) refers to him as a "displaced philosopher" and observes that "philosophy was his first professional tongue."

A major philosophical influence upon all his later work was the theory of inquiry of John Dewey, the American pragmatist theorist of education. In a late paper, Schön heralded Dewey's theory of inquiry as a revolt against "dualisms of thought and action, research and practice, science and common the academy and everyday life" (Schön 1992, p. 121). This focus on an epistemology which breaks through dichotomies between theory and practice was crucial to everything he would later do.

Dewey's writings are quoted throughout Schön's work, and he stated quite explicitly that he wrote his doctoral thesis in 1955 based on Dewey (1938), and 30 years later reworked its ideas "now on the basis of empirical studies professional practice that would have been out of order in the Harvard philosophy department of the mid-1950s . . . [to] make my own version of Dewey's theory of inquiry, taking 'reflective practice' as my version of Dewey's 'reflective thought'" (Schön 1992, p. 123). Those reworked ideas formed the basis for *The Reflective Practitioner* (Schön 1983).

Although Dewey was important throughout Schön's life, other philosophers also had a considerable influence on his thinking. He wrote himself (Schön 1992) that his early training was in logical empiricism (the Anglo-American analytic tradition, also known as logical positivism), but he largely moved beyond this approach in most of his work, and took on ideas from broader philosophical schools. In particular he was later influenced by the theory of tacit knowledge of Michael Polanyi, and as we shall later see by the ancient Greek philosopher of change Heraclitus – his second book (Schön 1967) was subtitled *The New Heraclitus*, and it could be considered a good description of Schön himself.

The combination of research and practice served Schön well throughout his life. Following his PhD (and a short time in the army), he spent 15 years in professional practice: first as a product design consultant at Arthur D. Little, then working in government for the National Bureau of Standards, and finally as the director of the Organization for Social & Technical Innovation (OSTI). Three of his major books were written while working in practice. Indeed, while working at OSTI he was invited to be the youngest person ever to give the British Broadcasting Corporation's prestigious annual lecture series, the Reith Lectures for 1970, subsequently published as his book *Beyond the Stable State* (Schön 1971).

When he returned to academia in 1972, as a professor of Urban Studies and Education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), he nonetheless retained close links with practice, and his later books are founded on a conversation between ideas and practice. He continued to be based at MIT for the rest of his life. It was while working at MIT that he developed some of the collaborations briefly mentioned above – with Jeanne Bamberger and Martin Rein, but most especially with Chris Argyris (based at nearby Harvard), with whom he developed so many important ideas.

Argyris brought a number of influences of his own that would prove to be important to their collaboration, notably his strong allegiance to the work of Kurt Lewin, the founder of the field of organizational development. Through his work with Argyris, Schön would also become influenced by some of the lessons of cybernetics, notably the work of Ross Ashby and Gregory Bateson, two profoundly original thinkers on learning whose work fed directly into the theory of organizational learning.

A further profound influence on his work came through his love of music. Schön was deeply musical, as a player of the clarinet and piano, and as a composer. While studying philosophy at the Sorbonne, he was equally engaged in studying the clarinet at the Conservatoire de Paris, and he practiced and played the clarinet on

an almost daily basis for the rest of his life. Music for Schön was more than a hobby – it had a deep influence upon the way he thought and wrote, as Richmond argued: "it was perhaps the structure of musical composition that inspired the profound harmony of his written output . . . the unifying theme of all his oeuvres was a finale that left those he had so powerfully engaged refreshed and with hope for the future" (Richmond et al. 1998, p. 3).

Indeed, Schön's musical experience formed the basis for one of his most vivid description for perhaps his most celebrated concept, that of "reflection-in-action":

> When good jazz musicians improvise together, they similarly display reflection-in-action smoothly integrated into ongoing performance. Listening to one another, listening to themselves, they "feel" where the music is going and adjust their playing accordingly. A figure announced by one performer will be taken up by another, elaborated, turned into a new melody. Each player makes on-line inventions and responds to surprises triggered by the inventions of the other players. But the collective process of musical invention is organized around an underlying structure. There is a common schema of meter, melody, and harmonic development that gives the piece a predictable order. In addition, each player has at the ready a repertoire of musical figures around which he can weave variations as the opportunity arises. Improvisation consists in varying, combining, and recombining a set of figures within a schema that gives coherence to the whole piece. As the musicians feel the directions in which the music is developing, they make new sense of it. They reflect-in-action on the music they are collectively making – though not, of course, in the medium of words. (Schön 1987, p. 30)

Schön often compared himself to a giraffe – an obituary called him "long-necked, graceful, curious, aloof" (Warsh 1997) – but from his height he was able to look over a wide range of different areas of life. The same obituarist described him as "interested in anything and everything: the design of a washing machine agitator; the pension system in Germany; the computer wiring-up of MIT; a program for homelessness in Massachusetts; the process by which corporations present themselves through the use of space" (Warsh 1997). That image of a giraffe was taken up by his wife, the celebrated sculptor Nancy Schön, as a posthumous tribute: she has made several sculptures under the name of "the reflective giraffe."

Although seen as somewhat aloof in professional life, he was a mentor to a large number of students as well as practitioners: one former student described him as "tough but flexible, blunt yet understanding, he challenged us to do our best work" (Fischler, in Richmond et al. 1998, p. 8).

In his personal life he was anything but aloof. He was deeply devoted to his family – with his wife Nancy he had four children and several grandchildren. At the time of his death, he was preparing one of his grandsons for his bar mitzvah ceremony (Schön was Jewish), and building a puppet theatre for his grandchildren, "who he taught the essence of reflection by having them critically conceive a theory of how a puppet theatre ought to work" (Richmond et al. 1998, p. 3).

Music and family came together at the end of his life. Sanyal (in Richmond et al. 1998, p. 7), drawing on accounts by Don's son Andrew, writes that

> it was a fitting farewell for his family to stand surrounding his bed holding hands and singing rounds of songs . . . as Don's eyes closed for the last time, the family members lowered their

voices in sorrow only to be urged by Don who raised his right palm to request them to continue singing so he could listen to his favourite Brahms as he gently embraced death.

It was this combination of influences and motivations – of Deweyan philosophy, professional practice, deep curiosity, music, and concern for the world – which led Donald Schön towards the profound contributions that he made in such a variety of different fields.

## Key Contributions: Change, Learning, and Reflection in Individuals and Organizations

Schön's first lasting contribution (or perhaps we might better say, set of contributions) centered around models of change in organizations, society, and technology. He published this work in two books, *Technology and Change: The New Heraclitus* (Schön 1967) and *Beyond the Stable State* (Schön 1971). Although the first of these was published 50 years ago, it remains very fresh and relevant to today's concerns. Schön contrasts the approach to two understandings of reality from two classical philosophers, Parmenides and Heraclitus – the first grounded in the permanence of stability, the second in the permanence of change.

In the view of Parmenides, as Schön (1967, p. xi) puts it, "stability was the only reality; being was continuous, changeless, one; change, in the form of creation or passing away, was inherently contradictory and therefore illusory." Organizations and society behave, argued Schön, as if Parmenides was correct: "we conceive of our institutions – nations, religions, business organizations – as enduring" (ibid., p. xii).

This conception of stability is summarized in Schön's concept of the **stable state** – the idea that our lives, our institutions, and our societies have fundamentally unchanging elements, values, and theories (an idea first introduced in Schön 1967, but developed at greater length in Schön 1971). As Schön wrote, "belief in the stable state is belief in the unchangeability, the constancy of certain central aspects of our lives, or belief that we can obtain such a constancy" (1971, p. 9). This kind of belief is attractive to many people and it is a guard against many forms of uncertainty. The stable state behaves homeostatically, as Schön identified – it self-regulates to preserve its form.

In particular, organizations are frequently dependent on the concept of the stable state. They tend to act as if they will continue to exist in their current form, with their current ownership and management, indefinitely. This is clearly false – to take just one counter-example, if we consider the Fortune 500 companies from 1970 and look at their status in 1983, one third had been merged or taken over with other companies, or split in some form (De Geus 1997, p. 51).

Moreover, organizations act according to Schön's principle of dynamic conservatism, an active and elastic approach to remain in the same form, which Schön (1971) described as "a tendency to fight to remain the same" (p. 32). Dynamic conservatism is not wholly negative – it is the process "through which social systems keep from flying apart at the seams . . . our systems need to maintain their identity,

and their ability to support the self-identity of those who belong to them, but they must at the same time be capable of transforming themselves" (Schön 1971, p. 60).

Notwithstanding the widespread nature of this belief in, and deliberate action to reinforce, the stable state, Schön regarded it as an insufficient description of the nature of organizations and society. Rather than siding with Parmenides in his view of change, he supported the view of Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher of constant change who famously argued that "one can never step in the same river twice" (strictly speaking, a later paraphrase of his words). In Heraclitus' view, stability is only achieved in the river through the rapidity of change in the flowing of the water.

In a similar way, Schön (1971) argued that "throughout our society we are experiencing the actual or threatened dissolution of stable organizations and institutions, anchors for personal identity and systems of values . . . the stable state itself is becoming less real" (p. 15). It affects a wide variety of institutions – he mentioned governments, labor movements, churches, and universities as four types of institutions which are radically affected by a loss of stability. This loss of the stable state, Schön argued, came partly from technological change and partly from social factors – exponential growth in technology had reached the point where it had become pervasive in all parts of the world, and changing at a speed that made it hard to ignore. (As a side note: in today's society we equate "technology" and "technological change" with computers and communications; Schön was talking about a wide range of technologies, and the widespread importance of the digital computer was only beginning in 1967.)

Schön identified three typical "anti-responses" to the loss of the stable state, each in turn essential attempts to refuse to recognize it: an attempt to *return* to the previous stable state, as best as possible; a *revolt* which is apparently against the past state, but in such a way that the past is enabled surreptitiously to return; and a state of *mindlessness*, which seeks to escape from the reality of change through drugs, violence, or other techniques. He saw each of these as unconstructive, as failures "to confront what might be like to live without the stable state" (Schön 1971, p. 29).

Instead, he argued that:

> The loss of the stable state means that our society and all of its institutions are in continuing processes of transformation. We cannot expect new stable states that will endure even for our own lifetimes.
>
> We must learn to understand, guide, influence, and manage these transformations. We must make the capacity for undertaking them integral to ourselves and to our institutions.
>
> We must, in other words, become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to change situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are "learning systems", that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation. (Schön 1971, p. 30)

This concept of a **learning system**, then, was Schön's key response to the loss of the stable state, to widespread change. A learning system needed to be heavily decentralized both in terms of geography (enabled by new communications) and in terms of decision-making (so that its leadership would be ad hoc and fluid rather than fixed and hierarchical). He argued that both businesses and governments had

the potential to be take on the character of learning systems, but that he most clearly saw them occurring in nascent form through two very different institutions – the newly prominent business consultancy firms, and the youth movement that occurred in the United States during the late 1960s. Both forms of institutions had proved themselves to be decentralized, with shifting leadership, and both to be effective at learning and adaption.

Schön discusses the behavior of a learning system that is working well, in his concept of governments as learning systems, although the lessons apply just as well to other forms of organization: "The opportunity for learning is primarily in discovered systems at the periphery, not in the nexus of official policies at the centre. . . . central [government] comes to function as facilitator of society's learning, rather than as society's trainer" (Schön 1971, p. 177). This concept would directly feed into his later work on organizational learning, but in itself can already be seen as the template for the decentralized governance that is so frequently seen as important in contemporary organizations.

In Schön's next key work (working with Chris Argyris), he developed the concept of **theories of action**, which they outlined in their first joint book (Argyris and Schön 1974), where they observe that "theories constructed to explain, predict, or control human behaviour are in many ways like other kinds of theories. But insofar as they are about human action – that is, about human behaviour that is correctable and subject to deliberation – they have special features" (p. 5). The concept of theories of action appears to build upon Schön's earlier work on metaphors and Dewey's theory of inquiry, although neither is directly cited in the book.

They make a crucial distinction between espoused theory, "the theory of action to which [someone] gives allegiance, and which, on request, he communicates to others" (p. 7) and theory-in-use, "the theory that actually governs his actions . . . which may or may not be compatible with his espoused theory." This distinction between espoused theory and theory-in-use is crucial in their joint work – much of Argyris and Schön (1974) is concerned with analyzing the nature of theories-in-use, which they note are highly difficult to express in explicit models or concrete statements.

They observe that in practice, two basic forms of theories-in-use are found, which they term Model I and Model II. The first of these, Model I, is based on the following assumptions: "a win/lose world, other people behave according to the assumptions of Model I, rational behaviour is most effective, public testing of assumptions is intolerably risky" (Argyris and Schön 1974, pp. 79–80); they contend that this is the commonest model in practice, despite being significantly dysfunctional. The second form, Model II, is based on the goals of: "maximize valid information; maximize free and informed choice; maximize internal commitment to decisions made" (ibid., pp. 87–89). They also discuss ways of enabling individuals to transition from Model I to Model II, and the implications of this theory for professional education.

Building on the idea of theories of action, which has a largely individual focus, Argyris and Schön moved on to look at the concept of **organizational learning**. Their books on this subject (Argyris and Schön 1978, 1996) were among the first to consider the topic, which has later become extremely important. Their starting point

is to ask what it means for an organization to learn: "it is clear that organizational learning is not the same as individual learning, even when the individuals who learn are members of the organization" (Argyris and Schön 1978, p. 9). Their answer drew heavily on the earlier idea of theory-in-use. They argue that "organizational learning occurs when individuals, acting from their images and maps, detect a match or mismatch of outcome to expectation which confirms or disconfirms organizational theory-in-use" (ibid., p. 19).

There is a strongly cybernetic flavor to this approach – it is deeply founded on feedback loops, the central concept both of cybernetics (Wiener 1948) and of the related field of system dynamics (Forrester 1961), much of this work having been carried out at MIT where Schön was based. Argyris and Schön drew even more explicitly on cybernetics in their use of the concept of single-loop and double-loop learning, which is often taken to be original to Argyris and Schön but which they attribute to the early cybernetician Ross Ashby (1960).

They define single-loop learning as occurring when "members of the organization respond to changes in the internal and external environments of the organization by detecting errors which they then correct so as to maintain the central features of organizational theory-in-use" (Argyris and Schön 1978, p. 18). This kind of learning is sufficient if the parameters for judging which errors to detect and correct are clear and constant. Circumstances may arise when those parameters are seen to be insufficient, and in that case double-loop learning is occurring: "a double feedback loop [which] connects the detection of error not only to strategies and assumptions for effective performance but to the very norms which define effective performance" (ibid., p. 22). The distinction between this single-loop and double-loop learning, and Gregory Bateson's theory of proto-learning and deutero-learning (which he originated in 1942 – see Bateson 1972), is quite a fine one, but Argyris and Schön place double-loop learning somewhere between proto- and deutero-learning.

Argyris and Schön are modest in the level of their contribution to this work. They do not claim to have originated the concept of organizational learning, and their 1978 book contains an appendix entitled "A Review of the Literature of Organizational Learning," based on six theories of organizational learning (organization as group, agent, structure, system, culture, and politics). This modesty notwithstanding, their joint work on organizational learning hugely advanced the field, putting it on a much sounder intellectual basis, and it is to Argyris and Schön (1978) that the huge majority of organizational learning researchers look as the basis for their work. In particular, Senge's (1990) concept of a learning organization rests heavily on Argyris and Schön's ideas.

Last (in terms of the time it was produced) we come to the contribution for which Schön may be best remembered: the concept of the **reflective practitioner**. In this work (Schön 1983, 1987) he drew together many of his earlier concerns, taking them forward in a new direction. His starting point is a "crisis of confidence in professional knowledge" (Schön 1983, p. 3), arising from a mismatch between the needs of professionals and the skills gained through traditional education processes. These traditional forms of professional education are dominated by a teaching model that Schön terms "technical rationality," which stresses "instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique" (Schön 1983, p. 21).

This starting point resembles some of the critique of society's response to change he presented in *Beyond the Stable State*. In a vivid passage, he writes of the disparity between the requirements of practice and the approaches that are possible under technical rationality:

> In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique, and there is a swampy lowland where situations are confusing "messes" incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or to the larger society, while in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern. (Schön 1983, p. 42)

The reason for this disparity in professional education, which makes it unsuitable for work within this swamp, arises from insecurity. In the establishment of a series of applied professional schools, such as social work, education, architecture, and urban planning, there was a widespread sense that these essentially applied fields needed to become "proper" academic disciplines with grounding to resemble established professions such as medicine and law. The result, Schön argued, was a form of teaching which stressed rigor and scientific foundations, rather than the direct needs of professional practice – making them well-grounded academically but poorly grounded in practice.

Schön worked to build "an inquiry into the epistemology of practice . . . based on a close examination of what some practitioners – architects, psychotherapists, engineers, planners, and managers – actually do" (Schön 1983, p. viii). Working with similar techniques to his earlier examination of metaphors in use (Schön 1963) and on the nature of theories in action (Argyris and Schön 1974), and again drawing on Dewey's work, he studied in depth the behavior of professionals as they operate.

The two key ideas in this epistemology of practice as Schön presents it are knowing-in-action and reflection-in-action. The first is a way of understanding how we actually embody and work with knowledge: "when we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way . . . our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in* our action" (Schön 1983, p. 49).

Schön moves on to consider the ways that we can both "think about doing [and] that we can thinking about doing something while doing it" (ibid., p. 54). It is this process, where professionals improvise in the moment based on their past experience, that he terms reflection-in-action. One who reflects-in-action "is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case" (ibid., p. 68).

Schön frequently used jazz musicians (given his own musical interests) as an example of reflection-in-action, and I have earlier quoted him at some length writing on this form of reflection. This way of changing practice based on based experience is crucial to his epistemology. As he wrote: "when a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it as something already present in his

repertoire. . . . The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or. . . an exemplar for the unfamiliar one" (Schön 1983, p. 138).

Examples such as the jazz musicians serve as a useful corrective to a misunderstanding that has arisen around Schön's work: that he is encouraging a different sort of reflection, the quiet kind that might occur at the end of the day through a journal or in conversation with a mentor or close friend. This too is an important part of reflective practice – Schön refers to it as reflection-*on*-action – but it is less critical to his vision of the epistemology of practice.

The concept of reflection-in-action was thus critical to Schön's alternative model of professional education: it needed to be one that drew upon the real nature of professional knowledge, action, and reflection. In a striking observation, Schön argued that a focus on reflective practice could lead to a "demystification of professional expertise . . . to recognize that the scope of technical expertise is limited by situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and conflict . . . when research-based theories and techniques are inapplicable, the professional cannot legitimately claim to be expert, but only to be especially well prepared to reflect-in-action" (Schön 1983, p. 345).

Ultimately, Schön's vision of the reflective practitioner, as an expert in practice as much as in theory, drew upon all of his earlier insights in philosophy, change, and learning, and presented a radical alternative view to that of the dispassionate expert. It is a vision that remains radical and important today.

## New Insights: One Person, Many Influences

Without a doubt, Schön's influence upon academic and professional practice has been huge. However, it is striking that there seem to be several Donald Schöns who have influenced different communities. There is Schön the change theorist, with his potent understanding of the stable state and what lies beyond it. There is Schön the organizational theorist (here always cited as the second part of a pair with Argyris), founder of organizational learning and concepts of single-loop and double-loop learning. There is Schön the theorist of professional practice, with his concept of knowing-in-action, and the related (but not identical) Schön the theorist of education, champion of reflection-in-action. Lastly there is Schön the design theorist, influential originally within planning but increasingly taken up into the growing importance of design thinking.

All of these Schöns are overlapping of course – how could they not be when they were a single person? The many authors who cite and draw upon his work will often focus on one part but acknowledge the rest. But there is a sense, in authors drawing on his work, that they most clearly care about one of these Schöns. This is surprising in the sense that he himself saw his work as coherent, with a strong narrative thread running through it; although he wrote a lot, and contributed a large number of new ideas, he did so carefully and clearly. This is in contrast to an author such as the anthropologist and cybernetician Gregory Bateson (1972), who has also had an

influence upon many disciplines – but in his case that was partly because he operated in several different disciplinary spaces during his lifetime, and only in later life came to see his work as a unified whole.

In my own experience, I encountered two Schöns first, then a third, and lately have become captivated by a fourth. While working on my doctorate in the evaluation of information systems (Ramage 1999), I read widely and worked with practitioners of organizational learning, as I took a view of evaluation as a learning process. It was clear in this reading that Argyris and Schön had a special place in the formation of organizational learning as a concept, and I found their work useful as a starting point. Running alongside this approach, I had further encounters with Schön as he was gradually taken up in the area of human-computer interaction (an important aspect of information systems), as a theorist of design – he was interviewed in late life for a book on the importance of design in the software process, at a time when design was just beginning to be a key concept in a range of fields (Schön and Bennett 1996).

When I moved from research to teaching, taking up a post at The Open University (the UK's largest university and a pioneer in distance learning) I came to know a third Schön: the reflective educator. Colleagues across the university, especially in professional areas, drew heavily on Schön's concepts of reflection. His ideas were taught in many fields, and the idea of reflection-in-action was central to the pedagogic model of many different areas. At one time at the Open University (OU), it was hard to find a teaching program that did not have some reference to Schön's work, frequently coupled to the learning cycle of David Kolb (1984). This was true in vocational fields where Schön has been taken up elsewhere, such as social work, nursing, teacher education, and management (all important areas for the OU). But it was also very much the case in the Faculty of Technology which for 35 years developed sociotechnical and reflective courses on highly technical subjects (until two successive internal mergers weakened that culture). Some of the this was a probably a misuse of Schön's ideas – on occasions reflection was presented as an after-thought within assessment activities, referred to scathingly by students as "the R word" – but much of it gave a richness to distance education of professionals that can sometimes be lacking.

In my own work I encountered a fourth Schön more recently: the Schön of *Beyond the Stable State*. I spent several years writing an overview of the life and work of 30 key systems thinkers (Ramage and Shipp 2009), including Donald Schön, and it was the Schön who wrote about widespread systemic change that struck me very much in producing that work. Re-reading Schön's many works in preparing this chapter, it is that Schön that still strikes me today. A statement such as the one quoted above that "the loss of the stable state means that our society and all of its institutions are in continuing processes of transformation" (Schön 1971, p. 30) was highly innovative in 1970 when he first gave his Reith Lectures. Today, in a period of huge political, economic, and social turmoil, it remains just as relevant. I think it is this Schön that could perhaps better be rediscovered than any of the other Schöns.

Two remaining images from Schön's writing have been important to me as an educator and scholar, and to my colleagues in the Systems group at the Open

University. Both have appeared above in this chapter. This first is the image of reflection-in-action as jazz: anyone who has sat in a jazz concert and seen the shift from one instrument to another, the spontaneity of solo works, will find this familiar. The second is the idea of the swamp: the messy real world of practice, into which theorists need to tread with care; this is an image which has inspired a number of systems colleagues (e.g., Ison 2010) and which continues to challenge us today.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Power and Public Policy

Schön's legacy has been huge, as I have already explored: in particular in professional education of all kinds (through the reflective practitioner), in design, and in organizational learning. So many authors have drawn upon his work, and he is extremely widely cited.

He is not without critique. A curious phenomenon is that which Fischler (2012, p. 322) describes as "the widespread diffusion but limited impact of Schön's ideas." Fischler is especially talking about Schön's impact within planning theory, where he had his academic home for 25 years, and where he is more respected than used. Nonetheless, the same could be said for a number of other fields where Schön's name, and the concept of the reflective practitioner, is widely cited but at quite a superficial level, where "very few represent an attempt to apply Schön's theory in novel ways, to test his propositions as hypotheses, to expand on his ideas, or otherwise to engage his work in a direct manner" (ibid.). There is a sense in reading some of those citing Schön that it is done because everybody cites Schön, but that the main concerns in the work are elsewhere.

One of the concerns that Fischler raises is that Schön's work takes (or is read as taking) a largely individual approach. The theories-in-action he presents are largely those of individuals; the reflective practitioners are individuals. Of course, he also has a theory of organizational learning, but this too does not have a high degree of engagement with power. There is a sense in some of Schön's work of a lack of context. Newman, for example, contrasts reflection-in-action with the critical educational work of Paolo Freire, arguing that: "Freire envisages praxis as a process with the potential of bringing about social, even revolutionary, change. Schön's reflection-in-action is also seen as capable of bringing about change in both the practitioner and the organisation, but it is not presented as a process that might challenge the society of which the practitioner and the organisation are parts" (Newman 1994, p. 90).

Schwartz (1987), in a book review of *The Reflective Practitioner* which also drew on earlier criticisms he had made of *Theory in Practice*, took a slightly different angle, arguing that: "on the whole it seems to me to offer a view of man and of human institutions that is naively optimistic in that it assumes that impediments to reflectivity are simply the result of bad habits and are easily corrected through a change in behaviour" (p. 616).

These issues of a lack of concern for power and social change in Schön's work are well described, although they can be defended in other ways. It is clear from writings

such as *Beyond the Stable State* that he had a great concern for policy issues, and he returned to this quite explicitly in one of his last books, on the idea of institutional frames. He and Martin Rein, his coauthor and another long-time collaborator, argued there that: "policies are sometimes reframed in action, and their reframing sometimes results from the actors' reflection on frame conflicts that arise in the evolving, politically coloured process of policy design" (Schön and Rein 1994, p. viii). Moreover, his colleague Niraj Verma defended him from the charge of a lack of appreciation for power dynamics, arguing that "Don was deeply interested in issues of power – not the power of holding a gun over someone, but a subtle form of intellectual power that grips us and forces us to act in particular ways . . . in its consequences it is as dangerous as more conventional forms of power" (Richmond et al. 1998, p. 9).

Perhaps the final statement to be made about Schön's legacy is that it is still a slightly unfinished one in terms of its effects. The ideas of reflection-in-action, of moving beyond the stable state, and his conceptions of design, in particular, are rich ones which need to be read and applied more carefully than hitherto; and with a particular eye to the issues of individualism, context, and power.

Donald Schön led a deep and reflective life, and taught us much about change, learning, and practice; there are many things we can still learn from his work today.

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## Further Reading

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Schön's writing was extremely clear and worth reading in its own right. Much of his key work was contained in books rather than articles, and is of a nature that the whole book needs to be read to gain full comprehension. The following works are of particular significance:

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Note that Schön's name is sometimes written as 'Schon' in library catalogues and bibliographies, which is incorrect but an easy mistake to make. It is sufficiently common that when searching for him online, it is best to look for both 'Schön' and 'Schon'.

# Edith Whitfield Seashore's Contribution to the Field of Organization Development: Theory in Action

# 69

Barbara Benedict Bunker

**Abstract**

Edie Seashore was a protégé of Douglas McGregor and a pioneer in the small group dynamics training movement that emerged from the work of Kurt Lewin (founder of the field of social psychology) and developed by the National Training Institute (NTL) at its summer campus at Bethel, Maine. She led the movement that integrated NTL and became its first woman president. NTL also created the first OD training program for consultants. During her more than 60 years as an independent consultant, she founded the American University master's degree program in OD (with Morley Segal) and taught in many of the other OD graduate degree programs in the United States. She had a profound influence on the hundreds of OD consultants that she taught and trained. She believed that diversity and inclusion were central values in OD practice. She embodied this value in her work and life. Seashore wrote one of the earliest articles on gender in the workplace. As a gifted practitioner, she believed that taking action produced data that led to effective interventions. She emphasized the use of self as critical to effective practice. Her choice awareness matrix helped practitioners interact with clients effectively, learn from the situation, and take next steps. Her wonderful sense of humor and deep practitioner insight helped many OD consultants over many years.

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## Contents

## Influences and Motivations: Carving Out Space for Women and Diversity in OD

Edith Whitfield Seashore graduated from Antioch College in 1950 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology. Antioch was a "nontraditional" college with a work study program and deep commitments to participation in a democratic society. Both of Seashore's parents were lawyers, although her mother never practiced. Before she went to college, Seashore attended a progressive (Dewey) school, but was aware of her minority status as a Jew when she was ignored socially on some occasions. The Antioch students were active in college governance. During her junior year, she was part of the search committee for a new president. Douglas McGregor was selected. During her senior year, she was elected "community manager" (i.e., president of the student body), which meant that she spent most of her year running and influencing college affairs (she often remarked with a wide smile that her challenger for this office was Warren Bennis – and she won!). McGregor became Seashore's mentor. He took her to her first T-group experience in the college lab at Bethel, Maine, the summer home of the National Training Laboratory for Applied Behavioral Science (NTL). Seashore's college experiences and McGregor's ideas in particular (theory X and theory Y) had a profound influence on her values and worldview. She left college deeply committed to making a difference in this world.

During the 1950s, as research on small group processes blossomed, Seashore returned to Bethel every summer to co-train T-groups. At the same time, she lived and worked in New York City and earned a master's degree in social psychology at Columbia University. After Seashore co-trained at Bethel for 10 years, Jack Glidewell took her aside in 1960 and told her that she was just as good – or better than – the men who were NTL trainers and that she should not return to Bethel unless she was recognized as a full trainer. She took his advice, and by the next summer, she was thereafter recognized as an equal and increasingly as one of the most competent trainers. But sexism was everywhere in the 1960s. There were very few women on university faculties, and NTL was essentially a white male club of social science professors. Seashore became an important presence on the Bethel summer NTL campus. She worked with and absorbed the ideas and theories of virtually all of the

early OD thinkers who were part of the Bethel summer community, including Ed Schein, Chris Argyris, Bob Tannenbaum, Lee Bradford, Ron Lippitt, Herb Shepard, Ken Benne, Dick Beckhard, Shel Davis, and John and Joyce Weir. Seashore and her husband Charlie spent their summers in Bethel during the 1960s, as Charlie was working for NTL. Seashore was a role model and a beacon of hope for other aspiring women in mostly male professions.

The 1960s brought sit-ins and protests about racial discrimination, the women's movement, and the Vietnam War. In group dynamics, the emphasis shifted from group process to encounter groups focusing on interpersonal feedback and individual development. The Organization Development Network began in an informal meeting in 1965 of industrial trainers in California. After a stint at the Ford Foundation, Seashore worked for Richard Beckhard Associates for several years, developing skills and experience dealing with business organizations and consulting to systems.

The 1960s was a time of upheaval and change, during which women took on challenges to change the culture of work. For example, NTL ran a "Presidents Labs" that was open only to chief executives. The men who came often brought their wives, so NTL offered a "wives group" experience for them. Initially, Seashore was allowed to train only the wives group, although she was then one of the most experienced and accomplished trainers at NTL. Finally, she broke through the barrier. Once she successfully trained a presidents group, the norms changed.

This was a period of time in which the few women working at Bethel met informally out of earshot to compare notes, support each other, and invent strategies to challenge the sexism that surrounded them. For example, Seashore, Billie Alban, and Barbara Bunker were the three women that NTL was willing to hire as competent trainers for T-group labs. In our informal conversations in the early 1970s, we three were able to make a list of approximately 20 women who – by NTL standards – were competent to lead T-groups. When the NTL staff would complain that there were not any competent women for them to hire, we presented our list, but nothing happened. We asked, "Why aren't there more women on staffs?" "We don't know any," they replied. "What about the list we gave you?" we asked. "What list?" they said. They lost at least three lists before the hiring practices actually changed to include more women.

## Consciousness Raising and Empowering Women to Act

I got to know Seashore at Bethel in the late 1960s. We spoke about the women's movement, which was just taking off when we worked as part of several lab staffs. During this time, women often caucused in private to reflect on their experiences with male colleagues and figure out how to act to shift situations in which they were not listened to and were treated disrespectfully or unfairly. Even the Bethel culture was white male dominated and not particularly interested in changing. Seashore's propensity to work with situations through action is captured in this experience:

We were part of an eight-person lab staff meeting to plan our work the day before the participants arrived. We were brainstorming about where in the schedule to put a theory session, and a man proposed that we hold the session right after lunch. I

commented that people generally have low energy after a meal and that maybe it would be a good idea to have an experiential activity then. No one responded, and the group continued to talk about ideas for the theory session. Then, about 10 min later, a guy named Bill said, "People are generally low energy after a meal and maybe it would be a good idea to have an experiential activity then." There was an immediate positive response from another man, and the whole group began to actively discuss which activity to use. I was stunned and shocked. When we took a break, I pulled Seashore aside and asked her if my suggestion was unclear, or what she saw happen. She said, "Barbara, they don't expect women to have good ideas, so they didn't hear what you said, but you were perfectly clear!" We then cooked up a plan to change the situation. We agreed that when either of us proposed something, if there was no group response, the other would say "That's a really interesting idea. Let's talk about it!" We didn't have to agree with the idea itself. We just needed to get it onto the floor for discussion. We discovered that this worked like a charm in many situations, without distracting or accusing the group and stopping the work process.

Over time, Seashore and I had this kind of conversation about many of the key issues that created problems for women entering the field of OD. We talked about our ideas at national OD meetings and finally wrote them up in an article that named the major issues: "Power, Collusion, Intimacy-Sexuality, Support: Breaking the Sex Role Stereotypes in Social and Organizational Settings (Bunker and Seashore 1976)." In this article, we described the behaviors that were part of the old world of sexism and the process we used to increase our own awareness. Our old responses were making it easy for sexism to continue! Then we described our process for becoming more aware and changing our behavior in situations where we experienced sexism. This piece circulated informally through many organizations in mimeographed and ditto format long before it was officially published. Women used it to reflect on and chart their own journey and as the basis for discussions with colleagues and clients, both male and female.

Seashore was a big presence in the field of group training and OD from the very beginning of her career in the 1950s. She was articulate about her views, but had great humor and warmth. She was always in action about the issues that stemmed from deeply held values. If a direct approach did not work, she figured out how to get what she wanted done in another way. She trained and influenced hundreds of people who entered the field of OD. In the 1970s, she was the consultant who worked on integrating several of the military academies that began accepting women. Her stories about her interventions there are the stuff of legends. Here is a brief version of the well-known story about her first meeting with the captain in charge of the integration of women into the United States Naval Academy. The captain (also known informally as "Boomer" to his men because of his loud voice) decided to interview Seashore after they found several other male consultants to be wrong for the task. Upon her arrival, Seashore was told that there would be very little time for the interview. She remembered McGregor's story about how consultants need to have one good idea to be successful with their clients. After the preliminaries, the captain described the situation. Women would arrive that summer for training and be part of the academy, which was then all male. "What should I do?" he asked. "You

should have some women on the summer orientation staff," she shot back. He turned to his staff and said, "Get some women on our summer staff." "Yes, sir!" they said. Seashore was hired and worked for 8 years on many issues involving the real integration of women into the academy (Seashore 2006).

## Key Contributions: Diversity, Inclusion, the Use of Self, and the Choice Awareness Matrix

### Diversity and Inclusion Are an Essential Part of Organization Change and Development

The ferment about gender and race affected organizations in the 1970s. In response to what was happening, some organizations instituted training programs like assertiveness training for women and diversity training for Caucasians. Seashore saw these issues as fundamental to organization change, not as separate training programs. She had a core belief that only when all voices were heard and responded to could an organization really fulfill its potential. Her personal world had always included people of color and other minorities, and she believed that this was both right and valuable. These were deeply held values that she consistently enacted as an important part of her life. They can be seen in how she chose to use her time, the diversity of the people she worked with, and those whom she mentored.

This contribution to the field became very visible in 1975, when she and three other NTL members (Hal Kellner, Peter Vail, and Barbara Bunker) convinced the NTL board members to resign rather than declare bankruptcy and close. Those individuals were replaced with a new board that was half women, half men, half people of color, and half white. Seashore became the new president of NTL, and Elsie Cross, a woman of color, became the first chair of the new board. The "four horsepersons," as they were often called, did this by convincing 75 very competent trainers to donate 2 weeks of their time doing NTL labs so the organization could pay off its debts and transform itself in a new beginning. This included changing the old membership criteria to become much more inclusive. The invited new members became the core of the new organization, while others had to apply for membership. Membership intake was controlled by categories so that people were admitted in groups of four – one from each category. The $250,000 debt was paid off in 2 years. For people in the newly developing field of OD consulting, the fallout from these events was positive for some and very upsetting for others. But the message was very

clear: diversity is an important part of our work in organization development and change.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 caused organizations like AT&T to realize that they needed to address issues of diversity in their own organizations. Seashore, Cross, Kellner, and others worked within the organization to create awareness and change. One such change project was allowing women to "climb the poles." These had been "men-only" positions, but the female employees at AT&T wanted access to these jobs. The consultants worked with the whole system during this transition. Their early efforts became a model for working within the whole organization rather than just sending people off for diversity training.

## Use of Self and the Choice Matrix

The expression "use of self" developed and was prominent in the training of T-group trainers in the 1950s and 1960s. It called for trainers to be aware of their own motivations and the impact of their behavior on others. This was a period in which psychoanalysis and psychotherapy were popular as part of professional training. For the participants, an important part of the T-group experience was becoming more aware of the impact of their own behavior on others. The group became a vehicle for collecting data about that impact, via a carefully defined process known as "feedback," a practical translation of the social psychological understanding of perception and action taking (Seashore et al. 1991). As the feedback process became popular and the word entered the general vocabulary, the basic steps and process often became distorted, as in "Let me give you a little feedback" – meaning "Let me tell you what I don't like about you!" This popular distortion of a carefully calibrated psychology-based process occurs too frequently. As a needed corrective, the Seashores' thinking refocused on what wanting to give someone *feedback* said about the giver's own internal state and perception. The impulse to give feedback provides data about what is going on inside. It needs to be attended to particularly by people in the helping professions.

Seashore's choice matrix (Patwell and Seashore 2006) is a 2-×-2 matrix that expands the 1960s' use of self-concept by focusing on a person's state of awareness as he or she takes action (Fig. 1). For a number of years, Seashore developed these ideas about the "conscious use of self" in her work with Michael Broom and their Triple Impact Consulting program. She expanded it to include the coaching relationship in her work with Beverley Patwell and their Canadian clients. The matrix contrasts automatic socially determined behavior with what today might be called "mindfulness," i.e., awareness of our thoughts, feelings, and motivations, as we prepare to act. This process can lead to personal growth and increased competence as a practitioner. It is also a formidable defense against the well-known tendency (especially in western countries) to blame the situation or anything but ourselves for the outcomes of our behavior.

Seashore's natural penchant toward action as a way to clarify and change situations led her to think about how to help developing OD practitioners not get

## Choice Awareness Matrix

©Edie Seashore

| AWARENESS | CHOICE ATTRIBUTED TO SELF | CHOICE ATTRIBUTED TO OTHERS |
|---|---|---|
| AWARE | ACCOUNTABLE<br>Deliberate<br>Intentional | BLAME |
| UNAWARE | AUTOMATIC<br>Robotic<br>Habitual | SOCIETAL INHERITANCE<br>Adapt<br>Assimilate |

**Fig. 1** Choice matrix

paralyzed in situations of ambiguity. As she mentored developing practitioners, she saw them getting stuck trying to translate theory into useful action. The choice matrix was an important conceptual first step in expanding the range of choices for action when a person could not see possibilities for action. Her own consulting style was based on action research theory. She understood that when you take action, a reaction provides information that can be the basis for your next action. Seashore engaged situations of uncertainty or ambiguity in this manner; she treated the reactions as data that informed her next move. You could say that she was the embodiment of action research. Her behavior was often intuitive and experimental. She believed that if you want to understand what is going on, you need to act and pay close attention to the reactions. For her, the key issue was not "the right intervention," but allowing the situation to speak so that she could learn from it and respond.

Briefly review her insights and how they affected both you and others – see sample chapters to learn how authors are developing this section.

## New Insights: Theory in Action

Seashore's contribution was to help OD practitioners move past their sense of "stuckness," i.e., not being able to envision alternatives or invent new ideas or behaviors to change the current situation. She conceptualized this skill in her choice awareness matrix. She embodied this skill throughout her life in groups and with her clients. Her wonderfully funny stories about consulting and her life were another way that she made theory come to life for others.

Edie Seashore was a consummate practitioner in the tradition that Donald Schon describes in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). Schon talks about "practitioner knowledge" as intuitive and based in experience. It is the ability to be effective in action in particular situations. OD practitioners continually find themselves in complex situations with clients and groups where they need to act and the options are not always immediately apparent. Creating new options by taking action is

critical to unfreezing the situation and promoting change. Seashore was a genius at this type of intervention. Her "rule of thumb" was to keep moving, to take some action, and to never get frozen in place. When you were able to do that, new options almost always appeared. The one thing she believed you should not do was to do nothing. For example, if a group participant got very angry and attacked her, as the leader she needed to engage that person, acknowledge and work with the anger, and see what happened next. The one thing that would create real trouble was to ignore that feeling or respond to it with anger.

Her "rule of thumb" was to keep moving, to take action in the face of any situation that is problematic or frustrating when it is not clear what to do. My personal example is our time in airports together at a time when we were both traveling frequently. She had an action strategy for dealing with delays or cancellations. The minute they were announced, she got on her phone making tentative alternative arrangements while most others grumbled and waited passively to see what would happen next. She did not assume that things would work out or that the airline would take care of her. She took action to assure that she had other options. I have used her strategy for years with great results.

Some of her contributions to the field of OD are in the many practitioners she trained in master's degree programs or in the Triple Impact Consulting program for experienced practitioners which she created with Michael Broom. In each of these programs, people practiced dealing with complex organizational situations and honed their intervention skills. "Don't just stand there, do something!" is an essential skill for an OD practitioner in interpersonal, group, and organizational settings, but not one that can be learned from reading. Her hundreds of students and colleagues saw her taking effective action in all kinds of difficult situations and carry that rule of thumb with them in their own practice.

## Seashore's Legacy: Influencing the Training of OD Practitioners

We generally think about important ideas in currency as the product of the well-published academics and practitioners in the field of OD. Seashore had a huge impact on how practitioners think and do their work by a different route. In the late 1970s, when she was president of the NTL Institute, she began to plan for a master's degree program in OD that would have NTL partnering with a major university. Morley Segal was teaching at American University in Washington, DC, and was an NTL member. Seashore and Segal developed the Master of Science in Organizational Development (MSOD) at American University as a joint program between the university and NTL. The program – which began in 1980 and is now training its 71st cohort – included NTL lab experiences and courses at the university. It has graduated at least 1,700 students with master's degrees in OD. The *use of self* concept is deeply embedded in the program and distinguishes it from other MSOD programs. Seashore taught in the program for 30 years. She also brought her ideas to many other master's and doctoral level programs by teaching in programs at Johns Hopkins University, Concordia University, Fielding Graduate University,

Georgetown University, the University of Massachusetts, McGill University, Sonoma State University, Benedictine College, and Pepperdine University.

As a result of her interactions with students in all of these programs, she was a hub in a large network of OD consultants who considered her their mentor and would turn to her for advice about client situations. These were talented people who had their degrees, knew the theories, and were working on their distinctive contribution as practitioners. There are always situations in practice when it helps to have consultation from peers. Seashore saw that need and – with Broom – established the Triple Impact Program for people in practice. It would meet for a day once a month in major cities on both coasts and deal with the consulting issues that individuals in the group were experiencing. Seashore used her choice matrix to help people move from being stuck or seeing no possibilities to clarifying what they could do in the situation. The dynamics of the process are close to what is described as "reframing" (Bolman and Deal 2013; Brummans et al. 2008). In fact, Seashore also used the language of reframing to help people develop a new set of possibilities. She became known for suggesting to people describing a current dilemma that they begin their description of their situation with the words "*Until now...*" This "reframing" shifts the perspective from current stuckness to the possibilities of what could happen next and invites new possibilities for action. Seashore's "until now" intervention is a good example of how she understood theory, but translated it in her consultation into useful interventions on behalf of her clients.

## A Model for Navigating a Career and a Family

When Seashore entered the OD field as an independent consultant in the 1960s, she was a pioneer in an emerging profession comprised of men. The model of women staying home to raise children and maintain the family was still in place. Most married women did not work, and if they did work, they certainly did not travel for work. Seashore did both with two young children at home. Her male clients were unaware of her family dynamic for the most part, since the 1960s was a time in which work and personal life were kept separate. If they did happen to find out, their reactions were usually negative.

Other professional women, however, were intrigued to understand how Seashore was able to value, enjoy, and manage her roles as wife, mother, home manager, and professional OD consultant. She became a role model for new possibilities in their lives, and so they studied what she was doing.

With the strong support of her husband, Seashore created an extensive support system that allowed her to both work away from home and be very present in it. In those days, preschools, public childcare, au pairs, video home monitors, and delivery services were mostly nonexistent, except for the very wealthy. Seashore hired a woman who was working for friends and brought her into her home to be her ears, eyes, and extra pair of hands. Her main responsibility was the children, but she coordinated other functions as well, including the business phone calls that were

essential to their consulting practices. When she was away, Seashore talked with her children as they got up, after school, and before they went to bed. She was deeply and directly involved in their everyday lives and at the same time in touch with the now highly valued and respected woman who was her helper at home and who gradually became a special and cherished part of the family. As the children grew older and needed transportation, Seashore taught the woman to drive and bought her a car. The Seashores created a retirement plan for her and supported her buying her own home.

The Seashores had other warm relationships with people who provided support services for their intense lifestyle. They always had a cab driver who was part of their system and who could be counted on to appear and take them to the airport. The cleaners and the grocers would go out of their way for the Seashores because of the relationships they created. We now call this a support system or a support network. Charles Seashore developed this support matrix idea into a conceptual diagnostic map (Seashore 1982) that is used by many OD consultants. Although he got it into conceptual shape, many of the ideas came from his life with Edie Seashore and their joint journey to create a family that would allow them both to work and travel and still be strongly and securely connected to life at home.

I decided to volunteer to write about Seashore's contribution because I believe she was much more influential in the field of OD than her publication list suggests. Over the years, she was a regularly featured speaker and presenter at professional meetings. Her sessions at these meetings attracted large and appreciative audiences. Her work was deeply influenced by her values and ideas that she converted into actions. She had a wealth of tacit knowledge characteristic of the consummate practitioner (Schon 1983). Her ideas have deeply influenced many whom she mentored, taught, or were part of her network of friends and colleagues. Seashore was an active independent consultant and teacher well into her 80s. I can remember people asking her, years ago, "When are you going to retire, Edie?" She replied, "I am retired! This is it!" She was again a pioneer as she grew older. Her death in 2013 was a profound shock to the OD community, which responded with large memorial gatherings on both coasts.

## In Summary: The Essential Edie Seashore

Edie Seashore was an OD pioneer and a force to be reckoned with in the lives of those she taught, befriended, and loved. Her core belief in social justice was fundamental to who she was. She engaged the world with a clear purpose, a willingness to take action, and a wonderful sense of humor that included herself. She valued diversity as a core part of OD. It can be said of her that her "theory in use" matched her "espoused theory," most of the time. She used storytelling as an intervention before books were written about it. She was the hub of an extensive network before networking became an intervention. She valued what women could bring to the workplace before gender became a research topic. She was ahead of her time and absolutely in your corner!

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# Peter Senge: "Everything That We Do Is About Shifting the Capability for Collective Action..."

# 70

Kathryn Goldman Schuyler

**Abstract**

Peter M. Senge is an author, organizational consultant, and systems thinker whose writings and workshops have influenced scholars and managers around the world. From his base at MIT in what was originally the Organizational Learning Center, which became the Society for Organizational Learning (SoL), Senge has contributed to a fundamental shift in the way that many look at the nature and scale of change. His initial book, *The Fifth Discipline,* brought together practices for generating the inner shift in awareness that he originally termed *metanoia,* from the ancient Christian term for movement of mind or awakening, supporting people in developing practical, interlinked capacities to reflect, learn together, and think systemically about how to have sustainable organizations in a sustainable world. His writings and collaborative work with leaders in schools, not-for-profit organizations, and corporations continue to contribute to organizational and societal evolution.

## Contents

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> *I am part of a larger reality, and if I am unaware of it, I will take actions that might make a lot of sense to me at the individual level or even my tribe or local group, but they'll be counterproductive in the larger world in which we're operating.*
> *(Peter Senge, in conversation with Otto Scharmer, U-Lab 2015)*

Peter Senge's work, from the initial publication of his best-selling book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990/2006) to the present time, has aimed to address what he first sensed as a teenager: that our society was "destroying the conditions for our own wellbeing, and we're all doing it. . ." (Peter Senge, in conversation with Otto Scharmer, ULab, 2015). He has provided systems perspectives, tools, and learning environments that have made it possible for people in business, education, government, and other communities of practice to think about the whole systems in which their work is embedded, so as to generate change that addresses underlying trends, rather than simply fixing current issues. His books, articles, and the organizations he has inspired or cofounded have already led to significant change in how people think about change, how organizations perceive their strategic direction, and how many business leaders understand the importance of shifting the impact of their business on the planet toward creating a more sustainable world.

At the heart of this is his recognition of the importance of self-development or "cultivation" for leaders, so that they never think that they have "the answer" but instead continually seek to listen to excluded voices in their worlds and develop sufficient personal mastery so that they can sustain both listening and deep commitment to what they value over long periods of time. In this chapter, I describe what inspires Peter in his work as a change leader and writer, highlight the most influential aspects of his work, indicate how this has been important to my own development as a scholar-practitioner, and finally, having spoken with him and several people who have been influenced by him in different ways, suggest what his lasting uniqueness may be – as I feel he is quite distinct among social and behavioral scientists.

## Influences and Motivations: History, Engineering, and Consciousness

Describing the personal journey that led him to his work, Peter spoke of his teen perceptions.

> I remember conversations with my mother. I was probably 13, 14, 15 years old. I grew up in Los Angeles, and I watched Los Angeles go from paradise to really not such a nice place . . .,

and so, I was very acutely aware of the adverse effects that are occurring when people take their individual actions with little awareness of the larger system.

At some level we create all these problems. It's not bad luck. It's not random. Somehow, our handprint is on every one of these problems. But of course, for most of us, most of the time it's somebody else's handprint, right? It's not . . . my handprint. I'm not destroying species; somebody else must be destroying species, but then if you look where is this somebody else, you will not find them, because that somebody else is the plural us. (Peter Senge, in conversation with Otto Scharmer, ULab, 2015)

Although he believes that this blindness to our part in the collective has been true throughout history, he sees our current moment as a critical one because the scale at which humans impact the planet has shifted from local to global.

Unlike most social scientists and change practitioners, Peter was trained as an engineer. He chose to attend MIT as a graduate student to build on his undergraduate education in understanding systems. Intrigued by the systems view, he wondered how to apply it to social systems and to "how we understand human connectedness" (Peter Senge, in conversation with Otto Scharmer, ULab, 2015). During his first semester as a student in 1970, he met his mentor Jay Forrester. Forrester had impressive credentials as an engineer. In the 1940s and 1950s, he had invented core memory – a key technical breakthrough that enabled digital computation. Reflecting back, Peter pointed out to me that Forrester and his team supervised the construction of the first 28 general purpose digital computers that were installed around North America in the early 1950s to coordinate the first coordinated defense system for North America – and that many of these continued to work into the 1980s, 30 years later.

What impressed him in Forrester's work shows the nature of his focus throughout his career. As Peter described the importance of this project, "*Doing the whole of it* was meaningful to me. They do breakthrough, kind of prototyping stuff. But they don't just do that. They supervise the construction – the full production, manifestation, and implementation of the computers by IBM (which is how IBM got into the computer industry)" (Peter Senge, in conversation with Otto Scharmer, ULab, 2015). In other words, even before he published his first books or founded the organizations that have influenced scholar-practitioners and managers around the world, Peter looked at societal systems change in the context of historical perspectives. He was intrigued by questions of how to design practical systems that work beyond typically expected lifetimes of usage and fascinated by the unseen interconnectedness of our human actions.

Describing himself, as far back as he can recall, he wondered how we as humans might shift the thousands-of-years-old pattern of societies coming into existence, growing, and either depleting their resources or being unable to settle their conflicts and then disappearing. He saw this as recurring throughout human history, but with larger implications in the present period, since humans can now destroy not just their local environment but the conditions for life of the whole species. The way he has brought together historical perspectives, an engineering can-do mindset, and an awareness that the roots of genuine transformational change lie in deep processes of mastering consciousness is core to Peter's uniqueness as a scholar-practitioner of

organizational change. Over the decades of his professional life, he has meditated regularly, regarding this as fundamental for his capacity to listen, which he sees as an essential capacity for any leader (Senge 2012). He perceives all problems as rooted in the way we as human beings use our consciousness, which shapes how we act.

> ...the human being exists with one foot in the infinite and one foot in the manifest or the phenomenological. ...all of this [systemic global problems] starts in some sense as mental distress or confusion, then it manifests in ways of acting that produce huge problems in the world. ...You've got to deal with the lack of understanding and the lack of cultivation that all of us have in this world that shapes how and what we perceive. ...Everything that we do is about shifting the capability for collective action, which starts with a different quality of conversation, a different collective awareness. (Senge 2012, pp. 316–317)

He is convinced that unless we cultivate our awareness through a practice of contemplation such as meditation, we project our own fears on the world:

> It's really that commitment to cultivate yourself, your ability to be quiet, your ability to be present, your ability to control your ego and your fear and self-centeredness, your ability to listen, your ability to suspend your own thoughts, to distinguish what's happening from what you're projecting – all of that is foundational for being an effective leader who can actually do some good. (Senge 2012, p. 327)

The extent to which his work is grounded in the importance of what he initially called *personal mastery* (*The Fifth Discipline*, 1990/2006) and more recently has referred to simply as *cultivation* is affirmed by various key collaborators of his, notably Roger Saillant (see *The Fifth Discipline*, p. 266) and Otto Scharmer (see comments, which appear later in this chapter).

From the start of his professional life, Peter combined practical application projects with theory development, writing for the general public, and teaching. He grounded this work in collaborations with different people at different times, always working with others. Initially, he developed workshops entitled *Leadership and Mastery* with Bob Fritz and Charles Kiefer of Innovation Associates. Coleading 40–50 of these 3-day workshops over 10 years was a practice field for developing and refining ideas and tools, which he then honed in writing *The Fifth Discipline* (1990/2006). As he describes himself, when he wrote this book that launched his global level of influence, he was not a theorist, but a practitioner writing from experience.

> Most people write books about their ideas. Sometimes, people write books based on their experience, and this was very much the latter. We were confident, because we'd seen so many examples of dramatic improvement in results and deep learning and growth by people, teams, and individuals. There wasn't any question of whether or not this would be useful: if it could be done well, it would be useful. (Interview for this chapter, May 30, 2016)

He repeatedly emphasizes both the collaborative nature of his own thinking and the way that the success of his books is embedded in communities of practice where people from business, education, government all work to use the ideas (Senge et al.

2015b). In fact, he wrote *The Fifth Discipline* (1990/2006) in order to launch the Organizational Learning Center at MIT (Senge et al. 2015b).

He has been influenced by colleagues from varied disciplines. For example, he built on Chris Argyris' ideas about Model I and Model II change as well as his use of the ladder of inference and was influenced by Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana's work about cognition and autopoiesis in change processes. He considers his understanding that there is no "reality" separate from the observer to have been influenced by Maturana, who as Peter said was "a very rigorous biologist who became famous for his work as an experimental biologist, trying to understand how a frog sees a fly" – which eventually became Nobel Prize winning research (Interview for this chapter, May 30, 2016) . It was out of this grounding in the "hard sciences" that Peter developed his perspectives on consciousness and the social creation of "reality" – not out of philosophy, although his thinking has also been influenced by his decades of Buddhist practice. As he commented, "everything that exists in the physical world exists in a web of interconnectedness, and it's always continually in flux," but somehow humans tend not to perceive this, since "most of us perceive things, and we perceive things as being more less fixed" (Interview for this chapter, May 30, 2016). This tendency to perceive fixity strongly influences how people work to "drive" change and is probably fundamental to why so many change programs are ineffective.

Peter's work can be distinguished from that of many influential social scientists, not only by its interdisciplinary nature but also by his unique combination of engineering, societal focus, and grounding in awareness or consciousness. All of his writing has been for the public, rather than being published initially in scholarly journals, making for a different type of career than many. Based at MIT, one of the US's foremost scholarly institutions, he crafted a path that let him remain in the academy without playing by its normal rules – something that is hard to do in any field.

## Key Contributions: Bringing Awareness-Based Systems Change into the World of Business

Peter Senge's main contributions to transformational change can be viewed from various perspectives: conceptual, practical, and role modeling.

### Conceptual

Often referred to as one of the top 25 business books of the twentieth century, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990/2006) brought together the simultaneous and interactive importance of five fundamental disciplines that had not previously been seen as a consolidated group of success skills for organizations or businesses. He called them *disciplines* meaning "a body of

theory and technique that must be studied and mastered to be put into practice...
(from the Latin *disciplina*, to learn)" (Senge 1990/2006, p. 10).

These are

- *Personal mastery* – "the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality more objectively";
- *Mental models* – "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action";
- *Team learning* – teams where "the intelligence of the team exceeds the intelligence of the individuals in the team, and where teams develop extraordinary capacities for coordinated action";
- *Systems thinking* – situations where the component parts are so interdependent that events "distant in time and space" have hidden influences on one another so that one can only understand what is happening by contemplating it as a whole;
- *Shared vision* – "the capacity to hold a shared picture of the future we seek to create" (Senge 1990/2006, pp. 7–9).

While none of these disciplines were new, in this book Peter presented them in their interdependence with one another in a way that made them practical and usable for managers and organizational consultants, opening a deeper space for executives and scholars to think together about change, grounded in personal practices of meditation and awareness. Concepts and practices that had existed but had been rarely used in the business world became popular: they are increasingly discussed in boardrooms around the world and used by both external and internal organization consultants.

Peter's unique contribution is in the way he discussed these tools, showing their practicality and urgency for the world of leaders. Even now, decades later, although both scholars and practitioners more often address the value of contemplation for leaders, it is still rare to bring together ancient practices of mind training with collaborative systems thinking focused on global change as well as organizational performance. Where much management thinking has led people to emulate others' leadership or the way other organizations have done things (e.g., benchmarking), Peter has always emphasized how people need to master their own minds, perceptions, and ways of interacting in order to generate creative actions.

The kind of change he sought and continues to seek involves *metanoia*: a deep inner shift in awareness about the systemic way things unfold in life and how that is influenced by how we think about and see life (see Senge 1990/2006, p. 13). In his second edition of this major work, he described how the disciplines work together: "The five disciplines represent approaches (theories and methods) for developing three core learning capabilities: fostering aspiration, developing reflective conversation, and understanding complexity" (Senge 1990/2006, p. 2). These capabilities work together to enable the kind of creative, generative leadership that is needed in all organizations.

Revised in 2006, with considerable material added to illustrate the impact of the ideas in the book, *The Fifth Discipline* (1990/2006) is one of the best-selling

leadership books ever published and has been for a long time. For example, when it was re-translated and re-published in China in 2012, 15 years after its first translation, "it was the best-selling business book in the country," and in 2013 "it was the number two" (Senge et al. 2015b, p. 2). Peter has published several other highly influential books, all of which were written collaboratively, showing his strong orientation toward interaction. *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* (Senge et al. 2004) introduced the notion of *presencing*, which is understanding oneself not only as an individual but as part of a larger social field, an idea elaborated further by Otto Scharmer (2009) in *Theory U*. Building on notions introduced earlier as personal mastery, *Presence* was revolutionary for many managers and organization consultants in looking at how consciousness could be foundational for dramatic societal change. In *The Necessary Revolution: How Individuals and Organizations are Working Together to Create a Sustainable World* (Senge et al. 2007), Senge and his colleagues focused on how companies around the world were developing products and processes that would allow the planet and human society to flourish. He returned to another area he perceives as foundational for lasting change – education – in coauthoring *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education* with Daniel Goleman in 2014, which was written to support schools in developing programs that simultaneously develop skills of understanding self, relating to others, and thinking systemically in students of all ages, from kindergarten to high school. In other words, to appreciate Peter Senge's contributions about transformational change, one needs to seek not particular concepts, but the way his publications show what he finds important, and to appreciate his combined emphasis on personal reflection, engaging in systemic thinking, and concretely putting ideas into practice.

## Practical

Among organizational consultants, Peter has made two sets of choices that are uncommon. He increasingly chose clients driven by his insights about what needs to change globally: his initial focus on business transitioned over time to a focus on generating sustainable food chains, healthy water, and the development of community-based schools that use his five disciplines to create classrooms that are learning organizations. In addition, rather than establishing a boutique consulting firm, as so many have, he created a series of network-based organizations in which knowledge is shared and people are encouraged to work collaboratively. Initially, his organizational change center was based within MIT, but it transitioned, becoming the independent Society for Organizational Learning (*SoL*) in 1997, with structural changes developed by a design team led by visionary thinker and executive Dee Hock. As Senge described the reason for transitioning out of the university, at the core was the way that universities fragment the development and application of knowledge (Senge and Kim 1997, reprinted 2013). As Senge and Kim, a cofounder of the MIT center, had explained in 1997, "Because research, practice, and capacity-building each operate within the walls of separate institutions, the people within

these institutions feel cut off from each other, leading to suspicion, stereotyping, and an 'us' versus 'them' mindset" (p. 6). Instead, as a global membership organization, SoL was intended to foster cross-institutional collaboration through its journal, workshops, and community gatherings.

Rather than focusing mainly on research or theory development, as many change theorists have done, Peter has focused on presenting concepts so they will be used in impactful ways. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (Senge et al. 1994) was the first of several books modeled on the *Whole Earth Catalogue* (Brand 1971, 1980), a hugely popular book that offered tools for change on a global level. Patterning his books on these books and working with Art Kleiner, one of the original editors of the *Whole Earth Catalogue*, Peter and his collaborators gathered tools and thinking that helped corporate managers, school administrators, and teachers put the core concepts of the five disciplines into practice in their organizations. This orientation toward publishing action-oriented, story-based, coauthored books continued with *The Dance of Change: The Challenges to Sustaining Momentum in a Learning Organization* (Senge et al. 1999), *Schools that Learn: A Fifth Discipline Fieldbook for Educators, Parents, and Everyone Who Cares About Education* (Senge et al. 2000), and *The Necessary Revolution: How Individuals and Organizations are Working Together to Create a Sustainable World* (Senge et al. 2007).

Peter has been catalytic in the formation of a number of organizations based on the principles he explicated and in addition has been dedicated to long-term efforts developed collaboratively by people from different parts of the world working in business, academia, and government. He supported the founding of the Sustainable Food Lab by Oxfam and Unilever in 2003, bringing together many of the world's largest food companies and key NGOs to develop outcome-oriented collaboration (Senge et al. 2015b). The Food Lab takes leaders from these very different worlds on learning journeys where they experience firsthand what farmers face in various parts of the world, where the existing food production process is fueling the cycle of poverty. People who would not have been willing to sit down at the same table to negotiate find themselves learning together, and as one Target executive said, "...every single assumption I came here with has been turned upside down" (Hamilton 2015, NP). The Academy for Systemic Change focuses on developing next-generation leaders who are already accomplished in awareness-based systemic change and can work together to advance this emerging field of know-how (see http://www.academyforchange.org/). They have created a virtual systems design center that connects, leverages, and enables the transfer of know-how. "We are a global community of individuals, organizations, and networks who are deeply involved in developing living examples that show what is possible in creating social systems that foster biological, social, and economic well being" (http://www.academyforchange.org/no page). The Academy has become a major focus of Peter's energy, as he sees it as a foundational place for developing and extending the lineage of what he has come to call "awareness-based systems change" – which is also being developed and promoted through Otto Scharmer's Presencing Institute, in which Peter is a key collaborator. Among its activities, the Academy for Systemic Change sponsors use of the five disciplines in schools and school systems through a project

named Camp Snowball, which brings together educators and students for a week each summer, to showcase and share examples of effective uses of each of the tools and to build community among them (see http://www.campsnowball.org/).

## Role Modeling

Peter is seen by many as a role model for a new way of being a change agent rooted in scholarship and knowledge. He has worked side by side with people from many fields – working actively with corporate, NGO, and community leaders, as well as with people from the academic world. When he arrives to participate in any group, he tends not to speak, but to listen, often preferring to be the last to speak when he is on a panel at a conference. His collaborative way of developing practice-oriented books and methods has supported others in taking action while he works alongside them. By quietly making time in his own life for decades to meditate regularly and only occasionally discussing this in public, he has helped people in the social sciences to appreciate the connection of individual reflection and systems change. He presented this initially in *The Fifth Discipline* as personal mastery, which he now sees as "standing between the worlds of phenomena and consciousness in service of living one's life as an ongoing process of creating (bringing into reality) what matters most to you" (Personal communication, July 13, 2016). By his actions, he has made space for others to think, lead, and consult from a place of deeper awareness of principles like interdependence and impermanence.

In addition, his actions have modeled how consultants can choose to focus on the issues that they believe are most important, rather than those that pay the most, as many consultants do. Peter chose sustainability (including food systems and water), education, and developing the next generation of leaders. By making such choices and acting on them, his actions speak to many across the worlds of organization change.

## New Insights: Change and Learning Are Inseparable

Taking a 500-foot up "helicopter" view of organizational change literature, Peter Senge can be seen to have nourished a unique body of work that lives at the intersection of theory and practice. Bringing together the five disciplines of change in the context of learning as active shaping and doing, rather than as just taking in new information, is fundamental to his worldview. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, many speak and write about consciousness and the value of mindfulness for leaders, whether or not they understand it from decades of meditation practice, as Peter does, but few thought about this in the 1980s and 1990s. Fewer still make it practical and accessible to corporate executives.

I was an organization development consultant when I first read *The Fifth Discipline*. I had been personally involved with what he now calls awareness-based change since the 1980s, but it was not easy to bridge the world of "personal growth"

(as we called it then) and the nature and structure of organizations. As far back as the late 1970s, I noticed that the societal change processes of the 1960s and 1970s seemed to have generated two forces moving in opposite directions within American culture: large numbers of people "dropping out" to create lives based on alternative values, while "the actual power residing in the largest, most complex, least-regulated organizations – the multinational organizations – increased" (Goldman 1979, p. 24).

To explore bridging this gap, my doctoral research assessed how studying in more open institutions (meaning those with clear purpose, considerable inclusion of all voices in decision-making, and openness to the surrounding community) was connected with fostering a sense of autonomy among students (Goldman 1979). Like Peter has done over the years, I focused on education because I suspected that students who experienced an open, person-centered college environment could reasonably expect other social organizations to function similarly. "This underlines the potentially catalytic impact of open organizations within community colleges" (p. 12, emphasis added here). As I wrote in the dissertation, I was seeking organizational change foundations for the possibility of encouraging "societal renewal, expanded consciousness, and increased use of latent human potential" (Goldman 1979, p. 14).

Since Peter had not yet written about personal mastery, it was not easy to speak about how organizations contributed to or inhibited the development of human consciousness. I struggled to find conceptual foundations for the type of change I wished to help happen in the world. When I read *The Fifth Discipline,* I felt that here, finally, was a mainstream path for action in this area, something that had been so lacking. I have used many aspects of the book in consulting with corporate management teams, specifically referring clients to the way Peter described alignment and its value and also to his description about when to shift from decision-making to dialogue.

For me, as I sense is true for many others, *The Fifth Discipline* legitimized talking about dialogue and the importance of practices of personal mastery in the corporate setting – something that had previously been difficult, if not impossible. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, it was highly controversial to offer workshops within corporations on skills related to reflection and meditation. Articles in *Fortune* and major newspapers like the *NY Times* presented accusations from people within such corporations, alleging that training in meditation was "brainwashing" them (see for example, Ciulla 2004, pp. 69–70; Main and Riley 1987; Sink 2007). To have a positive and respected source discussing personal mastery as a core discipline for managers was a first step in legitimizing what has now become widely accepted.

His work made space for me and for many organizational consultants to support managers in developing personal reflection processes and made them comfortable in doing such personal development work. Several years ago, I interviewed Peter about his meditation practice, strongly influenced by the Buddhist-Taoist-Confucian synthesis of Chinese teacher, Nan Haui-Chin, and the implications of having such a practice for organizational and social change (Senge 2012). There are few other places where he has shared his personal experience and perspectives on spiritual practice. A later discussion with him encouraged me to develop *Creative Social Change: Leadership for a Healthy World* (Goldman Schuyler et al. 2016). His

comments about how he prioritized "catalyzing and influencing collective action in reshaping systems" and "deeper exploration of systemic change" (Personal communication, March 7, 2014) shifted my focus from writing about individual practices back to my earlier emphasis on collective change toward a healthy society. He and his writings have helped me to hold lightly to two themes, neither of which has been dominant in organization change and development: deep, disciplined personal awareness practice and the potential for systemic change. As chair of the Practice Theme Committee of the Academy of Management, I led the committee in giving Peter its prestigious Lifetime Career Award in 2012 for all the reasons described above.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Awareness-Based Change Toward a Sustainable World

I see Peter Senge as a leader in creating a new role for people focused on societal change. He personally bridges the gaps between engineering, management, organizational behavior, systems change, and Eastern wisdom traditions and practices, as he can write and speak from personal experience in all of these areas. His unassuming style and self-confidence allowed him to nourish collaborative networks of practice and collaborative books, all focused on practitioners wishing to make change in key arenas of society: sustainable food and water, as well as education and the development of businesses to serve such purposes. His recent focus has been the creation of the Next Generation Leaders program in the Academy of Systemic Change, which brings together people in their late twenties and thirties who are already doing good work related to change to help them go further and support them in taking on broader leadership in such systemic change.

### Perspectives on Peter Senge's Legacy

Because Peter speaks so much about the importance of collaboration, I sought out the views of several people with whom he has worked recently, so as to bring other voices into this chapter and to add their perspectives on Peter's influence on them and the field. I spoke with Otto Scharmer, coauthor of *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* (Senge et al. 2004); Daniel Goleman, coauthor of *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education* (Senge and Goleman 2014); and Stacey Tank, VP of Corporate Communications and External Affairs, The Home Depot, who is a participant in the Next Generation Leaders program. I sought to glean how their work with Peter has influenced them as people, authors, and leaders and also how they perceive his legacy.

Daniel Goleman has focused on leadership and the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) for decades (e.g., see *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*, 2002; *Healing Emotions: Conversations with the Dalai Lama on Mindfulness, Emotions, and Health,* 2013; *The Emotionally*

*Intelligent Workplace,* 2001). Ever since writing *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), he has emphasized how much children need such development, which he believes is ignored by standard curricula. To encourage such learning, he founded the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) at Yale University (now at the University of Illinois in Chicago) to get such programs into schools. Since he and Peter have known one another for years and were each inspiring attempts to influence the schools, they decided to join forces by writing a book together, with Senge focused on the need for systems thinking and Goleman focused on social-emotional learning. It seemed clear that "this would be a very complete education and would beautifully complement the standard curriculum" (Personal communication, July 28, 2016). *The Triple Focus* (2014) describes the three skill sets that they see as essential: developing self, tuning in to other people, and understanding the larger world and how systems interact. They saw value in bringing together their lines of work so as to maximize the influence on school systems, as both agreed that:

> the factory model we have inherited through the Industrial Age School was never about tapping and cultivating this innate potential. It was never about growing human beings – it was designed to train factory workers en masse. Though almost everything has changed in the reality for our students since this model was implemented almost 200 years ago, the basic design of school has only been adjusted incrementally, not fundamentally. [An] important synergy between SEL and systems thinking has to do with transforming pedagogy and the culture of school. For example, a key to making such a spiral view of cognitive-emotional development practical in real educational settings is profound respect [for the learner]. (Senge and Goleman 2014, pp. 31–32)

Together, they focused on the *how* (the approach to pedagogy) as much as the *what* (SEL and systems learning), knowing that how anything is taught completely colors what is learned. In closing, Goleman commented to me "I find Peter a superb collaborator – it is his specialty. He listens, he's thoughtful, he adds insight. His thinking has long been a part of my way of looking at things, and his interest in education is really from the heart" (Personal communication – Interview for this chapter, July 28, 2016).

When I asked him to reflect on Peter's legacy and influence upon his own work, Otto Scharmer emphasized how Peter has created a very unique blend of theory and practice that was transformational for him with regard to how he has approached learning and change. Otto described how Peter:

> with his own presence, uses himself as a gateway for accessing a deeper level of knowing and creating a different atmosphere in the room that allows people to experience and sense themselves in a different way. It's a very visceral impression. . . .it was as if somebody opened a new set of eyes for me about what you can do. Even today, most learning environments are just talking heads, whereas what I saw him doing was entirely different. And it had a major influence on me: the whole thing of creating a more generative learning environment and an atmosphere that allows you to access a different level of your own awareness. (Personal communication – Interview for this chapter, September 2, 2016. All the following quotes are from this interview.)

By shifting the structure from a university-based learning center to a global community – when Senge formed SoL – he helped those around the world begin to self-organize. This inspired Otto's sense of what could be possible globally, so his collaboration with Peter helped him to birth *Theory U*, both on a conceptual level and on what he considers to be a "systems sensing level." "In Peter's journey, you can see how gifts of the mind are more and more connected with the heart and finally with the hands."

What underlies everything, in Otto's experience of him, is that:

> Peter is a practitioner who with the greatest sincerity cultivates his inner self as a vehicle to be more effective in serving the whole. You can see and sense this. It shines through in how he interacts with everyone. And this has had a real impact on my life.

Finally, he has been pioneering a new type of academic career "that redefines the relationship between theory and practice" for coming generations. For most academics, practice is something one looks at from outside, but:

> as an action researcher, you're involved with your whole being in actual transformation and practice. Practice plays a primary role and is much more intertwined with theory. . . .we are interested in knowledge that is helpful to the evolution of society. We are interested in healing, in catalyzing developmental potential – and that's our core essence, that's our DNA.
>
> Peter shows that when you have the courage to stand outside the well-worn path, you can actually create your own path that is much more interesting and relevant. From our very first conversations, I sensed how deeply connected he was with his own inspiration and intention in life. Meeting him and sensing this gave me permission to establish this connection within myself. So he created a role model for a different kind of teaching and learning, where you create an environment that allows people to connect more deeply with their own purpose in life. Peter has done this for many, many people.

Finally, looking at Peter's influence from the perspective of a young executive who has been participating in the current Next Generation Leaders program, his sense of history and value for reflection are evident. According to Stacey Tank:

> Growing up in business and in a US context, I was taught to jump immediately to action. Get it done. Quickly! Playing with pacing is one of my personal learning edges. Peter, on the other hand, has an innate ability to look across time. Across generations. To hold the creative tension. To find the deeper meaning and solution. I can think of many circumstances in which the world would have benefited from a longer-term view. It may be the most absent capability in the world today – and a lot is at stake because of it.
>
> Peter shared the attached quote with me a few years ago, from the Iroquois Confederacy Peacemaker (comparable to the US Declaration of Independence) first written about 1000 A.D. It reads, "Think not forever of ourselves, nor of our own generation. Think of continuing generations of our families. Think of our grandchildren. And of those yet unborn whose faces are coming from beneath the ground." This has stayed with me along with the question of how we can encourage more people to think and act this way. (This and the following comments are from a personal communication, September 13, 2016)

Tank, too, commented about how she listens and works with people. She emphasized the importance of systems thinking tools in business today, given the

complexity and level of challenge in all companies, and sees these spreading. Finally, she too noted the way his being makes a difference that can be felt:

> Peter has a calm, thoughtful energy that immediately makes you feel at peace. In my first conversations with him, I was struck by how he approaches every single person as an equal. Every question and idea matters. Every person is valued and safe.

## Unfinished Business: Embedding Mindful Practices in Institutions

From my conversations with Peter, I know he would laugh at the thought of there *not* being unfinished business, given the nature of change that he has focused on throughout his life. I see two areas to reflect on.

### Why Has There Not Been More Change?

Having seen and felt the enormous impact of Peter's work and his books over the last 25 years, I found myself wondering why there has not been more change and why things seem worse in many ways in organizational life, despite all the skillful efforts of so many people around the world. In the 1990s, there was huge excitement about this work, and many serious managers and consultants devoted considerable thought and time to it. While there have been many successful projects in some companies and parts of the world, in some ways it seems as though life has become more complex, and leaders still regard such approaches as existing on the fringes of business and social science. The need for cross-sector collaboration, which was suspected but not developed in the early years, is not yet widely recognized. I have no easy answer to this question, but it is an important one for those dedicating themselves to facilitating societal transformation.

One answer can be found in a comment Peter made in a recent article, reflecting on a trend he has observed over the years:

> Someone who just picked up the tools of *The Fifth Discipline* and said, "Hey, we can make more money if we use these tools" generally accomplished very little. But someone who had a deep intent to transform the prevailing organizational culture or the nature of work itself or people's relationship to their work could have amazing results. So, where the practitioner is coming from in terms of intent, spirit, and openness is important. (Senge et al. 2015b, p. 4)

As systems science shows, change takes time and includes delays, so cross-institution, cross-sector, and planetary change will take decades and perhaps centuries. In addition, deep change unfolds in ways very different from a linear progression. As Peter sees it:

> We live in a time of profound cross-currents: things are getting much worse *and* embodiments of a different future now being born can be seen all around us. If you think about this just a little, you realize it could not really be different. This same "dance of change" characterizes deep change in the natural world as well – the new emerges in the midst of the systems that have prevailed for a long time, and how the two interact shapes the change process.

As Maturana says, "All change occurs while it is being inhibited." It is naïve to think that one day everyone wakes up and says, "We have been doing it all wrong," and then sets out to change en masse. So, it should not surprise any of us that as the inner contradictions and destructive side effects of our traditional industrial–age ways of thinking and operating become more evident, people and institutions fight harder to preserve them. We all have a core choice – we can either put our attention on the battle with the status quo or on shepherding the new being born. (Personal communication, December 12, 2016.) For more discussion of these perspectives, see Scharmer et al. (2014) and Senge et al. (2015a, Winter).

## Awareness-Based Systems Change Takes Time

Most of what Peter Senge has helped to catalyze is still being developed. As he and his coauthors described the current state of "system leaders," people who foster collaboration for crossing thresholds none previously believed could be crossed, such leaders are needed but rare (Senge et al. 2015a). What they have in common, whatever their style or cultural basis, is that "their profound commitment to the health of the whole radiates to nurture similar commitment in others" (p. 28). This requires the kind of personal cultivation that Peter speaks and writes about and which has always been at the core of his work.

From Peter's own perspective, what remains to be developed for awareness-based change to spread and take root globally can be called "the interpenetration of collective reflection and action" – having reflection shift from primarily an individual event to one that focuses on the social field. When the world has leaders who are able to lead from a space of self-cultivation, nourished by deep, ongoing reflection, or meditation practices and who excel at nurturing networks of collaboration and larger generative fields, it will gradually become more possible for "the whole to become aware of itself as a whole." In a recent conversation, Peter commented that:

How to really embed mindful practices in institutions is a work of many, many decades and even generations. Really, we are just at the beginning. If you put it in a perspective of cultural change, when did human culture start to drift so far away from a generative connection with nature? Over the last several thousands of years! So, that's not going to be reversed overnight. I like the term *system sensing*: it orients us toward the capacity that we have to become present in the moment and really sense into the group and larger systems as a whole.

[To do this] I think collectively practicing silence is important. . . . Bringing together people who are very active in diverse change leadership networks into a culture of silence can help to cultivate and maintain an awareness of the whole. Silence as collective practice is a lost art in modern society, but it's an ancient idea that opens lots of important doors. It brings us in touch with subtle energies and how they manifest in the physical environment. There are groups who work this way, but few. We haven't talked much about this, because it has been premature. . . .we have to learn how to move back and forth between silence and words, reflection and action, in ways that conserve mutual awareness of both. For the modern mind, silence is the absence of noise. But for cultivation traditions, silence is the presence of something – it's not about absence, it's about presence. Once people experience this, they tend to fall in love with it: they become more and more able to allow awareness to rest in itself. (Personal communication, July 13, 2016)

Twenty-five years after the publication of *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge's influence has been felt on the issues he most values: sustainability, food and water, and education. It is acknowledged in many countries, including China, where he

now spends considerable time each year. He and Otto Scharmer are part of China's
"Thousands Talents" program, aimed to prioritize critical new capabilities for the
country and its possible role in the world. Since his influence comes from his writing,
his collaborative projects, and his own self-cultivation, I feel that the most powerful
impacts will live and grow, as those influenced by him continue to live and lead in
ways colored by deep value for awareness-based systemic change, serving the needs
of generations not yet imagined.

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## Further Reading

For those new to Peter Senge's writings, as a starting place I would recommend looking at both his early book *The Fifth Discipline* (1990/2006) and his recent co-authored article "The Dawn of System Leadership" (2015). In The *Fifth Discipline*, be sure to read the recent edition and focus on Peter's new introduction (pp. ix–xvi), the overall description of the five disciplines (Part III, pp. 128–252), and the newly-added chapter based on interviews with people who have used this approach over the years (pp. 255–282). You may also find it helpful to see his recent thinking about creating a healthy world, as juxtaposed with the views of Margaret Wheatley, Otto Scharmer, Ed Schein, and Robert Quinn in *Creative Social Change*: *Leadership for a Healthy World* (Goldman Schuyler et al. 2016, Chap. 1, and esp. pp. 65–88).

All of his writing, as listed in the references, will interest those who wish to go deeply into this area. Those reading more selectively may particularly enjoy the following:

Goldman Schuyler, K. with Wheatley, M., Scharmer, O., Schein, E., Quinn, R., & Senge, P. (2016). Visions of a healthy world: Views from thought leaders. In K. Goldman Schuyler, J. E. Baugher, & K. Jironet (Eds.), *Creative social change: Leadership for a healthy world* (pp. 23–90). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing.

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# Abraham B. (Rami) Shani: A Journey from Action Research and Sociotechnical Systems to Collaborative Management Research and Sustainable Work Systems

Michael W. Stebbins

**Abstract**

Abraham B. (Rami) Shani, a professor of management and organization behavior at the Orfalea College of Business, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, is a recognized scholar in the organization development and change field. The first book that he coauthored with Gervase Bushe, a pioneering articulation of parallel learning structure theory in the Addison-Wesley Organization Development Series, was written at a time when the rapidly growing field was not well understood or well-defined. The book, *Parallel Learning Structures: Increasing Innovation in Bureaucracies*, was hailed by Richard Beckhard and Edgar Schein as "a seminal theory of large-scale organization change based on the institution of parallel systems as change agents." The book has been widely quoted in contemporary times in line with new attention to diverse learning mechanisms within the field of organization design. As of this writing, Rami continues to publish and serve as an editor of journal articles, books, and book chapters at a record pace. In 2008, he joined Richard Woodman and William Pasmore in editing the annual volumes of *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, which establishes a special opportunity for academics and practitioners to share research findings and emerging trends in OD. Over the years, Rami has worked with consultants, scholars, clients, and leaders within the organization development academic community to found the subfield of collaborative management research and to document the evolution of sociotechnical systems theory toward sustainable work systems thinking and the development of new organizational capabilities. The chapter sections below will explore these collaborations and contributions. After a brief look at influences and motivations, the chapter will expand on three contribution categories along with ties to the relevant scholarly literature. It will be noted that beyond a phenomenal

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publication record and active involvement in organization development research societies and consortiums, Dr. Shani plays a key role in shaping the academic research agenda in action research, collaborative management research, and organization design.

## Contents

## Influences and Motivations: From Experimental Design to Lewinian Action Research

The issue of influences that motivate interest in the field of organization development and change is fascinating, given that great thinkers often have very different backgrounds, training, and connections to the field. In Dr. A. B. Shani's case, the attraction is rooted in his early experiences as an undergraduate student, early mentorship by experimental design (Mode 1) researchers (Gibbons et al. 1994), his experiences as an officer in the Israeli military, and master's and first-year doctoral experiences. Mode 1 and Mode 2 research will be briefly defined in the "Advancements in Action Research Theory and Practice Through Establishment of the New Field of Collaborative Management Research" section under "Key Contributions: Collaborative Management Research and Beyond." The examples provided below demonstrate his early focus on involving research participants in real-world problem-solving, along with his initial thinking about action research processes.

As an undergraduate student at Tel Aviv University during the early 1970s, Rami was trained by psychologists in rigorous experimental research. Emphasis was on adoption of appropriate field research methods and coursework on statistics and data analysis. During his senior year, he worked at an absorption center within a private high school. The center focused on integrating students coming to Israel from

different parts of the world. Over 200 incoming students at the high school relied on the center around the clock, as they lived in campus dorms. Rami saw an opportunity to conduct a mini-thesis on cultural influences and personal space. That is, Rami wanted to know how Russian, Argentinian, Israeli, and other people at the school felt about proper buffer zones and how they positioned themselves in social situations. The study would also track sex, family size, and other influences related to notions of personal space. The main focus of data collection was on "meet in the street" encounters and accurate measurements of distances between participants. Findings from this first study were eventually published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (Ziv et al. 1975). His early experiences with Mode 1 research both in college and later in the military produced interesting findings and publications, but especially with the military studies, he was troubled that the work did not produce many practical changes.

Dr. Shani's formal education was interwoven with military service. As he advanced to officer status, Rami observed that the army gathered an enormous amount of data from cadets and soldiers using survey research methods. He observed that the data was shared at the command level but rarely trickled down to lower levels or served any real use in personal development of officers. As a part of his master thesis, Rami initiated his second research study. This study was patterned after the pioneering Rosenthal and Jacobson Pygmalion study on the importance of teacher expectations. The Pygmalion effect associated with the Rosenthal and Jacobson study is the phenomenon whereby higher expectations lead to an increase in performance. This time, the study involved adults rather than children, with more safeguards regarding ethics (human subjects). Dr. Shani identified an opportunity to conduct similar research with soldiers, but this time, manipulating military trainer expectations during 3-month and 6-month leadership training courses. As with his first study, the research involved rigorous experimental design, including attention to human subjects. Experimental and control groups imitated the design used in the Rosenthal Pygmalion study. During the experiment, Dr. Shani participated as an observer, with an announced role as developer of future training programs. Professor Dov Eden, his academic mentor and advisor, emphasized from the start that data collected during the project should be used in feedback/discussion sessions with the sponsors. The study showed that high expectations led to lower attrition rates and improved performance. Presentations were made at the Base level and at Headquarters offices responsible for leadership development. In short, despite clear results and implications for changing hundreds of courses, the military had little interest in replicating the studies or following up with course changes. In stark contrast, the researchers were excited about the studies, identifying three "A" publication possibilities. Dr. Shani wondered, "What's wrong with this picture?" The hands-on field research experience, as well as frustrations over such limited use of the findings, led Rami to reconsider the ways that sponsors and participants were engaged in research programs. There had to be better ways to collaborate with clients and include them in research programs (Eden and Shani 1982).

During the first year of the Ph.D. program in Organizational Behavior (OB) at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, some of

Dr. Shani's work was published, and he continued to build his research knowledge and skills. As a junior member of the doctoral program and at the same time adjusting to a new country, he was also wrestling with doubts about traditional experimental research (Mode 1), the mix of courses he was taking, and whether to continue with the OB doctoral program. Following a break after the first year, Rami began to work with professors experimenting with Mode 2 qualitative research amid growing interest in action research programs at the Weatherhead School. In major studies conducted by Case professors at the Cleveland Clinic, there was more emphasis on engaging participants at all stages of the research program cycle. The research did not start with traditional hypotheses but instead focused on significant problems facing leaders at the medical centers. Also, the new work featured lively conversations with medical providers and direct attention to patient care issues. In the Clinic and other studies, Don Wolfe, Suresh Srivastva, and Bill Pasmore placed research in the context of the Lewinian action research tradition. About that time, Rami was also taking an organization theory class from David Brown and was frustrated with studying a wide range of macro models that seemed distant from practical application to real-world problems. David Brown, seeing Rami's frustration with course content, led him to explore sociotechnical systems (STS) theory. The macro theory, combined with field applications, seemed suited to Rami's preoccupation with relevance and action. These new associations and research projects essentially put Rami on a new path that led to his dissertation focus.

Bill Pasmore was determined to keep Dr. Shani at Case Western. He included Rami in a pending proposal to the Pentagon around support for the implementation of a sophisticated computer system designed to assess NATO combat readiness. Honeywell Corporation had developed the system in question but encountered serious problems in getting it to work properly. There was an urgent need to identify the problems and integrate technical and human systems in order to make progress. Pasmore and his team responded to the Pentagon RFP with a proposal to research the topic while utilizing a sociotechnical system (STS) framework and action research (AR) orientation. Rami joined the project and participated in a massive literature search focused on AR and STS while preparing the research design phase of the study (see for example, Pasmore et al. 1982). Some of the leading STS people in the country were asked to join an advisory board for the combat readiness project. In meetings and informal sessions, Rami gained exposure to Jack Sherwood, Dave Hanna, Jim Taylor, David Feldman, Harvey Kolodny, and other leading scholar practitioners. Several other STS projects were underway at the time within Proctor and Gamble, the World Bank, and Bailey Controls, creating a stimulating climate at Case that emphasized solid relationships and deeper level of engagement with partners, including clients (Pasmore and Friedlander 1982).

In part based on the literature search for the Pentagon, Rami vowed to take a holistic look at action research studies completed through 1981. This became the focus of his doctoral dissertation and paved the way for early theory building on parallel groups, parallel learning structures, and parallel learning systems. Initial collaboration with Gervase Bushe on parallel learning structures proved promising. The work evolved over the years to produce strong contributions in organization

development and change theory related to a wide variety of learning mechanisms. This is one of the three advancements reported in section two of this chapter.

After he completed the doctoral program in 1981, Dr. Shani moved to North Dakota University as a tenure track faculty member in organization behavior. In contrast to the larger projects at Case, Rami was able to partner with other social scientists at North Dakota to start his own action research projects. This provided Rami the opportunity to establish different relationships with clients at all phases of action research (see for example, Eberhardt and Shani 1985; Shani and Eberhardt 1987).

## Key Contributions: Collaborative Management Research and Beyond

Conversations with Dr. Shani and examination of his published works uncovered three clear themes that provide a framework for this section of the chapter. First, Professor Shani has contributed to literature concerning alternative modes of knowledge creation. The main contributions are advancements in action research theory and practice through establishment of the new field of collaborative management research. Emphasis has been on creation of collaborative, engaged forums within collaborative management research programs. Second, Dr. Shani has participated in the evolution of sociotechnical systems theory (STS) within international research consortiums. The shift has been toward sustainable work systems (SWS) design and the attention to creating new organizational capabilities. This evolution has spanned two decades and survives in multiple forms, including work with colleagues at the USC Center for Effective Organizations, the FENIX Executive Ph.D. program at the Stockholm School of Economics, Chalmers University of Technology's Institute for Management of Innovation and Technology in Sweden, and graduate programs at Politecnico di Milano in Italy. Finally, along with Gervase Bushe and Peter Docherty, Dr. Shani has clear contributions to the OD&C literature in articulation of parallel learning structure theory and the expansion to consideration of diverse learning mechanisms within the field of organization design.

While the above list contains main contribution categories, it must also be said that Rami's CV reveals a fourth theme that his research partners can readily identify. This theme is that Dr. Shani is the coeditor (since 2008) of the annual research series *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, the co-series editor of *Organizing for Sustainable Effectiveness*, and has coauthored diverse book chapters, articles, and presentations both within the organization development and change field and outside this field. Multidisciplinary collaboration on change research topics, as well as similar collaboration on marketing, information systems, production, healthcare, human resource management, innovation, product development, sustainability, and other change-related topics, has been part of his research agenda for the past four decades. Rami maintains a wide array of memberships in longstanding research centers, as well as associations with multiple university programs and transitory research groups. While this might fit within the first category listed

above, it is nonetheless important that Dr. Shani has been a force for professional development in his partnering and encouragement of diverse scholarly contributions to the OD&C literature.

## Advancements in Action Research Theory and Practice Through Establishment of the New Field of Collaborative Management Research

Gibbons et al. (1994) notes that new research practices are being introduced and the mode of knowledge creation is being changed in significant ways. Two modes of knowledge creation, mode 1 and mode 2, are each connected with distinctive sets of research practices. Mode 1 knowledge production – a complex of ideas, methods, values, and norms – has evolved to control the diffusion of the Newtonian model. Researchers who follow the rules are by definition professional practice, "scientific." Mode 1 problems are set and solved in a context governed by the academic interests of specific disciplines and communities. In contrast, Mode 2 knowledge is worked out in a context of application and is often interdisciplinary. Typically, Mode 2 includes a wider set of researchers, practitioners, and clients working together on a problem defined in a specific, local context. Various aspects of the Mode 1/Mode 2 distinction will be revisited throughout this chapter.

The point that Rami appreciates both Mode 1 and Mode 2 research orientations has been mentioned above, but more will be said about his support for Mode 2 knowledge creation. As coeditor of the first volume entitled *Collaborative Research in Organizations: Foundations for Learning, Change, and Theoretical Development* (Adler et al. 2004), Rami brought together diverse European and North American scholar practitioners. The intent was to provide alternative lenses and mechanisms to support academic-industry partnerships in conducting action research. Partnering and collaboration between people in university/institute settings and those in other organizational settings is increasingly part of knowledge production in management-related fields. While there is a belief that this partnering can add tangible value if carried out with attention to scholarly quality, there is still much to be learned about the emergence of Mode 2 (Gibbons et al. 1994) research. Mode 2 research often features involvement of a greater range of participants in the knowledge development process, along with greater variance in research processes and practices. Bonds are formed between academic researchers and organizational representatives that result in adoption of unique methodologies that are thought to be appropriate for the specific setting and presenting problems.

More complexity through involvement of different stakeholders and consideration of alternative research orientations can lead to disagreements about research processes and outcomes. On a higher level, collaborative management research (CMR) can be critiqued based on four different clusters of questions or perspectives. Rami and his coauthors point out epistemological, political, ethical, and efficiency bases for initiating a dialogue about the contributions of CMR. Also, in his seminal first volume on collaborative research (Adler et al. 2004), Rami and

his coauthors identified five different facets of collaborative research: different schools of thought or orientations used during collaborative management research, different types of academic organizations that facilitate partnerships and collaborative research, the emerging role of insider researchers, the associated learning mechanisms, and documentation of scientific and actionable knowledge. The key contribution was to map the subfield of CMR within action research as a body of knowledge and to generate discussion about the merits of CMR frameworks in terms of scholarly quality and practical relevance. As will be further documented below, much of Rami's work has involved meta-analysis of trends in OD&C theory and practice.

In a second handbook, Dr. Shani and his colleagues provide a more in-depth look at the promise of collaborative management research. The second handbook includes additional scholar/practitioner, management consulting, and client perspectives concerning CMR (Shani et al. 2008). It also includes case examination of research centers specifically designed to conduct collaborative management research and more in-depth treatment of CMR mechanisms and processes used in more complex and diverse organizational settings during change programs. Dr. Shani's specific contributions to AR and CMR theory are partly summarized in his contribution to the handbook (Coghlan and Shani 2008). Teaming with David Coghlan, Dr. Shani discusses the issues that managers and researchers must address to create a healthy community of inquiry that is appropriate for the particular task situation, research process, and culture (both academic and organizational). Both research task and relational issues, such as quality of participation and engagement in cycles of action and reflection, must be addressed. The authors further articulate the knowledge and skills required to create a community of inquiry and build it as the community evolves (see for example, Schein 2013) to produce tangible project outcomes and desired academic outcomes. Quality in CMR communities of inquiry seems to depend upon the nature of the real-life issue studied, the quality of collaboration, the quality of the reflective process, and whether the results are significant and the knowledge actionable.

Rami has regularly contributed to action research, OD&C, and collaborative management research handbooks, and journal articles on the promise of CMR. Together with David Coghlan, he coedited two four-volume series: *Fundamentals of Organization Development* (Coghlan and Shani 2010) and *Action Research in Business and Management* (2016). Some specific contributions can be found in the coauthored Chapter 45 of the *Sage Handbook of Action Research* (2008), second edition, and chapter four of the *Sage Handbook of Action Research*, third edition (2015). The authors address issues in developing new capabilities when programs are mainly driven and carried out by insider action researchers. Building on prior research on how organizations develop capabilities via CMR, insider action research initiatives, and learning mechanisms, Rami engaged doctoral students in research projects that further explore the meaning and practice of the Mode 2 research orientations in diverse organizational settings (see for example, Roth et al. 2007; Mitki et al. 2008; Fredberg et al. 2011; Shani et al. 2012; Cirella et al. 2012; Radaelli et al. 2014; Coghlan et al. 2016; Canterino et al. 2016).

## Parallel Learning Structure Theory and Expansion to Consideration of Diverse Learning Mechanisms Within the Field of Organization Design

In the 1980s, Rami worked with Gervase Bushe to publish *Parallel Learning Structures* (PLMs) in the Addison Wesley OD Series. In the preface, the authors describe a PLM as "a technostructural intervention that promotes system-wide change in bureaucracies, while maintaining the advantages of bureaucratic design." Technostructural intervention refers to a change in the technology and/or structure of an organization with the purpose of improving or stabilizing the entire sociotechnical system in the organization (Bushe and Shani 1991). The book as a whole was a refreshing shift in OD away from the usual preoccupation with an organization's social system to include attention to technical system factors (technology, structures, rules, and regulations) and organization design approaches such as STS. At the time of publication, *Parallel Learning Structures* was only one of a few books in the OD series that focused on the growing field of organization design within OD&C. Others included the book by Blake et al. (1989), *Change by Design*; Mohrman and Cummings (1989), *Self-Designing Organizations*; David Hanna's (1988) *Designing Organizations for High Performance*; Galbraith's (1973) *Designing Complex Organizations*; the Davis and Lawrence (1977) book, *Matrix*; and the Hackman and Oldham (1980) book, *Work Redesign*.

Bushe and Shani did not invent the notion of parallel learning structures, as they existed in different forms in a host of OD cases and other publications. But they did coin the term as a generic label for interventions where a structure is created, the structure operates parallel with the formal hierarchy and formal structure, and has the purpose of increasing an organization's learning (new thoughts and behaviors by employees). The PLS would vary with the type of OD intervention, but the "generic" intervention process would include purpose and scope of the project, formation of a steering group, communicating the steering group's vision and expectations to members of the organization, formation of study or other working groups, conducting the inquiry process and identifying options, experimental implementation, system-wide diffusion, and evaluation. The book paved the way for close examination of organizational learning and blocks to learning what change agents must deal with during an OD intervention.

Dr. Shani's work in the late 1980s began to shift more centrally to organization design. He teamed with Michael Stebbins to write a series of articles comparing different academic-based design approaches that manifest significant differences from design approaches used by leading management consulting firms in industry. The academic approaches all included a guiding conceptual model for change, design principles, a clear redesign process, and empirical records of applications in different settings (see for example, Stebbins and Shani 1989). For the next two decades, Dr. Shani's publications began to emphasize two trajectories: a broad examination of learning mechanisms beyond PLS, and evolution of a STS-based theory of organization design toward the sustainable work systems view of organization design. The SWS branch will be covered in the section below.

Based on a sabbatical at the Stockholm School of Economics in 1991–1992, Rami began to link with European research centers devoted to quality of working life and work design. Along with Peter Docherty, he began to examine the diverse ways that people in organizations seize upon ways to learn. In his foreword to the Shani and Docherty book, *Learning by Design*, Bill Pasmore (Shani and Docherty 2003) notes that the authors provide a window through which the reader can catch a glimpse of organizations in the act of learning, in the process of improving. Moreover, he notes that through cases offered by Docherty and Shani, we learn that learning is not unidimensional, replicable, or even translatable from one organization or one country to the next. Learning processes and learning structures seem to coevolve in organizations.

In completing *Learning by Design*, the authors relied on colleagues at their prior institutions. For Rami, this included Frank Friedlander, Bill Pasmore, David Kolb, and Gervase Bushe at Case Western. Additional support included first exposure to Torbjorn Stjernberg, Docherty, Bengt Stymne, and Jan Lowstedt at the Stockholm School of Economics. Many others, including Mariano Corso at Politecnico de Milano, Armand Hatchel at Ecole de Mines in Paris, Paul Lillrank, and Harvey Kolodny, contributed to discussions about action research and learning by design. Peter Docherty's perspective on *Learning by Design* stemmed originally from the Swedish Work Environment Fund's program on "New Technology, Work Organization, and Management," which occurred between 1982 and 1987. This work involved over 50 projects and with opportunities for interaction with a large number of his Scandinavian colleagues. This was followed by a program for Learning Organizations, 1990–1996, and eventually the SALTSA Work Organization program project on sustainable work systems, which established a strong network with colleagues in over 10 countries. Members of the SALTSA network met face to face during 1999–2004, producing a variety of books, research proposals to the EU, journal articles, and conference papers. Peter Docherty established the SALTSA network from his bases at the National Institute for Working Life and the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm.

The critical contribution of *Learning by Design* was to track organizational learning to prior theories and definitions, to pose a conceptual model that links learning mechanisms to strategy and design, resources and capabilities, the context, and sustainability. The vital link is said to be learning mechanisms. To a great extent, learning mechanisms determine change program success. Learning mechanisms, at and across different levels of the organization, are the internal ways of organizing, acting on, and developing the firm's differentiated capabilities. While individual, team, and organizational learning mechanisms are examined, perhaps the strongest contribution was to identify and analyze *organizational* learning mechanisms (Lipshitz et al. 1996), as well as linkages among the context, learning requirements, and choices among learning mechanisms. In later publications, cognitive, structural, and procedural categories of learning mechanisms are articulated in much greater depth (see for example, the rather comprehensive listing of the categories in terms of types and examples in Docherty and Shani (2008), and discussion found in Shani and Docherty (2008)). Cultural or cognitive mechanisms are the bearers of language,

concepts, symbols, theories, frameworks, and values for establishing thinking, reasoning, and understanding consistent with the organization's strategy. Cognitive learning mechanisms are management's main means for creating an understanding among employees on the character, need, and priority of the strategy and the learning and changes required to realize it. Structural learning mechanisms are organizational, physical, technical, and work-system infrastructures that facilitate research and practice-based learning. Examples include communication channels, the establishment of lateral structures, formal and informal forums, and learning-specific structures such as parallel learning structures and process improvement teams. Procedural learning mechanisms concern the rules, routines, methods, and tools that can be institutionalized to promote learning. They include processes and methods for collective learning, such as action learning or debriefing routines. Docherty and Shani have also made contributions in the way of advice for those who are to design learning mechanisms or make choices among existing learning mechanisms during change programs. For more on first-person voice/practice skills, second-person voice/practice communities of inquiry, and third-person learnings about how to learn to manage change while being in the middle of it, see Docherty and Shani (2008) and Shani and Docherty (2008). More recent publications provide additional development, illustrations, and empirical testing of learning mechanisms (see for example, Fredberg et al. 2011; Cirella et al. 2012).

## The Evolution of Sociotechnical Systems (STS) Theory Toward Sustainable Work Systems and the Creation of New Organizational Capabilities

Early efforts to advance theory and practice on organizational learning and learning mechanisms moved in tandem with sociotechnical systems advancements in the 1990s and beyond. The byline for the book *Learning by Design* is "Building Sustainable Organizations." At Case and through continuing collaboration with Bill Pasmore and other STS experts, Rami was schooled in STS theory and applied projects to build more effective organizations. During the Swedish-led SALTSA programs of 1998–2000, a diverse mix of scholars met at least twice a year to focus on design of work systems that could achieve a balance between employee involvement and engagement on the one hand and work-life balance on the other. In other words, how might organization and work be designed to ensure both high performance and employee development and quality of life? The project was called "From Intensive to Sustainable Work Systems," and most European and American members of the network contributed to the network's book, *Creating Sustainable Work Systems: Emerging Perspectives and Practice* (Docherty et al. 2002). Many of the contributors had backgrounds in organization development and change, organization and work design, and in particular, STS design. The STS designers included Frans M. van Eijnatten at Eindhoven University of Technology, Jan Forslin at the Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, and Rami Shani from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. Many of the other 16 contributors had extensive

experience guiding organization and work design projects based upon alternative action research-based design theories.

Rami's contribution to the first SALTSA-based book, beyond being a coeditor, was to set the context for the book and the vision for SWS design, including a clear focus on regeneration and development of human resources and the dual emphasis on promotion of quality of working life and competitive performance. He teamed with Michael Stebbins to write "Eclectic Design for Change," the first attempt to articulate the network's version of reflective design. Borrowing from Mackenzie (1986), SWS design is thought to be a blend of theory (organization science), knowledge embedding in the particular industry/sector and work situation, and the contributions of those who participate in the design or redesign process. Given the trend to inclusion of more stakeholders in design projects, SWS design recognizes that there is potentially a wide separation from a science-based solution that a manager might hope to use and one that will meet the needs of different constituents and work well in practice (Stebbins and Shani 2002). In this first effort at theory-building, the authors felt that as with STS and other design approaches, design processes would emerge separately by country contexts and the nature of the industry and firm.

The authors believe that while design processes will differ, it is possible to articulate requirements for the design process. Requirements refer to the pressures that stem from external and internal business conditions – the things that require change (Lillrank et al. 1998). Requirements are not the same as design criteria, but they eventually lead to development of criteria that will guide different change programs. Key requirements for the design process include exploring alternative design approaches at the outset; self-application of theory, methods, and practices; encouraging participants to take ownership of the change process through high involvement at all stages; exploring dilemmas identified during design work; recognizing the iterative nature of design work, continuous modification of designs during projects, including transitions and implementation; and exploration of intended and unintended consequences of design work. As with other leading design approaches, SWS design would have a guiding macro model, design principles, design requirements, and design criteria. Design criteria are statements that describe, in ideal terms, those functions that the new design should perform. Design criteria usually have action verbs; they state that the design should facilitate, promote, encourage, provide for, or motivate (Nadler and Tushman 1988). Design criteria reflect the values of the different stakeholders and are written in response to competitive conditions, the tasks to be executed, the collective sense of current problems, the perceived cause of problems, and other constraints.

The authors have recognized action research, STS, and self-design contributions to SWS theory. For example, while STS was originally developed to work in production settings, it has been significantly modified to work in services (Adler and Docherty 1998) and nonroutine situations (Pava 1983; Pasmore 1988; Mohrman and Cummings 1989). Self-design is also an outgrowth of STS theory and practice. The initial self-design work by Karl Weick (1977) has been captured and enhanced by Mohrman and Cummings (1989). The ideas of design as an ongoing process and

design as a recipe are part of both self-design and SWS design. The recipe idea does not mean a blueprint, but rather, recipes that require varying amounts of improvisation. Through action learning, the organization is prepared for continuous adjustment and redesign. SWS theory incorporates much of self-design thinking and also extends it through collaborative involvement of stakeholders in establishment of design requirements, design criteria, and homegrown creation of diagnostic tools used during the redesign process.

A second SWS design book, *Creating Sustainable Work Systems: Developing Social Sustainability* (2009), edited by Peter Docherty, Mari Kira, and Rami Shani, moved design thinking further by providing definition of what is meant by human and social sustainability in work organization. The second book also reveals more about the connections between business design and organizational design in the context of the environment and ongoing change management efforts. Stebbins and Shani (2009) propose Concurrent design as a way to integrate *business design* choices (selection of customers, creation of value for customers, assuring profit, and deciding which activities to perform in the value chain) with *organization design* choices (see for example, Slywotzky and Nadler 2005). Concurrent design featuring strong dialogue among those managing the business design, the organization design, and change management processes that guide both efforts. There are some strong connections here to modern architectural design (Weick 2004; Gehry 2004). In each case, a skeletal framework is created early with the idea that users can gradually complete the design work. Designers should underspecify structures and processes in the early going. Instead, self-organizing activities will flesh out the skeleton. This type of thinking is opposite to many past approaches to strategic organization design and in fact, more closely follows innovation that occurs in new product development. In brief, Concurrent design infuses a capability to self-organize around changing business design and organization design decisions. For more on this thinking, see Kelley and Littman (2005).

In Concurrent design projects, diverse stakeholders participate in deliberations about the vision and design criteria. The work is done by self-design groups, and the learnings from self-design experiments are discussed in light of perceived outcomes. Discussions with stakeholders are based on design principles underlying SWS change programs and of course, design criteria established by those involved in the project at hand. Beyond this basic model, not much is specified on Concurrent design process. For more on the topic of eclectic SWS design processes, see Stebbins and Shani (1995, 2009). For more on SWS design cases and the learning mechanisms that build employee skills in self-design, see Docherty et al. (2009). For more on a systematic view of outcomes and conducting impact analyses during design, see Nadler and Tushman (1997). For a discussion on the promise of creating collaborative organizations with a greater level of power equalization based on dialogue and collective learning, see Docherty et al. (2009, chapter 17).

During the past 10 years, Dr. Shani has been one of the leaders (with Peter Docherty, Sue Mohrman, and Chris Worley) of a growing network concerned with the design of sustainable organizations, which evolved to be "organizing for

sustainable effectiveness." The inaugural meeting took place in October 2008, followed by five workshops held around the globe. The first volume stemming from the meetings summarizes the extensive literature on sustainability. Members of the network draw on pioneers in the field to examine how the topic of sustainable effectiveness has been approached and what has been learned (Mohrman and Shani 2011). Particular focus is on purpose and capabilities development, which leads to the notion that organization design and learning processes are critical to building a sustainable world. It involves simultaneous focus on economic, social, and ecological outcomes.

Subsequent workshops focused on organizing for sustainable healthcare (Mohrman and Shani 2012), building networks for sustainable effectiveness (Mirvis and Worley 2013), reconfiguring the ecosystem for sustainable healthcare (Mohrman and Shani 2014), and organizing supply chain processes for sustainable innovation in the agriculture and food industry (Cagliano et al. 2016). In the volumes on healthcare, the authors examine healthcare systems that are building the foundations for sustainable, high-quality healthcare. Case-based analyses cover organization design changes that take advantage of new knowledge and medical advances needed to generate positive impacts on the health of individuals and societies. The chapters also explore the change capabilities and learning mechanisms that healthcare systems can adopt to focus on implementation and continuous improvement. The focus on design of sustainable organizations in healthcare will continue to occupy Rami's time, given the importance of the topic. All nations are grappling with problems of rising consumer demands for high quality care, in the face of limited resources and competing claims on government sources of income.

## New Insights: Knowledge and Skills Needed to Conduct Collaborative Management Research Programs

Dr. Shani's unique experiences with Ph.D. programs in Sweden and Italy have provided special insights about academic/industry partnership issues, along with the knowledge and skills needed to carry out collaborative management research programs. His participation on the faculty at FENIX required intense involvement with doctoral students as they conceived and carried out projects within sponsor companies (see for example, Coghlan and Shani 2015). As early as 2002, Rami introduced David Coghlan from Trinity to lead the FENIX seminar on insider action research. Students needed special knowledge and skills concerning the unique roles that action-researchers play and how to conduct themselves during projects. At FENIX, the foundations for training in CMR and Mode 2 research were diverse. They included action research theory and practice, use of specific methodologies within action research, and understanding of various models of organization design. For example, doctoral students explored Schein's Clinical Inquiry approach and cases and Hatchuel's theories on work intensity and work design. Rami contributed action research and CMR seminars at FENIX.

While the FENIX Executive Ph.D. program no longer exists per se, faculty at both Chalmers and the Stockholm School of Economics continue to advise single doctoral students in the FENIX tradition and in Mode 2 methods. At Politecnico di Milano, Rami continues to teach the Ph.D. course on CMR theory and practice. Also, through projects with industry partners and doctoral students, Rami continues the dual focus on OD practice and scientific inquiry. This follows the Lewinian heritage of action and collaboration, scholarship and practice, as being core values of OD.

The FENIX executive Ph.D. model featured unusual cooperation between researchers and managers and high commitment of resources from both sides. Executives at the four partner companies nominated Ph.D. candidates, paid for their attendance at courses and seminars in the Ph.D. program, and paved the way for original research within the companies. Essentially, students/managers were paid full time by their respective companies while they worked half time on their normal company endeavors. The FENIX faculty carried high student project loads and had to be available to meet with senior management partners, as well as the research teams. In navigating the issues involving sponsors, FENIX instructors had to show how projects would be science-based and benefit both OD&C and the companies. Knowledge and skills about handling insider/outsider issues gained during the FENIX and Milan projects have been shared in numerous scholarly works (see for example, Shani et al. 2012; Coghlan et al. 2016; Canterino et al. 2016; Cirella et al. 2012). In these and other publications, Coghlan and Shani and their students explore unique issues with CMR as a modality of action research in diverse settings.

As Coghlan and Shani (2017, in press) point out, Mode 2 knowledge production characteristics provide attention to both OD practice and scientific inquiry. The instructors as outside action researchers team with the students and inside teams to address specific organizational challenges. The researchers are to generate knowledge within a particular organizational context. Shani and Coghlan extended this profile to consider four other characteristics of Mode 2 research. For example, in the FENIX practice and other similar arrangements, the insider and outside researchers are accountable to management. There must be assurance that learning mechanisms will be created to sustain change. But at the same time, for the science of OD and CMR, the researchers are accountable to the academic community. For example, the faculty must certify the research and analysis methods used during projects and must be comfortable with both Mode 1 and Mode 2 research. The research team must learn to demonstrate how the work is rigorous, reflexive, and relevant (Coghlan and Shani 2014). We are beginning to understand that CMR can be judged by its own criteria and standards, which are different from traditional research standards (Canterino et al. 2016, in press). Moreover, in some instances, action research and CMR initiatives can be institutionalized through careful selection of learning mechanisms (Coghlan and Shani 2015). It is highly likely that Dr. Shani will continue to advance the three main themes of knowledge creation through CMR, the OD&C theory's new emphasis on learning mechanisms, and enhancement of sociotechnical systems theory to include the emerging literature on organizing for sustainable effectiveness.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Three Interrelated Areas of Organization Development Research

As observed in the chapter sections above, Rami has been a leader in advancing theory in three interrelated areas of organization development research. Manuscripts currently in the works highlight innovation in Mode 2 research processes and practices as well as bonds formed between academic researchers and managers. Through two major handbooks, Dr. Shani provides an in-depth look at the promise of collaborative management research and the challenges faced in creating healthy communities of inquiry in particular task situations. Future publications will continue to explore the unique methodologies created by researchers and managers that are appropriate in specific organizational settings. Together with David Coghlan, Rami will build on prior work on building new capabilities via CMR when the change programs are mainly driven and carried out by insider action researchers. As shown in the first section of this chapter (see section "Advancements in Action Research Theory and Practice Through Establishment of the New Field of Collaborative Management Research"), contributions in this area are already diverse and full of insights on unique methodologies.

For mainstream OD practitioners, Dr. Shani's legacy is tied to his initial postdoctoral research on parallel learning structure theory and the expansion to consideration of diverse learning mechanisms within the OD subfield of organization design. The book *Parallel Learning Mechanisms* remains a classic in exploring PLMs as technostructural interventions that promote system-wide change. The book also supports a shift within the OD field to consider technical system factors and comprehensive organization design approaches such as the most recent literature on sustainable work systems design. Rami has had a strong role, along with Peter Docherty in shaping the research agenda on action research and learning by design. His most recent contributions take the form of theory building, illustrations, and empirical testing of learning mechanisms.

Dr. Shani has also been a leader in building the body of literature on sustainable work systems, recognizing action research, sociotechnical systems, and self-design contributions to SWS theory. Two SWS books explore human and social sustainability in work organization, highlighting connections between business design and organizational design in the context of ongoing change management efforts. Dr. Shani will continue to be involved in the evolution of concurrent design thinking and projects focused on developing capabilities to self-organize in the face of changing business design and organization design decisions. His efforts to publish literature on the topic of organizing for sustainable healthcare and reconfiguring the ecosystem for sustainable healthcare are just beginning but show great promise for solving problems complex healthcare settings.

In summary, Dr. Shani will continue to be a highly visible contributor on scholarly books and journal articles related to issues in collaborative management research, action research, and innovation in the field of organization design. Through his efforts as a reviewer and editor of books and journals Rami will have a vital role in building the worldwide organization development research agenda.

It has been my treat in retirement to meet monthly with Rami and our friend Jim Sena in beautiful Morro Bay, California, to catch up on family, college, and community news. Our extended lunch conversations have continued for over 10 years, and it paves the way for collaborations on diverse research, writing, and editorial projects. Rami has this unique friendship and collaborative relationship with many others. He is most animated when recognizing the ideas and accomplishments of diverse faculty within the Orfalea College of Business as well as when he shares information related to new and old associations with scholars and students in Europe. Much of the conversation relates to collaboration with colleagues in Italy, Sweden, Canada, Ireland, and Israel, but his personal network in his adopted USA is also vast. People who know Rami well recognize his limitless energy and affection for players in the field of organization development and change. It is clear that Rami will continue to be an excellent colleague at the Orfalea College of Business and a vibrant force in the worldwide organization development community.

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# Peter F. Sorensen: Influences, Influencer, and Still Influencing

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Therese F. Yaeger

**Abstract**

Peter F. Sorensen, PhD, is professor and program chair of the Organization Development and Organizational Behavior Programs at Benedictine University just outside Chicago in Lisle, Ill. This profile contains information that emerged through numerous interviews and document searches. It confirms that Sorensen is still an emerging thinker in the field of organizational change, with his contributions spanning more than 50 years. Sorensen's background, contributions, and insights are explored, with the intent of aligning his work and background with that of Dr. Kurt Lewin, the father of social psychology. From these sharings, it may be concluded that Sorensen follows a Lewinian approach to life – providing insights to colleagues, removing obstacles in change, exploring the global populations, teaching concepts in social psychology, and influencing students (Lewin, Field theory in social science. New York, Harper & Row, 1952; Marrow, The practical theorist: The life and work of Kurt Lewin. New York, Teachers College Press, 1977). One such student of Sorensen's is Dr. David Cooperrider, creator of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) who wrote to Sorensen, "The Benedictine OD program you created and have built is so solid and so key to our entire field. You inspired my passion for a field that is becoming increasingly relevant and critical to human being's lives everywhere."

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## Influences: Education and Environment

In some ways, Sorensen's influences and motivations parallel those that influenced the field of Organization Development with the work of Lewin during World War II and the Nazi occupation of Europe. Sorensen grew up in a family dedicated to working with the youth of the West Side of Chicago, what was referred to as the "inner city." His father was an executive of the YMCA and director of a YMCA camp. His summers at camp were a shared experience for his entire family.

Sorensen's father and grandfather emigrated from Denmark in the late 1920s and early 1930s, prior to the Nazi invasion of Denmark. In fact, Sorensen's early childhood was characterized by conversations concerning the welfare of relatives in Denmark, stories of the Nazi decree that all Jews were to wear the Star of David, and how the Danish King appeared the next morning for his horseback ride wearing the Star of David. Sorensen remembers stories of how the Nazis attempted to destroy the Danish pride and the destruction of the beautiful Tivoli Gardens that was done in retribution for sabotage by the Danish underground. After WWII, Sorensen was told about how one of his relatives died in a Nazi concentration camp because he was a Danish policeman who worked to help the Danish Jews escape to Sweden. Other relatives provided a "safe house" for members of the Danish underground and those who escaped Nazi-occupied Denmark. From then on, people all over the world who had escaped Nazism with the help of the Sorensen family contacted his relatives every 4th of July.

After graduating from high school, amidst his extreme introversion, Sorensen entered Chicago's City College on the south side of Chicago but was drafted into the Army in 1955 before he completed his degree. Sorensen's limited college experience served him well in the military; because of his education, he was made a clerk-typist and was sent to Germany as part of the 11th Airborne Division (even though he absolutely refused to jump out of planes). Thanks to the educational services of the Army, he was able to complete 2 years of college while in the service.

Sorensen claims that there were two developments in his early career that influenced his OD work: his education and his experiences at CNA. After leaving the service in 1957, he returned to college under the GI Bill. While taking a class in social psychology, he first watched the film by Lewin, Lippitt, and White regarding an experiment with the Boy's Club. He still remembers how he sat in the dark after the film ended, waiting for the lights to come back on, thinking, "My god, this is not just a study of young boys. This is a study which encompasses all of the stories that I heard as a young boy about WWII and Nazism." Also at college, he met his mentor, Dr. Bernie Baum, an adjunct professor who had just completed his PhD at the University of Chicago with his dissertation on the decentralization of authority in a bureaucracy. Dr. Baum recognized Sorensen's shyness but also appreciated his military experience and maturity.

While still a student, Baum asked Sorensen if he would join him as he was starting a department at CNA Financial centered on organizational analysis (in a way, one of the early internal OD departments). Even here, the impact of World War II continued to play an important role in Sorensen's career, as Baum's family – like Lewin's – had seen the "handwriting on the wall" and escaped Nazi Germany with his family in the 1930s.

At CNA, Sorensen experienced firsthand the potential of good organizational change and analysis efforts. The department of organizational analysis became a "mecca" for organizational studies with researchers from MIT, Northwestern, Michigan, and the University of Chicago, to name a few. As early as 1965, Sorensen and his CNA colleagues studied the works of Douglas McGregor, Warren Bennis, Kurt Lewin, and others in the emerging field of OD. According to Sorensen, he was able to "work with the best in the field," presenting papers at regional management and sociological meetings, attending executive meetings of the Academy of Management. Both Whisler and Burack influenced Sorensen's thinking in terms of computer technology and its impact on the influence and control in organizations, and Sorensen had the opportunity to coauthor with both scholars on the topics of managerial training and organizational control (see Whisler et al. 1967; and Baum and Sorensen 1970).

There, he was also introduced to and worked with Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y concepts; the work from the University of Michigan group with Dr. Rensis Likert and his four systems of management; Arnold Tannenbaum's work on the measurement of power and influence in organizations; and Floyd Mann, Donald Pelz, and the rest of the great University of Michigan research team. These organizational researchers shaped Sorensen's thinking by modeling how good measurement and research can be translated to the corporate audiences while still making contribution to management research, and they provided models of organization research that served as a standard through Sorensen's career.

Beyond his work, at the societal level, it was a time of turbulence: of recognition of discrimination involving gender and people of color, the Weathermen (an underground American organization that carried out jailbreaks and riots), the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the 1970 Kent State shootings and sit-ins at major universities, and Chicago's Mayor Daley at the 1968 Democratic Convention. This turbulent period reinforced Sorensen's interest in power and influence in

organizations and organizational change. The 1960s and 1970s for Sorensen became a time of great realization – he saw the link between employees in organizations, and people broadly, stating, "We all want to be involved, with goals and development for our own future."

Along with the turbulence, there was also an element of optimism. Sorensen does not claim that CNA at that time was a model of Theory Y, but with his colleagues' education and degrees in sociology, the OD concepts clearly resonated with members of the organization analysis department. Although McGregor's writings were popular in management, they were frequently misinterpreted as being "soft management," when just the opposite was true. Sorensen believes that somehow, out of all of this, things were moving in the direction of Theory Y, as both management and employees were embracing the concept of increased employee involvement and commitment.

Baum later left CNA for a faculty position to establish a PhD program in public health at the University of Illinois, and Sorensen again returned to school, completing his PhD with the help of his wife Nancy Evans (whom he had met while working at CNA) and Dr. Elmer Burack, whom he had met as part of a research project at CNA and who was starting a PhD program at Illinois Institute of Technology. Sorensen's 1971 dissertation entitled "Management development under conditions of change," pertained to the role of computer technology and the redistribution of power and influence in organizations, which is a topic still of interest to Sorensen today. His doctoral research continued with a 1976 *Academy of Management Journal* publication with Burack entitled "Management preparation for computer automation: emergent patterns and problems," where he claimed that "management's computer preparation often seriously lags installation, is narrowly conceived, is incomplete or may never even take place" (p. 318).

According to Lewin, the father of OD, "Every psychological event depends upon the state of the person and at the same time on the environment, although their relative importance is different in different cases." (1936). Consistent with Lewin's quote above, Sorensen believes that his state and the state of his environment at the time contributed to his future in work, OD, and education. Clearly, the increasingly turbulent environment and the rapidly increasing technology were shaping the future for Sorensen and the field of OD.

Opportunity knocked before Sorensen even finished his PhD. While still a student, he received a phone call from the dean of George Williams College in Illinois, asking if he would be interested in joining the faculty (which he did), as part of a new graduate program with a college and faculty that later formed the Mecca for sensitivity training in the Midwest. He joined with two faculty members (Bennett and Perlmutter) who were major influencers in National Training Laboratories (NTL). Sorensen was greatly influenced by these two faculty who were instrumental in creating this Mecca for sensitivity training – Bennett and Perlmutter provided expert knowledge on sensitivity training, and "introverted" Sorensen balanced the OD curriculum with concepts on measurement, power, and organizational theories. This exposure to new change concepts further provided the basis for his interest in the field of Organization Development. Later, the George Williams OD program was

cited in an early group book as one of the first programs to offer coursework in group work, sensitivity training, and other concepts that later served as a foundation for OD. In 1986, Sorensen and the OD master's program at George Williams moved to Benedictine University, where the Masters of Science in Management and Organizational Behavior Program served as a foundation for one of the first PhDs in Organization Development.

## Sorensen as Influencer Through Programs and Publications

Sorensen's upbringing, education, and exposure to corporate OD work in his 20s allowed opportunities for contributions in later years. Equipped with good values (work and family) and the ability to publish provided fodder for major contributions in organization development and change research. Two of Sorensen's key contributions include his influence with students as part of the creation of the PhD program at Benedictine University and his research interests as reflected in five decades of publications.

## PhD Program at Benedictine University

Sorensen is reminded of the challenges and changes necessary when starting a new doctoral program at a traditionally undergraduate private college – in short, truly understanding the system where change is introduced. This undertaking was monumental in that the development and startup of the PhD program in OD was the first of its kind in the OD field and the first doctoral program at any Benedictine college or university. The change was successful in that it remains a critical turning point for Benedictine University; in the more than 20 years of the program's existence, it maintains a successful PhD completion rate, and two doctoral programs have since started at Benedictine University. Designed as a scholar-practitioner program to provide a bridge between the academic scholar and corporate practitioners, it has created a large number of alumni who stay in the corporate/practitioner world, as well as many who transitioned into academic careers, at schools such as Northwestern University and Purdue University. Today, alumni of Benedictine University and the former George Williams College programs reach into the 10,000 range.

The PhD program at Benedictine University has served as a model for two additional doctoral programs at Benedictine, and alumni of the program are now faculty in and chairs of a number of doctoral programs in the United States and internationally. The initial faculty were two graduates of the Case Western Reserve University program – Dr. Ram Tenkasi and Dr. Jim Ludema, and later Therese Yaeger, director of global OD for Motorola. Ludema went on to establish a PhD program at Benedictine in values-driven leadership, Tenkasi continues with the program as a major contributor and as a Fulbright senior research scholar, and Yaeger continued with the program with major contributions to international OD. Every member of the OD PhD program served as chair of a major Academy

of Management division, and Yaeger served both as the chair of the consulting division and as president of the Midwest Academy of Management.

Reflecting on the impact of his contributions at Benedictine University, Sorensen can be assured of his success, as he has been honored by Benedictine University with the highest faculty award (The Whinfrey Award) and the naming of the OD lecture hall as the Sorensen Hall of Leaders.

## Publications: Power, Structure, and Technology

Sorensen's contribution to OD research encompasses more than five decades of publications. His earliest publications in the 1960s involved the concepts of power and influence; a second research focus involved international and global OD; and a third focus involved appreciative inquiry and positive cultures.

Much of Sorensen's work on power and influence was dedicated to the concept of the total amount of influence in an organization – that the total amount of influence could be increased or decreased dependent upon the management system. He continuously studied, researched, and reported on the positive relationship between the total amount of influence in a system (indicated by the level of collaboration and shared influence) and organizational effectiveness. Amidst his introversion, Sorensen was encouraged by Baum to copresent their CNA research at the 1965 Annual Meeting of the American Risk and Insurance Association (ARIA). Their paper entitled "Influence Relationships as Administrative Organizational Data" was presented by the timid Sorensen, but he got quickly hooked on presenting strong research in an effort to identify next research topics.

While still in the corporate world, he continued to publish and present on his concept of influence and attitudes (Baum and Sorensen 1970). Also in 1970, he presented at the Illinois Sociological Association and the Midwest Academy of Management conferences, and he was invited to the Academy of Management. While there, he had the opportunity to sit in on an Academy of Management Planning Committee session, and the following year, at the National Academy of Management, he presented his first award-winning paper with Baum on the topic of student power and influence in universities. Sorensen's publications on influence and control included "The effect of managerial training on organizational control: An experimental study," in *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* with Baum et al. (1970), and "The measurement of intraorganizational power: The application of the control graph to organization development," in *Group & Organization Studies* in 1977 with Baum. When he assessed managerial training and its effect on distribution of influence, his findings were consistent with the early work of Arnold Tannenbaum (1962) as his results indicated an increase in total amount of influence which indicated greater shared influence as a result of training efforts.

This work was followed by a period of studies on Management by Objectives (MBO), based on the concepts of McGregor's Theory Y and the implications of MBO for enhancing the total amount of influence in an organization – a concept introduced earlier by Tannenbaum. Peter always felt that Management By

Objectives (MBO) was one of the most important applied concepts consistent with McGregor's Theory Y. His research over time indicated that organization culture was an important intervening variable and that organizations which were essentially Theory X (hard management) in orientation simply used MBO as another technique for exercising control and centralized decision-making. Conversely, Theory Y organizations used MBO as a meaningful and effective way of enhancing collaboration and focusing on enhanced organizational performance. Working with his colleague Richard Babcock, they published "Organizational Variables and the Success of MBO: A Research Note," in the *Journal of Management Studies* with Straub in 1976; and "Some difficulties in longitudinal assessment of need satisfaction related to management by objectives," in *Psychological Reports* (Sorensen Babcock and Hasher 1977). These studies reaffirmed the notion that continued organizational support over time for MBO programs was necessary for ongoing sustainability of the programs.

Research in technology in the 1960s and 1970s was unfolding and Sorensen captured this opportunity. Peter's early work on technology began at CNA with a collaborative research effort involving Tom Whisler from the University of Chicago, as Whisler and Leavitt in a 1958 *Harvard Business Review* article predicted that computer technology would lead to increased centralization of decision-making. This work included an article by Whisler, Meyer, Baum, and Sorensen "Centralization of organizational control: An empirical study of its meaning and measurement" in *Journal of Business* (1967). Afterwards, as part of his PhD dissertation, Sorensen was involved in a research project at the Illinois Institute of Technology exploring the relationship between technology and organization structure and design. This project allowed him to experience different organizations and their respective technological structures. Peter's later work on the topic of influence demonstrated that Theory X cultures used technology to centralize decision-making and that Theory Y cultures used information technology to strengthen decentralization. Sorensen's work on computers and technology appeared with his dissertation chair Elmer Burack in the *Academy of Management Journal* (1976) and *Organization Design* (1977).

## Influencing and Integrating Global Perspectives

Peter's continued research in power and control in organizations took an interesting twist as he explored the relationship between national cultural values and the use of power embedded in those cultural values. This data also resulted in some of the first international survey data reporting on national differences in the distribution of power and influence in organizations. Sorensen's findings actually preceded and closely paralleled the 1980 culture work of Geert Hofstede. Sorensen's findings, consistent with Hofstede research, indicated that the Scandinavian countries were the most egalitarian of cultures. Later, Alfred Jaeger furthered Hofstede's dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individual vs. collectivism, and masculinity vs. femininity) and indicated that the Scandinavian cultural values were closest to the

values of OD. In short, Jaeger's findings confirmed that Sorensen's Danish heritage made him a perfect fit for the world of OD!

Through the 1980s and 1990s, Sorensen expanded his work on international and global OD. In 1991, he coedited one of the first books on Global OD entitled *International Organization Development* with Thomas Head, Nick Mathys, and Keith Johnson (he later published *Global Organization Development*, coauthored with Head and Yaeger et al. 2006).

For this book, Sorensen's early research and publications involving a seven-country case study (Head and Sorensen 1993) provided exposure and expertise on global change issues, so that when he decided to create the first OD book on global challenges, colleagues were willing to share their cases for Sorensen's book, based on their OD and global experiences. This resulted in more than a dozen chapters for their first book, with cases involving countries that were not compatible to OD values to chapters on the most compatible countries, such as Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

Peter's doctoral students have continued to expand the topic of global OD with dissertations and publications on OD studies from Africa, Latin and South America, Europe, Scandinavia, and the Far East. Publications also included early OD work in China (i.e., "Chinese executives' assessment of organization development interventions" in the *Organization Development Journal*, 2006).

Beyond publications, Sorensen was involved in expanding global OD knowledge. After serving as the chair of the ODC Division of the Academy of Management, in 2002 Sorensen proposed an international conference sponsored by the division. The proposal was initiated and cosponsored (with the management consulting division) at the biennial international conference at the University of Lyon 3 in France. This conference was attended by students and faculty members from more than 20 countries. At the early 2001 conference with the management consulting division, Sorensen presented a paper involving an international study on the concept of bridging from corporate strategy to implementation of strategy across the globe. This conference still continues today, in collaboration with the ISEOR Research Center (University of Jean Moulin). Beyond France, Sorensen has also presented papers at conferences in Denmark, Norway, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Mexico, and China, and his work has been published in French, Spanish, and Mandarin.

## Applying Appreciative Inquiry to Practice

A third focus of Sorensen's research emerged in the 1990s – concept of Appreciative Inquiry. This interest was stimulated by the fact that Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was a concept initiated by his former George Williams master's student, David Cooperrider.

To further Cooperrider's AI concept, Sorensen attempted to share AI to the practitioner community. As a result, in 1996 Sorensen was the guest editor of a special 1996 double issue of the *OD Practitioner*, presenting the topic Appreciative

Inquiry for the first time to the OD Network. A quick 3 years later, with Cooperrider, Sorensen with Therese Yaeger and Diana Whitney, created an AI reader entitled *Appreciative Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change* (Champaign: Stipes Publishing). Again in 2001, the team of Cooperrider, Sorensen, Yaeger, and Whitney created a second reader entitled *Appreciative Inquiry: An Emerging Direction for Organization Development*; finally a third reader by the four authors was entitled *Appreciative Inquiry: Foundations in Positive Organization Development* in 2005.

Much of Sorensen work on Appreciative Inquiry was devoted to creating and presenting empirical studies of the implementation of AI. His commitment to the assessment of the effectiveness of AI is captured in an article published in Woodman and Pasmore's *Research in Organization Change and Development* Annual entitled "Assessment of the State of Appreciative Inquiry: Past, Present, and Future," with Yaeger et al. (2005). Here, the most important finding was that the more rigorous the study's design, the more favorable the outcome was. In essence, where there may be an aversion to do quantitative AI research, the data indicated that the more rigorous the AI design, the stronger the positive outcomes.

However, Sorensen's own research studies with Appreciative Inquiry combined AI with the assessment of organization change using a measure of organization culture, the Organization Culture Inventory (OCI), and the use of survey feedback. One particular area of interest was initiated by a reviewer of the 2005 *ROCD* article who suggested the concept of latent positive change (LPC), a finding that organizations with which Sorensen studied were characterized by a period of strong positive cultures. The concept of latent positive culture is reported in several articles, including "Appreciative Inquiry Meets the Logical Positivist" (Sorensen et al. 2005) and "Appreciative Inquiry in Bureaucratic Settings" (Stroyberg et al. 2005).

Additionally, in 2005 Sorensen envisioned a book series where the Addison Wesley 1970 series ended. The field of OD had expanded tremendously, and Sorensen with Yaeger identified more than a dozen topics worthy of publication. To that end, the Contemporary Trends in Organization Development book series was created and ten books already exist in the series, with topics such as large scale change, OD in health care, global organization development, optimizing talent, and the education of the scholar practitioner.

Still today, Peter continues to publish and present on global OD and appreciative inquiry. But Sorensen remains proud that almost all of this work has been in collaboration with his mentors (Baum and Burack), his colleagues (Head, Yaeger, and Richard Babcock), or his countless students.

Sorensen has been a member of a number of academic and professional organizations, including the National Academy of Management, the Midwest and Southwest Regional Academy of Management, and Chair of the OD division of the academy, and two alumni of the Benedictine PhD program have served as presidents of the Midwest Academy. He is a member of the OD Network and the International Society for Organization Development. The OD Network honored Sorensen for his contribution to OD education (titled the Kathy Dannemiller Sharing the Wealth Award), and the International Society for Organization Development (formerly

O.D. Institute) presented him with the Consultant of the Year Award. He is currently an international director of the International Society for Organization Development. He was the keynote speaker at the first OD conference in China, and one of the graduates of his PhD program was instrumental in the development and implementation of the first PhD program in organization development in Asia.

## New Insights: Involved Influencer

Upon reflection, Sorensen realizes now how his contributions to OD education (although common practice today) were formerly "novel" for typical, more traditional classroom practice in the 1960s, 1970s, and later. As a former student, coauthor, and current collaborator with Sorensen, I have witnessed his teaching approach to be in alignment with Lewin's approach to learning and collaborating among students. He is reminded of two novel educational concepts that were cutting-edge in the 1970s, namely, the application of experiential adult learning and the creation of doctoral OD education.

## Experiential Learning

Sorensen, like Lewin, believes that learning is more effective when it is an active rather than a passive process (Marrow 1977). Similarly, whereas Lewin (Weisbord 2012) pointed out that all problems have social consequences that include people's feeling, perceptions of reality, self-worth, motivation, and commitment, Sorensen believes that the awareness of both of these Lewinian concepts – active learning and understanding the social consequence – not only support OD philosophy but enhance the teaching and better prepares adults for real world work involving teamwork and collaboration.

A former masters-level student of Sorensen claimed that it was Sorensen's approachable style that made him a better student, claiming, "Sorensen's demeanor is one of humility, never drawing a focus on him but on others. He brings this unassuming characteristic and humor to informal conversations and to formal meetings, lectures, and discussions. Although never posing as an authoritative figure, the impact of his work is widely acknowledged, experienced, and appreciated by those who have studied and collaborated with him or read the body of his publications. His remarkable contributions deserve the recognition he has long deflected to doctoral students and colleagues." Other students disagree, insisting that Sorensen's approach to learning, while experiential, is one of academic excellence, claiming that Sorensen would never settle for second-rate graduate work.

Another indication of Sorensen's experiential learning style is the Contemporary Trends in Change Management Lecture Series. In 1977, with a seminar style approach to experiential learning, the first Lecture Series was presented at George

Williams and with Drs. Robert Blake and Dr. Jane Mouton of the Managerial Grid, and Dr. Edgar Schein as first year speakers. This semi-annual event led by Sorensen and his colleague Dr. Judi Strauss became the intellectual conduit for OD, as the lecture series and soon became a mecca for the Chicago OD community. The lecture series continues today in its 40th year, featuring major figures in the field such as Michael Beer, Susan Mohrman, W. Warner Burke, and David Cooperrider, among others. It is interesting that Sorensen today realizes he has had the opportunity to work with approximately 50% of the named thinkers in this book and as many as 75% of contemporary thinkers.

## Doctoral Education for OD

Sorensen, like Lewin, recognizes the meaningfulness of applied research and practical theory. While Lewin argued that applied research could be conducted with rigor and that one could test theoretical propositions in applied research (Rogers 1994), similarly Sorensen credits this research/theory concept to the scholar/practitioner design of the Benedictine University Doctoral Program. The scholar-practitioner design is what attracts the eager OD practitioner. One such practitioner is corporate executive and PhD alumni Dr. Mary Lou Kotecki who reminds us of Sorensen's passion to create the finest scholar-practitioner program, stating:

> Through Sorensen's program students are inspired and challenged by national and international thought leaders. Distinguished Visiting Scholars have included five Academy of Management Presidents (Bartunek, Cummings, Van deVen, Rousseau, and Huff); and other visiting scholars included Worley, Cappelli, Boje, Weisbord, Torbert, Beer, Burke, Argyris, Coghlan, Stacey, Gergen, and Cooperrider among many others. Additionally, he brought in more historical practitioners such as Blake and Mouton, Schein, and Dannemiller.
>
> As professor and director of this Ph.D. program Dr. Sorensen also serves as its linchpin. Sorensen lectures and serves as a student advisor, advocate, and motivator thus galvanizing student learning, participation, and performance. And, most remarkably, Peter consistently recognizes student contributions to the field and to their organizations.
>
> Through the years, Peter's Benedictine University students have come from very large corporations and institutions, through small for-profit and non-profit organizations, NGOs, consulting groups, energy and retail companies, and medical, educational, federal, financial, and religious institutions. Their positions ranged from CEOs, corporate officers, and executives to medical professionals and human resource directors. Three of his students served as officers within Academy of Management divisions; others serve on journal review boards or as journal editors.

Although she is an early graduate of the PhD Program in Organization Development at Benedictine University, Kotecki reminds Peter that he has now graduated more than 200 doctoral students in 20 years (but Sorensen is too humble to mention this!)

Sorensen parallels Lewin's willing collaboration with colleagues and students and sees this as a contribution to future OD scholars. Clearly, Sorensen's 50 years

of OD work has spurred not only a passion for OD student learning but the power of the novel student learning through the lecture series and how the scholar-practitioner doctoral program illuminates the innovative approaches to OD for future scholars.

## Unfinished Business: Still Influencing and Unfinished

Sorensen realizes now that he was destined for a career in OD based on his early exposure to humanistic values in his Danish family. Values around power in organizations such as autonomy, participation, and shared leadership – which are at the core of OD – were part of the family values with which he grew up. His exposure to disruptive societal changes of the 1960s aligned with what Lewin observed in Germany during his formative years. For Sorensen, the fundamental values of OD and the egalitarian values of the Scandinavian countries continue to influence him today more than ever.

Sorensen does not ponder about his legacy, stating "that's too far away to think about." In short, his thinking around unfinished business is still evolving. But three primary topics of unfinished business keep Sorensen busy – global OD, positive change, and education of the scholar-practitioner.

## Global OD

Sorensen emphasizes that we have yet to begin to understand the true significance of OD and change work in a global setting. He and the late Thomas Head shared that each international OD case as a grain of sand, but the beach has yet to be created to see a more holistic picture. He has reiterated to students that OD and change efforts can be very different in different cultures, and yet OD consultants may be too focused on their intervention to realize this important factor.

Sorensen is proud that his first book on global OD actually reported on unsuccessful change efforts in different countries – he would like to see more learning and reporting of lessons learned for failed change efforts in other countries.

## Positive Change

In 1996, when Sorensen was the guest editor of a double issue of the *OD Practitioner* on the topic of Appreciative Inquiry to the OD Network, he thought Appreciative Inquiry would be a powerful concept to share Cooperrider's work with OD practitioners. Having been a masters-level student of his, Sorensen was now familiar with Cooperrider's work at Case Western Reserve University and saw this issue as an opportunity to share new concept with the world of practitioners. Cooperrider willingly agreed to contribute to this undertaking. To date, this one 1996 issue is the most reprinted volume of the *OD Practitioner*, Sorensen

insists. "What David Cooperrider has started (ignited, Sorensen says is more appropriate) is simply the beginning of our knowledge of positive science in organizations," Peter contends.

Tangentially, Peter continues to look for the connection between AI and positive organizational concepts and is currently exploring the potential relationship between positive change and the increasingly popular notion of thriving and agile and how these concepts are changing the former concepts of influence and control in organizations.

## Scholar Practitioner Programs

One of the challenges of the future will be to optimize the opportunities and challenges presented by the increasing number of scholar-practitioner doctoral programs. Optimizing these opportunities can be realized by finding ways of sharing and collaborating on building the knowledge of the field sometimes by collaborating with other doctoral programs!

With the concept of the scholar-practitioner is the need of role models to aspiring OD consultants. Here, Sorensen believes there can be better role modeling in publishing, in practice, and in consulting. For example, Sorensen's role modeling to students is evidenced by his insistence that the Benedictine OD doctoral students' participate and present at the local and national Academy of Management meetings. As his mentor Baum stressed to him, Sorensen believes that the sharing and dissemination of one's research is necessary and often provides a promising future. According to Dr. Kathy Schroeder, a corporate OD executive and alumna of the Benedictine University PhD Program, "My research and publications are evidence of Peter's influence on my OD work. My published works on OD research and knowledge have strengthened my capabilities exponentially."

Sorensen realizes from his students that awards not only make a difference for the future of a new doctor's vitae but that they also make a difference in measuring success of the doctoral programs they attended.

So while Sorensen claims that he has unfinished business, many of his students and colleagues agree that he continues to influence OD research and countless students. As a former student of Peter myself, we all welcome his future contributions.

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Chris Mowles

**Abstract**

Ralph Stacey is one of the pioneers in taking up insights from the complexity sciences in organizational theory. Trained in South Africa and the London School of Economics as a macroeconomist, and latterly as a group therapist, Stacey has combined abstract analytical thinking with an interest in experience, the emotions, a sense of self, and belonging, which make us human. From his interdisciplinary education and experience in industry he has developed a perspective on organizations which combines insights from both the natural and social sciences. This has led to a substantial body of publications with international renown. From the sciences of complexity he argues by analogy that organizations are iterating patterns of human interaction, never in equilibrium, which cannot be controlled by any individual or group. From the social sciences he focuses on the importance of our interdependence, expressed through power relations, and daily conversational activity. Sixteen years ago, and with two close colleagues, he founded a group-based professional doctorate, which runs psychodynamically. The program encourages practicing managers and leaders to focus on their daily experience of managing in uncertainty. In starting this program, he has recreated the best traditions of the Academy dating back to the ancient Greeks, where students and staff engage together in reflective conversation about the things which matter to them, provoking each other to think. Though he is well past retirement age Ralph is still a faculty member, raconteur, and conversationalist, participating in ways which make us all, faculty and students alike, more fully ourselves.

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## Contents

We must not begin by talking of pure ideas – vagabond thoughts that tramp the public roads without any human habitation – but must begin with men and their conversation

(Peirce 1958, Vol. 8, p. 112).

## Introduction

Ralph Stacey was one of the first organizational scholars to appreciate the revolutionary potential of insights from the complexity sciences for theories of organizing. Highly trained in mathematics and statistics as a macroeconomist, the original appeal of the sciences of complexity for him were mathematical models demonstrating stable instability, or regular irregularity, a state known as "on the edge of chaos." This seemed to him to parallel his own experience in industry that managers are often in control and not in control both at the same time. His working experience had taught him that politics and power also figure prominently in how managers come to make decisions, particularly in conditions of uncertainty. Over time, and coterminous with his development as an academic and group therapist, he moved further and further away from the idea that organizations are complex systems to argue instead by analogy drawing on pragmatic philosophy and process sociology. Pragmatic philosophy is a broad discipline but is preoccupied with experience and action as the opening quotation shows. Process sociology is concerned with the flux and change of human interaction and how society arises from figurations of power and interdependence. This led him to develop the perspective known as "complex responsive processes of relating," a body of theories which combines insights from both the natural and social sciences. It is an account of how the complex phenomenon we refer to as "organization" arises from everyday conversational activity of human bodies responding to each other, engaged in the game of

organizational life, cooperating and competing to get things done. So human beings are involved in complex activity and are responding to each other in continuous processes of interaction: hence the name of the perspective, complex responsive processes of relating. Key to understanding the perspective is a highly social view of mind, self and society, a complex understanding of time, a pragmatic understanding of experience and values, an appreciation of paradox, and a figurational view of human relating based on power. His legacy rests not just in the complex body of theory, which he has developed, but also in his recreation in the Academy and beyond of a different, and ancient, tradition of deliberating together about what it means to be human.

## Influences and Motivations: Thinking About the Game of Organizational Life

Ralph Stacey tells the story that when he was chief strategist for a stockbroker and fund manager in the City of London, his job was to brief all the traders at the start of the day about significant financial trends in the markets so that they had a better idea about how they might trade. Quite soon into the job, he realized that he had no idea which trends were significant and which were not and so had very little insight about how best to advise them about what to do. He approached each new day with increasing dread, traveling from his home to the office and reading the *Financial Times* on the underground for clues about what he might say when he got there. Standing up in front of the traders, his managers, and the whole staff team, he found himself stuttering and stumbling over what he told them. His mouth was dry, his confidence at rock bottom: all he was doing was regurgitating what anyone else could have said if they had read the same newspapers, simply refracted through his own training as an economist. He had a deep experience of impostor syndrome.

It was a big crack in the confidence of someone who had always excelled as scholar, who had won prizes at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg for his work on economic modeling, and who had gone on to take both his Masters and PhD at the London School of Economics in London in economic model-building and forecasting using sophisticated statistical models. Stacey was someone who had always succeeded and held important jobs in the planning departments of British Steel and the construction company John Laing. It was a great relief to him when he was made redundant from the financial company after about a year, and this event probably was a big impetus in his scholarly journey to work out why social life is unpredictable and impervious to many of the theories that he had learnt as a macroeconomist.

However, one quarter from which he found some support while still in the firm was from listening to a senior, older trader who took little interest in macroeconomic trends but treated the whole performance of trading as a game to be studied. Instead of just relying on financial reports and stock prices, the trader paid as much attention to his colleagues and the waves of enthusiasm or desperation that swept through them. One of the most important clues for discerning what might play out on the

trading floor, as far as he was concerned, was how the traders responded to each other, amplifying some trends and damping down on others, how stock prices affected traders, and thus how traders affected stock prices. The market was being created and recreated on a minute-by-minute basis through trades and responses to trades, so that it was difficult to identify the beginning and the end, the cause and the effect.

## Joining the Academy

The idea of ensemble human performance as game, the amplifying and dampening effects of patterns of human behavior, and the interweaving of intentions are themes that Stacey returned to repeatedly during his thirty-year career as an academic. This he resumed when he left the private sector to join Hatfield Polytechnic, latterly and henceforward the University of Hertfordshire (UH), in 1985 and in his early 40s to run the MBA program there. He directed the MBA with other colleagues in a highly participative way, teaching theory to the students who were practicing managers, but also encouraging them to describe and make sense of their daily experience of managing in organizations. He was also exposed at the time to the thinking of the Tavistock Institute in London, which was involved in the development of the MBA program and which had a long tradition of thinking about organizational life from a psychoanalytic perspective. So his intellectual preoccupations continued to be congruent with Peirce's injunction in the opening quotation that in order to make progress together we should pay attention to people and their conversation: what they do, what they say about what they do, and how they come to say it. His ideas developed into a body of thought he and colleagues have termed "complex responsive processes of relating," which draws parallels between the predictable unpredictability of social life and the stable instability of complexity models which first fascinated him when he began to write books in the early 1990s.

## Complex Responsive Processes: The Movement of Thought

It would be easy to categorize Stacey's oeuvre as having a clear epistemological break between the scholarship he produced in the 1990s and his output post-2000. From the millennium onwards, after joining together with Doug Griffin (2001) and Patricia Shaw (2002), he took a radical social turn toward the pragmatism of G. H. Mead (1934, 1938) and the process sociology of Norbert Elias (2000, 2001). (The developing friendship resulted in their starting a professional doctorate together, named the Doctor of Management (DMan), which still runs to this day). That is to say, having mined the complexity sciences as a source domain for thinking about complex social processes in organizations from a realist perspective, sometimes claiming that organizations were complex adaptive systems, latterly his work took a turn to the social sciences, arguing the link with the complexity sciences by analogy and taking the step that social complexity needs to be understood with the help of sociology, philosophy,

and psychoanalytic theory. However, quite a number of themes and interests permeate both early and later periods, so it may prove an instructive exercise to explore what has changed and what has stayed the same in his intellectual development. (It is interesting to note that when other scholars reference Stacey's work, it is often the first, more realist period to which they predominantly refer).

In three books written over a period of nearly 16 years, Stacey set out to understand learning processes in organizations and the genesis of knowledge and creativity. *Complexity and Creativity* (1996) was Stacey's fourth book, having already established himself as a pioneer in the complexity sciences, particularly with his second book *The Chaos Frontier* (1991). His next book attempting to describe learning and knowledge creation, *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations*: *Learning and Knowledge Creation*, was published in 2001 as one of a series of books published by Routledge from colleagues at UH establishing the turn to social science in working with complexity ideas, as outlined above. And the third book tackling learning and knowledge, *Complexity and Organizational Reality* (2010), was ostensibly the second edition of *Learning and Knowledge Creation* but was so extensively rewritten that it took on a life of its own. I take each of these books sequentially to explore how each is located in Stacey's thinking and how they link together in the development of the body of the thought which takes the experiential component of the process of organizing, bound by power relations, values, and ethics, as its focus of study. As I outlined earlier, this focus on responsive experience, brought together in a perspective entitled complex responsive processes, links together insights from the complexity sciences, hence complex, with pragmatic theories of experience and communication, and the process sociology of Norbert Elias focusing on power and interdependence.

## Ideas Which Contributed to the Publication of Complexity and Creativity

*The Chaos Frontier*, Stacey's second book, explores in detail a variety of manifestations of the complexity sciences, in particular mathematical chaos. In mathematics "chaos" describes a particular state of behavior of models based on nonlinear equations. Nonlinear models can demonstrate perfectly stable and symmetric patterns with certain parameter values and completely random patterns at others. But there is also a state in between, where the parameter values are such that they produce graphed patterns of regular irregularity: at "the edge of chaos," the concept informing the title of the book. They are neither perfectly stable nor random, but both stable and unstable at the same time. They are fractal in nature, symmetrically unsymmetrical, and Stacey goes on to indicate how these fractal patterns turn up everywhere in nature in the shape of coastlines, firs, and snowflakes. Stacey makes the case that the increasing instability of the business environment means that managers need to look for alternative models for developing their companies over the longer term rather than relying on equilibrium models. While over the short-term, conventional control mechanisms work, more appropriate models are required,

mirroring the environment they find themselves in, because organizations are subject to nonlinear feedback mechanisms. Stacey makes the link here between the linear or nonlinear models that scientists use to model reality and the mental models that managers use to understand the world. He implies that a change in the former brings about a change in the latter and enables a greater ability to make sense of the turbulence managers need to navigate in conditions of open-ended change. In stable conditions, more orthodox management methods pertain.

Stacey sets out a rather binary argument to make the case for a strategic management approach based on the mathematical chaos. On the one hand, he says, conventional strategic management paradigms emphasize alignment, control, stability, and predictability. It is a paradigm that privileges top-down control often based on charismatic leadership, rationality, value-agreement, and sequential planning; however, for Stacey these are precisely the approaches that will disable managers when they face conditions of uncertainty because they prevent organizations from adapting to fast-changing circumstances and an evolving future. He stresses that he is not suggesting that managers should give up on control mechanisms, nor should they simply react to what arises. Rather, he states that learning processes in conditions of uncertainty are essentially political and depend upon a degree of conflict and an exploration of difference among colleagues. Strategy evolves from groups of managers continuously exploring what is new and different about the current situation working with analogous reasoning, a pattern of reasoning which mirrors the fractal patterns to be found in nature, to feel their way forward comparing the difficulties "in here" with the environment "out there." In other words, and harking back to his experience of the trading floor and his work with managers on the MBA at Hertfordshire Business School, it is important to pay attention to what managers find themselves doing every day at work as they compete and cooperate with their colleagues to get things done, and to find out what is similar and different about the circumstances they now face.

The publication of the *Chaos Frontier* led to Stacey being invited to join a cadre of scholars similarly interested in the complexity sciences. He attended a restricted membership complexity symposium in Canada where he met and conversed with Meg Wheatley (1992) and Jeff Goldstein (1989), among others, and went on to join something called the "Chaos Network," which held annual conferences. At one of these conferences, Stacey came across the work of the Santa Fe Institute and, in particular, Waldrop's book *Complexity: the Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos* (1992), which set out the history and development of the complexity sciences.

So by the time he came to write *Complexity and Creativity in Organizations*, the book on learning and knowledge under discussion, he had established himself as a scholar in a group at the forefront of what was perceived to be a new discipline in organizational studies. He had mounted a critique of what he termed the conventional orthodox strategic management discipline and had begun to investigate the social, psychological, and political dimensions of organizing in conditions of uncertainty, which he set alongside a more formal, systemic, and realist understanding of organizational structures and control in conditions of stability. Stacey grafted together the conventional and the unconventional, the traditional and the new.

## Complexity and Creativity: Principal Arguments

One of the first shifts in the book from the previous work is to identify one of the manifestations of the complexity sciences, complex adaptive systems theory (CAS), as being the richest example for thinking about social and organizational life. Rather than the edge of chaos example dominant in the *Chaos Frontier*, Stacey turns instead to CAS and claims that organizations are complex adaptive systems. A CAS is a computer-based model populated by agents, which interact according to rules designed by a computer programmer. Over time, the agents begin to develop patterns of interaction which are not reducible to or predictable from the rules given at the outset. The agents and their interactions evolve in surprising ways.

Stacey's first claim in the book, then, is that human brains are complex adaptive systems where neurons are the agents manipulating symbols and images. Together with other human beings, they in turn are complex adaptive systems to form organizations and institutions, which in turn are complex adaptive systems forming the wider society. These nested CAS have an inherent order, which is simply waiting to be unfolded through the experience of the system, but no one can know what that order will be until it unfolds in real time. In previous work, Stacey had already produced a dualism that one form of management is required in conditions of certainty and another in conditions of open-ended change. In this book he creates another, that of the formal and informal, the legitimate and the shadow organization. It is in the shadow system where people engage in necessary politics and use their intuition and practical judgment. And it is a self-organizing, bottom-up process, which interacts with the formal, procedural top-down legitimate system to create organizational stable instability. The quality of the crash between the legitimate and shadow systems in organizations creates the space for creativity and novelty to emerge; he describes this as being the space at the edge of system disintegration. The injunction for managers, drawing on Stacey's increasing exposure to psychoanalytic literature and experience, is to develop the capacity to hold onto enough of the anxiety generated by the ambiguity of uncertain situations to enable them to play and be creative. This play is both self-organizing and emergent.

Stacey's perspective on learning and creativity arises directly from CAS, which are manifestations of the complexity sciences that demonstrate self-organizing and emergent behavior. In organizational terms, this leads him to take an interest in organizational politics, anxiety and unstructured conversational exploration of possibilities in conditions of uncertainty, which he understands as analogous to CAS. Arguing against what he takes to be the dominant paradigm in organizational scholarship (the idea that we depend upon charismatic leaders to set organizational direction), he argues that we need not fear these "unstructured" processes. They will not lead to anarchy because they are constrained by our need for each other, the requirements of the task, and our common humanity. Stacey still presents his theory of learning and creativity as contingent, that is to say applicable in some circumstances and not in others. It rests on a series of dualisms: formal and informal organizations, top-down and bottom-up processes, legitimate and shadow systems, and ordinary and extraordinary management. It still also depends upon a systemic

understanding of organizations. Leaders and managers practice what he terms "extraordinary management" when they take up a position on the boundary of stability and chaos, contain the anxiety of their peers and better articulate potentially creative thought, discoveries, and behaviors, although there are no guarantees that this will be effective. He stresses the importance of what he describes as self-reflection, a lack of complacency and the need to keep things "on the boil," but still insists that managers as capable of "installing appropriate psychological and emotional conditions to encourage spontaneous self-organization that might produce creative outcomes" (Stacey 1996, p. 279). He argues that this is not the same as giving prescriptions for what works.

## Key Contributions: The Radical Challenge to Systemic and Contingency Theories of Organization

In the mid-1990s, Stacey had persuaded the university authorities, against some opposition, to start a PhD group at UH rather than supervising students individually. This was directly related to his training as a group analyst at the Institute of Group Analysis (IGA), fascinated as he had been by his exposure to the experience of working with the Tavistock Institute and having attended a number of Leicester conferences. (Leicester Conferences have been run by the Tavistock since 1957 and are large group events, lasting for 2 weeks, which attempt to study human interaction in real time. The role of the consultant in the Tavistock tradition and the role of the group conductor in group analysis are very different). There is not space here to describe the differences between Tavistock and IGA traditions except to say that the IGA has a much more social therapeutic tradition. The IGA was founded by S. H. Foulkes (1964), who was both a psychiatrist and a psychoanalyst but who reinterpreted Freud to understand human interaction in highly social terms, after Hegel. Influenced by his friend and colleague Norbert Elias (2000), Foulkes developed a body of theory and working methods, which placed the group at the heart of therapeutic intervention. It challenged the assumption that there are individuals at one ontological "level" and society at another, and it privileged neither one nor the other. For Foulkes, the whole of society could be represented in a group of 8–10 people and that is where its therapeutic potential for individuals lies. There are no individuals without society and no society without individuals in Elias' terms (2001); they are two sides of the same coin.

As I mentioned previously, two students who were attracted to UH because of Stacey's publications on complexity and organizations were Doug Griffin (2001) and Patricia Shaw (2002), and Stacey became their supervisor. Both Griffin and Shaw had a great deal of experience in organizational consulting and had worked together, and Griffin had a long history of philosophical inquiry, having moved to Germany from the USA to pursue his doctorate on the phenomenology of Husserl while working under Gadamer (1960). All three became friends and spent long hours together working out the weaknesses and lacunae of taking up theories from the complexity sciences and applying them directly to social life,

talking of organizations as though they were CAS. Stacey had already come across the ideas of Norbert Elias from his training at the IGA, and Griffin introduced the thinking of the pragmatists, in particular the communicative theories of G. H. Mead (1934). Together they wrote *Complexity and Management: Fad or Radical Challenge to Systems Thinking?* (Stacey et al. 2000), which became something of a manifesto for a new perspective they termed "complex responsive processes of relating." (They coined the term complex responsive processes to signal that it was derived from CAS, but that they were not taking a systemic view, and that human beings were responsive and not just adaptive). It also coincided with the founding of the professional doctorate, the DMan, at UH, which has continued for the last 16 years and has produced more than 50 doctorates. The program draws on the expanding body of theories originating in the combination of complexity and social science insights and is based on the working methods of the IGA. It is a research community which socializes the learning process in small and large groups, and where students iterate, then reiterate, their theses as a series of projects in response to comments and reactions from their peers and their supervisors. At bottom it tries to do justice to the idea of emergent learning, overcoming the dualisms of theory and practice, subjective and objective, and individual and social.

## New Insights: No Inside, No Outside, and the Paradox of Forming and Being Formed

I explore the ideas in the developing perspective more thoroughly below in the next step of the discussion of Stacey's theories of learning and knowledge creation, but for now it is sufficient to say that the *Fad* book marks a radical shift in thinking from the earlier work. Firstly, it abandons a systemic view of organizations altogether, arguing after Elias that to think of organizations as parts and wholes with boundaries is simply to use a mystery to solve a mystery. Stacey et al.'s (2000) argument is that thinking systemically about organizations assumes that the researcher is somehow outside the organization understood as whole, while at the same time it covers over human interaction with abstractions. Instead, Stacey et al. place social interaction at the heart of organizational research, the gesture and response of feeling human bodies, which create patterns of relating and then more patterns. These patterns emerge according to themes organizing the experience of being together. There are no systems, no wholes, no boundaries, no inside and no outside, no formal or informal systems, or no top-down or bottom-up: just patterning and then further patterning of experience. The second major shift is to abandon the direct link between CAS, selected as the most helpful manifestation of the complexity sciences, and organizations but to argue by analogy drawing principally on the arguments of Hegel, Mead, and Elias that we are intersubjectively formed. Stacey et al. (2000) abandon dualisms and argue paradoxically instead that individuals are formed by social life; at the same time they form social life. Neither the individual nor the social are prior but arise both at the same time in a paradoxical movement of dialectic.

The *Fad* book sets out a theory of what it calls "transformative causality" to explain social evolution in distinction to the rationalist if-then causality of Newton, the formative causality of systems theory (unfolding what is already there) or the adaptionist causality of neo-Darwinism (change occurs because of chance mutation and survival of the fittest). The term "transformative causality" is an attempt to explain evolution endogenously, arguing that it occurs without external cause but simply and only because of its own activity.

## Learning and Knowledge Creation: A Complex Responsive Processes Perspective

The publication of the *Fad* book and the founding of the DMan led to a productive 8 years of publications in the Complexity and Emergence series by Stacey, Griffin, and Shaw, and the graduates of the DMan program, either as monographs (Fonseca 2001; Streatfield 2001) or as edited volumes investigating concepts of emergence (Stacey 2005), research (Stacey and Griffin 2005a), public sector organizations (Stacey and Griffin 2005b), improvisation (Shaw and Stacey 2006), and values (Stacey and Griffin 2008). Alongside these, Stacey completed the fifth edition of his textbook (now published as *Strategic Management and Organizational Dynamics: The Challenge of Complexity*, Stacey and Mowles 2016), the first edition of which he wrote in 1992 and produced an edited collection of complexity readings upon which he comments with Griffin, MacIntosh et al. (2006). Additionally, having qualified as a group analyst, Stacey wrote an extended critique of psychoanalytic theory in his book *Complexity and Group Processes: A Radically Social Understanding of Individuals* (2003).

The second book on learning and knowledge explores some of the complex responsive ideas in more depth. In doing so, it deepens Stacey's critique of cognitivist theories of mind and knowing, systems thinking, and sender/receiver models of communicative exchange. For example, he critiques the idea that new knowledge is created in organizations by making the tacit explicit, an idea originated by Polanyi (1960) and then further developed by Nonaka and Tekeuchi (1995). To argue in this way assumes a cognitivist position that knowledge is somehow stored in individuals' heads, Stacey argues. As an alternative, he posits that tacit and explicit knowledge can never be separated. And by drawing on Mead's (1934) ideas that the evolution of mind is a social process and that neither mind nor knowledge is stored in an individual brain in any straightforward sense, he argues instead that knowledge is replicated and potentially transformed in communicative interaction between people. This is a process which cannot be captured, stored, or owned by anyone, thus making the idea of "leveraging knowledge assets" highly problematic, although this is not to say that knowledge cannot be stored in organizations in abstract form. This leads Stacey to recommend attaching much greater importance to every day conversations in organizational life, since it is in these exchanges that potentially valuable knowledge is created and recreated.

From this argument, he critiques what he deems to be a contemporary ideology of recruiting an exceptional professional elite to enhance knowledge creation. For Stacey, focusing on the quality of relating is as important as the attributes of the particular individuals engaged by organizations. He thinks that simply emphasizing the role of an elite cadre is likely to set up harmful insider/outsider dynamics, which are likely to cause stress and resentment. In terms of educating the workforce, Stacey argues that the contemporary emphasis on curriculum design and quality assurance replicates the dominant assumption that thought precedes action and that learning proceeds in linear fashion. As an alternative, he argues that learning in organizations, or in universities, arises from the potential transformation of identity of both individuals and the group and cannot be predicted in advance. It arises from communicative processes of meaning making arising in figurations of interdependent people – changes in meaning also reflect changes in power relations and the ability of people to break out of stuck patterns of communication and live with their anxiety.

Stacey's understanding reflects a different understanding of ethics. He argues:

> From this perspective, accountability and responsibility do not mean achieving targeted consequences, they mean the ethical, moral requirement to take responsibility for one's actions and account to one's fellows for what one is doing . . . Quality actions are actions that both those carrying them out and those affected by them can accept as ethical and moral in themselves, and acceptance implies a process of negotiation. The social is co-operative and competitive interaction as moral order. (2001, p. 230)

Uncertainty requires a pragmatic response to thinking about ethics since we cannot know the outcome of our actions, no matter how well motivated we are. Nonetheless, we are still responsible for what happens following our actions and need to proceed by keeping ends and means in view and negotiate what our actions mean to us.

Here are some similarities in thinking between Stacey's reflections on knowledge and learning in 1996 and those from 2001. In both books, Stacey draws on the complexity sciences, to argue for the importance of nonlinear dynamics in organizations coping in situations of uncertainty. But before 2000, he argues that organizations are complex systems, and after he argues by analogy. His favored manifestation of the complexity sciences in both cases is CAS. In both, he is concerned with microinteractions, which are shaped by power and politics and the psychosocial effects of anxiety and stuck patterns of behavior. But by 2001, he has turned to the social sciences in the form of philosophy and sociology to interpret key insights. This means taking up the radically social philosophy of G. H. Mead and the process sociology of Norbert Elias in particular. From Mead he takes the central insight that we are social through and through. Mind is the activity of an individual able to take herself as an object to herself, while communication is a series of gestures and responses between the self and others, where meaning emerges in the flow of the conversation of gestures. Meaning, then, is not a packet of data unproblematically communicated from one to another, nor is it determined by one party alone. From Elias he adopts the idea that society arises as the patterning of

activity of highly interdependent social beings, a pattern which is controlled by no one and by no powerful group. Order arises from the interweaving of intentions. In taking a perspective informed by these ideas, he has challenged a number of assumptions about social life. The first is that any one person or group of people can ever be in control of ongoing interaction. This may influence it strongly, but they cannot control it. Then he drops cognitivist assumptions that mind is contained in an individual and that, from there, it is possible to assume an objective position "outside" an organization looking "in." This does away with the need for mental models. He has also dropped the dualisms of inside/outside, formal/informal, ordinary/extraordinary management in favor of paradox; as humans we are formed by social processes and form them both at the same time and these result in dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. He adopts a pragmatic theory of action and ethics, which takes uncertainty seriously, arguing that ethical behavior is to be found in negotiation of how a group understands the particular application of general principles. And he adopts Mead's (1938) complex understanding of time, which held that we anticipate the future by drawing on the past in the living present. He has developed this position by elaborating a critique of systems thinking derived from Kant, and which he argues covers over human interactions with abstractions. Rather, Stacey argues that social patterns of stable/instability arise in the interweaving of intentions of responsive human bodies. The patterning of interaction, which we call "experience," creates nothing outside itself but further patterning, which is what he terms "transformative causality."

## The Later Period: Deepening the Perspective of Complex Responsive Processes

The period (2008 to the current day) saw a number of changes to the DMan, where students are now working actively with narrative research methods, pragmatic philosophy, and process sociology. They write narratives about what is happening to them at work, drawing on pragmatic theories of experience, communication and action, and social theories, which take an interest in power, culture, and identity. One of the cofounders of the DMan program, Patricia Shaw, left faculty in 2009 to pursue other projects. Ralph Stacey himself stepped down as director of the program in 2011 and was replaced by Chris Mowles, although he has continued as a member of faculty. Meanwhile, the other original founder of the DMan, Doug Griffin, died after a short illness in December 2015 and is missed by the wider research community. During this period, Stacey wrote two further books, the one under discussion here (2010) *Complexity and Organizational Reality: Uncertainty and the Need to Rethink Management after the Collapse of Investment Capitalism* and *The Tools and Techniques of Leadership and Management: Meeting the Challenge of Complexity* (2012) and two further editions of his textbook, the last of which was updated and revised with Chris Mowles (Stacey and Mowles 2016). Taking these three volumes together gives the most comprehensive statement of Stacey's thinking, but consistent with the enquiry into learning and knowledge creation, this chapter deals with the first volume.

## Complexity and Organizational Reality

The first thing to note is that Stacey does not stick simply to revising and updating the 2001 volume but paints a much wider canvas to understand the financial crisis from a complex responsive processes perspective. He links the crisis to the dominant and impoverished understanding of what leaders and managers do in organizations from the perspective of what gets taught in many business schools. It is still the case, he argues, that we have an expectation that leaders and managers can control the futures of their organizations and choose their "direction." Even a cursory consideration of what happened during the financial crises would lead all but the most committed of managerialists to assume the opposite, that leaders might be in charge, but they are certainly not in control. The book makes an extensive argument critiquing the notion that there could ever be an evidence-base for management, based on the sciences of certainty. This is because these depend upon generalized propositions, which apply irrespective of context. Rather, he restates why the complexity sciences, what one might term the "sciences of uncertainty," are a better source domain for thinking about stability and change, and how global patterns of human activity arise simply and only because of what everyone is doing together in their local interactions. They also account for the contextual nature of organizational knowledge, which is not universally applicable. No doubt influenced by process sociologist Elias, Stacey traces the historical development of leadership and management, the historical development of a sense of self (Taylor 1992), the development of the state and abstract ways of thinking (Scott 1998), and the evolution of concepts derived from the complexity sciences and how they have been taken up by organizational scholars.

In the last of these, he notices how a majority of complexity scholars still operate from within a paradigm of control, assuming that complex processes can be harnessed by leaders and managers for the good of the firm. He sides with Zhu (2007), who argues that many scholars drawing on the complexity sciences offer very little difference from the paradigms they claim to be replacing, because they are still stuck within a paradigm of control. Anything radical or different has a tendency to be absorbed into existing patterns of thinking and has to show that it aspires to scientific abstract mathematical modeling (McKelvey 2003), a helpful discipline, but not one which can say much about what human beings get up to on a daily basis in organizations. Focusing on what people are doing equates to taking an interest in processes of communicative interaction, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion as this plays into the repetition or potential transformation of our identities, and the flux and change of power figurations sustained and potentially transformed through norms, values, and ideology.

Stacey offers no prescriptions for how to get ourselves out of the muddle that we find ourselves in implementing vast schemes of improvement in the UK for education and health, for example. These have yet to demonstrate their effectiveness, yet we continue to insist that visionary leaders and managers can lead us to utopia. Instead, he offers more humble insights. Firstly, and whatever we mean by leadership, it manifests itself as the ability to endure the anxiety of uncertainty longer than

others. It also involves an enhanced capacity to notice one's own habitual patterns, and the habitual reactions of the group, to complex and demanding situations, and perhaps to draw these to people's attention. The reasons for doing so are that the general complexity of the environment is also present in the local day-to-day interactions taking place in every day organizational life. This observation points to the importance of cultivating reflexivity in leaders and managers, so that they become more detached about their involvement in the game of organizational life. He also draws attention to the importance of depathologising conflict, which arises inevitably in a situation calling out different goods. For Stacey, a leader is someone who is able to bring a group of people into a different relationship with themselves and thus with the leader; they are able better to recognize themselves and their situation, and understand themselves anew. Leaders are better able to articulate emerging patterns, or experiential themes, which are evolving in the experience of being together. Finally, change arises in everyday conversational activity and the capacity to notice, engage with, and make this more nuanced, enhancing our understanding of who we are and what we are doing together, offers greater hope for enduring uncertain and complex situations. Leadership is a highly social activity practiced in groups, and improving our ability to pay greater attention to this practice, finding more subtle ways to describe how it is playing out and how we might participate in it, may offer more opportunities for creating the futures we desire.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Focusing on Experience

Ralph Stacey was part of a small cohort of scholars in the early 1990s who were the first to identify the potential of the complexity sciences for informing a different approach to understanding processes of stability and change in organizations. Gradually, and over time, scholars drawing on the complexity sciences have proliferated, and it has almost become taken for granted that leaders and managers have to take complexity seriously if they are to do their jobs well. To a degree, this is often synonymous with a modernist narrative that increasing globalization and advances in information technology have meant that old paradigms of management no longer pertain. The taking up of insights from the complexity sciences are then seen as a contingent response to the emergence of new environments and pressures and enable leaders and managers to continue to exercise control in conditions of uncertainty. Complexity is a new tool in the managerial armory. These are precisely the assumptions that Stacey had abandoned by the end of the 1990s.

To illustrate the difference between Stacey's perspective and those of his contemporaries, let me draw on a paper from 2007 by Mary Uhl-Bien, Russ Marion, and Bill McKelvey, three eminent scholars who bring in the complexity sciences extensively in their work. The paper argues that top-down bureaucratic forms of management were effective for the industrial age, but a new form of leadership is needed for the knowledge age. This requires the development of a new framework for leadership, which the authors term complexity leadership theory (CLT). They then draw on

CAS to argue that organizations are complex adaptive systems, which have a unique and socially constructed "persona." What is needed is a theory of leadership, rather than merely focusing on leaders, which encourages adaptive and emergent outcomes. The required leadership framework needs to distinguish between administrative leadership that serves to coordinate organizational activity and adaptive leadership to refer to the leadership that occurs in emergent, informal adaptive dynamics throughout the organization. Finally, the authors claim that the framework needs to address adaptive challenges rather than technical problems, since the former and not amenable to authoritative fiat and involve managers trying to find their way out of problems they may not have encountered before. They adapt Ashby's (1960) law of requisite variety to argue for a law of requisite complexity, i.e., that the degree of complexity inside an organization needs to match the degree of complexity outside the organization. So complex problems demand complex responses, and it is the role of the leadership framework to:

> [seek] to foster CAS dynamics while at the same time enabling control structures appropriate for coordinating formal organizations and producing outcomes appropriate to the vision and mission of the system. It seeks to integrate complexity dynamics and bureaucracy, enabling and coordinating, exploration and exploitation, CAS and hierarchy, and informal emergence and top-down control. (2007, p. 304)

The point of bringing in this example is not so much to critique it but to demonstrate the difference Stacey brings as he joins together both the natural sciences of complexity and social sciences into a radically social view of organizations. Stacey no longer claims that organizations are CAS, as do Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007) – in fact he argues that they are not systems at all. Moreover, he has dropped many of the dualisms prevalent in Uhl-Bien et al.'s (2007) article. Stacey challenges the idea that there is a clear distinction between leadership and management, that there would be no difference between administrative and adaptive leadership for contingent conditions, and that there are bureaucratic structures and emergent processes (which he originally formulated as the legitimate and shadow organization until he changed his mind). Nor does he consider emergence to be a special category of human activity, which is the opposite of something planned or structured. Whatever emerges emerges because of the activity of feeling human bodies acting locally, whether they are planning or undertaking some other kind of activity. Human beings are constantly responding and adapting to each other all the time, in Stacey's view. In his books of 2010 and 2012, particularly alluding to the financial crisis, he has challenged the assumption that emergent processes are inevitably creative and innovative; for Stacey, they may also be destructive and regressive. Only time will tell, and the judgment depends on who is judging.

In sum, Stacey's work has moved to a position that calls into question the paradigm of managerial control and assumes that complexity helps us understand all human relating and always has. It may be that we are currently bombarded by rapid and complex change for a variety of reasons, but people in all ages have complained about the increased tempo of change afflicting their particular era and

have bemoaned the threats to identity and existing ways of doing things which result. It would be safe to say that Stacey's oeuvre has little in common with many of his contemporaries who still draw on the complexity sciences to produce new managerial frameworks to intervene instrumentally in organizations understood as systems. Instead, it probably has more family resemblances with process theories of organizational becoming (Tsoukas and Chia 2002; Langley and Tsoukas 2012; Langley et al. 2013; Hernes 2014), or critical management studies (CMS), although there are also clear differences with both traditions of thought. What the perspective of complex responsive processes shares with process theories of organization is a preoccupation with organizational becoming, with intersubjectivity and with complex theories of time. What it shares with CMS is interest in power, politics, and the creation and recreation of identity, what one might understand as a theory of culture or *habitus*. The perspective is critical, rather than realist, pragmatic rather than instrumental and above all values reflexivity and the dialectical exploration of difference. Although it encourages a focus on microinteractions to understand how global patterns are being functionalized, it is a perspective which claims to account for micro and macrosocial phenomena understood paradoxically. It does not require, as some critics have argued, a macrosocial theory at another level of observation: this is to completely misunderstand one of Stacey's central insights, following Elias (2000), that local and global arise simultaneously, forming and being formed.

Ralph Stacey was a successful working economist and has latterly achieved international eminence in organizational scholarship and in the domain of group therapy. But it would also be true to say that he has done so by highly unorthodox means according to the current standards of the academy, and particularly in the domain of organization studies. He has not been an assiduous publisher of journal articles, he has not been active on the conference circuit, he has not founded a research center in order to host waves of visitors and delegations, nor has he developed franchisable tools, frameworks, and techniques from which to make money. There is no copyrighted Stacey method – he did once design a two-by-two matrix, with one axis charting high agreement to low agreement and the other mapping close to certainty or far from certainty to map the conditions in which extraordinary management is required. Stacey had dropped this contingency theory of management by the millennium, although the diagram persists with a life of its own. The first two factors leave him open to the accusation that he has not sufficiently tested his ideas in peer review.

Instead he founded the modest DMan program of around 16 students at any one time, which still attracts participants from all over the world, and he has taken delight in working with consultants, managers, and leaders from all sorts of organizations to help them toward their doctorates. He also started the annual complexity and management conference, which is unlike most academic conferences; it is not structured around the presentation of academic papers but creates maximum opportunity for delegates to talk to each other about things which matter to them. As mentioned previously, the DMan is a professional doctorate, which aims to make a

contribution to practice as much as theory, and students produce theses which are highly engaging, complex, practical, and reflexive, but ultimately hard to derive articles from to publish in journals. Nonetheless, Stacey states that the thing which gives him most professional pleasure is to see ordinary managers, some of whom are less formally educated than many doctoral students, walking onto stage to collect their doctorates from the university's Vice Chancellor after a number of years of intellectual struggle in the research community. What is more, because the DMan is run as a group, faculty and students develop a degree of engagement with each other, which is highly unusual in an academic setting. In follow-up surveys, the 60 or so graduates of the program have described their experience as profound and transformational, and this is also true of the broader community of consultants, academics, and managers who have attended the annual conference over the years. One way of understanding Stacey's legacy, then, is not just to restrict it to an explanation of a complex body of ideas, which have proved very influential, but to note how he has consistently created space and time, on the DMan, at the conference and in the many public talks he is invited to give and for the contemplation of and engagement with what it means to be human and live a good life. In this sense, Stacey is part of a much more ancient tradition dating back to the Greeks and beyond of bringing people face to face to take their experience seriously, to question each other, to deliberate, and to demonstrate through that activity what we mean to each other.

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## Further Reading

The most recent and comprehensive statement of Stacey's work is to be found in the 7th edition of the textbook published in 2016 (Stacey and Mowles 2016). Meanwhile for a lighter and briefer overview of some of the key ideas, readers may be interested in: Mowles, C. (2011) *Rethinking Management: radical insights from the complexity sciences*, London: Gower. For an exploration of one of the key concepts of complex responsive processes, paradox, then Mowles' next book (2015) *Managing in Uncertainty: Complexity and the Paradoxes of Everyday Organisational Life,* London: Routledge, might be helpful, as might a chapter he wrote on one of the key contributors to the theory of complex responsive processes, Norbert Elias: Mowles, C. (2015) The Paradox of Stability and Change: Elias' Processual Sociology, in Garud, R., Simpson, B., Langley, A., and Tsoukas, H. (Eds) *The Emergence of Novelty in Organizations*, Oxford Oxford University Press :pp.245–271. For an insight into how the DMan program is run as a research community drawing on the ideas of the pragmatists and methods from group analytic practice then there are two articles in press. These explore the potential contribution of group analytic thinking to critical management education based on 16 years' experience running the DMan, and, inversely, explain critical management thinking and practice to group analysts: Mowles, C. (in press 2017) Experiencing uncertainty – on the potential of groups and a group analytic approach for making management education more critical, *Management Learning,* and **Mowles, C. (in press 2017) Group analytic methods beyond the clinical setting – working with researcher-managers, *Group Analysis***.

# Robert Tannenbaum: An Examined Life

# 74

## Christopher G. Worley, Anthony Petrella, and Linda Thorne

### Abstract

This chapter chronicles Robert Tannenbaum's life and contributions to organization development and change. Considered one of the founding fathers of OD, Tannenbaum's shift from accounting to industrial relations marked an increasing emphasis and passion for humanistic psychology. He was a champion for personal growth within a systems perspective, always recognizing the specific situation within which people were embedded. Although his publications on leadership, decision-making, and change were considerable and influential, it was his affirming impact in person – with each individual and audience he met – that defines his legacy in organizational change.

## Contents

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> Many organizations today, particularly those at the leading edge of technology, are faced with ferment and flux. In increasing instances, the bureaucratic model – with its emphasis on relatively rigid structure, well-defined functional specialization, direction and control exercised through a formal hierarchy of authority ... and relative impersonality of human relationships – is responding inadequately to the demands placed upon it from the outside and from within the organization. There is increasing need for experimentation, for learning from experience, for flexibility and adaptability, and for growth. (Tannenbaum and Davis 1969, p. 67)

## Introduction

Anyone could be forgiven for attributing the opening quote to some modern-day management guru. It was, in fact, written in 1969 by the subject of this chapter, Robert "Bob" Tannenbaum, and his client at TRW Space Systems, Sheldon Davis. The paragraph appears in the introduction to an article that proposed and defended a set of fundamental values that differentiated the growing social movement known as human relations and the practice of organizational development (OD). It was a watershed moment in the field provided by one of its leaders. For many, the article captured a zeitgeist; for others, it still does.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on Tannenbaum's life and contributions. He was highly regarded within the field of OD, the specialized niche of organization change that relies on the application of behavioral science to improve organization effectiveness (Cummings and Worley 2015). Tannenbaum is considered a founding father of OD and, in particular, a champion for personal growth and self-awareness. For Bob, separating personal growth from organizational change was like separating yin from yang.

In as much as this volume is oriented toward scholars and scholar-practitioners who made important contributions to change theory, the role of the scholar-practitioner – the one who not only develops but applies concepts and theories in practice – should be recognized and given special consideration. It is, in many ways, a more difficult task. Helping managers solve organizational problems and develop solutions in ways that transfer knowledge, build capacity and capability, improve performance, and contribute to an individual's growth and learning is inordinately and profoundly complex. Rigorous practitioners have contributed much to our understanding of the organization change phenomenon (Beckhard and Harris 1977; Kleiner 1996).

As authors and chroniclers of Tannenbaum's history and contribution – and knowing him the way we did – we also see the purpose of this chapter as including a strong practitioner orientation in addition to Bob's academic achievements. For all of Tannenbaum's conceptual developments and publications on the role of

managers, managerial decision-making, leadership, and group dynamics, he was always connected to practice. Relevance and effectiveness were important watchwords. In addition to our descriptions of Tannenbaum's contributions to change thinking, we also will be focused on his contributions to change practice.

The chapter proceeds as follows. We first provide a chronology of Tannenbaum's early life, upbringing, education, and professional accomplishments. We then discuss three "arcs" in his academic and practitioner career, including his views of humanism, his views regarding the role of individuals in the course of organization change, and his application of systems theory. We conclude with observations about his insights and impacts on the field and our sense of how Tannenbaum would view the world today.

## Influences and Motivations

Bob Tannenbaum was born to Henry and Nettie Tannenbaum in Cripple Creek, Colorado, in 1915. He remembered his early years as "a very happy period of my life" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 36). He reflected that many of his psychological strengths "may have been built in that early period" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 36).

In 1923, his family moved to Santa Ana, Calif. Southern California was to be an important context in his life and the setting of important experiences. For example, shortly after the move, he was confronted while walking home from school and called a "Jew" and "Christ killer." He described that event "as deeply central to the later years. It was a terrible rejection for me" (Tannenbaum 1995, pp. 39–40). Two years later, Bob had climbed a tree in front of his house, and as school let out, a boy saw him in the tree and yelled out to others, "Hey, do you want to see a Jew?" Several kids gathered around the tree, staring and taunting him. Tannenbaum stayed in the tree. Instead of coming down to fight, he "cowered in the tree and *took* it" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 41). The tree experience became an important story for him; it was a central theme in his 1977 OD Network Conference speech. One outcome from these two experiences was Tannenbaum's identification with and empathy toward minorities or "anything that sets a person off as separate from the others" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 41).

In 1932, Tannenbaum entered Santa Ana Junior College, taking leadership roles as president of his freshman class and of the student body. He entered the University of Chicago as a junior in 1935 and graduated with his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1937. Tannenbaum placed second out of 103 at the end of his senior year and was invited to join the Phi Beta Kappa Society. He believed that Chicago's comprehensive testing process worked well for him. "With my kind of systems sense, if I saw a problem or a case in a question, that characteristic of mine helped me to pick out very quickly the material from many different places that would be relevant" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 60). Tannenbaum believed that had the exams been more traditional, requiring memorization of facts and details, he would not have done as well.

In that same year, he began teaching accounting at Oklahoma A&M College, postponing work on his master's degree, also in accounting, to replace a professor on leave. However, in January, Tannenbaum's father became ill. Although Tannenbaum continued his teaching and received updates, by the time he was able to get to Santa Ana, his father had died, and he was only able to attend the funeral.

Tannenbaum returned to the University of Chicago in 1938 to begin his master's degree in accounting and soon began having anxiety attacks. They would usually occur when he was alone in the evening. Despite receiving support from a cousin and a very good friend, he decided to seek more help from the student health services office. Their counseling approach was based on a behavioral science theory, which Tannenbaum stopped finding helpful after just a few weeks. As his first attempt at "seriously trying to cope with my feelings," he considered it "a major life experience . . . and its impact has carried forward dramatically in both my personal life and my professional life" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 71).

He began his doctoral studies in Chicago in the fall of 1939. His declared major was personnel management and industrial relations. While at Oklahoma A&M College, he decided to change his major from accounting and described this as "my first move toward people" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 75). There was no epiphany, just a gradual change in focus. But World War II put that work on hold.

Tannenbaum joined the US Navy in 1942 and was accepted into its V-12 program, which quickly trained officers. He was assigned to the Combat Information Center (CIC) and to Destroyer Squadron 22. Tannenbaum's job was "going from ship to ship and training and helping in developing effective CIC operations." Because he went to different ships, he "had a chance to observe nine commanding officers and their leadership styles, [which] were markedly different, ranging from very democratic to . . . very authoritarian and non-consultative" (Tannenbaum 1995, pp. 88–89). Tannenbaum saw this experience as a significant influence in the creation of his views on leadership.

During this time (1945), he met and married Edith (nee Lazaroff) Tannenbaum. The courtship lasted all of 28 hours. "Her centeredness and emotional maturity, given the kind of conflicted inner psyche that I have – with my drive for achieving, for accomplishing – has just been terribly important to me, because she's been there as a rock, giving me a sense of peace, perspective, and balance" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 102).

Bob Tannenbaum received his doctorate in 1949 with a dissertation titled "A Rational Synthesis of the Manager Concept with Application to the Managerial Decision-Making Process."

In the fall of 1948, Tannenbaum joined the University of California, Los Angeles, with a joint appointment to the College of Business Administration and the Institute of Industrial Relations. He started as acting assistant professor as he was finishing his Ph.D. and became an assistant professor after the Ph.D. was awarded. The school's dean, Neil Jacoby, knew Tannenbaum from the University of Chicago and held the goal to "build a modern personnel management/industrial relations area" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 162). Bob eagerly began that process by changing the curriculum and hiring faculty. By 1950, he had become the personnel management/industrial relations area chair at the school and continued in that position until 1963.

Under his guidance and leadership, UCLA's business school – now the Anderson School – became a leading center of research and practice in organizational development and leadership.

Tannenbaum took an early retirement from UCLA in 1977 for health reasons and moved to Carmel, California. During his career, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Saybrook Institute, elected as a fellow of the NTL Institute, admitted as a diplomate from the American Board of Professional Psychology, and recognized as a distinguished member of the OD Network. He also received the first ASTD's Lifetime Achievement Award and was regarded as a leading figure in the field of humanistic psychology, where his oral history and papers are archived at University of California, Santa Barbara, along with those of Rollo May, Carl Rogers, James Bugental, and Virginia Satir.

## Key Contributions to the Field of Organizational Change

Tannenbaum's contributions to organizational change include strong views about the importance of humanistic values, the related belief that individuals are the source of ideas, energy and change in organizations, and early advocacy of systems thinking. His publications, teaching, speeches, and practice provide important grounding to these contributions.

## Humanistic Values

Bob's early writing, based mostly on his doctoral dissertation, explored the definitions and functions of management and the processes of decision-making. These articles were written in a positivist, rationalist, and scientific style at a seminal time in the evolution of organization theory. They reflected important contributions to what would become known as the human relations movement (Scott 1981; Perrow 1979). Over time, however, his orientation changed dramatically to psychological, humanistic, and behavioral.

Tannenbaum's initial descriptions of management and formal organization were clearly influenced by the researchers of the time. His first two articles – "The Manager Concept: A Rational Synthesis" (Tannenbaum 1949) and "Managerial Decision-Making" (Tannenbaum 1950) – were heavily influenced by Chester Barnard's (1938) The Functions of the Executive, as well as Herbert Simon's (1947) views of administrative behavior. In "The Manager Concept," Tannenbaum aimed to understand the functions of management. In addition to Barnard and Simon, he reviewed, among others, the writings of Stene (1940), Mooney and Reiley (1939), and Mary Parker Follett (1940) to determine the most parsimonious set of management functions. He concluded that "managers are those who use formal authority to organize, direct or control responsible subordinates . . . in order that all service contributions be coordinated in the attainment of an enterprise purpose"

(Tannenbaum 1949, p. 240). His definition appears a full five years before the widely accepted definition by Koontz and O'Donnell (1955).

"Managerial Decision-Making" is a tutorial on the types and processes of rational decision-making in organizations. After classifying and describing his terms, Tannenbaum turned to an analysis of authority as a central part of his definition of management. "The real source of the authority possessed by an individual lies in the acceptance of its exercise by those who are subject to it" (Tannenbaum 1950, p. 26). This perspective on power and authority was enormously popular among the human relations crowd but would be challenged by Emerson (1962), who argued power was a function of dependency.

While his first two articles were decidedly rational extensions of existing theory, the two follow-on articles, "Participation by Subordinates in the Managerial Decision-Making Process" (Tannenbaum and Massarik 1950) and "Job Satisfaction, Productivity and Morale" (Tannenbaum et al. 1961) began to explore the implications of these views on practical matters. In the participation article, Tannenbaum described the opportunity and logic for participation. He did not see participation as a "normatively" good thing. Participation was a "contingency" that needed to be understood. Adding additional knowledge, experience, and perspective directly addressed a weak assumption in the rational decision-making model regarding the manager's knowledge of alternatives. Participation was thus an interesting possibility in terms of contributing to better decision quality and execution. In the job satisfaction article, Tannenbaum attempted to connect and integrate these concepts in terms of organizational effectiveness.

With the publication of "Some Current Issues in Human Relations" (Tannenbaum 1959), however, he left the rationalist view behind and fully embraced a humanistic one. In the article, Bob responded to especially caustic criticisms of the human relations movement (Schoen 1957; McNair 1957, 1958). He suggested that in an area exploding as quickly as human relations, the broad range of opinions, perspectives, arguments, and controversies should be unsurprising. Training group (T-group) and sensitivity training programs had caught fire and liberated (brainwashed, according to the detractors) executives, social workers, engineers, mothers, and steel workers. Many of those were becoming apostles and advocates. It radically increased the number and diversity of voices from a variety of backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, education, and motivations.

Looking across this tangle of claims and techniques, Bob argued that human relations was a set of skills, competencies, knowledge (developed through research), tools, and processes for understanding how people get along with each other. Like any set of skills, knowledge and understandings, it could be used for good or ill, and he agreed that some people had used these tools badly, while others had inappropriate objectives or motivations. However he also clearly stated that it was important to keep focused on the right issues. That a few people were misusing the tools should not distract managers and researchers from the potential for human achievement. Both the seller and the buyer in a transaction have responsibilities to ensure a product's productive use. Tannenbaum demonstrated a nuanced understanding of

the social movement of which he was a part. He was aware of how powerful these tools, methods, and knowledge were, and he tried to diffuse irrational fears with rational arguments.

By the mid-1960s, human relations, humanistic psychology, T-groups, and sensitivity training were in full bloom. Organizational development had emerged as an important and applied manifestation of these perspectives, theories, and techniques and McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* (McGregor 1960) had catalyzed much of its promise. But riding on the coattails of human relations, the field of OD was more a movement than a disciplined professional activity. Tannenbaum believed that the field needed to be more explicit about its foundations. "Very often in our field, when people are talking about change, they don't deal explicitly in terms of, 'Toward what?' Wouldn't you say that Hitler brought about organizational transformation in Germany? It's not enough to talk about change or transformation, but . . . to say, 'For what?' Or, 'In what direction?' 'Why?' And what are the values involved?" (Tannenbaum 1995, pp. 4–5).

After working for more than four years with Sheldon Davis, a senior personnel manager, at TRW Space Systems, Tannenbaum and Davis presented a paper at the MIT/Sloan School's McGregor Conference that would become "Values, Man and Organizations" (Tannenbaum and Davis 1969). The 13 values clarified and differentiated how a humanistic view of people in organizations could be applied. We chose seven as illustrative:

- Away from utilizing an individual primarily with reference to his job description toward viewing him as a whole person
- Away from walling off the expression of feelings toward making possible both appropriate expression and effective use
- Away from maskmanship and game playing toward authentic behavior
- Away from distrusting people toward trusting them
- Away from avoiding facing others with relevant data toward making appropriate confrontation
- Away from avoidance of risk-taking toward willingness to risk
- Away from a primary emphasis on competition toward a much greater emphasis on collaboration

More than any other statement of its time, the article became an important touchstone for the field. "In our view, McGregor was overly cautious and tentative in calling the Theory Y tenets 'assumptions' and in limiting them to being his 'interpretations'" (p. 68). Tannenbaum and Davis declared this as the way to unleash the untapped potential of both individuals and organizations.

Tannenbaum was a vocal proponent of the humanistic values he believed appropriate for the OD profession, and he continued to refine them. By the 1983 ODN Conference, he was challenging the field with additional values, including recognition and acceptance of differences, awareness of and concern for our social and ecological environments, the pursuit of peace, holding a sense of the sacred, and loving unconditionally beginning with one's self.

Tannenbaum's critics believed that his position – and perhaps more importantly his advocacy of the values – was overly directive. This is an enduring issue, as the field of OD remains mired in debates about its "values" and how they should be expressed and used (Church and Jamieson 2014; Worley 2014). In particular, interventionists are often reluctant to share their beliefs, knowing that it is crucial for people to discover and articulate their own value systems. This belief springs from experience and asserts that it is especially important for leaders with formal authority to understand and acknowledge their own values and mission.

## Individuals as the Source of Ideas, Energy, and Change

Why or when Tannenbaum developed the view that everyone was a unique individual and that this mattered greatly to organization change is unknowable. But he would certainly have agreed with the quote from Walt Kelly's famous Pogo comic strip, "we have met the enemy and he is us!" (http://www.thisdayinquotes.com/2011/04/we-have-met-enemy-and-he-is-us.html). It is also a safe bet that this perspective was connected to his experiences in and commitments to sensitivity training.

The first National Training Laboratory (NTL) in Group Development was held in Bethel, Maine, in the summer of 1947. NTL had been established to study the T-group as an alternative to traditional forms of learning and education. Paul Sheets, the head of UCLA's Extension Services, was involved with this early training and wanted to start a similar program in the West. In 1951, Sheets invited Tannenbaum to be part of a planning committee that would eventually launch the Western Training Laboratories. "For me, these [planning sessions] were very exciting. I was with people who were very behavioral science-oriented and all humanistically oriented. I was in the process of making a transition myself, from personnel management and industrial relations into the behavioral sciences. I was in a learning mode" (Tannenbaum 1995, pp. 196–197). The first Western Training Laboratories program was held in 1952. In 1958, the Western Training Laboratories moved to the UCLA conference center near Lake Arrowhead, California.

Tannenbaum served as the dean of faculty, and during his involvement with T-groups, he continually experimented with different models. He was always focused on personal learning. Reflecting Bob's emerging views on the individual's role in change, the Western Training Laboratories focused on the person – on the self – rather than interpersonal relationships. Without polarizing the differences, the NTL laboratories focused on group dynamics. Staff exchanges between the two groups began in the early 1960s and afforded important cross-pollination opportunities. Tannenbaum's first trip to NTL's Bethel was in 1963. As the dean of an advanced lab, he invited Will Schutz, Herb Shepard, and Charlie Seashore to be on his staff. Tannenbaum also worked with Abraham Maslow at a Western lab.

But Bob's interests in this subject extended beyond Western Training Laboratories and NTL. In 1953, with the help of Irving Weschler and Fred Massarik, Tannenbaum started "Leadership Principles and Practices," an undergraduate course in sensitivity training. It was probably the first sensitivity course offered in any

management school. The title was deliberate. Tannenbaum was aware that most academic courses focused on the intellect and any course that dealt with the emotional and intuitive would be looked upon with suspicion (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 219). In 1966–1967, Tannenbaum – along with Art Shedlin – also developed the first university-based OD training program, a ten-week residential "Learning Community in Organization Development" course for OD practitioners. It was sponsored by UCLA's Graduate School of Management and its university extension. It lasted for two years in that form and then was shortened to a six-week, full-time program that continued until Tannenbaum's heart attack in 1971 (Tannenbaum 1995, pp. 298–299). Tannenbaum also contributed to the Master of Science in Organization Development (MSOD) program at Pepperdine University, which was created by one of his students, Pat Williams, in 1975. Tannenbaum was a central figure in that program, advising faculty on curriculum design and teaching in every cohort until the year before he died. In addition, Tannenbaum partnered with Williams in Mexico, where he helped to build the University of Monterrey's OD program and the Mexican Association of Professionals in OD.

The culmination of Tannenbaum's interest in individual change as key to organizational change came in his collaboration with Bob Hannah, a former student, with whom he developed the "Holding On and Letting Go" program at NTL. It was first held in 1976, and Tannenbaum stayed with it until 1985. The lab was entirely focused on intrapersonal matters, matters of deep, emotional, and generally unconscious blockages. The basic premise underlying the workshop was that individuals in the context of social organizations become increasingly unwilling to change when the change gets closer to their core identity. In referencing this work, Tannenbaum quoted Ernest Schachtel, a psychoanalyst:

> The anxiety of the encounter with the unknown springs ... from the person's fear of letting go of the attitudes to which he clings for safety, of the perspectives which these attitudes give him on the world, and of the familiar labels for what he sees in the world. So man is afraid that without the support of his accustomed attitudes, perspectives, and labels he will fall into an abyss or flounder in the pathless. Letting go of every kind of clinging opens the fullest view. But it is this very letting go which often arouses the greatest amount of anxiety". (Tannenbaum 1976, p. 4)

It's no wonder we are inclined to hold on to the "safety" of our old and familiar ways of being. Emotions and their source are neither easy to acknowledge nor deal with. In this lab, people encountered confusion, shock, fear, helplessness, depression, and loss of meaning. Understanding this process was an important step in discovering one's "inner voice" and of the connection between the self and change.

The insights gained through these personal development and educational experiences helped Tannenbaum develop a better understanding of how difficult it is for a person to change. He admonished overly enthusiastic "change agents" to be more aware and respectful of the difficulties people have with change. The need for safety, stability, and continuity were – and are – a powerful force for "holding on," and powerful feelings need to be explored and "let go" if leaders expect deep change in their organizations.

Tannenbaum thus developed the belief that self-knowledge and self-awareness could liberate and mature a person and that, in the end, this path allowed the individual to make appropriate choices regarding his or her identity rather than be chained to past experience. Tannenbaum believed that for an individual to break the bonds of the past and confront the responsibility of free choice, the greatest strength that person could have was faith in his or her real self and that the self was an inner being of feelings and emotions that could be understood only through work. It was a journey that took time, required a growing maturity, and was unique to every individual.

In his search for ways to raise a person's consciousness, Bob learned that feelings were most often the doorway to personal discovery, insight, and change. He said, "I frequently used this phrase: "in personal learning, feelings are our best friends"" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 140). Feelings needed to be acknowledged, examined, learned from, and appropriately expressed. He was convinced that thinking is always accompanied by a parallel stream of emotion that there is an indivisible connection between thoughts and feelings. A friend recognized this capacity in Bob:

> "I see how beautifully you combine thought and feeling.
> Thought without feeling sits like a stone on the brain,
> on the page, or on the tongue.
> But with warmth and compassion it takes wing and flies
> straight to the heart."
>     A gift from Liz Bugental, wife of James Bugental, on the occasion of Tannenbaum's 80th birthday

When a person consciously embraces this awareness, he or she is much more likely to take the right action. Carl Rogers supported such a view. He wrote that a person emerging from therapy "increasingly discovers that his own organism is trustworthy; that it is a suitable instrument for discovering the most satisfying behavior in each immediate situation" (Moustakas 1956, p. 206).

This was one of Tannenbaum's biggest contributions to the field of organization change: the understanding and realization of the complex role emotions make to effectiveness, which is the output of a system composed of a situation and some people (Tannenbaum and Massarik 1957). Tannenbaum focused his considerable intellect on the people part of that equation and how the complexities of life contributed to dysfunctional behaviors. While never denying the contribution of the situation (see below), it was Tannenbaum's belief that with effort, individuals could understand themselves well enough to make increasingly conscious and responsible choices to engage in new behaviors, move in new directions, and provide the impetus to make organization changes.

In his work with T-groups, with intact teams, teaching and speaking, and in his consulting/coaching, Bob worked to bring people's limiting scripts into consciousness, thereby freeing them to make more enlightened and appropriate choices in their lives. He believed that clients must ultimately find the courage to freely face existential questions and act in accordance with their inner compass. He encouraged and equipped people to take responsibility for their future.

Tannenbaum's beliefs always guided his counseling conversations with clients and mentees. He was both patient and optimistic that, given the right environment, it was within the power of most people to reach their full potential. Tannenbaum accepted this belief as an article of faith. He worked hard to help his clients and students develop a level of confidence in their inner voices that allowed them to come out from behind the masks they wore. Working toward this courageous faith and freedom of choice in people, in their being and becoming, was the foundation of his work.

Tannenbaum was, in many ways, swimming upstream against a society and culture that actively discouraged the expression of feelings, especially negative feelings, and his psychodynamic perspective was not a widely shared view in the world of organization development. Very few, if any, people in the field of OD approached the depth of self-exploration that Bob proposed. In this regard, he was a pioneer.

He followed this path in his own life; it was a signature of his work in the field of organizational change. He deeply believed that the individual was *the* major source of ideas, energy and change. He believed that the pursuit of self-knowledge and free choice were important values. They were also a doorway to greater effectiveness in the individual's life: with family, organization, and beyond.

## Systems Thinking

In a 1982 interview with Dave Jamieson for the *Training and Development Journal*, Tannenbaum was asked what concept or framework could move the practice of organizational development forward. He responded, "To me, the most powerful framework available is systems theory, which is also a way of thinking about the world. I think this view is particularly appropriate for practitioners. An organization's relationships with its environment ... is becoming more important as determinants of what happens inside the [organization]. We will need to devote more attention to problems which exist at this boundary" (Jamieson and Tannenbaum 1982).

As much as he believed in the single individual as the source for change, Tannenbaum also believed that significant change at any social system level, from interpersonal, to group, to organization and beyond, was likely to trigger insecurity and stress. Managers and OD practitioners must be prepared to respect, live, and work with this reality. Thus, Tannenbaum's focus on self-development was complemented by an interest in the practical application of systems thinking.

In particular, there was an emerging understanding that the T-group/sensitivity training experience, while powerful, was limited in its transferability. Maintaining the new behaviors developed in a T-group environment was impossible in the context of the organizational environment where structures, systems, processes, power, and culture were at play. In the late 1960s, for example, Tannenbaum supported Lou Davis – whose focus was job design – in bringing Eric Trist to UCLA. Tannenbaum knew and respected Trist from their experiences at Bethel and

NTL. Because of Trist's pioneering work in sociotech work, "we became much more aware of the importance of technology in the unfolding of organization work and, in other important ways, had our horizons widened" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 188).

One of the first interventions using systems awareness occurred in 1952–1953 at the US Naval Ordnance Test Station in China Lake, California. Extending the ideas learned in sensitivity training about the role of the individual in change and group dynamics, Tannenbaum and his colleagues facilitated "vertically structured" groups, a manager and his/her direct reports, to explore group dynamics, interpersonal communication, and task issues. These sessions are generally regarded as the first examples of what would become team building (French and Bell 1993, pp. 26–28; Tannenbaum 1995, pp. 281–282) and were chronicled in two publications (Tannenbaum et al. 1954; Kallejian et al. 1955). It was the first demonstration of group dynamic's pragmatic utility in the business world. Team building and team development would eventually become a broadly accepted organization practice (Dyer 1977).

For organization development, this was the "thin edge of the wedge." It opened up the view that the system, and not just the individuals in it, needed to change. Eventually, a small number of OD practitioners would take on an entire organization as the client. The consultant and client, often the CEO, would start with a complete examination of the organization's environment before addressing the internal dynamics of the organization. This was a radical departure from the "human relations" approach used to bring about organizational change by a focus on the personal and interpersonal organizational dynamics. It was a marriage of the practice of business consulting and organization development and a logical extension of systems thinking.

It also led Tannenbaum to extend his original thinking about leadership. In "Leadership: A Frame of Reference," Tannenbaum and Fred Massarik (1957) defined the term as "interpersonal influence, exercised in situation and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals" (p. 3). In other words, leadership was a process that involved an influencer (a leader), someone being influenced (a follower), and a situation. Although this article was not widely read, Tannenbaum believed that the ideas in the article formed many of the beliefs that were reflected in his later work (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 164).

His second leadership publication was based on a talk to California state administrators. Warren Schmidt encouraged him to write it up, and together they produced the HBR Classic "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern" (1958). It remains one of the most copied and downloaded articles of all time. While standard leadership training at that time was focused on a right way and a wrong way to be a leader, Tannenbaum's view was different. "We weren't the first to begin talking about leader, follower, and the situation, but we gave heavy emphasis to this. And as many of these things work out, the time [was] right for something" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 166). In the article, Tannenbaum and Schmidt suggested that leadership was not some monolithic set of competencies to be pursued and followed mechanistically. Instead, leaders may choose between extremes of top-down pronouncements and participation or involvement from subordinates. They labeled this as

boss-centered versus subordinate-centered leadership. "It was one of the first statements in the management literature of what 10–15 years later came to be known in the management theory area as contingency theory" (Tannenbaum 1995, p. 167).

Later in Tannenbaum's career, his counseling work with CEOs was done with a systems framework. CEOs, usually with their spouse, would visit him at his home in Carmel. They would spend a couple of days talking about the problematic issues facing the client. To prepare himself for these conversations, with the permission of his clients, Tannenbaum would contact their colleagues, subordinates, and adult family members. In these conversations, he inquired about their relationship with the client as well as how the client behaved in various situations. Tannenbaum showed a keen awareness of the importance of the practical and psychological environment of the client and how that environment impacted his or her behavior.

## Insights for the Field

Tannenbaum's influence on us as individuals, practitioners, and researchers and his influence on the field can be seen in the way much consulting work gets done. Although Tannenbaum was a productive writer/researcher early in his career, his legacy to organizational change is unlikely to be tightly connected to his writing. In that sense, one might say that he left a light footprint. Instead, his influence on change will be personal – and rightly so. His footprint resides in the people who learned from and experienced him when he was still alive. These people were deeply affected, and they carry this energy forward in the world today.

For us as individuals and practitioners, Tannenbaum was instrumental in launching or encouraging us to have committed lives of personal growth in service of being effective consultants and members of society. He was convinced that an OD practitioner would be a better organizational consultant if the practitioner was clear about, understood, and was able to know when a client said or did something that stirred an emotion, defensive routine, or other reaction. Importantly, however, Tannenbaum was clear about the boundaries of this work for practitioners and clients.

For practitioners, personal growth work was important to improve the consulting process; it was never about training practitioners to be therapists. In fact, Tannenbaum was quick to admonish practitioners, smitten by the personal growth bug after attending a T-group or other personal growth experience, who wanted to practice such tactics on clients. Personal growth was first about sharpening the consultant as an instrument of change, a process that each of us takes personally and seriously. Similarly, and in keeping with his views of systems theory as a central part of OD, coaching clients through difficult emotional experiences was always contextual. Finding the appropriate and relevant expression of feelings, emotions, thoughts, and ideas was always a part of organizational change, not some separate activity. Thus, while he advocated for personal growth in general, he was clear that OD was an organization process of which becoming more emotionally mature and

integrated was only a part. This integrated perspective of the change and consulting process is core to how we operate as practitioners and action researchers.

In thinking about how Bob influenced our own practice, our thoughts also center on the importance, power, and limits of affirmation. Bob's presence and expression was almost always affirming. He had a calm and considerate manner; we, and in fact almost anyone he interacted with, invariably felt that Bob was interested in their experience in the moment. When he spoke, he usually presented his thoughts and feelings in an open-ended way and sought a response from those listening. He was patient and could attentively listen to another person for a long time. It is no wonder that so many OD practitioners, including us, considered Bob a mentor and looked forward to the opportunities to be with him.

But affirming a person's worth or ability to change is not the same thing as encouraging someone to change. Bob's work on holding on and letting go raised an essential truth about change that transcends systems levels. The closer a system – individual or organizational – gets to issues of core identity, the more frightening change becomes. We fear that too many people in our field too easily and indiscriminately go for the "transformation" button without regard for the nature of the change. When change involves core identity, and it is incumbent on the OD practitioner to know when that is, the need for continuity must be appreciated. In our own personal growth work, each of us recognized a critic. That part of us which was eager to find different ways of being confrontational and all-too-willing to raise difficult issues with authority figures. But understanding the reality of core identity allowed us to become more patient, more accepting, more tolerant, and more caring. It allowed us to see reality and legitimate paths to wholeness in new ways.

Thus, much of Tannenbaum's impact came through an educational process and often through the many seminal speeches he gave to the US and Canadian OD networks. He used these opportunities to share his current thinking and raise issues that he saw in the profession, and they were always thought provoking. One of the themes he returned to numerous times was the abuse of "techniques, methodology, and procedures as being almost the be-all and end-all of OD work" (Tannenbaum 1968, p. 1). It was not techniques themselves that bothered him. It was people's dependency on their use and eventually to their overuse. Tannenbaum's plea was to develop and use one's self in consulting. He emphasized the need for behavioral flexibility and social sensitivity, for understanding the other, and for ways of being achieved only through self-understanding.

For example, Tannenbaum gave a keynote speech to the OD Network Conference in Pasadena, California, in 1983. After a statement of his credentials and accomplishments, the convener introduced him this way: "Bob's relationship to this network and to those whose lives he has touched is far deeper and richer than mere professional credentials. To walk and talk with Bob is to get more in touch with the spirit and the values of our profession. When you meet and share with Bob, you are more aware than ever that OD is not a set of techniques or workshop designs, nor is it a group of behavioral theories, not even a set of principles. OD, when you meet Bob, you learn [is] a matter of personal orientation, a matter of heart, a matter of toughness, a matter of modesty, a matter of grace, a matter of the power and the pain

of love." His insights, questions, and comments were challenging, wise, and helpful. People who were fortunate enough to have spent time with him benefited in their practice and their lives. One man working with one person inevitably produced change.

Anyone who was at the OD Network Conference in April, 1973 remembers – and many of those who were not there have either heard about, read about, or know about – the presentation that Tannenbaum gave, entitled "Does this Path have a Heart?" During the speech, he quoted Carlos Castaneda's "The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge" to express his belief in the importance of individual choice:

> I warn you look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself, and yourself alone, one question: Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is no good. One path makes you strong. The other one weakens you.

Although Bob was obviously talking about the practice of organization development, he was also asking this question in the most personal way. He confronted individual OD practitioners with the practical, moral, and spiritual question of how they wished to conduct their life as a way to give themselves and their work meaning. Tannenbaum was telling us that we all have this question to answer. Each of us and *each of us alone* must make the existential choice in everything that we do.

Every individual in every generation has to address this question. It is an unending odyssey, and it will never be done once and for all. Isaiah Berlin wrote, "values – ethical, political, aesthetic – are not objectively given, not fixed stars in some Platonic firmament, eternal, immutable, which men can discover only by employing the proper method – metaphysical insight, scientific investigation, philosophical argument, or divine revelation. Values are generated by the creative human self. Man is, above all, a creature endowed not only with reason but with will" (Berlin 2013, p. 43). Bob urged people to take the path of deep vocation, not simply a means of livelihood. This depth of caring was his signature message and perhaps his greatest legacy.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business

We believe that Tannenbaum would be an outspoken critic of today's approaches to leadership development and personal growth. We feel confident that he would have liked Jeff Pfeffer's 2015 book "Leadership BS." He would agree that too much leadership development is naïve regarding power and unconnected to results. With regard to personal growth, we think he would say that popular methods are too technique driven, too shallow, and too fickle with respect to fads. Knowing your Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) score is not personal growth. For Tannenbaum, and on this point the authors completely support his view, personal growth was (and is) deep work, hard work, often painful work, and perhaps most

importantly, not an end in itself, but a powerful means to more effective lives both in an out of the office.

Tannenbaum was an optimistic humanist. He deeply cared for people, and individual development was a major focal point of his long career. He believed that all social system change was mediated through individuals. He encouraged leaders and organizational development professionals to make a commitment to becoming "more whole, more complete, more mature human beings who are in touch with themselves and their environment" (Tannenbaum 1980). Bob embodied this quest for deep self-awareness and maturity. This was his North Star, his meta-goal, and he pursued it in many settings and in many roles.

Tannenbaum died in his sleep of congestive heart failure on March 15, 2003. In his obituary, Sam Culbert, a former student and longtime colleague at UCLA, wrote, "but you don't have to believe that [he is dead] if you don't want to. If you choose not to, you'll have plenty of company. Why erase from your mind the presence of a man who constantly affirms you!"

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# Frederick Winslow Taylor: The First Change Agent, From Rule of Thump to Scientific Management

# 75

Søren Henning Jensen

**Abstract**

This chapter describes Taylor from a perspective that appears to have been much neglected – his role as a change agent. Throughout his life and career as a manager and management consultant, Taylor worked with organizations to make positive changes, making them better, more efficient, and less reliant on rules of thumb. He changed the notion of the modern organization to one driven and managed by scientific principles. This chapter interprets his work through this lens. It is not intended as a celebration or critique, but rather as an alternative perspective – one that offers or inspires new insights and views on change and on Taylor and his work. The chapter sets out a general introduction before going on to discuss Taylor's main influences and sources of motivation – what was fueling his thinking and driving his actions? From there, we consider Taylor's key contributions, or more precisely his key contributions in his role as a very early proponent of change. This leads us on to a new view of Taylor, from which we ask what can be learned from him today; what new insights, if any, does he bring to perspectives on organizational change? In this context, we review examples of his influence in areas that may be surprising to readers. The chapter ends with a discussion of some unresolved issues – unfinished business and harder-to-transfer ideas that must be addressed if we are to truly harness the potential of Taylor's work and deliberations. The chapter ends with a short list of suggested further reading.

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## Contents

## Introduction

This chapter considers Frederic Winslow Taylor from a perspective that has not been well studied: his role as a change agent. Most people would not think of Taylor as a change scholar. He is best known for having given birth to scientific management, which has historically been seen as an objectivist and functional approach to improvement, an old and *static* approach to doing things better – whereas *change* is seen as dynamic and modern. Yet, in this chapter I assert that Taylor was the first modern change scholar and indeed one of the greatest. Much of his thinking was by no means modern. To a large extent, his ideas and beliefs were rooted in his time. His view of workers was very far from modern-day human resource management (HRM) practices, and many aspects of his approach and the ontological assumptions of his methods are outdated and appear naive at best. His theories have also been misused, misunderstood, and taken out of context. But he was among the first to realize that change, and management, in general, should be carried out with a view of the context of the whole organization. His approach included all levels of the organization and had a strong focus on personnel. He understood that implementation and follow-up were key elements in any change process and that these do not happen of their own accord.

Frederick Winslow Taylor was in many ways an enigma, even in his own time. In quite a few areas, he was very much a product and steward of his time. He was also a man of progress and in several ways considerably ahead of his time. Around the turn of the twentieth century, he was concerned about nature going to waste or disappearing altogether. It seemed to him that the vast majority of people were focused on producing goods and services at unprecedented speed and in unprecedented numbers with little or no concern for the impact on the environment. Resources, both natural and human, were plentiful so there was no concern for conservation. But Taylor had a strong drive. He was concerned about waste in general and the waste of human effort in particular. This feels to be at the very heart of his motivation. Taylor was keen to ensure that work was carried out with little or no waste, that functional labor was not carried out in a haphazard manner, that no slack or "soldiering" was allowed, and that work was well structured and monitored. Only in this way would wealth and welfare be secured. "Soldiering" was a term Taylor used often. It is a military term, referring to the time soldiers spent doing nothing between their chores; to Taylor it epitomized the waste of resources –

inefficiency: "Underworking, that is, deliberately working slowly so as to avoid doing a full day's work, 'soldiering' as it is called in this country" (Taylor 1919, p. 13). (It should be noted that while Taylor first published his book in 1911, the references made in this chapter are from the 1919 version from Harper & Brothers.)

Taylor was convinced that the organized company, and indeed society, would not come about unless overseen by solid middle managers like him, as the vital link connecting upper management with manual laborers. This was a new way of thinking and behaving, which promised to ensure that efforts and resources were not wasted. But the approach to planning, organizing, and managing organizations had to be *changed*. In this respect, scientific management clearly deals with the management of change, and it is in this light that we will consider Taylor and his work as a change scholar and practitioner. Be warned, the literary trick of repetition I employ is no accident: it is intended to drive home central points and highlight change elements for which Taylor was a strong advocate. It also reinforces how the same simple elements and ideas expressed with Taylor's clarity, to a large extent contributed to the immense impact of his ideas, which still endure today.

I am neither a proponent for scientific management and Taylor in general nor an opponent. But I am curious about the person, practitioner, and scholar that Taylor was, and I am captivated by the complexity, range, clarity, and impact of his thinking and his work. I am convinced, too, that seeing him as a change scholar adds much-needed depth to our understanding of him.

## Influences and Sources of Motivation: What Drove Taylor's Thinking?

With a background as a machinist and engineer, at a time when the role and impact of technology was on the rise and engineers were seen as a new class helping society to secure growth and prosperity, Taylor set out to lead change at the very beginning of this new era. Engineers were meant to drive change. But few, if any, brought about change as Taylor did.

When we are writing about historical persons, parts of the description will inevitably be based on guesswork. Even if there is meticulous documentation or access to letters and diaries, these only give us a part of the whole picture. We're also bound to interpret these clues in the context of current standards, having not experienced the environment as it was. This means that we will never fully understand Taylor and the motives behind his work. It is important to acknowledge this before I go on to discuss how I perceive Taylor as a change management scholar. We cannot conclude categorically that this is who or how he actually was; we can only surmise this, drawing on his life experiences and his impact in the organizations he worked for.

It is always difficult to say what exactly shapes people. Looking at Taylor's early years, the shift in plan from studying to become a lawyer at Harvard (one of the most prestigious universities in America) to working as an apprentice patternmaker and machinist at the Enterprise Hydraulic Works in Philadelphia must have had a

significant impact on his life. Missing out on a place at one of the very best universities and a promise of a prominent career may have been what attuned him to the notion of lost opportunities and wasted resources.

Perhaps it was his nature and background, which differed considerably from those he worked with even from the start, that enabled Taylor to observe work on the shop floor with analytical clarity and some detachment, in turn spurring his interest in efficiency and waste reduction. The groundwork he did in studying how organizations worked, and how they should work, led to his role as one of the first management consultants, continuously striving to identify what could and should be changed, improved, and made more efficient. It is evident that right from the start of his career that Taylor wanted to improve efficiency. Not just in the narrow scope dictated by the firm he was working in, but in a wider and more general context. He used the term "nationwide efficiency," noting that inefficiency was not a local but a general problem. "This paper has been written: First. To point out through a series of simple illustrations, the great loss which the whole country is suffering through inefficiency in almost all of our daily acts" (Taylor 1919, p. 15).

During his early years, Taylor witnessed inefficiency at both an individual employee level and at a managerial level. He was much more focused on the former than the latter, which had more to do with the design of the work. This required that workers and management were aligned for the system to work. In practice it usually meant that workers should do as explained to them by their superiors. But, it also required that management worked and planned efficiently, so that workers had efficient routines to follow. In this regard, professionalism was an implicit requirement of management. This was also evident from the incentive structure, where rates favored high-quality products: the result of carefully planned work procedures and work processes broken down into smaller parts which could be better observed, measured, and optimized.

Whatever the reason, Taylor had both an eye and a talent for improving efficiency in organizations. He was leading change efforts in the organizations he worked for, and the changes caught on and inspired others to follow his example. Eventually his methods went country-wide, even before he wrote his famous book on scientific management and gained international recognition in the early twentieth century (Guillen 1997). It seems that what really caught on was the promise at the core of his work: that we can do better, waste fewer resources, and get more out of the resources we already possess; that we can and we must change! Though this exact formulation does not appear in *The Principles of Scientific Management*, it is one of the key messages in the introduction to the book and a strong theme that runs through the work. In the introduction, Taylor asserts "the search for better, for more competent men from the presidents of our great companies to our household servants was never more vigorous than now" (Taylor 1919, p. 6). This feels like an early reference to the need to create a sense of urgency, something Kotter (1996) highlights in his approach to change. Later in the introduction, Taylor cites scientific management as the tool that "can bring together and reconcile the interests of employers and employees" (Taylor 1919, p. 10).

## Key Contributions: Taylor's Impact on Change in Theory and Practice Through a Hands-On Approach

Although this chapter is not dedicated to the technicalities of scientific management, it makes sense to offer a brief overview of the method of change Taylor used and for which he became famous. Even for readers who are familiar with his work, this is an important backdrop for understanding him as a change agent.

Taylor's approach to change encompassed the whole organization. The process involved several steps; the image most associated with Taylorism (or scientific management), time studies of individual workmen using a stopwatch, came relatively late in the process. First, he made revisions and adjustments to the management group, designed to coordinate and systematize the manufacturing process. He made sure management had well thought-out plans for manufacturing in all its stages and related activities. This was the starting point: without this, the subsequent steps would have little impact. The next step was to ensure that the machinery was operating properly. This was accomplished by making necessary adjustments to enhance machine performance. In this step of the process, it was important that the adjustment of the tools and machines was in alignment with the production plans laid out by the management. Finally, when the production company was functioning at a high level of efficiency, Taylor introduced changes to the way labor was carried out, to increase the output of the workers. Adjustments to the way the work was carried out were put in motion to secure a smooth process without any bottlenecks. The adjustments and recommendations were directed both at workers directly involved with production and those handling the constituent materials and finished goods. In particular Taylor emphasized two groups of employees in his change process: those in charge of operating the machinery, being at the very core of productivity, and those who organized and managed the work on the shop floor. The people on the shop floor were in charge of the layout of the plant and ensured that the orders coming from the planners at the management level were carried out. This, according to Taylor, was one of the cornerstones of his work. He makes clear that, "to work according to scientific laws, the management must take over and perform much of the work which is now left to the men; almost every act of the workmen should be preceded by one or more preparatory acts of the management which enable him to to do his work better and quicker than otherwise" (Taylor 1919, p. 26).

This was how real change was implemented. It was crucial to engage both parties in the change efforts. It was also important to change and develop the surrounding organization to ensure that the impact carried over would not be compromised by suboptimal practice or the creation bottlenecks when products moved out of the process. In other words, Taylor's approach was all-encompassing. To add value, the process of eliminating waste from all parts and functions of the organization was essential. While focus was on the shop floor – where the production was carried out and where the new efficient methods would be visible and tangible – the process started at the top of the organization, concerning the overall layout and management systems. This is described in some detail by Taylor: "Perhaps the most prominent single element in modern scientific management is the task idea. The work of every

workman is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance and each man receives in most cases complete written instructions, describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish as well as the means to be used in doing the work" (Taylor 1919, p. 39).

Taylor's approach was to methodically divide and break down the process into smaller parts with the goal of increasing efficiency and reducing waste. Planning, strategy, and design were all seen as managerial tasks, while the workers carried out the work exactly as dictated by management.

Taylor's theories and applications helped change many aspects of how work takes place in modern factories. He changed the way production of goods and services is executed and the way we approach the design of work. This includes, but is not limited to time studies, work planning, incentive schemes, and the role of the middle manager. Scientific management is now an active part of how work is conceived, planned, managed, and executed. This is possibly best expressed in the quote: "In the past man has been first; in the future the system must be first" (Taylor 1919, p. 7). In other words, the management system is more important than the needs and ideas of any individual.

I believe that a significant contribution of Taylor's legacy, both good and bad, is rooted in the clarity of his approach. He reduced complexity by applying a stringent, linear approach to how organizations should work. His methods break down entire work processes, including management functions. Processes are observed, measured, and modified to achieve high-performance modes in all functions. Processes are changed until perfection is achieved. Although Taylor's methods were initially developed and implemented in production companies, his approach was quickly accepted to be so simple and universal that it was applied to all types of companies. It was not so much *context* specific as *mindset* specific. All industries involving some kind of production could use the approach in some way. It had scalability and embodied the philosophy that "This company can do better/be more productive/ optimize its use of resources." It held the promise that the optimal organization could be created: nothing would have to be left to guesswork; there would be no more rule of thumb. In this way Taylor's approach served as the mechanism by which firms could transition from guesswork or unreliable contribution to science-driven rules.

Taylor objectified production processes. He relied heavily on data, observations, measurements, and careful planning and goal alignment. In time, his methods even spread to the service industries and from the private to the public sector. As we will see below, his influence even reached architecture and the aesthetic, *avant-garde* movement. In this sense, the change he brought about was on a much grander scale than that of most other scientists and practitioners. Taylor's biggest contribution of all, perhaps then, is the simple fact that his theories could be applied system-wide.

Wren (2011, p. 12) notes that Taylor's conclusions have not survived unchanged. I am not sure how far I agree with this. It is true that the application and understanding of how to work with the principles of scientific management have changed over time and have adapted to a modern way of understanding workers. Still it should also be noted that much of the later controversy of scientific management does not come from the source, from Taylor, but rather from later and often rather

loose interpretations of his methods. So the by the book interpretation of his thought have clearly not survived unchanged. But the very core of the thoughts brought forward still remains intact to this day.

The enduring elements of scientific management from Taylor's ideas were largely driven by a keen interest in eliminating waste and focusing all labor on achieving optimal production. Progress and change should be driven by data, analysis, and a clear and consistent methodology, not the rule of thumb. (The term "rule of thumb," in use since the seventeenth century, refers to rules and measurements based on guesswork and rough practice, rather than exact and scientific measurements.) This need is more pronounced today than when first evidenced by Taylor. Its importance to change is reflected clearly in change management disciplines and tools, such as Lean Six Sigma and Business Process Re-engineering. The idea that everything that *can* be measured in relation to work processes *should* be measured can be traced back to Taylor. While "data-driven management" may be a more recent association, work tasks – no matter how mundane – were to be carefully scrutinized and designed to optimize utility. In other words, effort should never be wasted. This principle of Taylor's theory has survived unchanged. The concept of methodical, empirically driven improvements of work processes is here to stay, and all methods and management tools that are built on this principle owe this to Taylor. His introduction of science – of correct measurements, of a carefully planned stepwise approach – to change, taking into consideration the whole organization from top management to the shop floor, can thus be seen as Taylor's most important contribution to his field.

Taylor's approach to change extended above and beyond looking at the manual labor aspect and how this was carried out. It was a new way of thinking, planning, and executing work – from its organizing to its execution and gradual improvement. There should be no more guesswork or rule of thumb, but objective measurements and observations of work, always striving to decrease waste and increase output. Taylor's approach resulted in optimization of the work process by breaking this down into manageable parts. In many ways, what would have been seen as the "new rules," based on the principles of scientific management, appear to have been in direct opposition to apprenticeships. Taylor wanted work and management to be objective and impersonal and for knowledge to be shared where it was needed. Apprenticeship, on the other hand, emphasized passing on craft skills, with a focus on personal knowledge and judgment. This tended to promote knowledge hoarding and *individual* rather than collective processes, which in turn meant less reliable approaches to work across an organization. Taylor saw the value of knowledge as being at an organizational level, rather than an individual level. He valued the knowledge that existed on the shop floor as much as the knowledge residing with top management. But he also valued the new knowledge generated by carefully measuring and subsequently changing work processes. To Taylor, this vastly outweighed the knowledge embedded in rules of thumb, which assumes by and large that the same routines will be followed, without any real insight into how well they work or what could and should be improved. Taylor describes this under "The Finest Type of Ordinary Management" (Taylor 1919, pp. 30–34). In the greater scheme of things, he maintains that only knowledge that has been carefully collected

through scientific measurements and methods provides real value to companies and in turn to society as a whole. Taylor set out to show "the enormous gains which would result from the substitution by our workmen of scientific for rule of thumb methods" (Taylor 1919, p.16). The downside is that knowledge is rarely neutral: it usually reflects a particular perspective, most often the perspective of the management (Nonaka 1994). Knowledge can used to wield power over workers, ultimately creating inequality in the workplace. Much of the criticism leveled at Taylor is directed precisely at these power dynamics of his model, and yet he seemed oblivious to them. Still, Taylor was among the first to demonstrate and document the effect of using knowledge systematically in the management process. Although it is light-years away from knowledge management as we know it today, his influence in this area is still one of his major achievements.

## New Insights: What Can We Learn from Taylor Today?

Change is an inherent part of the life of an organization, which is why it is so important to understand and try to manage it and why the tools and managerial approaches we create must be able to cope with the changes firms encounter. Some approaches will change, some will perish, and others will persist over time. So to what extent have the contributions of Taylor – a change scholar who practiced over 100 years – stood the test of time?

Clearly the time in which Taylor lived and worked had a bearing on his standpoint. His work contains scant mention of the empowerment or involvement of workers, with much greater emphasis on maintaining class and power structure. He refers to the vast majority of knowledge in a company being on the shop floor, rather than in the boardroom: "Now in the best of ordinary types of management, the managers recognize frankly the fact that the 500 or 1000 workmen included in the twenty or thirty trades, who are under them, possess this mass of traditional knowledge, a large part of which is not in the possession of the management" (Taylor 1919, p. 26). But he is clearly referring to workers' aggregate knowledge, his point being that this knowledge must be gathered by the middle management and sent up the hierarchy for analysis with the purpose of productivity improvement. Workers needed to be obedient and pliable; otherwise, they were of no use. Orders were to be followed, not questioned: the labor force could easily be replaced. Taylor's was a world divided by class, and in that world, those with a proper education and position possessed more personal knowledge than the individual worker. This argument goes right back to our earlier observations, that the change Taylor and his fellow engineers were supposed to bring about was one that kept the class divisions intact yet ensured that resources were utilized optimally and that there would be no "soldiering." This era-specific emphasis has a bearing on the applicability of Taylor's approach in the modern world where the role and impact of class and class consciousness differ significantly in the workplace. Technologies aimed at keeping the working class efficient but docile are frowned upon now, for good reason. Yet Taylor also advocated that when a worker could not do as instructed,

he or she should be replaced, because such a person would not feel at home as they would never realize his or her potential as they might do other places. There is no dismissing of individuals who fall short of the requirements imposed by Taylor's regime. They are not seen as "bad," but simply as not being right for that particular job. This is a perspective that has retained its currency – recognition of the need to match personal skills and qualities with the job in hand. In this sense Taylor was an early proponent of job specialization based on skills and requirements to increase efficiency and reduce waste. Once he implemented changes in an organization, even menial tasks were changed to fit the overall plan and layout. The primary skill was the ability or willingness to learn new ways of doing things and to accept the new ways of organizing and carrying out the work.

Critics are quick to accuse Taylor of dehumanizing the work process: they accuse him of everything from ineptitude to being a charlatan, the devil incarnate, responsible for the exploitation of workers through demeaning work practices. (See, e.g., Wrege and Perroni 1974, whose article focuses on the famous "pig iron" case – which we will examine more closely later in the chapter.) Several of his detractors suggested that Taylor had fabricated or sugarcoated (e.g., Wrege and Perroni 1974) the results that had made him and his method famous; others (e.g., Govekar and Govekar 2012) argue that Taylor was simply employing a parable to bring his teachings to life. In reexamining the legacy of Taylor's work, Wrenn (2011) asserts that too much attention has been paid to finding flaws in his arguments and to demonizing Taylor and not enough placed on his contributions of how work processes are designed, organized, performed, and improved. Others consider the wider-reaching influence Taylor has had – in the case of Guillen (1997) – on modern architecture.

Taylor's theories may have seemed extreme, with their focus on weeding out all of the slack from an organization. However, taken as an approach, philosophy, or set of guidelines, it would be left up to the management to reflect on their application and choose where to set the limit. We can opt to focus on the rigidity of Taylor's ideas, his insistence on one best way to do pretty much anything, or we can also choose to see his theories as an open offer to management to decide how tightly organized they want their company to be. In an open, competitive economy, this could also become a parameter when attracting investors, resources, and talent. I believe that this is a new insight that has been lost in the "either/or" debate of Taylor's theories.

If we adopt Taylor's approach to eliminating waste as the driver for change, we must also apply this to the waste of human efforts. Taylor would argue that it is a waste of resources if the wrong person is assigned to a specific task. He advocated that attention be given to matching the individual worker to the task at hand, both with the aim of increasing efficiency and of ensuring that the skills of the individual worker were not wasted (i.e., by being put into a context where their skills could not be sufficiently utilized). To my mind, this aspect of Taylor's approach to change has been overlooked: matching "skills required" with "skills possessed." If we look at how companies today ask employees and managers to apply for their own jobs as a part of a major change process, we can see that this vital element of change management is alive, well, and being increasingly widely adopted. Its application

today may be miles away from Taylor's original application to coal shoveling and pig iron carrying, but the mechanism and the underlying assumption are much the same. If a worker's skills do not meet the organization's needs, neither party will be satisfied in the long run, and skills and human efforts will be wasted.

We should remember, however, that the attention to personnel handling came late in the change process, after machine calibration and the overhaul of managerial processes including work planning, This seems to be in line with the statement that with scientific management, the system came first. We are not given much insight into this part of the process, and it is doubtful that the same candor was displayed in terms of staffing at a managerial level in Taylor's day as it is today. However, Taylor's change process did take into account the idea that tasks and skills needed to be matched, and that change was not isolated to the shop floor – an insight that is too often overlooked in Taylor's work, perhaps because of his overall emphasis.

It is evident how Taylor's thinking has brought about change in classical production including heavy industry, the railways, and – in due course – services. All of this is well-known and documented. However, to properly show how far Taylor's thinking reached and affected the actions of others, and how far his approach to change reached, we will go on to explore its application and impact in the field of modernist architecture in the early part of the twentieth century, with reference to Guillen (1997). While this may not be the most known or scrutinized area of Taylor's influence, it highlights the breadth of impact his thinking on change had for society as a whole. Therefore it is seen a fitting to include here rather than focusing on his influence in organizations, which is rather well-known.

A quite surprising area of influence Taylor was the impact he had on European modernistic *avant-garde* architecture. This began soon after *The Principles of Scientific Management* was published and endured until the 1930s. Nothing could be further apart than the rigid principles of scientific management and the experimental and vibrant ideas and principles of *avant-garde* modernism. It was the purity of Taylor's ideas that caught on and felt very close to some of the basic principles of *avant-garde* architecture. The new idea was that the only proper approach to progress was to abandon guesswork and embrace measurements and science. Science (psychology, engineering, physiology) should dictate how to plan and execute work as a way out of the old orthodoxy when planning and developing society overall and its buildings. There was focus on hierarchy or hierarchies as a means to an end when it came to establishing the control of work (Guillen 1997). Ideas including those suggesting that conflicts could be avoided or reduced through planning and controlling and that knowledge should be collected, analyzed, and used for the good of all, rather than be hoarded by individuals or even worse overlooked, underused, and neglected, also came from Taylor's work and found their way into the new *avant-garde* modernism. The idea that progress came from planning and executing in iterations, and that technology should be embraced and actively used, was another area where modernism and Taylor's theories intersected. Scientific management is often seen as uniformity, which is not entirely correct given Taylor's emphasis on the need to carefully match workers with the right task and then carefully monitor and instruct that person to help improve his or her skills. This

fitted well with the concept of talent and talent development in modern architecture at that time. As noted by Guillen (1997, p. 689), the list of similarities and inspiration between the two goes even further. After initially seeing Taylorism as "an inevitable and horrible path towards the future" (Guillen 1997, p. 689), Le Corbusier soon after embraced the concept wholeheartedly. Even to the degree where he encouraged Taylorization and standardization to his fellow architects (Guillen 1997, p. 696). Possibly Le Corbusier and the other modern architects of the era saw the clean, methodical, and rational approach as something they could use to create their visions. The new architecture was all about clean lines, space optimization, and minimalism with no waste: through Taylor they saw a way to accomplish their ideals and achieve the desired aesthetics. The compatibility of Taylor's ideals and those of this artistic profession were surprisingly strong.

This example illustrates how the influence of Taylor with his clean scientific approach to change, and focus on strict planning and resource efficiency, can be traced across the modern economy and society – perhaps to a greater degree than many have realized. It also highlights the importance of perspective. It is easy to see Taylor's scientific management as nothing but a nitty-gritty approach to organizing work processes. Whether or not you agree with his theories and approach to change, it is important to acknowledge that he was, to no small degree, responsible for a scientific approach to the study and improvement of organizations more generally – inspiring research, practice, and new ideas with wide-ranging impact. (Next time you admire early twentieth-century modernistic architecture, or Le Corbusier's designs, remember that they have been inspired by Taylor!)

Looking more closely at Taylor's work, we soon see that there is more than meets the eye. He was an inspiration for change in many areas, and his theories still provide valuable insights, as long as we see *The Principles of Scientific Management* as a source of inspiration – of new thinking about rationalization – and not just as stale and dusty manual.

Yet Taylor's theories also leave some unfinished business: issues that he did not address and aspects of thinking about the organization of work that do not carry over so easily into current practice.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Landmarks and Room for Improvement

Thanks, in part, to Taylorism, society has benefited from fine-tuned production of goods and services which in turn paved the way for increased wealth and reduced prices. This has not been without cost to individuals however, and even now – more than 100 years after Taylor's work was published – there are still significant outstanding issues in the pursuit of optimal change management. It is important not to overestimate Taylor's influence, and it would be wrong to state that all modern attempts and approaches to modify and improve the workplace in a systematic way are somehow borne out of or rooted in Taylorism. It would also be misleading to attribute all positive and negative elements that have grown out of increased work

specialization, and efficiency gains and division of labor, to Taylor's work and thinking. So let us focus the remaining discussion on some of the remaining issues that are most significant, both in terms of legacies and unfinished business from a change perspective.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Taylor cites the now-famous case of "the pig iron" in his book *The Principles of Scientific Management* (Taylor 1919, pp. 42–47). In this example, a laborer named Schmidt was used to demonstrate how to instruct workers to follow the precise instructions of their supervisors to significantly increase productivity. The story illustrates several points Taylor was not exactly known for, most notably his people skills, particularly when dealing with ordinary workers. In this case, Schmidt the pig iron carrier is given rather direct and somewhat harsh orders by Taylor, which Taylor justifies as being "appropriate and not unkind" for a man of Schmidt's "mentally sluggish type" (Taylor 1919, p. 46). Taylor's description of what ensues is rather less generous:

> The pig iron handler stoops down, picks up a pig weighing about 92 pounds, walks for a few feet or yard and then drops it on the ground or upon a pile. This work is so crude and elementary that in its nature the writer firmly believes that it would be possible to train an intelligent gorilla so as to become a more efficient pig iron handler than any man can be. (Taylor 1919, p. 40)

Imagine a modern manager uttering something even remotely similar today – and during a change process! Taylor was very much a man of his time – characterized by strict class divisions and class consciousness. Those who performed menial labor were expected to follow orders and to do so blindly. In the early 1900s, it was assumed that those with no formal education or position in society were simple and lacked the personal motivation and wit to direct themselves. Consequently to the elite, both the old and the new class of engineers, where Taylor belonged perfectly, were perfectly natural to talk to, think about, and treat manual workers in a manner that would be frowned upon today. So comparing manual laborers to Gorillas would be considered reasonable. When Taylor (1919) notes that there is more knowledge on the shop floor than at the managerial level, he is referring merely to information that middle managers could collect, analyze, and act upon. There is no thought given to empowerment of those shop floor workers, as would be the case in today's change management movements. Whatever potential laborers might hold, this would have been deemed latent until made manifest by managers and consultants. *This* was what needed to happen to effect change and reduce waste. This is one of the most important areas of unfinished business in Taylor's theories. For his ideas here to have relevance and value in today's knowledge economy, they must be applied to all groups of employees. The idea that shouting orders or treating people like they are mindless drones is long gone in most societies – we simply know better now. Taylor did not. But had he still been around today, that thought process would undoubtedly have developed – in this sense the lack of focus on the individual is merely unfinished business. If brought up to date, I would assert that Taylor's work and method would fit well with the contemporary view on human resource management, and management in general – and could be tested as such.

Closely related to this issue is the relative lack of consideration to work breaks in Taylor's proposed method. In his book he tells a story about women visually inspecting ball bearings at the Simonds Roller Bearing Company. This was done using old rule-of-thumb management. Then a Mr. Sanford E. Thompson took over the management of this work and applied scientific management to the process. Interestingly, one of the main components was to reduce the number of work hours and introduce mandatory breaks. It was noted that, contrary to what might be expected, "with each shortening of the working day the output increased instead of diminishing" (Taylor 1919, p. 88). This was done to reduce stress and ensure that the women could work with a high predictable level of quality over time (Taylor, p. 92). Breaks were to be organized and carefully managed to avoid the current situation where, despite the long hours, "the girls spent a considerable part of their time either in partial idleness, talking and halfworking, or in actually doing nothing" (Taylor 1919, p. 92).

Taylor notes in detail how the women's work is carefully monitored to determine how to organize the work: "guarding against giving her a task so severe that there was danger from over fatigue or exhaustion" (Taylor 1919, p. 92.)

The story and its implications are interesting because it shows that Taylor did factor in issues such as job boredom and the cognitive aspect of work in addition to the physical and physiological aspects. It also illustrates that Taylor looked for optimal work designs for all the involved elements. Numbers were to be respected as absolute, whether units per time, steps walked or in this case the length of the breaks. Today, the idea that it should be possible to achieve this level of scientific accuracy for all types of manual work seems implausible in the modern world and, to my knowledge, has not been tried and tested in a proper workplace setting.

However, this is not the unfinished business we are focusing on here. Rather I wish to address the insufficient attention paid to workers' breaks in Taylor's methods. Yes, he does write that optimal conditions need to be set otherwise productivity will decrease and workers be worn prematurely down. However, there is little elaboration of this and even less consideration of the likelihood of his rules being kept to as rigidly as he prescribes once he has changed an organization. As the companies Taylor changed were all driven by profit, surely there would always be the temptation to crank up the pace just a "little" more. And yet it seems that Taylor did not anticipate that his method carried inherent scope for exploitation. Possibly he had a strong belief in his own authority and was confident that his words would weigh heavier than the drive to increase profits or even that the logic was self-evident and needed no further elaboration. Another explanation could be that he lacked the human insight to anticipate the risk of potential exploitation. Whatever the reason, Taylor's approach to change and the principals of scientific management need an efficient management tool to protect workers from exploitation. Simply stating that breaks are important without properly embedding this in this change approach as he did with the observation and planning is not sufficient. This lack of sufficient attention to a point that has since been a central point of criticism for those who see scientific management as inhumane makes for another piece of unfinished business in Taylor's work.

The famous (or infamous) "pig iron" case described above effectively illustrates the very core of his work. As it turned out, there never was a worker named Schmidt employed at the factory: it is not a "true" story (Wrege and Perroni 1974; Wrege and Hodgetts 2000). Some critics argue that this demonstrates that Taylor was not honest or that the whole thing was a sham (Wrege and Perroni 1974). Yet, as suggested above and has been referenced by Govekar and Govekar (2012), the most likely explanation is that Taylor intended the use of the story to function as a parable; indeed, he used it as an example both in his book and in his speeches. In Govekar and Govekar (2012), the authors go on to show the parable as a literary concept and analyze the story according to these terms. I agree wholeheartedly with the underlying analysis they present – and that the parable is intended to show both the reason for implementing scientific management and its impact, by way of example, even if this is made up. I would argue further that the parable does not simply illustrate how scientific management works; it also clearly demonstrates how Taylor worked with change. In this sense, the "pig iron" case is a very powerful parable, which boils down his approach to changing organizations and making workers more efficient, by using a methodical approach. Parables are simple stories; therein lies their impact. The pig iron story as a parable underscores Taylor's impact, which lies in the simplicity of his message. Organizations can be changed to function more effectively, to be optimal, to eliminate waste of all kinds – just follow his prescription for scientific management and the results will follow. This, as I see it, is Taylor's legacy.

## Conclusion

In this chapter we have journeyed through Taylor's life and works from his early years and influences, which ultimately led to a lifelong study and pursuit of change and improvements, including his legacy and the unfinished business he left behind.

The picture I wanted to show was one of Taylor as a change scholar rather than merely a rationalist. It is true that he is credited with inventing and promoting the method used to rationalize work, making it manageable in order to improve and optimize it. However, if we look at this in a broader context, all the steps in Taylor's approach to achieving efficiency are elements in a change process. It is the change that creates the efficiency. Further, I believe that without the greater message concerning the need for organizations to change in a systematic and manageable manner, the tools would have been long forgotten. Today we do not use the actual methodology Taylor proposed, and we certainly don't use the approach to managing or "coaching" employees as he did. Taylor saw this need to improve efficiency early on in his career and he pursued it relentlessly. To him, change was about reducing and eliminating waste, and Taylor detested waste in any shape or form. He argued that change and efficiency improvements were a means to an end for eliminating waste.

As I see it, the impact of Taylor's work came from the simplicity and clarity of his message. All organizations can be improved, can reduce resource waste, and can change – as long as they approach the problem scientifically. They need to reduce

complexity by breaking down assignments into smaller parts, by acknowledging that the parts of the organization need to be aligned, and by accepting the limitations of imperfect knowledge. Through Taylor's theories, the change process becomes simple and manageable without sacrificing the big picture. He promises that the potential of change and improvement embedded in all organizations can be realized through what is essentially change management. Below I will try to illustrate the complexity of his work and the influence it has had.

When we look at the range of his contribution, it is obvious that Taylor inspired change in more ways than most probably realize. I have put together some of the most prominent insights and shortcomings in the works of Taylor to illustrate my point that in order to truly understand Taylor's work and its impact, we need to see the full picture.

Taylor indirectly criticized contemporary organizations and their management for not paying attention to the total flow of the work process and partly for not creating alignment throughout the organization's activities. He was also critical of their inability to recognize the value of the collective knowledge of workers and the role of the middle manager. He recognized that knowledge about organizations came from the shop floor more than from the management floor and that planning and execution were intertwined. He identified the middle manager as a key player in successful change initiatives – in fact Taylor practically invented the modern version of the middle manager function as imperative to the process of improving organizations. "This close, intimate, personal cooperation between the management and the men is of the essence of modern scientific or task management" (Taylor 1919, p. 26).

However, he forgot to formally build a break into his change process, other than a friendly reminder of not overdoing it.

Taylor was also naive in his trust in management to create optimal production rather than cannibalize resources. He created incentive schemes that strongly favored the owners and managers over the workers. He was overbearing and condescending in his reference and approach to the workers. He was an elitist and a rationalist, forgetting or overlooking any personal motivation beyond money. Yet Taylor's work has been read as having been deeply influenced by Christian thinking. Indeed his rather short book, written in a straightforward language, has inspired several interpretations of possible subtexts and metaphors. Even if few people have actually read *The Principles of Scientific Management*, every business school student and most managers know about Taylorism. This is a clear indication of its importance.

His method influenced production and service, both public and private, and it carried over into a context not foreseen by Taylor or any of his contemporaries. Despite being seen as the epitome of uniformity, Taylor's work inspired *avant-garde* architecture to the extent that Le Corbusier strongly encouraged young architects to read Taylor's work. While the approach Taylor proposed is seen as obsolete by today's standards, the underlying methods and logic are very much present in most modern efficiency tools. In short, even if Taylor's methods and approach to scientific management are simple, his theories are not. There is so much more than meets the eye once we abandon what we think we know about him and look deeper. It is

Taylor's ability to explore the complexity of change which I believe allowed him to express the clarity of how to manage change effectively.

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## Further Reading

For those who find they would like to know more about Taylor, I have provided a list of proposed additional reading. It is not an exhaustive or authoritative list. The volume of literature on Taylor and his works is extensive. Rather, it is a list that I have compiled based on my own research into his life and work. It shows the breadth of his influence which extends in many directions. His influence begins with his own work, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, which stands out as the one book that those of us who have worked with him use to underscore the impact of his thinking and conclusions. Next, there is a list of articles, many of which were written in relation to the centennial for the publication of Taylor's book in 1911. They are chosen because I feel that they all deal with the author and his work in a manner displaying curiosity, academic rigor, and a genuine interest in seeing more than just the obvious. The articles look at Taylor with a view to understanding his thinking and his actions, to identify underlying patterns in his writing.

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# Ramkrishnan (Ram) V. Tenkasi: Expanding and Bridging the Boundaries of Theory, Practice, and Method

Eric J. Sanders, George W. Hay, Bart Brock, and Elise Barho

**Abstract**

In the field of organization development and change, Dr. Ramkrishnan (Ram) V. Tenkasi is an emergent thinker with contributions to scholarship and practice. Woven throughout the career of this academic and Fulbright senior research scholar is a recurrent theme of dialectical synthesis and boundary expansion along with frequent collaboration across a spectrum of advisors, peers, and doctoral students. Tenkasi's scholarship has influenced the field with contributions to its understanding of organizational knowledge and communication, scholar-practitioners and the linkage of thought and action, and models of organization development – particularly large-scale change. He continues to expand his own learning and boundaries through immersion in cross-disciplinary methodologies while expanding both the rigor and relevance of our field.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Ramkrishnan (Ram) V. Tenkasi's contributions and insights as an emergent thinker within the field of organization development and change are broadly recognized and encompassing. His success in reaching across philosophical and disciplinary boundaries is characterized by a dialectical synthesis of theoretical paradigms and the integration of managerial action into those paradigms. His recognition as an emergent thinker is evidenced by the broad range of scholarship conducted by others citing his research. This Fulbright senior research scholar and professor of organization development at Benedictine University strengthens the field of organization development and change with rigorous research, with the transformation of that rigor into relevance as actionable knowledge for management practitioners and with the development of the next generation of management scholar-practitioners.

## Influences and Motivations: Eastern, Western, and Dialectical Synthesis

Born in India, the third son of a successful, well-educated couple, Ramkrishnan (Ram) V. Tenkasi's early years occurred within the philosophical paradigms of a pluralistic society, perhaps the foundational elements for a propensity of dialectical synthesis evident throughout his career. Early education included readings in classical Indian scripture, such as the Bhagavad Gita, still found on his office bookshelf, and contemporary Eastern philosophies including the writings of Tarthang Tulku, a Tibetan Buddhist author and teacher. Formative grounding in the broader, subjectivist philosophies of the East are clearly balancing influences to his later studies of objectivist philosophy prominent in Western social sciences.

*Doctoral Education*. Tenkasi conducted his doctoral studies at Case Western Reserve University (R. Tenkasi, personal communication, February 7, 2015). Some of his most influential advisors were those serving as his dissertation committee: William Pasmore (chair), Richard Boland, Suresh Srivastava, and David Cooperrider. Influential traces of each are found throughout his later work.

Pasmore provided mentoring in large organizational consulting and its requisite understanding of systems theory. Jointly, Tenkasi and Pasmore obtained a grant for socio-technical research of knowledge work at Procter & Gamble, concluding with new theory development about how teams are hampered in generating knowledge due to cognitive over-simplification processes. This journey into grounded theory, mixed methods, and scholar-practitioner work initiated Tenkasi's path toward being a scholar-practitioner – living in the worlds of both academia and practice (Tenkasi and Hay 2008). Cooperrider and Srivastava also served as early influencers. As Tenkasi studied and conducted fieldwork with them at the Cleveland Clinic, development occurred for the theory and methodology of appreciative inquiry (AI). Here Tenkasi learned to apply abstract theory to practice, taking the concepts of appreciative, positive psychology that Cooperrider and Srivastava developed to support AI, and applying them to organizational change including large-group interventions comprised of many stakeholders. Interestingly, Cooperrider conducted his master's-level studies at George Williams College with Peter Sorensen who Tenkasi later joined in developing the Benedictine University Ph.D. program in organization development.

Boland was Tenkasi's strongest influencer in terms of organizational theory and is a frequent coauthor in the intervening postdoctoral years. Boland brought exposure to the original articles of theory builders not only in organization theory but also in various social sciences and the philosophy of science in particular. Tenkasi learned philosophy of science through studying Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato; Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Popper, and Latour, organization theory from the writings of Mooney and Reiley and Richard Scott; management theory based on the arguments of Frederick Taylor, Chester Barnard, Max Weber, and Henri Fayol, and change theory from Lewin (1947); economics from the writings of Adam Smith; systems theory from the writings of von Bertalanffy, and its application in open systems from the work of Henderson, Parsons, and Taylor. He studied evolution from the work of Darwin and its derivative, population ecology a deterministic theory while also absorbing more agential organizational approaches such as decision theory, resource dependence, and contingency theory as noted by Hall (1987). He also studied the systems-resource model (Yuchtman and Seashore 1967) and participant-satisfaction models (Cummings et al. 1977), followed by more theory, including learning and social theory from Giddens (1979), Archer (1995), and Bhaskar (1998). This framing provided a strong foundation for Tenkasi's own theory building and the framework he has used to teach organization theory and philosophy of science to hundreds of doctoral students over the past 20 years. This theory building and framework rests on essentially three points made in one of his early chapters, "Knowing and Organizational Being" (Tenkasi 1993):

- theoreticians can no longer claim an exclusive right to knowledge . . . exploration of the 'consciousness' of an organization – and the capacity to imagine alternatives – should be open to the contributions of each and every organizational participant;
- . . .within such a pluralistic, 'active' structure of knowing, successive depths of questions make themselves available to be examined;

- active inquiry and imagination may be able to break the knowledge barrier and support new ways to address key issues such as peace, prosperity, and social justice.

  (Tenkasi 1993, pp. 172–175)

These three points appear as themes throughout this chapter.

*Early Scholar-Practitioner Focus*. Upon completing his doctorate, Tenkasi became an assistant professor in the Center for Effective Organizations (CEO) at the Marshall School of Business in the University of Southern California (USC). He worked for 6 years at CEO in what Jay Galbraith described as a halfway house for scholar-practitioners who are working both in academia and industry (R. Tenkasi, personal communication, February 7, 2015). Tenkasi taught and conducted a number or research projects, most often working with Sue Mohrman, and they ultimately developed a theory of change as a learning process, noting that change comes from new cognition inducing new behaviors that also enable structural coordination mechanisms (Tenkasi and Mohrman 1999; Tenkasi et al. 1998).

Perhaps most important in his years at USC, Tenkasi became a true scholar-practitioner, developing his already strong research skills through both longitudinal and cross-sectional studies with clients including AlliedSignal, Hewlett-Packard, Kaiser Permanente, Motorola, Shell Oil, and Texas Instruments. This high-level work and exposure allowed him to build both skill and credibility as a researcher and consultant. It also taught him to work quickly and effectively to generate results that were useful to both the client and the knowledge community at large.

*Leadership in Academia*. Tenkasi advanced as an active researcher with grants from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Fulbright foundation (where he was named a senior research scholar for a longitudinal study encompassing 40 years of the Indian software industry analyzing the determinant factors for its unprecedented growth), and many other government and nongovernmental sources. Meanwhile, he developed as a leader in academia. He served as an officer of the Organization Development and Change Division of the Academy of Management starting in 2002 and culminated as its chair in 2007. He has also served on Funding Panels for the National Science Foundation regularly since 1998, Netherlands Foundation of Scientific Research Institutes (NWO, the equivalent of NSF for the Netherlands), the Department of Defense, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Fulbright awards, as well as the National Institutes of Health. Since 1998, Tenkasi has helped build Benedictine University's doctoral program in organization development. Working closely with Peter Sorensen and Jim Ludema initially, and later with Therese Yaeger, he codeveloped the curriculum and process used in this executive doctoral program focused on creating scholar-practitioners. Pushing and pulling working professionals through a doctoral program in just 3 years is a formidable challenge to which Tenkasi rose easily. Leveraging his strong research background, Tenkasi took the lead in teaching philosophy of science, organization theory, qualitative methods, quantitative methods, the scholar-practitioner journey, and mixed research methods.

Tenkasi serves on the editorial boards of many journals, including the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (associate editor), the *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, the *Open Business Journal Bentham Science Series*, the *International Biopharmaceutical Association*, and the *International Journal of Management Practice*. He has led in terms of both his own research development and his service to the academic community.

*Development of New Scholars*. Tenkasi is actively engaged in teaching students in a variety of doctoral programs, primarily at Benedictine University. The graduate students he has taught carry with them his imprint in terms of conducting rigorous research. The dissertations he has chaired have added to the field and their authors continue to do so – witness the dissertations he has chaired that are cited and referenced in this chapter. The four authors of this chapter have benefited from having Tenkasi as their chair; most of their subsequent publications convey actionable knowledge for use by scholar-practitioners. Furthermore, three of the chapter authors have moved from being full-time practitioners to being academic scholar-practitioners with undergraduate, masters, and doctoral students of their own.

Although the development of new scholars is part of Tenkasi's legacy, it also brings into sharp focus the nature of scholar-practitioners. The challenge of transforming business managers and organizational leaders into scholar-practitioners requires a different andragogy from those within traditional research-focused doctoral programs. The "outside-in" approaches of didactic instruction where knowledge is poured into students are eschewed in favor of "inside-out" approaches of constructivist learning where knowledge is grasped as it is produced. Comprehension occurs as students give voice to their emerging understanding of theory; expertise emerges as students enact their research. Tenkasi's classes are a learning laboratory for the development of a deeper understanding of the fundamental nature of scholar-practitioners and of the processes used to gain and produce actionable scientific knowledge. As beneficial as this is for the doctoral students, this also continually deepens Tenkasi's appreciation and insight into organizational knowledge and action.

## Key Contributions: Perspective Making and Perspective Taking, Process Models of Theory-Practice Linkage, Scholar-Practitioner Development, Validating Models of Large-Scale Change, and Expanding Longitudinal Methods

Not unexpectedly for an emergent thinker on organizational change, Tenkasi's growing work has yielded diverse, multiple, and substantial contributions to the field of organization development and change. Five broad contributions are highlighted in this section: perspective making and perspective taking, process models of theory-practice linkages, scholar-practitioner development, validating models of large-scale change, and expanding longitudinal methods. The influences and motivations discussed in the preceding section are visible in these five contributions.

*Perspective Making and Perspective Taking*. Tenkasi approaches organizational knowledge with the concepts of perspective making and perspective taking. Along

with coauthor Dick Boland, he advances the critical role that perspective making and perspective taking serve as "...the basis for transformation within and between communities of knowing..." (Boland and Tenkasi 1995, p. 352). (Note: this article is one of Tenkasi's leading publications with 517 Web of Science citations to date and a broad scope of referencing conferences and articles.)

Perspective making and perspective taking offered a different view on knowledge work (e.g., innovation and new product development) from the dominant paradigm at that time, the conduit paradigm. The conduit paradigm held that innovation could be accomplished with the linear sharing of organizational knowledge and is evidenced by the deployment of knowledge warehouses to store the intellectual capital of an organization. Under the conduit model, knowledge warehouse users merely access the stored knowledge to be on the way to successful innovation. The problem with the conduit model, as Tenkasi and Boland point out, is that is ignores the symbolic and interpretative dimensions of any knowledge element.

Perspective making and perspective taking are based on Wittgenstein's model of language games (1953), a model that allows knowledge to be studied in terms of its symbolic and interpretative dimensions. Knowledge does not exist only at an abstract level but is situated at a concrete level within the activities and conversations of the knowers. Perspective making is the ability of knowledge workers to make explicit their concrete level knowledge on some aspect of their work. Since perspective making is only the externalization of knowledge, perspective taking is needed to complete the knowledge work within an organization. Perspective taking is the ability of the knowledge worker to internalize the knowledge held by others – to play in the language game as if a member of that knowledge community. Successful innovation and new product development require the synergistic use of perspective making and perspective taking to leverage and extend the knowledge that is being developed within the organization. Boland and Tenkasi (1995) end with an emphasis on narrative as the means to further perspective making and perspective taking as it is experientially grounded, enriched with language and action. Perhaps innovation could be furthered with more emphasis on the essentially human capacities for storytelling and less emphasis on the rather sterile knowledge warehouses.

*Process Models of Theory-Practice Linkage*. Around the turn of the current millennium, there was a renewed call within the management literature for academics and practitioners to bridge knowledge and action. Stemming from continued observations of a "great divide between theory and practice" (Astley and Zammuto 1992; Lawler et al. 1996; Rynes et al. 2001), many professionals were questioning their discipline and its future. As Austin and Bartunek (2003) pointed out, what is the lasting value of management scholarship if it does not translate into management practice that makes a difference – management knowledge and practice are inextricably linked. Huff and Huff (2001) proposed the creation of "boundary spanners" who would "potentially close the relevance gap from both ends" of science and business (p. 50). Boundary spanners are tasked with the securement of actionable scientific knowledge – the knowledge that meets the criteria of the scientific community and the business needs of the organization (Adler et al. 2004, p. 84).

Tenkasi and Hay (2004) completed one of the first studies documenting how boundary spanners bridged knowledge and action. Based on the work of Mohr (1982) that differentiated between process and variance approaches to empiricism (Van de Ven and Poole 2005), the study adopted a process lens, while most extant research depended on variance approaches to examine this divide. The main result of this inductive study of scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners was a process mode of theory-practice linkages.

The process model shows us that theory-practice linkages occur within all phases of organizational work. Linkage across knowledge and action happens in the beginning (project definition), the middle (project execution), and the end of scholar-practitioner work (project realization). Furthermore, there appears to be a causal order to these phases. Actionable scientific knowledge does not occur without linkages being present in the earlier phases. Theory-practice linkages in project definition and in project execution precede boundary spanning in project realization.

Theoretical contributions from this study provide us with understanding of the nature of *bridging processes* across knowledge and action as scholar-practitioners move from theory to practice and from practice to theory in separate phases across time. They may begin with the use of a *theory* to frame upcoming actions that need to be taken later, or they might *collect data on the results of an intervention (practice)* to inform a subsequent theoretical discussion. Scholar-practitioners also use *coordinative* linkages involving the presence of both theory and practice at the same time. For example, scholar-practitioners are adept at achieving actionable scientific knowledge through one form of practice, action research, allowing the simultaneous movement of organizations forward via action while generating greater depths of understanding, be it practical or scholarly.

*Scholar-Practitioner Development*. Tenkasi's synthesis of thought-action provided insight for Hay in the development of a scholar-practitioner process model and later Sanders in its extension into a functional model of scholar-practitioner work. Under Tenkasi's guidance, Sanders (2015) compares the work of highly experienced scholar-practitioners in organization development (including Edgar Schein, Warner Burke, Thomas Cummings, and Michael Beer – all profiled in this volume) and in medical translational research to reveal that scholar-practitioners in the two fields are far more similar than different in thought-action application. It verifies the roles of scholar, practitioner, and scholar-practitioner over time (Tenkasi and Hay 2004; Wasserman and Kram 2009) and adds the important role of teacher. It further shows that both groups not only move between segmented roles of scholar, practitioner, and teacher but also integrate roles, blending two or even all three of those roles together. The study also confirms and expands on the strategies and tactics used to connect theory and practice introduced by Tenkasi and Hay (2004) and develops the personal characteristics these boundary spanners share. Combined, this thought-action insight better describes the work of scholar-practitioners in both fields than traditional theory of a linear model of academic development: basic science to hypothesis generation, then limited trial testing, and finally larger population application with limited feedback from the field to the academy.

*Validating Models of Large-Scale Change.* Social networks are the stuff of both popular acclaim and derision, but Tenkasi went deeper to examine their efficacy as tools in implementing large-scale organizational change. Tenkasi and Chesmore (2003) chose to examine the validity of *strong ties* through a social network lens of intraorganizational units when studying 40 units of a large, multinational corporation implementing large-scale organizational change. Quantitatively confirmed hypotheses show that strong ties between the change initiator and the change recipient supported more successful change efforts than those with weaker ties. Further contribution highlights the importance of strong ties at not just the group (or unit) level but also the individual level in large-scale change.

Tenkasi with his frequent coauthors, Sue and Alan Mohrman, further illustrates the power of informal social network configurations to better facilitate deep, fundamental organizational change as compared to change efforts dependent on hierarchical, formal implementation networks. Mohrman et al. (2003) is a widely cited article that provided a key contribution to our understanding of large-scale change by further revealing that informal networks of relationships among *individuals* are the conduits through which organizational information and resources are exchanged, work is accomplished, and decisions are made. And these informal networks are critical for conveying a message of change, as well as enacting it throughout an organization.

Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, Tenkasi continued his research on large-scale change as a Fulbright senior research scholar studying the computer software industry in India from its founding in 1966 to 2003. His quantitative application of negative binomial regression to data from over 1,000 of the software firms provides clear significance for growth factors which are broadly categorized as institutional or entrepreneurial. Institutional factors incorporate governmental policy liberalization, technical institution infrastructure, ecological effects, software technology parks, and venture capital effects – the latter two having a negative effect, perhaps due to competitive density. Entrepreneurial factors include caste/community, business house, premier institutions, replication, and nonresident Indian effects.

The growth of the software industry within India cannot be modeled without the inclusion of the Indian caste system and its impacts regarding an entrepreneurial effect. The traditional Indian business community includes the Vaishyas, Syrian Christians and Sindhis' and Parsees' groups while excluding Brahmins, Kshatriyas, other Hindus, other Christians, and Muslims. Traditionally, firms were also most likely to be founded by people from business houses (families or organizations) such as the Tatas, Birlas, TVS, and government organizations. Tenkasi found that a key entrepreneurial determinant of software industry success was the large-scale entry of nontraditional business communities that included artisans who were lower in terms of significance in the traditional Indian caste system. This industry matched their values and interests while others did not, and while established industries had imperfect market conditions with structural advantages that favored stronger business houses and the traditional business-oriented castes such as the Vaishya's, the nascent software industry eliminated those advantages and enabled nontraditional

business communities to thrive along with those founded by the traditional business houses and castes.

In addition to documenting the historical growth of the software industry in India, there are two key contributions of this research to organizational theory. At an institutional policy level, Tenkasi showed that government should facilitate evaluation and investment in areas where both human and physical capital are available and maintain that investment over time. Additionally, bureaucratic barriers should be minimized, practices to involve the masses over favoring elitism should be applied, and policymakers should assess, learn, and revise these policies over time. On an entrepreneurial level, he showed that policymakers should encourage people to challenge societal norms to promote the entrepreneurial spirit. This involves ensuring that people obtain the necessary skills and education, encouraging role models for people to follow (especially successful Indian entrepreneurs in the USA who returned to India), and enlisting the assistance of external community and ethnic resources to be key sources of knowledge spillover and entrepreneurial stimulation.

*Expanding Longitudinal Methods*. Tenkasi continually seeks to build new insights within the field, particularly through strengthening the rigor and richness of our evaluations of organizational change efforts. His efforts in this area led to new insights for Brock as the rigor in longitudinal studies was challenged by accessing methods of a field most familiar with longitudinal work – epidemiology (Brock and Tenkasi 2014). While some of his work has been theoretical in nature, Tenkasi confronted the applied complexities of generalized estimating equations (GEE) often used in epidemiological studies in response to troubling characteristics that plague much of longitudinal data, namely, non-Gaussian and noncontinuous data, repeated measurements issues, and within-variable autocorrelation (Ballinger 2004; Hardin and Hilbe 2003; Liang and Zeger 1986; Zeger and Liang 1986).

His further insights into the need for ensuring rigor when evaluating field work in organizational change led us to an additional cross-disciplinary methodology designed for confirmation of variable manipulation in medically based observational studies – propensity scoring. This methodology enables field researchers to *in effect* retrospectively achieve the impact of experimental randomization through examining the conditional probability that a subject *would have received* a particular treatment based on a vector of observed covariates (Rosenbaum and Rubin 1983). Propensity scoring extends the rigor of observational field studies by allowing rigorous confirmation of treatment effect, which is otherwise elusive yet quite necessary in longitudinal work.

As Tenkasi and Brock utilized these cross-disciplinary methodologies to rigorously evaluate fieldwork over a 3-year, longitudinal period, they discovered strong evidence that a synthesis of diagnostic and dialogic organizational change paradigms was not only possible but also likely more fruitful than either change paradigm acting independently (Brock and Tenkasi 2015). These findings are yielding new insights about the conduct of observational and longitudinal studies, yet even this finding on the efficacy of synthesizing diametric paradigms may be linked to his earlier theoretical contribution in combining paradigmatic and narrative cognition (Boland and Tenkasi 1995).

# New Insights: Ontology, Epistemology, and Praxis of Organization Development and Change

The diverse, substantial, and multiple contributions of Tenkasi to organization development and change contain several overarching insights relevant to the discipline. These insights deepen our understanding of the discipline beyond the surface level content of the contributions to generate new possibilities for the discipline. The understandings and new possibilities stem from consideration of the ontology, epistemology, and praxis of organization development and change.

*Ontological Insights*. Complementing Tenkasi's scholarship are two insights into the nature of organizational reality. These are classified as ontological insights due to how they reframe foundational assumptions on organizational reality. The first insight concerns organizational knowledge and the fundamental assumptions about its nature. The second insight focuses on scholar-practitioners and the fundamental assumptions regarding the relationship between their thoughts and actions.

The work by Tenkasi on organizational knowledge is based on a rejection of the assumption that such knowledge exists independent of the knowers who created it. Rather than viewing knowledge workers as craftspeople who assemble new ideas based on the objective qualities of prior knowledge, they view knowledge work as innately subjective and filled with interpretation. The strong form of the insight into the ontology of knowledge is that knowledge does not exist outside of the knowers but rather rests within the processes of knowing that characterize human beings. It is more accurate, from this ontological perspective, to discuss organizational knowing rather than organizational knowledge. Organizational knowing puts the necessary people and meaning making back into the picture.

The work by Tenkasi on scholar-practitioners is based on a rejection of the Cartesian separation of thought and action that forms an untested assumption behind most of the research on scholars and leaders. He advances a premise that thought and action co-occur and that to deny their coexistence is to minimize the critical role that each plays together in successful scholarship and practice. Tenkasi brought the work of the Russian cognitive psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (1962), into the conversation to effectively frame how thought can mediate action. And in doing this, he provides historical context to the call to bridge knowledge and action by linking the early 1900s to the early 2000s. This lasting interest in scholar-practitioners is not just about actionable scientific knowledge; it searches for deeper understanding of how we as human beings can leverage our powers of cognition and agency to make a difference with our professions and lives. This insight is one of the contributions that has distinguished Tenkasi as a great thinker on Organization Change and Development.

*Epistemic Insight*. Clearly integrated into the work of Tenkasi are the insights that there are multiple forms of knowing and that expertise is not the sole domain of scholars or presidents and CEOs of organizations. There is an Aristotelian philosophy of knowledge that underpins Tenkasi's model of the scholar-practitioner as an epistemic technician (Tenkasi and Hay 2008). Scholar-practitioners have experiential knowledge, technical know-how, theoretical understanding, and wisdom to solve dilemmas. The significance of the epistemic insight is that it democratizes the formal

and informal inquiries into organization development and change – the perspectives of all employees, stakeholders, clients and customers, and interested parties have value. This democratic assumption to knowing mitigates the damage that can result from privileged truth imposed on an organization by vested interests and the powerful. It is this epistemological insight that furthers the ability of an organization to be an agent of community wellness and social change.

*Praxis Insight.* The process model of theory-practice linkages highlights the high level of skill required of successful scholar-practitioners. Scholar-practitioners who generate actionable scientific knowledge use theory-practice linkages as organizational tools across a broad range of their capacities. Master scholar-practitioners are active agents in the linkage process – they construct the conditions and the forms of the theory-practice linkages. The master scholar-practitioner uses theory-practice linkages as framing devices to give direction to a broadly expressed change mandate from top leadership, as influencing and legitimizing devices to argue for a course of action, as sensemaking devices to bring into focus the ambiguity and confusion of organizational life, and as demonstrative devices to indicate the practical and theoretical value of the results. Most significantly, scholar-practitioners use these tools within academia as well as organizations. They are adept at moving strategically between these two worlds.

The significance of this insight for praxis rests in its implications for change agents. Change agents are not confined to operate just within the current tasks and conditions of the organization nor are they solely responsible for generating development out of nothing on their own. Rather the change agent is a skilled craftsman who constructs the conditions and forms of development out of the material within the organization. The change agent cultivates and nurtures the growth of the organization, not as a bystander but as an active catalyst for emergence.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Advancing the Ontology, Epistemology, and Praxis of Scholar-Practitioners of Organizational Change

As an emerging thinker of organizational change, Tenkasi's legacy is growing and there is much unfinished business. Many of those profiled in this volume are still actively contributing to the knowledge community well into their eighties. Assuming Tenkasi will have similar longevity, there are 30 years of contributions yet to come. Consider this a mid-career review of his growing body of work.

*The Legacy of Tenkasi's Scholarship.* We identify four ways in which Tenkasi's scholarly agenda has created a legacy for other scholar-practitioners to follow. First is his legacy of theoretical contributions as noted in the previous sections. His doctoral dissertation on cognition and how it impacts team development and research and development grew into the work on organizational knowing and how organizational learning impacts organizational change (e.g., Tenkasi et al. 1998; Tenkasi and Mohrman, 1999). Second, his work on large-scale change, especially the research on the determinant factors of the growth of the Indian software industry,

has been presented globally and has impacted policy and development of the software industry in other countries (e.g., India, China, Australia). A third legacy is Tenkasi's methodological ambidexterity and reflexivity. His work demonstrates how innovative research paradigms (e.g., process and epidemiological models of analysis) can be brought to bear on the field to tease out new insights.

Fourth, and finally, his work on and with scholar-practitioners may be his greatest legacy. His research over the years has brought us models of how scholar-practitioners create useful knowledge (Tenkasi 2011; Tenkasi and Hay 2004, 2008) and the strategies and tactics that they use to translate theory to practice (Tenkasi and Hay 2004; Sanders 2015). This work continues to evolve and will engender further scholarship on how boundary spanners work between knowledge communities as the worldwide economy grows increasingly based on organizational learning and knowing.

*The Unfinished Business of Tenkasi's Scholarship*. Two areas within Tenkasi's scholarly agenda rise to significance as generative of major research initiatives and define his unfinished business to date. First, and in addition to being his greatest legacy, scholar-practitioners form a primary area for further study. This ongoing research centers on the challenges of being boundary spanners, as the worlds of scholarship and practice are hard to bridge. As difficult as it is to succeed in one of them, it is even more difficult to succeed in both. The production of actionable scientific knowledge is a rare outcome; more executive doctorates of OD wind up contributing to practice or scholarship but not both. This finding merits continued investigation to identify the originating conditions and operating mechanisms for actionable scientific knowledge. Additionally, more research is needed to extend the existing research to other communities of practice. Who are the boundary spanners of these disciplines and how do they bridge knowledge and action?

The second avenue of unfinished business concerns the investigation of the ontology of organizations. This avenue of research seeks to challenge the taken-for-granted assumptions on the nature of organizations and their functioning. Tenkasi and Boland questioned the status quo on knowledge management with the use of Wittgenstein and Giddens to reframe the nature of organizational knowing. Critical realism (Bhaskar 1998) and morphogenetic theory (Archer 1995) played a key role in the development of the process model of theory-practice linkages because of their openness to the dialectical synthesis of thought and action that makes scholar-practitioners possible.

More of this ontological work needs to be done to further our understandings of organization development and change by testing our assumptions on the mechanisms and agents of such change. And there are a host of topics to investigate: the role of dialogue versus shared action in organizational change, how an individual change agent mobilizes a system toward change, the interleaving of replication and emergence as change unfolds, and, lastly, what is the nature of change that is permanent.

It is to these ontological, epistemic, and praxis challenges that we look to continue the legacy of Ramkrishnan (Ram) V. Tenkasi.

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## Further Reading

The following publications will help the reader to explore in more depth the overarching themes from Tenkasi's work.

Understanding the essential principles for integrating theory and research knowledge to the realm of practice: lessons from the scholar practitioner (Tenkasi & Hay 2013).

Integrating theory to inform practice: Insights from the practitioner-scholar (Tenkasi 2011).

Following the second legacy of Aristotle: The scholar-practitioner as an epistemic technician. (Tenkasi & Hay 2008).

Actionable knowledge and scholar-practitioners: A process model of theory-practice linkages. (Tenkasi & Hay 2004).

Social networks and planned organizational change: The impact of strong network ties on effective change implementation and use (Tenkasi & Chesmore 2003).

The role of networks in fundamental organizational change: A grounded analysis (Mohrman et al. 2003).

The dynamics of cognitive oversimplification processes in R&D environments: An empirical assessment of some consequences (Tenkasi 2000).

Perspective making and perspective taking in communities of knowing (Boland Jr & Tenkasi 1995).

Knowing and organizational being. (Tenkasi 1993).

# Tojo Thatchenkery: Concept Champion, Engaged Educator, and Passionate Practitioner

Param Srikantia

**Abstract**

The chapter reviews the scholarly and practical contributions of Tojo Thatchenkery as a concept champion, engaged educator, and passionate practitioner to the discipline of organizational change management. After briefly reviewing some of the dominant influences that have shaped Thatchenkery's work, the chapter focuses on his contribution (a) as a scholar-practitioner elucidating the construct of Appreciative Intelligence®, (b) as a thought leader and a champion of the social constructionist and hermeneutic perspective on organizations, (c) as a scholar-practitioner generating original, bold, and creative extensions of the appreciative inquiry approach to knowledge management, sustainable value, and economic development, (d) as a champion of multiculturalism and diversity, (e) as an exceptionally creative pedagogic innovator who has fused action learning, sensitivity training, and experiential learning into a graduate program that equips a new generation of organizational development professionals, and finally (f) as an effective and creative consultant with an extensive array of high-powered clients who have benefitted from innovative organizational interventions interweaving elements such as Appreciative Intelligence®, social constructionism, sustainable value, and invisible leadership. The chapter concludes with an exploration of Thatchenkery's key insights and legacy to the field of organizational change.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Dr. Tojo Thatchenkery is a transnational scholar and practitioner and a prolific contributor to multiple domains of organizational development and change theory, research, and practice. He is best known for elucidating the construct of Appreciative Intelligence® and is widely recognized as a thought leader and a champion of the social constructionist perspective on organizations. He is particularly celebrated for his conceptual development of a hermeneutic approach to organizations and for undertaking original, bold, and creative extensions of the appreciative inquiry approach to multiple frontiers such as knowledge management, sustainable value, and economic development. Drawing upon his transnational experiences, he has also been a champion for recognizing and valuing diversity, reminding organizational decision makers to be sensitively attuned to the unique leadership patterns of a range of cultural groups through his work on invisible leadership of Asian Americans. He has demonstrated exceptional ingenuity in organizational consulting, with an extensive array of high-powered clients who have benefitted from innovative organizational interventions interweaving elements such as Appreciative Intelligence®, social constructionism, sustainable value, and invisible leadership.

## Influences and Motivations: Local Pathways to a Global World

Tojo Thatchenkery's organizational worldview was decisively shaped by at least three distinct forces: His upbringing in India which connected him to an ocean of wisdom free of Western overreliance on technical analytical rationality; the intellectual climate in the doctoral program in Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University; and a handful of mentors from across the world.

Thatchenkery's upbringing in India has been a significant force in his scholarship, teaching, and consulting, in both explicit and implicit ways. Tojo was born in Kerala,

India, in 1959 to a family strongly rooted in the values of education. His mother, a longtime high school teacher and later the head of various educational institutions in Kerala instilled the values of liberal education for her five children. The state of Kerala has the distinction of having elected the first communist government anywhere in the world (instead of by revolution). Kerala stands out as one of the best examples of social engineering for creating income equality among people and this focus on social justice influenced Tojo for rest of his life.

Thatchenkery's work on Asian immigrants and their enacted styles of invisible leadership and his formulation of the notion of Hindu social capital are direct expressions of the cross-cultural influence on his scholarly output. Furthermore, since the entire notion of bureaucracy is a colonial import to the Indian context under British rule, Thatchenkery also benefited from a healthy skepticism towards the dominant Western organizational model, namely, ubiquitous yet stultifying bureaucratic structures and culture. This skepticism supported his creative exploration of alternatives to dominant organizational theories, models and practices.

From Kerala, Tojo decided to move to the capital city of New Delhi for his undergraduate and Master's studies in Psychology. While being a student at the University of Delhi, he was active as a member of the academic council of the University, representing the whole student body. He was instrumental in fighting for and creating several student-centered initiatives at the conservative University of Delhi. He earned his BA in Psychology in 1980 and MA in the same subject in 1982. Soon after that, he was appointed as a research associate at the University of Delhi Business School and during this time he became active at the Indian Society for Applied Behavioral Sciences, an organization devoted to fostering social justice in India through education and training.

Thatchenkery's talent for research began emerging even as an undergraduate student studying psychology in India. Responding to the clash of epistemologies that was such a hallmark of postcolonial Indian society, as a young teenager Thatchenkery conducted a carefully designed study to explore the scientific validity of astrological predictions. By the time he was a graduate student, he had published research papers in India in the applied behavioral sciences and had already begun a successful career at New Delhi University in the social sciences. The organizational studies community in the United States was very fortunate to be able to import a young scholar who had shown so much early promise in India and who already had the breadth of perspective and experience to conduct meaningful scholarship and practice, formulate bold questions, explore courageous approaches, and bring an original and creative mind, without succumbing to the limiting forces of the dominant logical positivist zeitgeist prevailing in the US context.

Thatchenkery was subsequently also influenced by the Case Western Reserve University's Organizational Behavior department, which was the first ever in the world to award a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior and has been known for its commitment to methodological pluralism and for encouraging nonpositivistic research in the discipline. Historically, it is equally well known for its commitment to developing scholarly practitioners and practical scholars who explore the interplay among theory, research, and practice, in contrast to many other doctoral programs in

the discipline that tend to intellectualize organization behavior while devaluing attention to practical, everyday conundrums of organizational life.

In his scholarship, teaching, professional services, and consulting, Tojo Thatchenkery embodies and extends the highest aspirations for scholarship and practical effectiveness that inspired the founding members of the Case Western Reserve University's Organizational Behavior department. Whereas most organizational behavioral departments in the United States are restrictively positivistic in their orientation, encouraging incremental and largely verification-oriented research, the Case Western Reserve University's Organizational Behavior program actively challenged doctoral students to pursue bold, discovery-oriented research and to experiment with a broad range of paradigms and qualitative research techniques. Based on Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan's *Sociological Paradigm's of Organizational Analysis*, one can clearly discern Thatchenkery's commitment to the paradigmatic quadrant of radical humanism, embodied in two distinct streams of scholarship. First, Thatchenkery has made important scholarly contributions to social constructionism, a paradigm of research and thought that has been significantly underrepresented in business schools, despite its centrality in many social science and humanities disciplines. Like other social constructionists, Thatchenkery posits that organizations cannot be understood merely as objective entities discoverable by a positivistic science, but irreducibly as socially constructed entities whose meaning and dynamics are generated through social processes involving individual and group mental models, practices, values, norms, enactments, and relationships. This ontological frame invites a range of approaches to understanding and intervening in organizations, including attending to the phenomenology of organizational members.

Secondly, Thatchenkery is implicitly aligned with another tenet of radical humanism in rejecting the current status quo and zeitgeist of the organizational world. He embraces not maintenance of existing organizational forms but a deep commitment to exploring organizational systems and processes that are significantly more responsive to human aspirations and that are better suited to unleashing the full potential of human beings. Thatchenkery's scholarship combines the optimism of social constructionist perspectives in viewing organizations not as rigid entities resembling machines but as cooperatively constructed realities amenable to continuous reinterpretation and transformation with the reformist zeal captured in a commitment to change and novelty rather than to continuity and maintenance. Radical humanist perspectives are conspicuously absent in most business school education perhaps because of the conservative nature of corporations and the vested interests that silently shape mainstream business discourse. It is against this intellectual context of a profound scarcity of creative theorizing in the radical humanist tradition that Thatchenkery's significant contribution to organizational studies can be better understood and appreciated.

Thatchenkery was also influenced by a constellation of mentors consisting of creative organizational behavior thinkers who, in combination with his substantial native talents and intellect, helped to springboard his conceptual imagination. Abab Ahmad, an eminent management scholar at the Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi, was a seminal influence on Thatchenkery and mentored him

during Thatchenkery's time as a research associate and later as lecturer. Deepankar Roy, a prominent organization development consultant, introduced Thatchenkery to T-groups and facilitation techniques, an initiation that has been a vital part of Thatchenkery's creative learning, practice, teaching, and scholarship ever since.

Chief among Thatchenkery's mentors at the Case Western Reserve University was Dr. Suresh Srivastva, who encouraged his students to be fiercely and unapologetically original and courageous in their formulation of research questions, the selection of research methodology and in transcending disciplinary boundaries, nudging them to read classical philosophers, world literature and multiple social sciences so as not to be limited by the intellectual horizons of business theorizing. Together, Dr. Suresh Srivastva and Dr. David Cooperrider developed what became known as appreciative inquiry, and Dr. Cooperrider's consistent focus on positive organizational imagery was another source of influence. Dr. William Pasmore, through his contributions both to knowledge work and to a sociotechnical perspective on organizational change, helped to inspire Thatchenkery to explore the continuous potential for organizational learning and the reiterative realignment of technology and social processes especially in the context of knowledge management. Dr. David Kolb, an eminent theorist and researcher on adult learning, exposed Thatchenkery to a very broad range of readings and intellectual orientations that expanded his culturally ingrained potential for non-linear learning. Dr. Richard Boyatzis was Thatchenkery's first year advisor and helped reinforce Thatchenkery's focus on applied scholarship. Kenneth Gergen, the doyen of social constructionist perspectives on organizations, was Thatchenkery's intellectual collaborator who provided encouragement to build conceptual bridges between social constructionism, hermeneutics, and appreciative inquiry.

## Key Contributions: Appreciative Intelligence and Dynamic Workplaces

Thatchenkery has been a prolific contributor to multiple domains of theory, research, and practice. This section summarizes his key contributions in the following areas: (a) as a scholar-practitioner elucidating the construct of Appreciative Intelligence®, (b) as a thought leader and a champion of the social constructionist perspective on organizations, most particularly with the conceptual development of a hermeneutic approach to organizations, (c) as a scholar-practitioner generating original, bold, and creative extensions of the appreciative inquiry approach to multiple frontiers such as knowledge management, sustainable value, and economic development, (d) as a champion for recognizing and valuing diversity, reminding organizational decision makers to be sensitively attuned to the unique leadership patterns of a range of cultural groups through his work on invisible leadership of Asian Americans, (e) as an exceptionally creative pedagogic innovator who has fused action learning, sensitivity training, and experiential learning into a graduate program that equips a new generation of organizational development professionals to take on the organizational challenges posed by increasingly complex, unstable, conflicted, and chaotic environments, (f) as an effective and creative consultant with an extensive array of high-

powered clients who have benefitted from innovative organizational interventions interweaving elements such as Appreciative Intelligence®, social constructionism, sustainable value, and invisible leadership.

## Elucidation of the Construct of Appreciative Intelligence®

Thatchenkery's development of the construct of Appreciative Intelligence® (Thatchenkery and Metzker 2006) bears eloquent testimony to his own Appreciative Intelligence® and his capacity for creative conceptual innovation by sensing an intellectual opportunity, extrapolating themes from one intellectual domain to another and developing ideas that embody his deep commitment to making a practical and positive difference in the mindset of contemporary managers and the surrounding organizational milieu. Thatchenkery invokes a powerful and naturalistically grounded metaphor of "seeing the mighty oak in the acorn" to describe this form of intelligence that enables some people "to perceive the positive potential in a given situation and to act purposively to transform the potential to outcomes" (Thatchenkery and Metzker 2006).

Appreciative Intelligence is defined by Thatchenkery as "The ability to reframe a given situation to recognize the positive possibilities embedded in it that were not initially apparent...to perceive the positive potential in a given situation and to act purposively to transform the potential to outcomes." Thatchenkery's conceptualization involves three components, namely reframing, appreciating the positive, and seeing how the future unfolds from the present. Thatchenkery's work provides numerous examples of Appreciative Intelligence, some even involving reframing a situation for a new possibility even in the face of extreme deprivation. For example, Muhammad Yunus, distinguished economist and founder of the Grameen Bank who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize saw entrepreneurial creativity and spark even among homeless, disenfranchised people too poor to own the shirt on their back. They would not have the financial capacity to qualify for traditional bank loans. But rather than seeing them through the denigrating lens that the middle class and the elite see them, he decided to boldly advance them sums of money to establish entrepreneurial projects and to pay back the loans. While customary belief would lead us to expect that such loans not backed by collateral would not be returned, Yunus stumbled upon the surprising discovery that the abysmally poor, when advanced small sums of money, actually paid back their loan obligations at a more impressive rate than their middle class and upper class counterparts. This revolutionary finding enabled him to establish the Grameen Bank and through its success, the global microcredit movement which has proved to be a popular, though now controversial tool in the armamentarium of poverty alleviation measures.

Conceptualized in this manner, Appreciative Intelligence® can be understood as a very important new form of intelligence to be added to the range of intelligences identified by Gardner (1983) as part of his theory of multiple intelligences. At the same time, Appreciative Intelligence® goes beyond Gardner's formulations because

Gardner's eight types of intelligence (namely: linguistic, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, musical, logical-mathematical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and naturalist) still appear as static, discrete, trait like dimensions that operate independently of each other. Thatchenkery's construct of Appreciative Intelligence® is more a dynamic way of being than a static trait and one that is not confined to a particular dimensions but cuts across categories and domains of existence to enable the individual to powerfully inhabit a certain ontological space (Thatchenkery 2015).

In theorizing this special ontological space, Thatchenkery drew on his cultural upbringing and early socialization in India, which helped him to distinguish and resonate with a particular constellation of possibilities. Thatchenkery believes that, growing up in the extremely resilient culture of India, one continually experiences the dynamic vitality of the human spirit that never seems to be depleted in its celebration of life even in the face of the greatest hardships of everyday living. Recognition of these possibilities and realities of "being" fostered an intellectual consciousness in Thatchenkery that enabled him to exercise the very faculty that the construct of Appreciative Intelligence® illuminates. In addition, the theory behind Appreciative Intelligence® also draws on social constructionist philosophy highlighting the role of language and mental models in shaping one's perceptions of reality.

The exploration of Appreciative Intelligence® in the context of entrepreneurship, innovation, social capital, knowledge management, economic development, and leadership has been a recurring theme in Thatchenkery's work beginning with Thatchenkery and Metzker (2006) and continuing through countless research papers and books (listed in the bibliography that follows this chapter). The construct has attracted the attention of practicing managers at the highest levels of strategy formulation, and Thatchenkery has unveiled this concept in multiday seminars conducted in all the major cities of the United States, Europe, Asia, and South America. Thatchenkery's work has impacted tens of thousands of people at all levels of organizations. His ability to translate the theory and practice of Appreciative Intelligence® and to present it in an engaging manner that inspires practicing managers to apply it readily in their organizational contexts makes him a scholarly entertainer of world class repute and explains the overwhelming contagion of enthusiasm for his seminars and texts. His book *Appreciative Intelligence®: Seeing the Mighty Oak in the Acorn* enjoys the distinction of endorsement by the Harvard Business Review that placed the book on their recommended reading list in 2006. It is an important contribution to the sets of approaches committed to supporting the unfolding of human potential in its multiform manifestations because it joins a chorus of voices that are helping to retire the anachronistic conceptions of intelligence as a unitary phenomenon. Taken to its logical conclusion, it has the power to help create a world in which every child can come to be appreciated for their uniqueness and special talents in a noncompetitive celebration of multiple capabilities that nature has generously sprinkled and distributed.

Given the impact of the book and the construct of Appreciative Intelligence®, it would be appropriate to indicate a little about its history and the influences that

inspired Thatchenkery to develop it fully. It was through his inductive research into the phenomenal success of entrepreneurs in the Silicon Valley region and the transformation of that region into a powerhouse of entrepreneurial innovation that he began to discern a pattern that led to his adumbration of the concept of Appreciative Intelligence®. He was fascinated by the manner in which venture capitalists, immigrant entrepreneurs, and educated professionals gathered in this region, making possible a magnitude of innovation that amounted to nothing short of "history making," culminating in such wonders of the entrepreneurial world as the Internet, social media, and the marvel of a networked world. Thatchenkery coined the term "Appreciative Intelligence®" to account for this explosion of entrepreneurial innovation, demonstrating the centrality of this schema of apperception and its embodiment as an identifiable form of intelligence among these outstanding entrepreneurs that made the degree of innovation, risk taking, and creativity possible (Thatchenkery and Metzker 2006). He was building on his 1990s research on the dynamism of Indian entrepreneurs in that region to suggest that multiple ethnic groups felt supported in the Silicon valley community that successfully led to opportunity recognition, persistence, resilience, and anticipation of positive outcomes, the essential ingredients of Appreciative Intelligence®. The development of Appreciative Intelligence® reflects Thatchenkery's creative capacity to synthesize and transform diverse streams of thought and experience into a powerful new theory and practice, as he brings together research into entrepreneurial successes of the Silicon Valley subculture, appreciative inquiry, social constructionism, and the theory of multiple intelligences to create both a construct and an accompanying set of organizational interventions to help unleash and transform organizations and individuals into generative entities capable of achieving dramatic breakthroughs in innovation and entrepreneurial resilience.

Thatchenkery's book on Appreciative Intelligence® has been exceptionally well received and translated into five languages. In addition to it being selected by *Harvard Business Review* for inclusion in their 2006 recommended book list, a number of other reputed, cutting-edge practitioner outlets have featured a discussion of the book, including Canada's *Globe and Mail*, the ASTD publication *Training + Development*, and other management magazines such as *Ode* (Europe and United States), *Management Next* (India), *Organisations and People* (United Kingdom), and *Transformation* (a publication of the World Business Academy).

Thatchenkery makes it abundantly clear that even though the construct of Appreciative Intelligence® may appear like an individual competency, it has a profound impact on groups, organizations and at the broader societal level, and he explores how it can be applied in all of these contexts. For corporations, its application can result in enhanced performance through new products, improved work arrangements, and an explosion of creativity and innovation. For the governmental organizations, Appreciative Intelligence® would pave the way for new forms of governance, perhaps less based on power-over and more based on power-with and a celebration of the positive potential of recognizing that we are all deeply interconnected, leading to a more enlightened way of being in relationship with each other.

## Thought Leadership of the Social Constructionist Perspective on Organizations

True recognition of the significance of Thatchenkery's contributions requires an understanding of the intellectual context of the discipline at the time Thatchenkery aligned himself with the social constructionist viewpoint and challenged the ascendency of logical positivist approaches to organizational behavior (Gergen and Thatchenkery 2014). The most eloquent testimony to the powerful impact and enduring relevance of his contribution is evident from the impact made by three of his seminal pieces that converge to form a very solid body of conceptual work on the social constructionist viewpoint on organizations (Thatchenkery 1992; Gephart et al. 1996; Gergen and Thatchenkery 2004). We will now explore the essential features of this aforementioned trinity. Thatchenkery's *Organizations as texts: Hermeneutics as a model for understanding organizational change* has come to be cited more than 400 times in various publications that explore the role of language in organizational studies including an intellectual endorsement of its centrality by *The Annual Review of Psychology* (1999) which indicated the significance of his work for the field of organization change and development. In *That's Moving: Theories that Matter*, Karl Weick (1999), past editor of the *Administrative Sciences Quarterly* states, "Thatchenkery's use of hermeneutics to understand what happens when people fold appreciative inquiry into their ready-to-hand action" exemplified precisely the kind of scholarship that represent theories that truly matter.

Another element that made up this intellectual trinity of powerful papers that shaped and supported the social constructionist perspectives in organizational theory is a paper titled *Organization Science as Social Construction* that Thatchenkery coauthored with Kenneth Gergen, one of the leading exponents of social constructionism (Gergen and Thatchenkery 2004). This paper was truly foundational and built conceptual linkages between hermeneutics and social constructionist philosophy within the realm of organizational studies. Ever since its appearance, Thatchenkery's *Organization Science as Social Construction* has been consistently ranked among the most frequently cited papers especially by scholars who are dedicated to exploring the role of language, assumptions, and self-referentiality in organizations. It also enjoyed the distinctive honor of winning the prestigious *McGregor Award*, awarded jointly by the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* and Sage Publications for the best articles published in *JABS* from 1990–1999. Regarding the third element of the trinity, it was in 1996 that Thatchenkery coedited with David Boje and Robert Gephart another definitive work, also widely cited, *Postmodern Management and Organization Theory*, which helped inject a broad variety of postmodern perspectives into organization theory (Gephart et al. 1996).

Collectively speaking, this trinity described above gave a tremendous scholarly impetus to the proliferation of social constructionism in research in organizational studies and management. Although postmodernism had begun to percolate into the social sciences as early as the 1980s, its dynamic application within the field of organizational studies and management theorizing and research is clearly one of

Thatchenkery's flagship scholarly accomplishments. This has helped unleash an intellectual revolution in the world of organizational theorizing, helping to humanize both the organizations themselves and the intellectual reservoir from which they draw their inspiration for change and transformation. The introduction of postmodern perspectives into the Academy of Management (AOM), the very bastion of highly valued scholarly research on management, was also accomplished at the initiative of Thatchenkery. A showcased paper symposium that Thatchenkery arranged in 1992 entitled *Postmodernist readings of managerial abilities, learning organizations and information systems* became the very first time that a symposium championing the postmodern perspective was featured on the AOM program.

## Extensions of Appreciative Inquiry to Knowledge Management, Sustainable Value, and Economic Development

Thatchenkery has been extensively involved with the refinements and subsequent developments in the appreciative inquiry approach in terms of theory, research, and practice (Thatchenkery et al. 2010; Thatchenkery and Chowdhry 2007; Thatchenkery and Stough 2005; Thatchenkery 2005). His numerous books, some authored and others edited by him, have significantly expanded the frontiers of appreciative inquiry and applied the method to new settings and contexts, significantly enriching the understanding of the potential appreciative inquiry brought to varied areas of business, nonprofit, and research environments.

Consistent with his interest in enhancing the creativity of knowledge work environments, Thatchenkery adapted the general principles of appreciative inquiry to knowledge work environments, resulting in the articulation of an approach he pioneered called the Appreciative Sharing of Knowledge (ASK) (Thatchenkery 2005). Equally significant and to be discussed more extensively later in this chapter is the creative use that Thatchenkery has made of appreciative inquiry and sensitivity training in educating students in the art and science of designing knowledge work environments of great intellectual vitality. In combining these approaches, Thatchenkery gives concrete expression to the fact that the cognitive effectiveness and conceptual vitality of groups is powerfully shaped by the emotional and social architecture underlying their functioning.

Another noteworthy extension of appreciative inquiry created by Thatchenkery is in the area of sustainable value. A landmark contribution in this domain has been his coedited book *Positive Design and Appreciative Construction: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Value*, bringing together contributions from various scholars and practitioners of appreciative inquiry in developing a new design-based approach to creating sustainable value, replacing the older notions of sustainable development (Thatchenkery et al. 2010).

Thatchenkery has been the very epitome of scholarly productivity in the prolific manner in which he has gone about the business of building bridges between the concepts of Appreciative Intelligence® and appreciative inquiry on the one hand and the vast array of domains to which he has applied the appreciative processes.

Bridging together appreciative inquiry, knowledge management, sustainable development, social capital, organizational development, postmodernism, and information technology and economic development, he has been able to create a collage of new possibilities hitherto unexplored in organization studies. Not only has he independently authored and coauthored myriad books, but also, through books edited by him, he has also created spaces to which he has attracted scholars and practitioners engaged in these frontiers of research to pool together their insights and key learning and advance entire fields of application. A list of these scholarly books will give the reader a glimpse into the variety and vastness of his conceptual endeavors: They include *Managing Complex Organizational Change* (2016), *Optimizing Business Growth: Strategies for Scaling Up* (2016), *Leveraging Human Factors for Strategic Change: An Organizational Culture Perspective* (2015), *Understanding Work Experiences from Multiple Perspectives* (2015), *Organizational Transformation: Change Management Perspectives* (2014), *Strategic Initiatives for Competitive Advantage in the Knowledge Society* (2014), *Reframing Human Capital for Organizational Excellence* (2013), *Positive Initiatives for Organizational Change* (2012), *Positive Design and Appreciative Construction: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Value. Leveraging Global Competiveness for Organizational Excellence* (2010), *Enhancing Organizational Performance Through Strategic Initiatives* (2009), *Handbook on Management Cases* (2008), *Appreciative Inquiry and Knowledge Management* (2007), *Information Communication Technology and Economic Development: Learning from the Indian Experience* (2006), and *Appreciative Sharing of Knowledge: Leveraging Knowledge Management for Strategic Change* (2005).

## Multiculturalism and Invisible Leadership

Thatchenkery's contributions as a transnational scholar who is in a vantage position to address issues related to cultural diversity and to educate scholars and practitioners globally about the possibilities and challenges associated with international diversity in a global world found further expression in his book (coauthored with Keimei Sugiyama) *Making the Invisible Visible: Understanding the Leadership Contributions of Asian Minorities in the Workplace* (2011). The book examines the significant impact made by Asian minorities in the United States and elsewhere but in doing so elucidates a construct of "quiet leadership," referred to also as "invisible leadership," a self-effacing style of leading people unobtrusively, often from behind the scenes, that may pass unnoticed in organizational cultures more attuned to detecting and recognizing self-promotional styles of leadership widely practiced by white males and embedded as the dominant zeitgeist of Western or Western-styled organizations.

While Western notions of leadership imply a high degree of visibility, personal charisma, and the creative use of power, one of the distinctive hallmarks of the Eastern traditions is a conception of leadership as entailing ego-transcendence. In the Eastern traditions, a leader is someone who makes a contribution to the well-being of

the collective but does so in a very self-effacing manner because he or she has transcended their ego and is able to subordinate their quest for visibility to the collective needs of the group they belong to. The prolific Indian mystic, Osho, whose discourses have been captured in several thousand books covering all the wisdom traditions of the world, explains that in the West, the leader is trying to be the metaphorical wave while in the East, the leader is one who has come to understand the ephemeral nature of the wave and therefore disappears as the wave only to be resurrected as the ocean itself, embodying its immense power and vastness. Thatchenkery's work on invisible leadership explores the leadership style of many Asian Americans whose values and outlook are rooted in collectivism rather than in individualism and who prefer to lead quietly and unobtrusively. It is the style of leadership captured by Nelson Mandela in his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* when he states: "A leader is like a shepherd. He stays behind the flock, letting the most nimble go out ahead, whereupon, the others follow, not realizing that all along they are being directed from behind." Similar sentiments are echoed in the Taoistic tradition by its founder Lao Tzu who says of the best leaders, that when their work is done, the people say "we did it ourselves."

It is appropriate to indicate that Thatchenkery's interest in the notion of invisible leadership appears to have its roots in his own cultural experiences. He recalls vividly a speech delivered by a former President of India, Abdul Kalam. In this famous speech, Kalam recounted a time when he was the mission director of India's first satellite launch that unfortunately failed. Kalam described how the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization at that time, Mr. Satish Dhawan took full responsibility publicly for the failure. A few years later when the launch was completed successfully, Dhawan stepped out of the way and attributed the credit for the success of the launch to Kalam who directed the mission and had Kalam announce the success to the media. Thatchenkery was very moved by this example and quotes the words of Kalam who characterizes the ideal leader as one who "takes the full brunt of failure, but shies away from the sunshine of success, handing over the glory to teammates and believing that success belongs to the whole and not to one individual, therefore, the whole should benefit and the success is mutually owned." It is hardly surprising that Thatchenkery became intrigued by the styles of leadership among the Asian minority in the United States who import similar ideals of making quiet contribution, choosing to stay behind the scenes and be somewhat anonymous they have imbibed from the collectivism of their culture of origin.

In this book (Thatchenkery and Sugiyama 2011), Thatchenkery brings together research, theory, and anecdotal data that highlights one of the major challenges of managing organizations in which many subcultures with their own distinctive personal, managerial, and leadership styles coexist. His book is a wake-up call for all those managers and leaders who are genuinely concerned about tapping into the creative talent, particular capabilities and authentic styles of minorities and the multiple ways in which their contributions may come to be eclipsed by a more

dominant, vocal majority more at ease with more visible and strident ways of declaring their contribution. Thatchenkery's work is a powerful response with significant insight into the marginalization that many Asian managers and professionals experience in their organizations (Thatchenkery and Sugiyama 2011). Much organizational change theory has often implicitly assumed a homogenous cultural context and his work is an important rejoinder helpful in reversing this blindness to diversity that has unwittingly crept into the field. In so many ways, Thatchenkery's groundbreaking work serves as a useful reminder to organizational decision makers, power centers, and architects of organizational change to be sensitively attuned to the idiosyncratic, self-effacing, quiet, and invisible leadership patterns of minority groups like the Asian Americans (Cheng and Thatchenkery 1997). He is recognized as one of the very first researchers to shed the analytic spotlight on the human and social capital dynamics and patterns unique to Asian Americans in federal agencies and in US corporations, and his reputation has led him to the US Congress to testify for the *White House Initiative on Asian Americans*.

Thatchenkery's contribution to multicultural understanding and insight is predicated, among other things, on his notion of a communal or social rationality in sharp contradistinction to the conception of human beings as self-contained, rational individuals. In the context of corporate globalization, this viewpoint offers a very important alternative to the culturally disembedded notion of a society formed of self-interested individuals that is wreaking havoc on the cultural integrity of societies globally. Thatchenkery replaces this with a recognition of communal reality that shows a genuine appreciation for persons and communities as conditioned by and organically rooted in historical and social contexts. His research on information communication technology (ICT) and economic development of India (Thatchenkery and Stough 2005) is a powerful example of the significance of communal rationality.

Prior to Thatchenkery's research, no one had predicted that India would emerge as a major center of excellence in terms of information technology because most models based on technical rationality highlighted the lack of a sound infrastructure, excessive governmental regulation, and an unresponsive investment climate (Thatchenkery and Stough 2005). As Thatchenkery's analysis pointed out, most of these accounts failed to acknowledge the significance of communal rationality that was firmly rooted in a collectivist culture that was resilient enough to transcend problems and embrace creative solutions through a cooperative consciousness. Unconstrained by self-interested individualism and its liabilities, the culture promoted active knowledge sharing because ideas were not seen as privately owned but communally shared and exchanged. Thatchenkery coined the term *Hindu Social Capital*, which "signifies the positive characteristics and competencies attributed to the Indian professionals (in software, banking, engineering, etc.) in India and overseas based on the common perception of Indians as good with abstractions (The term *Hindu* is used, for want of a better one, to explicate the Indian mind-set and is not meant to be a religious attribute)."

## Pedagogic Innovation in the Institutionalized Fusion of Action Learning, Sensitivity Training, and Experiential Learning

After earning his Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, Thatchenkery joined the brand new department of Social and Organizational Learning (PSOL) at George Mason University, a department that was established with the goal of promoting interdisciplinary work involving faculty from diverse academic backgrounds including economics, anthropology, sociology, computer science, management, and cultural studies. Thatchenkery excelled at institution building and early in his career at George Mason, he collaborated with faculty across schools and created the Master of New Professional Studies program which became a prolific incubator for about half a dozen masters programs that were developed out of this initiative.

One of Thatchenkery's sterling accomplishments is that in 1996 he became the founder of a professional Master's degree program with a focus on organizational learning and knowledge management (ODKM) at George Mason University, the first of its kind anywhere. The program was renamed M.S. in Organization Development & Knowledge Management in 2008 and celebrated its 20th year of growth this year. He is currently the program director of this Master of Science in Organization Development and Knowledge Management at the Schar School of Policy & Government at George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia. This professional degree that Thatchenkery founded has produced a very impressive cadre of practitioners, consultants, entrepreneurs, and scholars who are leaders in education, public service, change management, and organizational transformation in business, government, global and US-based NGOs, and international financial institutions.

It would be instructive to explore the unique, "blue ocean" features of the program that Thatchenkery founded because significant dimensions of his approach to organizational change have been woven into the design of the program and integrated in a most spectacularly innovative manner. The three required core courses he teaches for the ODKM program are Group Dynamics and Team Learning, Organizational Learning Laboratory, and Learning Community. All three of these courses have significant experiential grounding and are designed to foster pragmatic, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual competencies in both the experienced and embryonic organizational development professionals who participate as students. Thatchenkery believes that many different kinds of knowledge are integrated in communities and institutions and that every community develops over time a set of shared *practices*, resulting in a community of practice.

Each of the three courses is distinctive. In the Group Dynamics and Team Learning course, students go through an intense T-group type experience that is ingeniously cross-fertilized with methods and perspectives drawn from adult and experiential learning theories, organizational learning methodologies, and encounter groups. In the Learning Community course, Thatchenkery focuses on communities of practice, helping students identify, surface, and play with both tacit and explicit group practices and norms, while also generating new ones, through an innovative course design in which small groups of students design and deliver professional-

quality, full-day learning experiences for the benefit of their colleagues, the professors, alumni, and guests, and then reflect on the experience (both of codesigner and participant) through a structured process. In the Organizational Learning Laboratory, students acquire mastery of organizational learning interventions and conduct real-world consulting projects designed to promote breakthroughs in organizational effectiveness, learning, and renewal.

A core hallmark of Thatchenkery's approach is the personal reflection application essay (PRAE), "where students describe their experiences from intense group interactions, simulations, exercises, case studies, or role play, reflect on them, conceptualize/theorize them using readings, and propose concrete new behaviors they would engage in based on the new learning." Although many students find this level of integration of experience, observation, conceptualization, and experimentation initially challenging, they readily see the value of the exercise because of its direct relationship to the competencies of being an organizational change agent. Another novel dimension of the program is that students are often invited back to facilitate small group laboratory learning within the program.

In addition to his role designing programs, curricula, and courses, Thatchenkery has been a committed and supportive mentor to his students. He has advised and chaired many Ph.D. dissertations and master's students both at GMU and at other institutions. Thatchenkery goes well above and beyond to help his students in the directions they most seek to develop. For students with a practitioner focus, he analyzes what the student needs and helps the student develop the knowledge, skills, competencies, experience, networks, and qualities of being necessary to be effective and successful in organization development and change (or wherever their careers take them). For students with a scholarly focus, he helps the students develop the conceptual and analytical rigor, knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to excel. For students with a combined focus, he provides both types of guidance. In all cases, Thatchenkery goes far above and beyond for his students, both while they are students and also whenever needed afterwards as alumni. For example, as part of giving students experience and opportunity, three of his books were coauthored with his students: Carol Metzker for *Appreciative Intelligence*®, Keimei Sugiyama for *Making the Invisible Visible*, and Dilpreet Chowdhry for *Appreciative Inquiry and Knowledge Management*. Students routinely seek out Thatchenkery for guidance, and alumni routinely stay in touch with him for decades on end.

In addition to his role at George Mason University, he is also a doctoral faculty at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, California, and a member of the NTL Institute of Applied Behavioral Science and the Taos Institute. The NTL institute is the pioneering organization for applying insights from the behavioral sciences to awaken people to possibilities for creating egalitarian and more socially just workplaces that embrace power equalization and celebrate and promote diversity. The Taos Institute focuses on bringing the benefits of a social constructivist paradigm and insights to organizational and other human contexts. In all of these pedagogic roles, Thatchenkery's core philosophy of teaching and the accompanying set of practices outlined above permeate his pedagogy, student interaction and mentoring, and design of programs, curricula, and courses.

## Impactful Consulting Integrating Multiple Methods and Perspectives

Thatchenkery's impact in the field of organizational development and change reaches an acme in his consulting work. His consulting has had a salubrious influence on tens of thousands of managers globally. Thatchenkery's consulting draws on Appreciative Intelligence®, social constructionism, knowledge management, sustainable value, invisible or quiet leadership, organizational learning, group dynamics, and mindfulness. In these presentations and interventions, he shows an extraordinary conceptual and training agility in applying his vast reservoir of insights in each of the aforementioned thematic areas to the design and delivery of high impact programs and workshops. Through the Institute of Management Studies (IMS), a membership organization of Fortune 500 companies providing training and management development seminars for corporations in nearly 30 cities around the world, Thatchenkery has reached hundreds of global managers at all levels of management offering a uniquely integrated blend of expertise in Appreciative Intelligence®, knowledge management, mindfulness, and organizational learning. Additionally, Thatchenkery has an extremely impressive array of clients globally who invite him to offer his expertise in enhancing the effectiveness of their organizations. His seminars and interventions lie within the domains of change management, leadership development, organization design and strategy, and knowledge management. Past and current clients include Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, IBM, Fannie Mae, Booz Allen, PNC Bank, Lucent Technologies, General Mills, 3 M, British Petroleum, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, United States Department of Agriculture, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, US Department of Treasury, USPS OIG, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Akbank (Turkey), and the Tata Consulting Services (India).

## New Insights: Unleashing Human Potential Through Appreciative Intelligence

Thatchenkery's contribution to the scholarly and practical dimensions of organizational development has been extremely catalytic in unleashing creative currents that have helped thaw the somewhat rigid edifice of logical positivism in the disciplines of public policy, knowledge management, and organizational learning and development. His elaboration of social constructionist and hermeneutic approaches to organizational theory have added to our appreciation of the fluidity of organizations and their capacity for dynamic vitality, interplay, and continuous rejuvenation that occur between and among organizations, actors, observers, and environments (Gergen and Thatchenkery 2014). He has helped remind us constantly of the creative power of human subjectivity in the design of organizations through the iterative mechanisms of interpretation, sensing, and meaning making (Thatchenkery 1992).

It is impossible to overestimate the extent to which the epistemological stance he has inhabited across multiple thematic areas of scholarship has fueled viable alternatives to mainstream approaches in how organizational processes are understood conceptually and managed through creative interventions predicated upon social constructionist appreciative sense-making.

Just as one illustration of the very profound real-world impact of Thatchenkery's work, the articulation of the construct of Appreciative Intelligence (Thatchenkery 2015) represents both, a significant conceptual refinement and extension of appreciative inquiry and an applied lever of transformation that is highly generalizable to a plethora of real world problems. It has had very significant consequences reaching the shores of countless organizations globally. Through the seminars of the Institute of Management Studies (IMS) mentioned earlier, Thatchenkery has reached literally thousands of participants who have rated his impact extremely highly and have noted the carryover effects of his teaching into everyday practices in their own organizational context in diverse, geographically dispersed global organizations. From a more personal standpoint, I can provide one direct example among hundreds of organizational change efforts inspired by Thatchenkery's work every year. It was not uncommon at this international financial institution that I consulted with to arrange for the "training" of leaders of so-called Third-World countries by inviting economists from leading American universities to impart the training. The reality was that much of this training delivered by academic experts was far removed from the realities of the leaders of the various countries. Several economists from the so-called First World were perceived as largely disconnected from the ground-level realities of the various countries. Thatchenkery and Appreciative Intelligence® inspired the author to reframe the challenge away from providing expert opinion of eminent economists and toward unleashing the appreciative intelligence of the participants themselves by designing spaces for the profound insights, experiences, talents, and capacities of the diverse participants to be freely shared. Participants were invited to bring glowing examples of economic rejuvenation from their local contexts and to serve as faculty, inspiring each other through powerful sharing with the other participants from different regions of the world. This promoted transfer of learning and insights across the world based on an appreciative valuing of what appeared to be working best in the ground level realities as opposed to abstract theories taught by the so-called First world experts. The concept of "Appreciative Intelligence®" thus enabled the conscious pursuit and focus on positive examples from different regions of the world and the replacement of the expert paradigm with a celebration of the local knowledge available. The concept of Appreciative Intelligence® and the powerful implications of organizational realities as socially constructed have influenced and shaped theory, research and practice tremendously (Thatchenkery and Metzker 2006). In business schools and in schools of public policy it has introduced to the teaching of organizational change an extremely tangible set of methods and techniques to help overcome the logical positivist conception of organizations as rigid entities not very amenable to change and transformation.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Multiple Tributaries, Unknown Destiny

While many organizational and management specialists have taken the level of the firm as the fundamental unit of analysis and have consequently attempted to develop concepts and interventions that optimize organizational outcomes within a firm level competitive advantage mindset, Thatchenkery enjoys a somewhat different but impressive reputation in the general field of management and in the specialty of Organization Development (OD). He is often recognized as a consummate scholar and practitioner who has transcended the narrowness of the firm level focus of organizational development and instead taken the focus of his efforts to be the creative unleashing of human potential within larger social collectivities. His contributions on appreciative intelligence, social constructionism and hermeneutics, sustainable value, appreciative sharing of knowledge (ASK), and invisible leadership go beyond firm level competitive dynamics and seek to unleash the creative splendor inherent in human nature in the service of human flourishing, enhancing the synergistic potential among human beings, and maximize cooperative consciousness and entrepreneurial creativity. Within OD, he is especially recognized in the area referred to as Positive Organizational Behavior, which examines the multiple ways in which language, particularly positive language, generates organizational realities. His paper, "Organizational Sciences as social construction," coauthored with Kenneth Gergen, has now come to be recognized as a classic and has been cited more than 400 times and has been reprinted half a dozen times in different scholarly journal outlets. Similarly, his book *Appreciative Intelligence*® is a Harvard Business Review recommended reading. In the area of knowledge management, which is centrally important in today's information society, Thatchenkery has developed Appreciative Sharing of Knowledge (ASK). When it comes to questions of planetary well-being and responsible stewardship of the planet's resources, Thatchenkery has contributed through his book *Positive Design and Appreciative Construction: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Value.*

Thatchenkery intends to spend the next few years studying the relationship between entrepreneurial cognition, opportunity recognition, and Appreciative Intelligence®. While most research on entrepreneurship focuses on the macro level using knowledge spillover theory and regional advantage strategy frameworks, Thatchenkery's contributions explore entrepreneurship at the micro, individual level, studying the interrelationships between entrepreneurial cognition, opportunity recognition, and Appreciative Intelligence®. He is articulating a comprehensive, multilevel research agenda examining entrepreneurship in a holistic manner. Similarly, Thatchenkery's work on quiet and invisible leadership among Asian Americans is blazing a new trail as the first major piece of research to identify and document leadership styles that may be unique and idiosyncratic to specific ethnic minorities. In a global, multicultural world, the study is an extremely valuable reminder of the importance of not merely giving lip service to diversity but to understanding the unique leadership patterns, styles of engagement, and forms of contribution that may be relatively distinct to and prevalent among people who share a collective identity.

## Conclusion

Thatchenkery's scholarly and professional contributions to the organizational development field demonstrate the potential for synergy between scholarship and practice and the interplay between the three identities that he has been able to inhabit in a fluidly integrative manner, namely that of concept champion, an engaged educator and a passionate practitioner. As a concept champion, he has demonstrated relentless commitment to upholding the intellectual significance of Appreciative Intelligence, social constructionism, and invisible leadership. As an engaged educator, Thatchenkery has been able to create and sustain a dynamic institutional architecture for one of the world's leading graduate programs in organizational development and knowledge management at George Mason University, a program that has already produced twenty cohorts of practitioners who are in so many ways shaping the field of organizational development and its emerging contours in the Washington D.C. metropolitan areas and elsewhere, globally. As a passionate practitioner, he has crafted a variety of creative interventions involving Appreciative Intelligence, he has extended appreciative inquiry to challenges of knowledge management and sustainable development and he has shaped the organizational cultures of countless organizations through his seminars that have had an extraordinary impact.

Imparting extraordinary vitality to Thatchenkery's scholarly and practitioner work is a tremendous gift for weaving together seemingly disparate elements into coherently integrated wholes and leveraging the concomitant synergies in knowledge work. In his world, appreciative intelligence, social constructionism and hermeneutics, knowledge management, entrepreneurial creativity, invisible leadership, action learning, sustainable value, and cross-cultural identity formation in fostering leadership excellence don't exist in splendid isolation but freely flow into each other like multiple tributaries coming together, mixing, colliding, dissolving, and disappearing as individual thematic entities only to be reconstituted in a oceanic space of transformative energy capable of enhancing the resilience of individuals, organizations, and societies for planetary well-being. They come together as seamlessly and with the same degree of integrative synergy as the three facets of Thatchenkery himself- a concept champion, an engaged educator and a passionate practitioner, each one fortifying the other, adding layers of multidimensional richness to his presence as an organizational development practitioner who is leaving an indelible imprint on the profession.

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Steven S. Taylor

**Abstract**

Bill Torbert's career has combined being a leader, teaching leadership, consulting to leaders, and researching leadership. Above all else he has been intent on embodying and explicating what he came to call his "collaborative developmental action inquiry" (CDAI) approach to life, social science, and leadership. CDAI sees every action as an inquiry and every inquiry as an action. That is to say, we are constantly inquiring into the social world and also acting to change that social world. Torbert's response to this is to suggest a social science that is based in multiplicity. Rather than a single set of practices, he suggests that social science research can have a first-, second-, or third-person research voice; have first-, second-, or third-person practice as its subject; and be about the past, present, or future; with single-, double-, or triple-loop feedback. CDAI represents a different paradigm that holds that the primary aim of social science research is to generate moments of deep inquiry amidst action and create capacity for and practice of mutual exercises of power, leading to patterns of timely action. In order to "do" CDAI, Torbert has created various ideas and tools for practice. For first- and second-person practice of CDAI, Torbert has developed two powerful tools, the four territories of experience and the four types of speech. In third-person research, he led the use of adult developmental theory in organization change and extended the theory to create stage models of organizational development and of social scientific development.

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## Contents

Bill Torbert's career has combined being a leader, teaching leadership, consulting to leaders, and researching leadership. Above all else he has been intent on embodying and explicating what he eventually came to call his "collaborative developmental action inquiry" (CDAI) approach to life, social science, and leadership (moving from the general case to the specific). I say embody and explicate because Bill has always tried to walk his talk. His published works are efforts to talk his walk and to explain in text what Bill was trying to live, often drawing upon his own adventures (and misadventures) as illustrations of his ideas. And, unlike many action researchers, Bill has not rebelled against quantitative research. In fact, he is the first to have introduced the notion of integrating "first-, second-, and third-person" research (Torbert 1997, 2013) on the past, present, and future (Chandler and Torbert 2003), interweaving quantitative measures, qualitative data, and action interventions (Torbert 2000b, 2013).

Bill was one of my professors when I did my Ph.D. at Boston College. I was never his research assistant, nor was he my advisor (although he was on my Ph.D. committee). After I finished my Ph.D. and left Boston College, he and I were part of a small group that met regularly to inquire into our own practice for over a decade. Bill and I eventually wrote one chapter together (Torbert and Taylor 2008), and even though I have read most (but certainly not all) of his work, I primarily know Bill and his work from our efforts to walk our talk together, which in some ways continues to this day. The lessons I learned about living, social science, and leadership were profound, and in this chapter I hope to offer some small sense of that.

## Influences and Motivations: Peace, Yale, and Action Research

Bill went to Yale as an undergraduate in the early 1960s and as a graduate student in the late 1960s. With the civil rights movement domestically and the Vietnam War abroad, it was a time of unrest when it seemed possible to question everything, and Bill was well situated to do so. His father worked for the State Department, and Bill spent time in several countries growing up, which may be where he first learned that there are many different ways of being and that our deepest cultural assumptions and rules about how to be in the world are not simply taken-for-granted facts of nature, but rather social constructions of a particular human culture.

His first great influence at Yale was the pastor and civil rights and peace activist William Sloane Coffin (cf. Coffin 2004). Through Coffin's influence, Bill played a leadership role, first in Yale in Mississippi, which led to the 1964 and 1965 civil rights acts, and then as director of Yale Upward Bound, an innovative war on poverty

high school program, which cut New Haven's drop-out rate in half through the practice of "collaborative inquiry." Bill's second great influence at Yalewas Chris Argyris, whom Bill first met and studied with as an undergraduate and who chaired Bill's dissertation committee in graduate school. Like Coffin, Argyris' influence was not only intellectual but also behavioral and emotional. Argyris raised questions about whether one's actions were in fact consistent with one's values and introduced Bill to experiential learning in groups (Bethel T-groups, Tavistock group relations, Esalen encounter groups). The third great influence Bill encountered while he was at Yale was the Gurdjieff work (cf. Ouspensky 1949), based in New York and Paris, which Bill attended for 25 years. The central inquiry of this spiritual work is how one can develop an impartial, post-cognitive consciousness amidst the stresses of every-day action. In addition, while at Yale, Bill met, read the work of, and was significantly influenced by political theorists Hannah Arendt, Paul D'Entreves, Karl Deutsch, and Herbert Marcuse, psychologists Erik Erikson and Abraham Maslow, political economist Charles Lindblom, philosopher Donald Schön, and theologian Paul Tillich.

After Yale, Torbert taught at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas for 2 years and at the Harvard Graduate School of Education for 4 years. He chose to go to Harvard in part to learn more about developmental theory from Lawrence Kohlberg and Bill Perry and in the end learned even more from Carol Gilligan and Bob Kegan (who was then a grad student), as well as from the writings of John Rawls and Amartya Sen. After his time at Harvard, he was influenced primarily by several of his peers in our field – Ian Mitroff, Lou Pondy, Bob Quinn, Peter Senge, and Karl Weick – but most of all from his British action research colleague and coauthor Peter Reason.

After he resigned from Harvard, Torbert directed The Theatre of Inquiry for 2 years and then joined the faculty at Boston College, initially as Graduate Dean of the Management School. There he remained for 30 years until his retirement in 2008. At The Theatre of Inquiry, Bill led weekly hour and a half "Action Work-shops," a 13-week "business/school" whose members first created a business together, and then went on to start their own businesses, and a monthly public performance which began as a theatrical play for an audience and gradually invited the audience into a profound action inquiry by the end of the evening. All of these exercises became fodder for the action-effectiveness MBA program that he later cocreated with faculty at Boston College. This unique approach transformed the BC MBA program from a rank below the top 100 to #25 nationally.

Later, in the late 1980s and until his retirement in 2008, Bill served as director of BC's Ph.D. program in organizational transformation, consulted to more than two-dozen organizations, served on the board of directors of unusual companies (e.g., Trillium Asset Management, the original socially responsible investing company, and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, which became #1 HMO nationally at that time), and won local and national teaching prizes, as well as national research awards. His most well-known books during this period were *Managing the Corporate Dream*, *The Power of Balance: Transforming Self, Society and Scientific Inquiry*, and *Action Inquiry: The Secret of Timely and Transforming Leadership*.

Since 2008, he has functioned as principal of Action Inquiry Associates, continuing to sponsor and do research on the Global Leadership Profile, the psychometric measure that, since 1980, has served as the quantitative anchor for his and a number of his colleagues and students' third-person action research. He has also changed his focus from organizations to friendships; has cocreated the Action Inquiry Fellowship, wherein three-dozen highly diverse international scholar/practitioners sharpen their first- and second-person action inquiry capacity with one another; and, in 2015, coauthored with Hilary Bradbury, *Eros/Power: Love in the Spirit of Inquiry*.

## Key Contributions: Collaborative Developmental Action Inquiry

Returning to the beginning of his career, Bill's senior undergraduate thesis "Being for the Most Part Puppets: Interactions Among Men's Labor, Leisure, and Politics" (Torbert and Rogers 1972), written in collaboration with his classmate Malcolm Rogers, became his first published book. This sociological field survey of 209 blue-collar workers in three industries showed that the relative amount of discretion a man had in his job directly predicted the degree of his creative leisure engagement and political action. These findings, along with Bill's direct experience of the poverty and mechanicity of assembly-line workers' jobs, motivated him to try to learn how organizations could be reorganized to encourage creativity and responsibility at all levels and how he himself could play a leadership role in such processes.

Argyris had agreed that Bill could do an action research dissertation on (a) his founding and leadership of Yale Upward Bound and (b) the school's evolution toward becoming a truly collaborative venture between faculty and students (as documented primarily by innumerable tape recordings of meetings and interviews of all participants). This eventually led to the explication of an eight-stage theory of organizational development at the end of Bill's third book, *Creating a Community of Inquiry: Conflict, Collaboration, Transformation* (1976), written largely in the first person. This book documented both how the author himself learned and changed as a collaborative leader and how each of six different sub-cycles of the program followed the same developmental sequence (the two spring staff selection and curriculum planning periods, the two distinct 7-week residential summer programs, the five-person core staff, and the overall 2-year endeavor). This theory of eight organizational development stages has proven to be the most differentiated in the field of organizational development. By showing what stage of development an organization was currently at, the theory also became key to Torbert's later, quantitatively verified successes (Torbert 2013) in generating organizational transformations in his action research/consulting interventions. One reason for this is that the theory shows how organizations alternate between more centralizing stages and more decentralizing stages suggesting radically different interventions at alternating stage transitions, whereas most OD consulting theory and practice focus on helping organizations decentralize.

But, why, you may be asking, was this Bill's third book (1976) and not his second? Because, after he had completed his 2-year study of Upward Bound during

graduate school, just as he was about to write it up, the department's faculty concluded that it could not possibly be objective and scientific if the researcher was also an actor in the field experiment. Unfortunately for Bill, he had not yet generated the concept of how first-, second-, and third-person research can complement and strengthen one another. Faced with a choice between discontinuing the doctoral program and designing and executing a completely different study in 9 months, Bill chose the latter, doing a laboratory experiment on learning from experience, asking why it is so difficult to learn from experience in a way that transforms one's initial assumptions. Thus, this dissertation, *Learning from Experience: Toward Consciousness* (Torbert 1973), became Bill's second book.

*Learning from Experience* first introduces the notion that, contrary to the general modern view that the outside world is the "territory" that we attempt to "map" via social science, there are actually four distinct "territories of experience" – the outside world, our inner sense of our own embodiment and action, our thinking and feeling, and a post-cognitive attention that any of us can cultivate, but few do.

This laboratory study produced a reliable verbal behavior scoring system that was shown to be able to distinguish which of two educational processes generated the most moments in action when participants were conscious of all four territories at once. This quality of first-person awareness-in-action was shown to be necessary, in turn, for a person to learn whether his or her assumptions at the outset of an "action inquiry" process deserved to be transformed. In his later work, to which we now turn, Bill showed how second-person conversations, third-person organizations, and social science itself can gradually cultivate a conversational and organizational awareness-in-action that spans all four territories of experience, by evolving through analogous personal, organizational, and paradigmatic developmental trajectories.

We can date the second half of Torbert's career from his acceptance of the position of Graduate Dean at the Boston College School of Management in 1978 to his retirement from Boston College in 2008. His scholarly work has been the development of "collaborative developmental action inquiry" (CDAI), which although not often recognized as such is a fundamentally new and different paradigm for social science research. That is to say, Bill takes seriously the idea that we are co-constructing our social world as we act and interact. Bill's first articulation of this approach was to suggest that we need an "action science" (Torbert 1976 pp. 167–177). The term *action science* was picked up by Chris Argyris and eventually became the title of the book (Argyris et al. 1985) that lays out the philosophic and academic foundations for Argyris' approach. Meanwhile, Bill came to the conclusion that "science" was too cognitive a word and instead adopted the term "action inquiry" (Torbert and Associates 2004) to better convey the more holistic and embodied work he was trying to describe.

Argyris conceived of action science as a way of extending the naturalistic science tradition. Torbert conceived of action inquiry as a new paradigm that includes third-person, generalizable theory, data, and quantitative testing of hypotheses; but that also breaks away from many of the assumptions and methods that constitute empirically positivist scientific inquiry, in order to include first- and second-person inquiry into the very action settings in which we researchers are

ourselves also participants. One of the most important ideas in Argyris' Action Science is the Popperian notion of disconfirmability – action science argues strongly for treating all of our mental models (Senge 1990) about the world as hypotheses that we should actively be trying to disconfirm, especially when those mental models lead us to act in ways that prove to be problematic in some way. This is the essence of Argyris and Schön (1974) Model II double-loop feedback as I understand it. Torbert is all for holding our mental models loosely and inquiring into them, but action inquiry does not rest on the same belief that that we can apply the processes of naturalistic scientific inquiry to our actions in the social world (indeed, action inquiry comes closer to a quantum understanding of physical science, and Torbert believes CDAI represents a paradigm change relevant to both the social and natural sciences).

The Popperian idea of disconfirmability implies both a certain stability and a certain distance. That is, you need a phenomena that is stable enough to be testing the same phenomena that you formulated the hypothesis about. And you need to be able to observe the phenomena from enough of a distance that you can see what it is. Often neither of these conditions are met in the case of social action (cf. Lehrer 2010). Instead, action inquiry sees every action as an inquiry and every inquiry as an action. That is to say, we are constantly inquiring into the social world and also acting to change (or not) that social world. When I see my colleague first thing in the morning and ask her or him how they are doing, it is an inquiry, a probe into the system (even when I intend it as a simple social ritual that doesn't require an answer). When my colleague responds with "same old, same old," I learn that the social world is much as it usually is. But when my colleague responds "my dog died last night," I have learned something else and our relationship has changed in some – perhaps small – way. Action inquiry is based on this understanding of the social world as something that is constantly shifting in which we are embedded, unable to assume either stability or distance.

Torbert's response to this is to suggest a social science that is based on multiplicity. Rather than a single set of practices, he suggests that social science research can have a first-, second-, or third-person research voice; have first-, second-, or third-person practice as its subject; and be about the past, present, or future; with single-, double-, or triple-loop feedback (Chandler and Torbert 2003). This results in 81 different research types – Torbert's argument is that modern social science includes a woefully small subset of these research types and that the more types that are included, the more powerful the research will be. I say powerful, because another way in which action inquiry represents a new and different paradigm is that Torbert holds that the primary aim of social science research is to generate more and more instances and patterns of timely action – not only to gain greater and greater certainty about a conceptual map of the world, supported by various sets of empirical facts, as is the aim of most modern social science.

In order to "do" action inquiry, Torbert has created various ideas and tools for practice. The idea of first-, second-, and third-person research/practice (Torbert 1997)

**Table 1** Four territories of experience of an individual person (From Torbert and Taylor 2008)

| | |
|---|---|
| The outside world | Objectified, discrete, interval units, of which "I" am actively aware when "I" notice the color and manyness of what "I" see or the support the outside world is giving me through the soles of my feet (focused attention) |
| One's own sensed behavior and feeling | Processual, ordinal rhythms in passing time, of which "I" am actively aware when I feel what I am touching from the inside or when I listen to the in and out of my breathing or the rhythms and tones of my own speaking (subsidiary, sensual awareness) |
| The realm of thought | Eternal nominal distinctions and interrelations, of which I can be actively aware if my attention "follows" my thought, if I am not just thinking, but "mindful" that I am thinking (witnessing awareness) |
| Vision/attention/intention | The kind of noumenal vision/attention/intention that can simultaneously interpenetrate the other three territories and experience incongruities or harmonies among them |

has been perhaps the most popular, at least in terms of being adopted by the academic community (e.g., Reason and Bradbury 2001; Shear and Varela 1999; Velmans 2009). For first- and second-person practice of action inquiry, Torbert has developed two powerful tools, the four territories of experience, shown in Table 1 (Torbert 1972), and the four types of speech, shown in Table 2 (Fisher and Torbert 1995). The four territories of experience are (1) *the outside world*, (2) *one's own sensed behavior and feeling*, (3) *the realm of thought*, and (4) *the realm of vision/attention/intention,* and one of the practices of action inquiry is to pay attention and recognize feelings of fit and/or incongruity across the four territories. Is a given outcome congruent or incongruent with an organizations' vision?

It is probably not possible to always be paying attention to all four territories of experience at the same time – I know I have trouble being aware of more than one at a time, and in most of my life, I'm not consciously aware of any of them. However, the feelings in each of these territories are useful data that can help guide action. Here we can plainly see a difference between paying attention to a feeling of incongruity and seeking disconfirming data – a strict action *science* can't accept feelings of incongruity as legitimate data to disconfirm a mental model. Action *inquiry* requires paying attention to those feelings and inquiring further, that is, acting to further explore those feelings. Eugene Gendlin's *Focusing* (1982) and his subsequent work on exploring "felt sense" is another body of first-person research in the same spirit.

Torbert's four types of speech take the idea that speech is action (Austin 1962), or rather conversational interaction across the four territories of experience, which at its best includes (1) *framing* a joint intent, (2) *advocating* one or more strategies, (3) *illustrating* how specific behavioral tactics and contextual conditions favor a strategy, and (4) *inquiring* how one's conversational partners respond. Here the contention is that a balance of the four types of speech will be more effective in generating timely action and receptivity to feedback on the part of all participants

**Table 2** Four parts of speech (From Torbert and Taylor 2008)

| |
|---|
| **Framing** refers to explicitly stating what the purpose is for the present occasion, what the dilemma is that you are trying to resolve, and what assumptions you think are shared or not shared (but need to be tested out loud to be sure). This is the element of speaking most often missing from conversations and meetings. The leader or initiator assumes the others know and share the overall objective. Explicit framing (or reframing, if the conversation appears offtrack) is useful precisely because the assumption of a shared frame is frequently untrue. When people have to guess at the frame, they frequently guess wrong and they often impute negative, manipulative motives ("What's he getting at?"). For example, instead of starting out right away with the first item of the meeting, the leader can provide and test an explicit frame: "We're about halfway through to our final deadline and we've gathered a lot of information and shared different approaches, but we haven't yet made a single decision. To me, the most important thing we can do today is agree on something. . . make at least one decision we can feel good about. I think XYZ is our best chance, so I want to start with that. Do you all agree with this assessment, or do you have other candidates for what it's most important to do today?" |
| **Advocating** refers to explicitly asserting an option, perception, feeling, or strategy for action in relatively abstract terms (e.g., "We've got to get shipments out faster"). Some people speak almost entirely in terms of advocacy; others rarely advocate at all. Either extreme – only advocating or never advocating – is likely to be relatively ineffective. For example, "Do you have an extra pen?" is not an explicit advocacy, but an inquiry. The person you are asking may truthfully say "No" and turn away. On the other hand, if you say "I need a pen (advocacy). Do you have an extra one (inquiry)?" the other is more likely to say something like, "No, but there's a whole box in the secretary's office." The most difficult type of advocacy for most people to make effectively is an advocacy about how we feel – especially how we feel about what is occurring right now. This is difficult partly because we ourselves are often only partially aware of how we feel; also, we are reluctant to become vulnerable; furthermore, social norms against generating potential embarrassment can make current feelings seem undiscussable. For all these reasons, feelings usually enter conversations only if the relationship is close and risk is low, in which case there is little likelihood of receiving corrective feedback. The other time when feelings enter conversations is when they have become so strong that they burst in, and then they are likely to be offered in a way that harshly evaluates others ("Damn it, will you loudmouths shut up!"). This way of advocating feelings is usually very ineffective, however, because it invites defensiveness. By contrast, a vulnerable description is more likely to invite honest sharing by others ("I'm feeling frustrated and shut out by the machine-gun pace of this conversation and I don't see it getting us to agreement. Does anyone else feel this way?") |
| **Illustrating** involves telling a bit of a concrete story that puts meat on the bones of the advocacy and thereby orients and motivates others more clearly. Example: "We've got to get shipments out faster [advocacy]. Jake Tarn, our biggest client, has got a rush order of his own, and he needs our parts before the end of the week [illustration]." The illustration suggests an entirely different mission and strategy than might have been inferred from the advocacy alone. You may be convinced that your advocacy contains one and only one implication for action and that your subordinate or peer is at fault for misunderstanding. But in this case, it is your conviction that is a colossal metaphysical mistake. Implications are by their very nature inexhaustible. There is never one and only one implication or interpretation of an action. That is why it is so important to be explicit about each of the four parts of speech and to interweave them sequentially, if we wish to increase our reliability in achieving shared purposes |
| **Inquiring** obviously involves questioning others, in order to learn something from them. In principle, the simplest thing in the world; in practice, one of the most difficult things in the world to do effectively. Why? One reason is that we often inquire rhetorically, as we just did. We don't give the other the opportunity to respond, or we suggest by our tone that we don't really want a TRUE answer. "How are you?" we say dozens of times each day, not really wanting to know. |

*(continued)*

**Table 2**  (continued)

"You agree, don't you?" we say, making it clear what answer we want. A second reason why it is difficult to inquire effectively is that an inquiry is much less likely to be effective if it is not preceded by framing, advocacy, and illustration. Naked inquiry often causes the other to wonder what frame, advocacy, and illustration are implied and to respond carefully and defensively. If we are inquiring about an advocacy we are making, the trick is to encourage the other to disconfirm our assumptions if that is how he or she truly feels. In this way, if the other confirms us, we can be confident the confirmation means something, and if not, then we see that the task ahead is to reach an agreement

(Steckler and Torbert 2010; Torbert 2000a). Of course, in day-to-day life, it is not always easy to distinguish advocacy from framing, and it is not unusual for people to mask an advocacy as an inquiry (e.g., "why are you being such a jerk?" is usually really advocating that the other is being a jerk rather than being an honest inquiry). The more authentic the inquiry, the more likely it is to yield a valid response. The point is not to provide a precise analytic tool with which to map out interactions, but rather to provide a guide for the messy practice of interacting with other human beings in real time.

Torbert is best known (cf. McCauley et al. 2006) in academia for his use of the third-person idea of developmental theory (cf. Loevinger 1998). The theory suggests (and is supported by a great deal of empirical evidence (Torbert 1994, 2013) that as adults, we develop through various stages that are defined by having different governing action logics and that gradually lead toward a greater and greater capacity for continual four-territory awareness, for timely action, for receptivity to pertinent feedback, and for the development of organizations that support such personal development. Each action logic determines how we make sense of and act in the world. The stages are described in Table 3. Torbert adopted and adapted Loevinger's sentence completion test instrument for determining developmental level for business use (now referred to as the *Global Leadership Development Profile*). He is not the only scholar to use developmental theory (e.g., Kegan 1994; Kegan and Lahey 2009); however, he led the use of developmental theory in organization change and extended the theory to create stage models of organizational development (Fisher and Torbert 1995;Torbert 1976, 1987) and of social scientific development (Torbert 2000b, 2013).

Torbert's empirical work linking leadership development to organizational transformation includes one of the most stunning findings in the literature. Change leaders at the Transforming and Alchemical action logics predicted 58% of the variance of the success in organizational change (Torbert 2013). In modern social science where seemingly no variable ever explains more than a few percent of the variance, this is a truly incredible result. Couple it with Torbert's other empirical work which finds that only about 5% of managers in organizations are at the Transforming or Alchemical action logics (Fisher and Torbert 1995), and his work offers both a compelling explanation for the relative lack of success of organizational change efforts and a clear prescription for how organizations can more successfully manage change.

**Table 3** Action logics (Adopted from the Action Inquiry Associates *Global Leadership Development Profile Report* created by Bill Torbert and Elaine Herdman-Barker in 2012)

| | |
|---|---|
| Opportunistic | Short-time horizon, flouts power and sexuality, rejects feedback, hostile humor, deceptive, manipulative, externalizes blame, punishes, views luck as central, punishment rules, views rules as loss of freedom, *eye-for-an eye* ethic |
| Diplomatic | Observes rules, avoids inner and outer conflicts, conforms, suppresses own desires, loyalty to group, seeks membership, right versus wrong attitude, appearance and status conscious, tends toward clichés, works to group standard |
| Expert | Interested in problem solving via data, critical of others and self, chooses efficiency over effectiveness, perfectionist, values decisions based on merit, wants own performance to stand out, aware of alternative constructions in problem resolution but can be dogmatic, accepts feedback only from *objective* craftmasters |
| Achiever | Results and effectiveness oriented, long-term goals, concerned with issues of ethics and justice, deliberately prioritizes work tasks, future inspires, drawn to learning, seeks mutuality in relations, aware of personal patterns of behavior, feels guilty if does not meet own standards, blind to own shadow, chases time |
| Redefining | Collaborative, tolerant of individual difference, aware of context and contingency, may challenge group norms, aware of owning a perspective, inquiring and open to feedback, seeks independent, creative work, attracted by difference and change, may become something of a maverick, focuses on present and historical context |
| Transforming | Process and goal oriented, strategic time horizons, system conscious, enjoys a variety of roles, recognizes importance of principle and judgment, engaged in complex interweave of relationships, aware of own personal traits and shadow, high value on individuality, growth, self-fulfillment, unique market niches, particular historical moments |
| Alchemical | Alert to the theater of action, embraces common humanity, disturbs paradigms of thought and action, dispels notions of heroic action, deeply internalized sense of self-knowledge held with empty mind, sees light and dark, order and mess, treats time and events as symbolic, analogical, metaphorical (not merely linear, digital, literal) |

## New Insights: What I've Learned from Bill

The first thing I was told to read in my doctoral program was Gergen's (1991) *The Saturated Self*. It shook my taken-for-granted ontology of the social world to its core and led me to question the idea that the naturalist scientific tradition could ever "work" in the social world. Decades of reading management research have made it clearer to me that the naturalist scientific tradition is not enormously helpful, especially if Bill is right, and the aim of social science research is to generate deeper inquiry and more and more patterns of timely action.

I have tried to take seriously Bill's ontological idea that every action is an inquiry and every inquiry an action. The idea of speech as action comes easily to me because it was also part of my theater training (Stanislavski 1936a, b, 1961), and I have brought that into my own academic work (e.g., Taylor and Carboni 2008). Perhaps because of my theater training, I have been much more attracted to the first- and

second-person practice of action inquiry and the tools, such as the four types of speech. I have worked on articulating how to teach action inquiry approaches (Taylor et al. 2008), and my latest book (Taylor 2015) is a how-to guide that brings together Bill's approach with other tools within the reflective practice tradition for leader development.

It has felt like a natural fit to take Bill's work and mix it with artistic methods. This is in part because there is a history of action research methods that use artistic forms and in part because of the way Bill has always welcomed art into his own practice (e.g., The Theatre of Inquiry) and in part because Bill's action inquiry paradigm for social science might more appropriately be called a paradigm for social art. One of the great lessons for me is that action inquiry is a craft for living – with the hope that if you master the craft, you might live artfully. Charlie "Bird" Parker said, "You've got to learn your instrument. Then you practice, practice, practice. And then when you finally get up there on the bandstand, forget all that and just wail" (quoted in Pugatch 2006, p. 73). Action inquiry provides tools and methods for practicing how we interact with each other. It offers developmental theory as an overarching pathway. But it is really about getting up there and just wailing in a way that produces more and more patterns of timely action in the service of social justice and human flourishing.

What does it look like to just wail when we interact with others? Isn't that what we do most of the time and often with disastrous results? The wailing that Bird speaks of isn't just doing whatever pops into your head and body. It is acting from a deeply embodied skill set and awareness of the context and situation. Below is a small example from a group of academics that had been meeting regularly for years to work on their action inquiry skills.

On this cold November day, the members of the group had arrived and were exchanging greetings and catching up with each other. Faustina entered the kitchen where Paula was standing.

"How are you doing, the super commuter?" said Paula.

"I'm cranky," responded Faustina.

"Oh what else is new, you are always cranky when you come to these meetings," answered Paula. And like after most "little things", they didn't engage with it further. However, a few minutes later when the group started to discuss their agenda for the meeting, Faustina suggested that they explore the interaction she had with Paula rather than working on the case that had previously been planned. Paula advocated that the group work on the originally planned case.

"Why do you want to do it?" asks Faustina.

"Because we said we were going to do it," replied Paula.

"So what?" responded Faustina.

Those two simple words, which we can imagine being said a hundred different ways, jolted the room. Robert had been feeling tired and frustrated with the way the group was being so nice to each other and not deciding which case to analyze and Faustina's "so what" brought him back to earth, back to feeling grounded. Robert thought, "ah, this is real and suddenly we're back to what matters." It was like a splash of cold water on his face.

Meanwhile, Robin was excited by Faustina's "so what." She believed that Faustina had the self awareness and skill to say something very diplomatic and analytical, but had chosen to bluntly, emotionally, and somewhat confrontationally express what is going on for her

with her "so what." Robin found her choice to be provocative, exciting and beautiful. It was not provocative enough to make Robin afraid – Faustina knew the group and had a sense of how much the group could take.

   It was also an effective action as it moved the group out of their wandering discussion of what they should do in their meeting to focusing on the sort of work that they all have previously agreed that they should be doing. (Taylor 2013 p 75–76)

This interaction is not earth shaking and it might not even be noteworthy for most people. But for this group, it was an example of mastery of the craft skill of interacting with others, an example of action inquiry performed at a high level – a purposive and strategically distinctive exemplar of double-loop feedback to both Paula and the group as a whole that changed the group's planned activity for the session. My great takeaway from working with Torbert's ideas and practices is that leadership is largely about the day-to-day interactions, these small moments and the immense craft skill that can be needed to navigate them well. And it is more than leadership; it is indeed an art of life. I tried to describe my understanding of my own creative process, and Bill commented to me that it was one of the best examples of action inquiry he had seen.

   I will describe my own process of creating an edge for a flower bed in my yard. The flower bed is between the front of my house and the lawn. When we bought the house there was no sharp edge to the bed, it just sort of ended and the grass began in what was more or less a straight line. My wife, Rosemary and I agreed that we wanted a more defined edge and that the edge should follow a more organic curve. Just reaching that sort of agreement was a complicated and creative process (that was spread out over a couple of years) of its own, but I'll start from having decided that much.

   With that in mind, we made a visit to our local stone yard and looked at what sort of materials they had that might make nice edging material. We walked around the yard, paying attention to our senses, what various materials looked like, what they felt like, and how they were being used in various displays. At this point what data I selected was based on the sensemaking I already had about the desired edge. I don't recall what the weather was like, or what either of us were wearing, but I do recall looking at various types of brick, rough-tumbled cobble stones in various sizes, and some manufactured paver products that were being used as edging in some sample patios. I looked at the colors, the weights, the sizes, the texture of the surface, the regularity or lack thereof, and how they fit together. In short I paid attention to what was important based on my thinking about the edging and I didn't pay attention to countless other things that were happening in the world around me.

   And as we looked at the materials, we talked about them. That is to say, I took action and commented upon what I was seeing and how I made sense of it. I said things like, "oh, this color is very nice" and "these granite chunks have a nice smooth edge." Rosemary also made comments like, "these would go well with the edging in the back yard" and "I'm a little creeped out by having someone's name on the edging." (The smooth granite pieces were from headstones that had broken during the engraving process and many of them did include parts of names of the dead on them.) This is the collaborative aspect of the creative process and my comments were actions that Rosemary attended to and her comments were actions that become sensory data I then selected and made sense of. As we talked, it became clear that brick was not appealing to either of us, so based on that sensemaking I stopped looking at different types of brick, I stopped selecting data about brick from the world I was in. As we talked I paid attention to the granite stones and how big they were, how they would fit in with existing edging, how regular they were and how they might fit together. Eventually we made a decision and bought a truckload of edging stone.

We took the stone home and the next day laid out some rough curves of where the edge of the bed should be. This was a process of setting the stones out in a curved line and then looking at the edge and talking about it, "maybe out a little more here", "I think it's too straight there" and so on. Then making adjustments, moving the stones around, talking some more, making more adjustments until we were happy with the edge. During this process, we were selecting data about how the curve looked in relation to the house, the yard, and the existing plants in the bed and making sense of the whole of it in an intuitive and felt way. We would act by talking and adjusting and then consciously making sense of it again and based on that sensemaking (it's too straight here) make further adjustments. After several iterations of the process we were ready to move on to the next step, setting the stones into the dirt.

The process of setting the stones in to the dirt is very much the same as the previous activities of selecting the stone and determining where the edge should be in terms of selecting data, making sense of it, acting and attending to particular data based on that sensemaking. However the craft skills involved and what data I attend to is different. What was fundamentally a problem in two dimensions has become a problem in three dimensions as I now have to work with the many ways in which my yard is not level. Where before I was looking at the big picture of the curving edge, I am now more focused on how each stone fits with the one before it, how deep the hole needs to be, and making sure the stone rests securely in the hole without wobbling. Every few stones I step back and look at the curves of the edge I am making and sometimes I pull a stone out and reset it in a slightly different position. I also think about pragmatic issues such as how high the edge should be and how that will affect drainage in a rain storm. There are also periodic conversations with Rosemary as we step back and talk about how the edge is going. The final edge is similar to the one we laid out in the previous stage, but it doesn't follow the same path exactly. (Taylor 2012, pp. 8–11)

Again, the interaction is hardly earth shaking, but that is part of the point. For me, the small, day-to-day process of acting, being open to what results from that action, then continuing to act while drawing upon highly developed craft skills, is the heart of action inquiry. Or at least the heart of the first- and second-person practices.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Continuing Bill's Work

It is perhaps not surprising that, other than doctoral students writing their dissertations based on CDAI theory and the GLP instrument, the academic community as a whole has not (yet?) embraced Torbert's new paradigm for social science research – no existing paradigm ever yields easily (Kuhn 1962). However there are areas where his work is influential, notably in nontraditional educational programs that emphasize practice such as the Center for Creative Leadership, Fielding Graduate University, the California Institute of Integral Studies, the Integral Institute, or in the UK the Ashridge Business School, and in Canada the Shambhala Institute's Authentic Leadership in Action program.

It is also not surprising that the business world has not wholeheartedly embraced his work. Beyond the underlying aims of promoting social justice and human flourishing (both of which much of the business world has trouble serving), Torbert's approach is hard. It is not a quick fix, it cannot be applied en masse, and he asks people and organizations to walk the talk. It takes years to develop your own craft and practice of action inquiry.

The empirical findings from Torbert's developmental theory work also suggest that the challenge for businesses is large and cannot be easily addressed. Consistently successful change leadership requires post-conventional development. A small percentage of managers have reached this level of development. Generally it takes from 5 to 10 years to fully transition from one stage to the next. This implies that businesses need to spend decades to develop managers who will be able to consistently lead significant change efforts. Very few organizations work with those sorts of time frames.

Torbert calls for development into the post-conventional stages, the move from mystery/mastery to collaborative inquiry. It is very much the same movement as Argyris and Schön's (1974) move from Model I to Model II governing values. The *Difficult Conversations* (Stone et al. 2000) move from "A Battle of Messages" to "A Learning Conversation" is also essentially the same. In all cases the movement involves becoming curious about how you and the other are understanding the situation, why that is different, and how that leads you to act differently and in ways that are problematic for each other. In short, it requires what I call openness and deep curiosity toward ourselves and leaders.

The great remaining question is how do we develop leaders who have this openness and curiosity in a more timely way? How do we take timely action to develop people and organizations more capable of taking timely action? There is certainly a chicken-and-egg issue here or perhaps even something of a Catch-22, but it is the very real issue that Torbert's work has raised and not provided an answer for.

Maybe there isn't an answer; maybe there is only a dedication to practice over many years. Certainly the much ballyhooed 10,000-hours rule (Gladwell 2008) that tells us 10,000 hours of practice (dedicated practice of your practice really) is needed to develop expertise suggests that there are no shortcuts. The long history of master (or in some cases a coach) apprentice relationships in almost all embodied practices – from the arts to sports to spiritual practices – also suggests that as humans, this is how we develop. Perhaps the question then is why don't we pursue the craft of interacting with each other in a more disciplined and intentional way? Why aren't organizational leaders like master artists who constantly refine and develop their craft? Why aren't young managers like apprentices developing their craft under the direction of master leaders?

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## Further Reading

*The Power of Balance*. (William R. Torbert, 1991) – Torbert's mid-career masterwork that is the first full articulation of action inquiry, including a robust theory of power, as well as telling the story of his efforts (with successes and failures) to use Action Inquiry as a leader earlier in his career.

*Action Inquiry*. (William R. Torbert & Associates, 2004) – The final, mature articulation of Action Inquiry including tools, techniques and many different examples.

*Eros/Power*. (Bradbury & Torbert, 2015)–A jointly told Action Inquiry into the nature of love, friendship, gender, and power over the course of the two authors' lives.

# Eric Trist: An American/North American View (The Second Coming)

# 79

Paul D. Tolchinsky, Bert Painter, and Stu Winby

**Abstract**

Eric Lansdown Trist was born in 1909 and died in June 1993 in Carmel, California. Eric lived in a golden age of organization thinking and experimentation. While small in physical stature, Eric was a giant in his thinking and influenced many of the most prominent practitioners and theoreticians in his generation and the next in organization theory and organization design. The list of his protégé's reads a little like the subjects of this book. Those who knew him and learned from him were forever changed by his presence and thinking. This chapter reflects on Eric's second trip to the USA and North America, from the middle 1960s until his death. After experiencing America during the Great Depression, Eric returned to the UK, to carve out his career and explore the world of work and the social psychology of people at work. He loved America and often found himself defending her to his colleagues. When the opportunity came in the mid-1960s, invited by Lou Davis at UCLA, Eric returned and left an indelible imprint on his generation and the one to follow. Those of us who view organization design as our calling owe it mostly to Eric and his inspiration.

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Terms like "industrial democracy," "open systems," and most importantly "sociotechnical systems" became mainstream notions because of Eric. He pioneered the notion of organization ecosystems and predicted the turbulence of the last half of the twentieth century, with his colleague Fred Emery. Eric lived and breathed "action research" and "action learning. He fervently believed that the wisdom in the organization could solve most anything (a theme you might hear in other chapters, as well). Each person had a voice, and each voice had to be heard.

**Keywords**

Action learning • Action research • Sociotechnical systems • Open systems thinking • Industrial democracy • Jamestown • Rushton coal mine • Labour Canada • Quality of worklife • Turbulent environment • Self-managing work systems • Principle of redundancy • Adaptive work systems • Adaptive ecologies • Time to market • Ecosystems • Organization environments

## Contents

## Introduction

Eric Trist described his life as having roughly five phases, the first four in Britain and the last being in North America. *"The first phase was becoming a social psychologist with the study of the social and psychological factors in long-term unemployment in Dundee; the second was really in group dynamics, which I learned during the war and afterwards in a psychoanalytic context; third came the sociotechnical system ideas from the coal project; and the fourth, development of the idea of socio-organizational ecology which dates from a joint paper with Fred Emery on 'The Causal Texture of the Organizational Environment'"* (Emery and Trist 1967).

The fifth phase extended from 1966, Eric's appointment at UCLA, until his death in 1993. It was, in the view of these authors, his most productive years. During this

span of approximately 30 years, Eric managed to write or inspire three books, several treatises on the Quality of Worklife and Socio-technical Systems, and numerous articles on the topic of organization design and organization ecology. He spawned an entire movement in the area of Quality of Worklife [or the Ecology of Worklife as it came to be known in the USA]; inspired labor organizations to participate in the co-creation of the workplace, in partnership with management; gave birth to a profession of "theory bound" practitioners in the field of organization design and organization change; and managed to write about the future we have today, in 2016!

Since Eric passed away in 1993, there have been numerous articles, chapters, video tributes, DVD's and even one book written about Eric (Trahair 2015; Kleiner 1996; Weisbord 2012 3rd Edition; Painter 1994). Given the wealth of reading material, both by Eric and others, it is difficult to find more to say about a man who influenced so many of us. We want to begin this article on the late 1960s and 1970s, picking up where Trahair (2015) leaves off in the story of Eric and his contributions to organization behavior, theory, and practice, the "second coming," if you will. Eric visited the USA in the 1930s, touring the USA and spending significant time in New England and the west coast. He returned to UCLA, at the invitation of Lou Davis in the mid-1960s, then moved to the University of Pennsylvania at the invitation of Russell Ackoff, lived for a short time in Minneapolis then moved to York University in Toronto at the invitation of Harvey Kolodny, and retired to Gainesville Florida and finally to Carmel, California, where he passed away.

Paul first met Eric at General Foods, in 1975, as a young, brash, internal consultant to the new product line start-ups. Eric had been hired to coach the leaders and guide the introduction of this more democratic, socially and technically integrated workplace. Eric impressed Paul as an unassuming Brit, almost frail, with a shy smile and enormous gift of inquiry. He was the first academic, research, practitioner Paul had ever met! He talked like a British laborer and connected with working class outrage, irony, empathy and unique humor, and profanity. At times, Eric could be in deep thought that he would run late to everything. He walked everywhere, often getting lost, and distracted by his own thought processes.

## Influences and Motivations: Making the World a Better Place

Eric was a product of two world wars, although he was quite young during the first war. He lived through the Great Recession, and a period of great social upheaval and unrest. Eric was trained in group dynamics, psychoanalysis, and social psychology. As a group therapist, he could feel the energy within a group and could easily reflect what was from the heart and what was not.

In his first trip in the USA, Eric was struck by the socialist and communist movements. He empathized with the plight of workers. Eric saw the consequences of dysfunctional systems.

As a trained social psychologist, Eric engaged in appreciative inquiry, long before the term was invented by Cooperrider and others (1987). He was fully invested in the

moment, always making you feel as though you were the only person in his universe. He was the consummate social psychologist, enamored with the workplace and making it better. He was not, nor did I ever hear him espouse to be, a business man or an engineer... although he was comfortable around both.

Eric was a tremendous listener, with the capacity to "hear" at multiple levels. In meeting, after meeting I attended with him, he could listen, cut through the words, and reflect immediately what was really important to individuals. As such, he had a deep empathy for people (much as others of his generation, i.e., Kathie Dannemiller).

In the mid-1940s, Eric saw a better way of managing the workplace (nearly stumbled on it, as some would say). A democratic approach that could lead to unparalleled performance. He spent his life testing and preaching this vision, building a worldwide network of devoted associates (including Kurt Lewin, Douglas McGregor, Eliot Jacques, William McWhinney, Bob Tannenbaum, and Fred Emery to name just a few), and mentoring disciples (such as Cal Pava, William Pasmore, Stu Winby, Bert Painter, Susan Wright, and multitudes more). This group, led by Eric, laid the groundwork for management innovations in the 1980s (many of which still exist in 2016 as elements of "holocracy" and "teal" organizations).

One of the most profound lessons to influence Eric's thinking and that of those he touched came from the now famous studies of the coal mines in the 1950s. The lessons Eric learned he applied over and over again. Two things stand out. First, the catalyst for the change was technology. This is still true today, possibly even more so. In 1949, a new technology to allow continuous longwall mining (vs. traditional hand-got methods) had been introduced. This technology was introduced differently in some locations than others. In mines that had problems installing the technology, engineers simply told miners how they should organize themselves and what to do. In mines where the technology was more productive, leaders enabled miners to decide for themselves how to organize the work. The more participative approach enabled a form of teamwork and self-control that had been lost in the "engineered" mines. Second, the teams literally designed themselves, what Trist and Ken Bamforth (his research colleague at the time) called "responsible autonomy" (Trist and Bamforth 1951). The results of the research were clear and significant, yet they were ignored by the British Coal Board, which refused to support self-organized approaches to mining. This resistance to new and more productive work arrangements that feature a shift of power from management to workers continues very much today and is something that drove Eric to fight for the rights of workers his entire life.

Eric had a tremendous affection for coal miners. He often related the story of the Rushton coal mine project outside of Philadelphia, PA. From Eric's perspective Rushton and his work with both Warren Spinks (owner/operator) and the United Mine Workers (Arnold Miller, President of the United Mine Workers of American) was a very meaningful experience for at least two reasons. First, of course, it brought back memories of his Durham days. And secondly, although the initial stages of the project were actually quite successful for both the workforce and the owner, it did break down over time. Union members were divided in whether or not to extend the

autonomy to the rest of the mine. A myriad of issues arose, from perceived inequities to exclusion from some of the higher-paying jobs and experienced miners benefiting more than less senior coworkers. In the end, even the research team practices were called into question, 12 years later. Eventually the mine closed and the debate about what might have been continued (Goodman 1979).

Twenty-five years after the work in British mining, we witnessed the impact this had on Eric, many times within different client systems, as we worked with Eric in facilitating the design of several different production sites. Both his ability to connect with and relate to workers and his cautious way with leaders, who could undermine this shift in power, enabled Eric to inspire and motivate these around him.

## Key Contributions: An Amazing Legacy

Eric (and his closest colleague, Fred Emery, who is also profiled in this collection of essays) gave the field terms and concepts that were both new and energizing. Terms like "industrial democracy," "open systems," and most importantly "sociotechnical systems" became mainstream notions because of them. Eric and Fred believed that organizations were living systems, and that as such, coped with turbulence by "generating their own order" from the bottom up. Eric treated every organization as an ecosystem that lived in relationship to the world around and the world within. In the coal mines, it was physical and visceral – the roof would collapse if workers did not have the skills and authority to do something about it, even if it was not part of their job description. In these organizations, Eric sought to build in the capacity of the people themselves to learn and change the system when it needed to change versus waiting to be told.

Let us explore several of Eric's contributions.

## Each Person Has a Voice and the Ability to Influence

The notion of self-organizing: given the data, people will coalesce around solutions that will amaze you. Eric believed fervently that the wisdom in the organization could solve most anything. Each person had a voice, and each voice had to be heard. Combining these multiple realities into one cohesive solution was the most powerful way forward. This was true whether the workers were experienced in operating the technology or newly hired. "Greenfield" sites, started from scratch with new, self-organizing workforces, were among the most productive of all of the organizations that followed the sociotechnical system paradigm.

## Open Systems and Systemic Thinking

In their seminal piece, "The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments" (see volume III: Trist/Tavistock Anthology 1997), Emery and Trist established that "the

functioning of an organization can only be understood in its transactional relations with its environment." Further, the "environmental contexts in which organizations exist are themselves changing, at an increasing rate and towards complexity. As a result, one can only view, design, and adapt organizations with from a systemic perspective. Not seeing the whole enables what you do not see to undermine and potentially negate the rest (a sociotechnical point of view). It was important, in Eric and Fred's view, that organizations be designed with the capacity to adapt to whatever changes threatened their existence. This thinking was influenced by Ashby's law of requisite variety, which held that no biological system could survive a change in its environment without the ability to adapt to that change (Ashby 1957).

## Sociotechnical Systems

Eric's greatest contribution to the field of organization behavior and design is in the understanding of the relationship between social systems and technology. Eric's insights into the interdependencies between these two concepts continue to influence and guide organization designs. Today many of those designers are software developers and knowledge workers who intuitively understand the dynamic relationship between the human system needs and requirements, the requisite technology, and the processes created to turn inputs into outputs.

The second principle of sociotechnical systems (shared first by Fred and expounded on by Eric) is the principle of redundancy of functions. *Any component system has a repertoire that can be put to many uses, so that increased adaptive flexibility is acquired. While redundancy of functions* (the essence of agility and adaptive systems) *holds at the biological level, as for example in the human body, it becomes far more critical at the organizational level where the components – individual humans and groups of humans – are themselves purposeful systems. Humans have the capacity for self-regulation so that control may become internal rather than external. Only organizations based on the redundancy of functions have the flexibility and innovative potential to give the possibility of adaptation to a rapid change rate, increasing complexity and environmental* uncertainty (International Conference on QWL and the 1980s, Toronto 1981). In practical terms, this often meant that workers should be multiskilled and broadly knowledgeable rather than able to perform only a single task or function.

## Action Research or Action Inquiry

Three of the many definitions for action research are a "systemic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and undertaken by participants in the inquiry" (McCutcheon and Jung 1990, p. 148); "a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their

understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out" (Kemmis and McTaggert 1990, p. 5); and "action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (Rapoport 1970, p. 499 as cited in McKernan 1991, p. 4).

Within all these definitions, there are four basic themes: empowerment of participants, collaboration between researchers and those in the system, acquisition of knowledge, and social change. The process that the researcher goes through to achieve these themes is a spiral of action research cycles consisting of four major phrases: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Zuber-Skerrit 1991, p. 2).

Put simply, action research is "learning by doing" – a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and, if not satisfied, try again. While this is the essence of the approach, there are other key attributes of action research that differentiates it from common problem-solving activities that we all engage in every day. A more succinct definition is,

> "Action research...aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an imme-
> diate situation and to further the goals of social science, simultaneously. There is a dual
> commitment in action research to study a system and concurrently to collaborate with the
> members of the system in changing it into what is regarded as a desirable direction.
> Accomplishing these twin goals requires the active collaboration of researcher and client,
> and thus it stresses the importance of co-learning as a primary aspect of the research process"
> (Susman and Trist, SESS, 417–450). Eric rarely had a "plan" other than to engage with the
> client in an action research process, to discover what was next and how to proceed.

Eric believed, in his heart, that people should create their own futures and that people inherently knew the best answers and approaches; the notion is that no one knows better than those doing the work.

## Academic/Researcher/Practitioner

Eric taught many of us coming out of the university in the late 1960s and 1970s the importance of teaching and continuous learning. He was a unique combination of the two. Always questioning and documenting, the researcher and writer part came easy. Applying the theory and testing it in reality were something else. Eric believed, as his mentor Kurt Lewin did, that "nothing is as practical as a good theory."

Eric's thinking and work first took hold in Procter and Gamble in the 1960s. Introduced to his concepts by McGregor, Procter embraced the notion of "open systems" and built their first sociotechnically designed factory in Augusta Georgia in 1963 (Kleiner 1996, p. 67). Augusta was so successful that by 1967, Procter had mandated that all new factories be designed this way.

In 1973, Eric began, what would be a 5-year effort, with the Jamestown Area Labor-Management Committee. Over this time frame, Eric and his doctoral students

visited Jamestown regularly, helping to implement Joint Labor-Management Committees in the local factories in addition to a regional Area Labor-Management Committee to provide oversight and encouragement to local businesses and labor leaders. Eric found that having the commitment of this overall body had a stabilizing effect. Local small projects would go up and down, but they would hold because of the committee.

Jamestown was the first small town where innovative industrial cooperation took place. Over time, Jamestown became synonymous Labor-Management Innovation and cooperation. This effort was initiated by the then mayor, Stan Lundine. While he was Mayor, Jamestown received national attention for the labor-management strategy that Lundine implemented. Jamestown, which had long been a center of labor strife, became a national model for labor/management cooperation. Later as a Congressman, Lundine brought his labor/management ideas to Washington and was instrumental in developing legislation that created labor/management councils and employee stock ownership plans.

While Jamestown heralded a new way of collaboration and the Quality of Worklife movement, it also highlighted one of Eric's greatest frustrations: traditional resistance to these principles was always evident in these relationships. Acceptance to these principles was too tentative to alter the conventional management practices or encourage trade unions to divert their attention from traditional collective bargaining issues such as security and job seniority.

This led Eric to what he called "the function of a continuant." Introduced publicly in Oslo in 1987, the term came from a book on logic by W. E. P. Johnson, the Cambridge philosopher, written in 1924. Eric had a new use for it, namely, the need for a point of stability in a change-making organization. Today we call these joint groups "steering committees" or as John Kotter refers to them, "guiding coalitions."

## Labour Canada: Quality of Worklife Takes Hold

Beginning in the early 1960s, Eric made frequent visits to Canada, for work and for pleasure – he said he had a "love affair" with Canada. After Eric moved to the University of Pennsylvania, his visits to Canada became more numerous, particularly for extensive work with Alcan at its smelter in Arvida, Quebec. During the 1970s, Eric consulted also with various federal government departments, including the federal Treasury Board, an interdepartmental system that aimed to promote public service-wide quality of worklife (QWL) practices. Eventually, in February 1977, Eric began his work as an advisor to a small QWL unit with the Canadian federal Department of Labour, promoting QWL ideas across Canada.

For the next 10 years, across Canada, Eric applied his master "network builder" skills in conferences, workshops, speeches, and films, encouraging grassroot innovation in quality of working life in individual workplaces, and, increasingly, in

community-based developments. In Trist's words, the "new field of inquiry" was the extension of action research methods beyond the primary work system in individual organizations to the broader scale of "whole organizational systems" and "macro-social" contexts.

The application of this ecological framework depended upon center-periphery partnerships, where many of the "new directions of hope" to respond to the pressures of turbulent environments were to be found in the hinterlands of society. Thus, in Canada, Eric built on his experience from Jamestown, New York, and Craigmillar, Scotland, to help foster future-oriented development projects with employers, local and provincial governments, trade unions, educators, and individual citizens involved in joint efforts to revive their own communities in outlying regions of Canada such as Sudbury in Northern Ontario and in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, on the Maritime coast.

Indeed, it was no accident that during the extended period of his engagement with Labour Canada, Eric "retired" from the University of Pennsylvania in 1978 and became Professor of Organizational Behavior and Social Ecology in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University, Toronto. Within this combination of academic and practitioner roles, Eric applied and developed new concepts of "management in turbulent environments," extended "search conference" methodologies throughout Canada, and in his last full-time teaching years at York was introducing an entirely new program on the study of the future.

At the peak of his involvement in Canada, Eric gave the closing address at the second International Conference on the Quality of Working Life in Toronto in 1981. Eric's theme was the re-thinking of QWL to take into account growing unemployment in developed economies, the emergence of knowledge work, and the impact of the microprocessor revolution. This was Eric Trist as a quiet but insightful "revolutionary...able to break out of old thought-systems and usher in a new paradigm" (Bennis 1978, p. 60). It was also the conviction of a person of intense passion with a nonjudgmental affection and devotion to the dignity of "the working man" (Painter 2016; Toronto 1981).

## New Insights: Foreseeing the Future

If Eric were here today, he would likely be amazed at how right he and Fred got it, back then! Eric and Fred foresaw the turbulence of the 1970s and beyond as early as 1967 in their article... they began to write about "the salience of a turbulent environment." They predicted that the levels of interdependence, complexity, and uncertainty were rising so fast that traditional institutional forms would not be able to adapt or keep up. The notions of agility and adaptation, were first outlined in The Causal Texture of Organizational Environments, Human Relations, 20 (1967), pp. 199–237.

Eric held the view that "the more complex, fast-changing, interdependent but uncertain world growing up in the wake of the second industrial revolution is rapidly rendering obsolete and maladaptive many of the values, organizational structures and work practices brought about by the first. In fact, something like their opposite seems to be required. This is nowhere more apparent than in the efforts of some of the most sophisticated firms in the advanced science-based industries to decentralize their operations, to debureaucratize their organizational form and to secure the involvement and commitment of their personnel at all levels by developing forms of participatory democracy (Edinburgh 1971).

In the late 1980s, Eric again was early in identifying the value chain as a broader unit of analysis of the technical system, before the craze of reengineering. He defined the need for cross-functional, self-managing structures to align with parts of the value chain, like order fulfillment or product generation. Eric saw the necessity of STS to move upstream to product development and played a role in improving time to market performance by organizing complex human relations issues through new collaborative work designs. He understood the issues of task interdependence between functions and how empowered integrated teams could help manage coordination issues.

Eric continually sought the answer to the question, "how can we create adaptive ecologies in the workplace?" Twenty years later, in Silicon Valley, we can see that the new emerging work innovation is a self-managing work system that is comprised of members of the ecosystem who work together to improve the customer experience by linking wearable devices and big data technology from the customer to the multifunctional ecosystem work system. In the Valley the ecosystem is the new organizing unit. This essentially is a sociotechnical system.

Another innovation pervasive in the Silicon Valley and spreading worldwide is adaptive production systems which again have roots in Eric's work. Increasing turbulent environments requires increasingly more adaptive work organizations. Adaptive systems have highly attuned sensing and sense-making processes and the ability to rapidly prototype new solutions. These adaptive systems learn to fail fast, fix things quickly, and continuously interact with their ecosystems.

Eric was able to foresee the issues that would face society and organizations into the twenty-first century. Time to market, getting to market quickly, and really understanding what enables and gets in the way of moving faster were among these. He saw the world "speeding up" as far back as the mid-1970s. Further, as chaos occurs and situations become less predictable and faster, He saw the need for systems that can move as fast, become reconfigurable, and adaptive to the new situations.

Today, in 2017, in the world of digital the unit of analysis is the ecosystem. When you map a process (as Eric and Fred envisioned it), the touchpoints are other companies and function within them. The system contains multiple companies and multiple players, an ecosystem, or a constellation, much bigger than conceived by others during their time.

He foresaw the impact of the commuter age and the Internet.

He recognized that organizations were a part of an ecosystem. Today the boundaries between organizations have become blurred. Customers are competitors, and suppliers not exclusive and the product development, ideation to implementation cycles, are highly integrated across organizational boundaries. Design has become as much about the ecosystem of the organization, as it is about the roles, boundaries, interfaces, and interdependencies within the organization.

## Unfinished Business: A Legacy of Things to Think About

To those who knew him, Eric was prone to depression and self-recriminations. People would describe him as humble to a fault. Often Eric felt that he had not had much of an impact and that his work made little difference. As he reflected on the world, it seemed to him that society had made little progress, even when the solutions were very obvious. Perhaps he never recovered fully from the rejection of his ideas by the British Coal Board in the 1960s.

Sometimes too trusting, often overlooked, he was Periodically not credited for his contributions to their thinking by colleagues like Elliott Jacques and Lou Davis (Pasmore 2016; Winby 2016). Academics viewed him as a competitor, while Eric always saw the opportunity for collaboration. Even trade unions did not always trust Eric's intentions and would renege on promises or fall back to traditional thinking. Eric, on the other hand, rarely criticized the ideas of others, instead finding the nugget or gem within that he could take and build on in an appreciative, helpful way.

One of Eric's greatest frustrations was the lack of sustainability of the changes he had helped introduce, even when these changes were demonstrably better than the old ways. Eric was at his best and most dynamic self when he was on the shop floor or in meetings with those doing the work. He was not a salesman nor particularly dynamic in a meeting with senior managers. As a result he worked a lot at the periphery of organizations, where he could affect the most change. The higher he tried to take his ideas, the more resistance he experienced. In the end, Eric could not explain how to make change happen (at the highest levels in a system) or how to embed it into the fiber of the organization.

Eric felt, toward the end of his life, that we had lost the thread that he had started with and that was the human condition. As the sociotechnical approach become more popular, it also become more codified and routinized. The core for Eric was unleashing the human spirit and human potential. Eric was reflecting on the "dark side," the "destructive" side of the human species. This darker perspective reflects perhaps Eric's own sense of not having accomplished as much as he would have liked, as well as his acknowledgement of what he saw as the challenges ahead (Wright 2016).

Full of self-doubt, Eric never got the academic recognition he deserved, even while publishing over 250 articles (either as sole author or in collaboration), numerous books, and working papers plus hundreds of speeches and guest lectures.

## Conclusion

An important relationship in Eric's life was with his "best student" as Eric would fondly refer to Cal Pava. Cal met and studied under Eric at Wharton, and then later when Cal taught at Harvard, both he and Eric had ongoing collaborations and meetings. Cal extended social technical system theory and practice into the area of nonlinear work design and office work. He evolved social technical systems thinking by introducing such concepts as "deliberations" as a new unit of analysis for nonlinear work. In this respect, Cal was doing what Eric wanted, which was to evolve social technical system theory and practice beyond the manufacturing focus it had had over the last several decades. In the twilight of Eric's last years, unfortunately, Cal became gravely ill with an incurable brain tumor. Eric went to Stanford hospital in December of 1992 and spent an afternoon with Cal which became a seminal moment for Eric.

During the last few years of Eric's life, he was concerned that STS would fade away and never achieve the promise he felt it deserved. But during the last year of his life, he realized that his work was assimilated into the modern organization, that much of what he predicted were the issues of the day in management and organization science (Winby 2016). Cal Pava's work (1983) which was being integrated into Silicon Valley companies like Apple and Hewlett Packard, along with extensive use of STS concepts and practices in manufacturing and product development areas. The same holds for today, where STS has evolved into new models of work organization integrated with digital strategy.

In 1987, Eric went into semiretirement in Gainesville, Florida, with his wife Beulah, best friend, companion, secretary, and assistant on many projects (Weisbord 2012). In the last years of his life, he dedicated himself to his final and perhaps most lasting gift to us *The Social Engagement of Social Sciences: The Tavistock Anthology*, Volumes I and II with H. Murray (1990, 1993). The University of Pennsylvania would not publish Volume III. It was finished by Fred Emery (1997) and foretells of more than we are even aware of today. . .. Fred originally wanted no part in the SESS. . . seeing it as a look backward, and not about the future. When he finally read the first two volumes, he commented they were "even more amazing than I ever believed."

He died on June 4, 1993, in Carmel, California, at the age of 83. His close colleague Fred Emery died 4 years later, in Canberra, Australia, on April 10, 1997.

Many have described the importance of the relationship Eric and Fred Emery had. "Polar opposites" is the phrase Marv Weisbord (Productive Workplaces) used as an apt description. Eric would rarely take a compliment or credit, without acknowledging his kinship with Fred. Eric was fond of saying, Fred "was the smartest person I ever met!" Without Fred, much of the codification of Eric's thinking would be lost.

Finally, we would leave you with Eric's closing comments in his International Conference on QWL in the 1980s speech in Toronto, Canada, in 1981:

> We must continue to create jobs of high quality and bring into being organizations and communities through new paradigms that provide the enabling conditions for such jobs to

*come into existence in both the market and social economies. Otherwise we are not likely to fare too well in countervailing the turbulent environment that increasingly surrounds us!* How prescient. His challenge and legacy remain.

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# Haridimos Tsoukas: Understanding Organizational Change via Philosophy and Complexity

# 80

Demetris Hadjimichael

**Abstract**

Haridimos ("Hari") Tsoukas is a Greek organizational theorist whose work has been influential in introducing and popularizing a holistic, process-based conception of organizational change. Traditional accounts of change assume that entities (including organizations) are by nature static and only undergo change after external force is applied. In contrast, Tsoukas maintains that change is ever-present in the social world and that change itself is the intrinsic basis for organizing. As such for Tsoukas, organizations are not static entities but ongoing processes of organizing, embedded within social nexuses of practices and discourses, which are constantly mutating. He identifies two main sources of organizational change: (i) the world being an open-system and (ii) the reflexive agent. The assumptions and conclusions underlying his work have been strongly influenced by interpretative, phenomenological, and process philosophy, as well as complexity theory. To acquaint the reader with his ideas and work, the chapter is structured as follows: first it will describe Tsoukas' background, secondly it will summarize his key contributions to understanding organizational change, and thirdly it will discuss new insights from his work and it will conclude with his work's legacies and unfinished business.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Heraclitus famously remarked that "everything changes and nothing abides." This dictum may be argued to hold for both the physical and social strata of our world (see Prigogine 1992). On a physical level, change is evident, for instance, in the different geological layers of our planet. Each layer took millennia to form and signifies vastly different environmental circumstances overtime. On a social level, constant change is even more rapid. This is testified by both the constant mutation of different social institutions over the course of human history (e.g., tribalism, democracy, feudalism, communism, and capitalism) and by the endogenously created instability of each social institution (e.g., ever-changing financial and political circumstances in twentieth-century Capitalism) (e.g., see Cunha and Tsoukas 2015). On a micro-social level, that of the individual, change is apparent in the life history of each person which essentially is influenced by the evolving circumstances that exist during one's time. Ongoing change is something that Professor Haridimos Tsoukas came to recognize through his research and the trajectory of his own life. This may be illustrated by how his interest in exploring, thinking, and writing about organizational change had emerged through his life experiences.

## Influences and Motivations: The Process of Becoming

Haridimos Tsoukas was born in 1961 in the small mountainous town of Karpenisi, in central Greece. He is often simply referred to as Hari, which is the Greek short form of the name Haridimos. He was the eldest child among three kids. His father worked as a shop keeper and his mother as a dressmaker. He grew up in a loving family, whose motto was "education, education, education." Family narratives of poverty, the Nazi occupation of Greece, the Greek civil war (1945–1949), and the persecution of left-leaning citizens after the end of the civil war (and the victory of the Right) shaped his upbringing. When the military dictatorship in Greece collapsed and democracy returned in 1974, Hari was in his early adolescence (13 years old).

He spent his late adolescent and early student years in an intensely politicized atmosphere, and as he admits, it has been impossible for him to shake off his long-held interest in politics and current affairs. As a student, he was involved in the left only to realize soon that his love of independent, open-ended thinking could not find a hospitable habitat in closed ideologies and intellectually unsophisticated political parties of the left. In the course of time, he came to describe himself as a progressive or communitarian liberal in the manner of Philip Selznick (2002). Civic engagement has always been important to him. As an intellectual, he always thought it important to contribute to public dialogue through his writing of opinion articles in Greek newspapers, a practice he begun even from his early student days through publishing a local newspaper in his home town.

Hari was originally educated as an electrical and industrial engineer. During the early-to-mid-1980s, he studied engineering on both an undergraduate (Ptychion) and postgraduate level (M.Sc.), at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece) and the Cranfield University (United Kingdom), respectively. As he admits he was an "unhappy engineer by discipline" during the period of his undergraduate studies, and between 1985 and 1990, he grasped the opportunity to defect to the social sciences by undertaking a Ph.D. in organizational sociology at the Manchester Business School. While there, he received the Tom Lupton Doctoral Research Scholarship. During this time, he was supervised by the late Professor Tom Lupton, who subsequently retired, and his supervision was undertaken by Dr. Alan Thomas. His doctoral thesis was a piece of organizational sociology – "Explaining work organization: A realist approach (Tsoukas 1989a)" – involving the study of two plants, a chemical plant in northern Greece and another in northern England. Since his undergraduate days, he was strongly interested in the theory of knowledge, which later intensified during his doctoral research. The course on epistemology, on the first year of the Ph.D. program at the Manchester Business School run by Professor Richard Whitley, influenced him deeply. His concern with philosophy of science was manifested in the subtitled of his doctoral thesis ("A realist approach") – his research was explicitly based on a realist epistemology (Bhaskar, Harre), through which he attempted to explain the differences in the work organization of the two plants.

Another important influence during his doctoral years was the late Professor Stafford Beer – one of the leading post-World War II cyberneticians (Beer 1981). As he himself acknowledges, Hari took from Professor Beer a keen interest in systems, complexity, and cybernetics, which he has retained to the present day. Other intellectual influences were anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1979) and the philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis (2005). As Hari notes, from Bateson he learned to appreciate communication, metaphor, and connectedness, while he owes to Castoriadis his appreciation of indeterminacy and creative praxis. Looking back at his own intellectual development, he sees a decisive shift from rationalistic modes of thinking toward a greater appreciation of language, interpretation, and process. His encounter with the work of the late Professor John Shotter made him discover the eye-opening philosophies of Wittgenstein and Bakhtin while developing later an acute interest in phenomenology, existentialism, and Aristotelian philosophy. His strong interest in philosophy is evident throughout his work. Perhaps the best

description of his own intellectual making is provided by him as follows (slightly paraphrased, see http://www.htsoukas.com): "I am not a philosopher but can't help but see everything from a philosophical point of view. I am not a complexity scientist but can't help but approach everything in terms of Gregory Bateson's memorable phrase "the pattern that connects." And I am not a politician but, as an engaged citizen, can't help but be passionate about the affairs of the 'polis'."

Between 1988 and 1990, he became an associate fellow of management studies at the University of Manchester. From 1990 until 1995, he was appointed as a lecturer in organizational behavior at the University of Warwick. Following 1995, he became an associate professor of organization and management at the University of Cyprus (1995–1998) and at the ALBA Graduate School (1999–2000). He was offered his first professorship at the University of Essex (1998–2000), which was followed by professorships at ALBA (2001–2003) and the University of Strathclyde (2000–2003). Since the early 2000s, thanks to his growing reputation and dedication to his profession, he was appointed as a scientific advisor to the Association of Chief Executive Officers in Greece and as a book series editor for the series "Management" by Kastaniotis Publishers in Greece (since 2003) and as series coeditor for "Perspectives on Process Organization Studies" by Oxford University Press (since 2010). Between the years 2003 and 2008, Hari became the editor in chief of the highly regarded journal *Organization Studies*. In conjunction with the above, Hari was promoted to George D. Mavros Research Professor of Organization and Management at ALBA (2003–2009). Throughout his career, Hari remained a strong believer in being an active citizen. As such, he regularly comments on Greek and Cypriot politics in major national media (i.e., currently "To Vima"; previously "Kathimerini," "EconomikosTachidromos") and his personal blog Articulate Howl (www.htsoukas.blogspot.co.uk – where he writes in Greek) (see Tsoukas 2015b). In 2015, to stay faithful to his beliefs on being an active citizen, he unsuccessfully ran for the Greek Parliament with a newly created social-democratic party.

As can be seen from the above, Hari has grown into becoming a highly esteemed member of the field of organizational and management studies. In 2009, his fascination with the notion of constant change led him to co-found (with Ann Langley) the annual International Process Symposium to which he has been a co-convener ever since. Currently he holds the positions of the Columbia Ship Management Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Cyprus (since 2010) and the Distinguished Research Environment Professor of Organizational Studies at the University of Warwick (since 2003). While holding these positions, apart from serving as the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Cyprus (2012–2016), he received numerous awards for his teaching and research. Specifically, for the last 11 years Hari, has consistently received the Best MBA Teacher Award from Warwick Business School. Additionally, in 2014, he was awarded a higher doctorate (D.Sc.) from the University of Warwick in recognition of his lifetime contribution to his field of scholarship. Two years later, he was made the 18th EGOS Honorary Member and awarded the Joanne Martin Trailblazer

Award from the Academy of Management to recognize his work's contribution to organization and management theory, especially process thinking. During the same year, he was awarded the Cypriot Research Award from the Cypriot Research Promotion Foundation, in acknowledgment of conducting high-quality research in the Republic of Cyprus.

## Key Contributions: Weaving Together Philosophy and Management

The aim of this section is twofold: firstly, I attempt to unpack the concepts that Hari uses to account for organizational change by referring to his research and influences; and secondly I seek to exemplify how his theoretical work enables a holistic understanding of organizational change. Indeed, the assumption that change is both perpetual and inherent in the social stratum is one of the most central aspects of Hari's research on organizational change. This is because this notion seems to underlie all the four pillars he relies on to account for change in organizations, which he and Robert Chia have termed as "organizational becoming" (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). The four pillars Hari builds on are (i) process, (ii) discourse, (iii) performativity, and (iv) the socially embedded self-reflexive individual. Despite referring to these concepts separately, it should be kept in mind that Hari's key contributions to understanding organizational change lay in their creative synthesis, which I seek to demonstrate below.

### Process

Tsoukas (2012, p. 70) takes the ontological position that social phenomena (e.g., organizations) are not predetermined entities that await discovery via the utilization of quasi-Newtonian reasoning (see also Weick 1979). On the contrary, social phenomena are assumed to be the emerging interweavement of actions of sentient agents that have both intended and unintended consequences (Cunha and Tsoukas 2015, p. 229; Tsoukas and Chia 2011). He argues that to understand social phenomena in-depth (including organizational change), one must conduct detailed studies of the flow of activities in situated and temporal contexts (Langley et al. 2013; Tsoukas 1989b, 2009b, 2012, 2016b). Of course, the lack of determinacy in social interaction does not imply that the latter occurs randomly (i.e., without order/logic) (Tsoukas 2005b, p. 73). This is due to the fact that any interaction is inherently a part of both a broader social context as well as a local situation (Tsoukas 1998a, b). What this suggests is that although agents do not automatically execute a set of deterministic rules imposed on them by a social structure (Garud et al. 2015), these interactions are nevertheless regulated by tacitly attending from shared social expectations and understandings to the exigencies of each situation at hand (Dionysiou and Tsoukas

2013; Tsoukas 1996, 1998a, 2011). This understanding leaves open the possibility that new interactions may give rise to creative adaptation of what is socially expected, and this in turn may create new possibilities for future action which prior to an occurrence was unthinkable (Tsoukas and Chia 2002).

Hence, before Hari considers organizations, he sees that human action is essentially an ever-mutating flux of interaction (Tsoukas 1998b). Based on this, it is evident that he does not prioritize stability, to be able to conceptualize change (Tsoukas and Dooley 2011). In other words, he does not see change as a "fait accompli," but as a phenomenon that is always present. As such, he sees organizations as "secondary accomplishments" (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, p. 570). In Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 570) words: "Change must not be thought of as a property of organization. Rather, organization must be understood as an emergent property of change. Change is ontologically prior to organization." Put simply, change is the very condition for the existence of organizations – organization at large stabilizes human interaction. Nevertheless, despite their differences in ontological order, change and organizations are both conceived to share a similar nature: they are unfolding *processes* in which mutation over time is a given (Tsoukas 1998b).

## Discourse

In their present form, organizations exist to impose order and hence direct the incessant flux of human interaction toward certain ends. They do so by imposing socially instituted rules and meanings on their members (Castoriadis 2005; Tsoukas 1998b; Tsoukas and Hatch 2001). By drawing on Weick (1979), it is asserted that organizations offer their members "a set of [generic] cognitive categories," which are meant to orient them in unfolding situations (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, p. 571). For example, the category "patient" is used in medical practices to signify that a person under this generalization requires treatment (Tsoukas 2016b, p. 149). Sharing categories is achieved by exposing organizational members to a specific way of talking about things – a discourse (Rorty 1989, p. 6; Taylor 1985b, p. 23; Tsoukas and Hatch 2001, p. 239). Discourse is given to members in narrative form (organized in stories) (see Bruner 1991). Thanks to this form, they are enabled to perceive what is salient in situations (Tsoukas 1998a). Each discourse highlights a specific aspect of the world that is tied to what is of importance to the community that uses it and, as such, signifies specific states of affairs and appropriate activity (Tsoukas 1998c, 2005a). This is because each discourse is centered around an imagery (see Shotter and Tsoukas 2011). For example, the development of chaos theory signifies that the until now dominant Newtonian imagery which had assumed that the cosmos is ordered and stable is simply one way of examining and thinking about it (see Tsoukas 1998b). The legitimation of the chaotic discourse essentially allows scientists to seek to understand the cosmos in ways unthinkable in the Newtonian conception. The reason is that the underlying imagery of the cosmos in chaos theory is one of unstable, dynamic, nonlinear behavior which is radically different from the Newtonian.

## Performativity

Over time, agents take the organizational discourse and the way it presents the world (imagery), for granted, and engage in a patterned (i.e., organized) typology of actions. The performances that fall under a pattern of action for the sake of accomplishing an organizational goal are more commonly referred to as routines (Dionysiou and Tsoukas 2013; Weick 1979). But routines, like discourse, are seen at best only as "emergent accomplishments" (Feldman 2000). This is because they both have an element of stability and change. Both are open to modification, adaption, or even erosion (Tsoukas 2005a, p. 101). It should be noted, however, that language (which includes cognitive categories) and performance (i.e., practice/activity) are mutually constituted – if one changes so does the other (Tsoukas 2005a, p. 99).

The change of cognitive categories and routines can be explained by their contact with the world (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). In the world (which includes the organization) it is impossible to have definitional closure, because it is an open system (Prigogine 1992; Tsoukas 2016a). The world is an open system because events (especially in the social stratum) do not always follow a predetermined pattern – they are subject to unpredictable variation (Tsoukas 1989b, 1998b, 2013). In Tsoukas' (2016b, p. 145) words: "first-time events are not exception but the rule in human life." New events present members with new sets of circumstances. The uniqueness of the circumstances always has an element which has neither been articulated nor dealt with before (see Shotter 2011; Shotter and Tsoukas 2011). Hence, to express and deal with the new features of situations, organizational members must create new distinctions (Tsoukas 2009a, p. 942). To do so, they draw and apply existing cognitive categories and routines in new ways (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). If the new ways of expression and behaving are taken up by a number of people in the organization – this leads to new knowledge and organizational change (Tsoukas 2005a, p. 99, 2009a). Therefore, the constant performance of improvisation is required for the function and maintenance of the organization. This renders the organization as a process that is perpetually becoming something that it previously was not (Tsoukas and Chia 2011, p. 9; Weick 1993).

To illustrate the above, consider the ever-changing moving-in routine of the housing department of a U.S. university studied by Feldman (2000) and later discussed by Tsoukas and Chia (2002). Initially, the department specified that students could move into the university's halls of residence during three specific days at the beginning of the academic year. This routine resulted in angering the students and their parents, because it caused long queues and traffic jams. Their complaints triggered the department to change its routine in the following semesters. Specifically, an administrator was appointed to liaise with the local police department to manage traffic during those days. In parallel to this measure, new rules were instituted for the moving-in days. Cars stopping to unload in front of the halls were restricted to do so for just half an hour, and other specific parking spaces were allotted for the moving-in days. Change did not stop there. During a later year, the university's team was scheduled to play during the first move-in day. Because this caused serious complications to the housing department's process, further refinements were made to the department's routines. They decided to

also liaise with the sports department prior to those moving-in days to ensure that they do not have a similar clash in the future.

## Reflexive Agent

Of course, improvisation and thus change, cannot happen automatically. Sentient, knowledgeable individuals are required for organizations to perform effectively and achieve change in the light of the uncertainty and singularity of new circumstances (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011, p. 342; Shotter and Tsoukas 2014b; Tsoukas 1996). According to Yanow and Tsoukas (2009), by relying on social/organizational significations, people are habituated to behave in certain ways (see also Tsoukas 2015a, p. 63). The habituation implies that when dealing with routine situations, people do so nonreflexively (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011). Despite their nonreflexivity, their behavior always draws on collectively established significations of their social context (Shotter and Tsoukas 2014b, pp. 383–385; Tsoukas 1996). For example, when helping a customer with a common phone issue, an experienced employee is solicited by the situation to respond in a polite and helpful manner (as befits speaking to a customer) without having to think about it (Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001). But, in unexpected situations, performances which under normal instances are fluid – break down.

Performance breaks down because the employee is likely to be "reflecting on" how to best deal with the unfamiliarity of the situation (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011, pp. 344–346). But even in non-typical situations where the person is called upon to improvise, like in routine behavior, she/he necessarily draws on socially "established distinctions and standards of excellence" (Tsoukas 2015a; Yanow and Tsoukas 2009, p. 1345). The magnitude of a breakdown is related to how severe the unexpected situation is, and this in turn relates to the modification of the routines/categories required (Tsoukas 2016b; Tsoukas and Chia 2002). If the situation is only minimally different to a typical situation, then the employee is likely to only momentarily "reflect in action" and marginally adapt the normal procedure to deal with it. However, when the breakdown is a major deviation from typical situations, the employee is likely to have to "reflect on action" so as to find a new and appropriate ways to deal with the situation (Yanow and Tsoukas 2009). Consequently, one may see instituting a combination of a certain discourse, and a set of appropriate behaviors is not entirely pointless due to the open-endedness of the world (see Tsoukas and Dooley 2011). They both serve as the basis for their "imaginative extension" in ways that serve the organizational cause (Tsoukas and Chia 2002).

However, it should be noted that change is not only the result of organizational members encountering non-typical and unexpected situations (Tsoukas and Dooley 2011). People are inherently generators of organizational change (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). This is because agents are not simply puppets for the organization to achieve

its goals. As explicated above, they are reflexive and, in addition, are emotional beings that have corporeality (Tsoukas 2005b, p. 380). Reflexivity is tied to narrative thinking, and this implies that all narratives have a narrator (Tsoukas 1998a; Tsoukas and Hatch 2001, p. 248). Due to their social nature, humans are reflexive narrators. Consequently, they can replicate what they do as agents in the form of stories. But far from being slaves to their perceptions and existing narratives, they can narratively reorganize what they perceive in ways that new possibilities for action are illuminated (MacIntyre 2007; Tsoukas and Hatch 2001). Therefore, due to having their own interests and views about the workplace, they themselves may use new narrative forms which in turn may serve as catalysts for change. In other words, they can exercise their ability to self-reflect (Yanow and Tsoukas 2009), so as to adapt their behavior by revising previously held beliefs in the light of new experiences (Tsoukas and Chia 2002).

An excellent example of the role of sentient individuals as a source of organizational change is the case of Rebecca Olson analyzed by Shotter and Tsoukas (2014a). Olson was appointed as the new CEO at a hospital in the United States. Shortly after her appointment, she realizes that along with the hospital's financial problems, she had to deal with a case of sexual harassment that had been ignored by her predecessor. The reason the case was ignored, despite the existence of an official process for dealing with such complaints was that the harasser was a member of a powerful family which could potentially cause problems to any CEO in the specific hospital. On top of that, it was not only one person that complained about the harasser but several over a sequence of years. Notice that like her predecessor, she could have opted to ignore the case and just focus on the financial aspect so as not to jeopardize her job. However, one of the victims, like Rebecca, had a physical disability. This spontaneously made her feel empathy for the victim. The "blend [of] judgment [disapproval] and feelings [disgust]" about the situation moved Rebecca to act against the harasser (Shotter and Tsoukas 2014a, p. 233). Unlike other similar cases she had dealt with in her previous work experience, the uniqueness of the circumstances predisposed her to approach this situation cautiously. For instance, she did not fire the person on the spot or take him to a tribunal. Due to the harasser's influence, she spent months deliberating and talking with people across the hospital. With this, over time she managed to acquire enough leverage to force the harasser to resign.

One can see that the actions of two single individuals and the inaction of several others effected change on the specific organization. In the case of the harasser, his influence and the inaction of other members allowed him to enact sexual harassment – undisturbed – in the organization for several years. This of course, changed the hospital's (not to mention his victims') morale and what behaviors were perceived as tolerable. However, with the intervention of the new CEO, she manages to change the status quo of the organization and reiterate that such behavior is unacceptable. Notice that to impose this change, she was not guided by the indifferent "processing" of hospital regulations (Taylor 1993). The process involved the unfolding of

embodied emotions, reflection, and judgement. Her actions were the result of attending from what she considered to be socially accepted to how that type of behavior made her feel and think and consequently weave her narrative (Shotter and Tsoukas 2014a, p. 228).

In summary, by applying Hari's conceptual framework, it is noticeable that organizational change is not related to a particular aspect of an organization – but to the organization as a whole. The social realm is seen as an ever-evolving flux of human interaction that mutates on the basis of the nonlinear evolution of its institutions. Organizations are created to order the flux toward achieving a certain goal. Although, organizations are created to impose order, they are not stable entities. On the contrary, they are bundles of processes of organizing that are gradually differentiating their language (e.g., customer satisfaction, sales figures) and routines (e.g., safety, disciplinary procedures). Two reasons are identified as the main drivers of change. The first is the open-endedness of the world, which gives rise to unpredictable variation. Due to this, organizations are constantly called upon to deal with aspects of situations they have not dealt with before. As such, to deal with the uniqueness of each situation, they must "generate singularities" – tweak their practices and create new terminology to categorize arising peculiarities (Tsoukas 2016b, p. 246). The second is related to the organization's members. Specifically, as self-reflexive beings that experience the world emotionally via their bodies, they are seen to have their own perspective on how the organization "ought" to be. Therefore, by experiencing new situations, these may cause them to reflect on their beliefs. By doing so they may find that they would like the organization to be otherwise narratively rearrange events and thus take action that aims to change the organization (e.g., creation of new routines, organization of strikes, leadership initiatives). However, for any of the two discussed reasons to effect change, potential variations in routines or discourse must be taken up by a significant number of members of an organization.

## New Insights: Beyond Determinacy and Rationalism

The new insights that can be derived from Hari's work on organizational change stem from the fact that it affords us to see this phenomenon in a completely new light. His work introduces a postmodern conception of the world (see Toulmin 1992, 2001), which emphasizes that "change is a fundamental ontological category of lived experience and that organization is an attempt to order and stabilize the intrinsic flux of human action" (Tsoukas 2005a, p. 101). Although, this view may be more accepted in the present, it was not common in the management literature when Hari started working with it in the 1990s. The vast majority of the management literature approached social phenomena (including organizational change) from the Cartesian-cum-Newtonian ontological perspective of static entities causally impacting each other (Shotter and Tsoukas 2011, p. 334). This perspective has been dominant for a very long time – its lineage can be traced as far back as Plato

and Aristotle (see Tsoukas 1998b). In addition to the aforementioned perspective's assumption of "stasis" (being static), the literature on organizational change and strategy approached both from a rationalist perspective where they were portrayed as the result of premeditated planning (see Tsoukas and Chia 2011, pp. 8–9). The two most popular approaches that have relied heavily on rationalism and the ontology of determinacy to conceptualize organizational change are the behaviorist and cognitivist (Shotter and Tsoukas 2011, p. 334; Tsoukas 2005a). To understand how Hari's work spurred new developments in theory and research on organizational change, this section is structured as follows: I shall first briefly summarize how organizational change had been researched by the behaviorist and cognitive approaches prior to the popularization of Hari's work, and then I will aim to show how later research has incorporated Hari's insights.

One of the earliest and most prominent advocates of the behaviorist approach of organizational change is Kurt Lewin. This approach's underlying assumptions suggest that change is "episodic" and "other-directional" and that what is changed are objects with specific structures which can be calculatingly altered (Tsoukas 2005a, pp. 96–97). In particular, change is suggested to be essentially a sequence of movement between distinct states, e.g., moving from A to B and then to C (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, 2011, p. 9). Entities, such as organizations, are portrayed to be static by nature. Therefore, in this approach what is examined are the states but not the change that occurs between them (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). To effect change, a change agent (usually the management) must force a change on the organization by altering its members' behavior. The change agent can do so by issuing edicts that highlight a desired end which can be attained by the members behaving in a certain manner. To enforce edicts, change agents must rely on their hierarchical authority to reward or punish members. With the above rationale, it is obvious that the agents of change are seen as external forces that force organizations to change after considerable calculation on how to do so (Tsoukas 2005a).

Similarly, the cognitivist approach holds approximately the same assumptions about change as the behaviorist approach. However, the key difference between the two approaches lies with the fact that cognitivists focus on *why* people behave in certain ways (Tsoukas 2005a, p. 97). Behavior for them is a secondary phenomenon that depends on the meaning people have about something (see Healey et al. 2015). Meaning is equated with information processing. The latter is portrayed to mediate what a person perceives and how she/he responds to situations (for an extensive review, see Hodgkinson and Healey 2008). Information processing is seen to depend on a person's schemata of the external world (also referred to as representations). The latter are argued to be a form of stored knowledge which structures a person's perception of the world and the meaning it has for them. So, to enact organizational change, one must change the driver of behavior – the schemata. Merely applying a "stimulus-response" technique via the reinforcement or discouragement of behavior by rewarding or punishing people is highlighted to be inadequate (see Eden 1992, p. 261). Per the cognitivists, one must first understand individuals' schemata and

then attempt to change them to successfully implement organizational change. Schemata are seen as measurable by using a technique referred to as cognitive mapping (see Pyrko et al. 2016). By doing so one can see the staff's beliefs and goals. Consequently, organizational change is again seen only as a matter of planning, applied in a series of steps by an external change agent (Eden and Ackermann 1998). Firstly measure the staff's schemata, secondly facilitate them to reflect and agree on "an aggregated map, and thirdly agree on a course of action for intervention" (Tsoukas 2005a, p. 97).

It is now easy to see the contrast of assumptions employed by the determinist-cum-rationalist perspective and Hari's as they are diametrically opposite. Whereas the first perspective holds that change is effected episodically on objects with determined structures (e.g., staff, behavior) by meticulous planning from external agents, the latter maintains that change is continuous and occurs intentionally and non-intentionally from within ever-mutating processes of organizing which rely on discursive distinctions that legitimize certain practices (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). These assumptions and the use of a process-cum-phenomenological language have opened up new avenues of researching organizational change by legitimizing the study of organizational discourses and practices as catalysts of change. For example, the *Journal of Organizational Change* had a special issue on how discourse is related to change in organizations, where Hari was called to write the afterword on how language matters in organizational change (Tsoukas 2005a). In this special issue, studies showed how discourse relates to organizational change and how a change of organizational routines relates to changes in discourse (e.g., see Anderson 2005; Tietze 2005). Similarly a further series of studies focusing on organizational change have further highlighted the role of marginal unplanned mutations in discourse, resources, and practices having cited Hari's work, ideas, and terminology (e.g., see Chiles et al. 2004; Feldman 2004; Reay et al. 2006; Weick et al. 2005).

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Different Language, Different World

Wittgenstein aptly remarked that "a picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (Wittgenstein 1986, para. 115). In the case of organizational change and organization studies, the picture of determinate entities with static natures has long held us captive (Tsoukas 2005a; Tsoukas and Chia 2002). This worldview paints a world of static objects and subjects that are locked together in quasi-causal relationships (Shotter and Tsoukas 2011). By uncritically adopting it, this perspective masks that the world is constantly subject to change and the process cannot be reduced to points on spatiotemporal lines. It masks what happens between the points and that change is not only effected from external forces (Tsoukas and Chia 2002, 2011). It masks that meaning is conceivable only from attending from the background of the vast nexuses of social meaning (Tsoukas 2005b, Chap. 16). It masks

that change occurs from within the organization and that even Machiavellian change agents themselves are subject to change (Tsoukas 2005a).

The above is easily grasped if one realizes that no one, not even scheming change agents, possess what Thomas Nagel (1986) refers to as "the view from nowhere" – an objective, a-contextual, and a-temporal vantage point from which to peruse organizations and the world (Tsoukas 1997). Change agents and organizations themselves are immersed in social practices and imageries that orient them toward pursuing certain goals (Castoriadis 2005; Tsoukas 1998b). This is easily demonstrated by asking ourselves the question: toward what end is change consciously sought after by management of organizations that partake in modern capitalism? The answer is simple. It seeks to make the organization more efficient for it to attain the goal of infinite growth by infinitely reducing costs via the application of certain technological means (not necessarily material). If one accepts that societies institute certain goals which they take for granted and uncritically paint in positive colors (e.g., infinite growth and efficiency in modernity, God in the middle ages), then the notion of impartiality of change agents and organizations is a modern myth (Castoriadis 2005; Tsoukas 1997). A myth that was conceptualized in the Renaissance with Nicolai Copernicus's discoveries, the inception of Newtonian physics, and then popularized in the humanities by Descartes, Spinoza, and co; a myth which the Western world has enthusiastically strived to fulfil ever since. This myth's sphere of influence reached its climax in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g., the Vienna Circle, behaviorism, cognitivism) (MacIntyre 2007; Taylor 1985a; Toulmin 1992, 2001; Tsoukas 2011). But especially in the second half of that century, this view's accepted legitimacy had started to wane with the popularization of quantum physics, chaos theory, phenomenology, and re-engaging with pre-Socratic philosophers (Toulmin 2001; Tsoukas 1998b).

Following the above, the legacy of Haridimos Tsoukas lies with the fact that he has assisted in the making of a new worldview from which to examine organizational change. He has done so by helping scholars researching organizational change (and organization studies in general) to become familiarized with a new language early as the end of the 1980s (e.g., see Chiles et al. 2004; Feldman 2004; Garud et al. 2015; Reay et al. 2006; Weick et al. 2005). The language of complexity, phenomenology, and process philosophy are evident throughout most of his work (Tsoukas 1998b, 2016a; Tsoukas and Dooley 2011). In a recent keynote speech, he identified and urged researchers to import more vocabulary from the aforementioned fields in order to further investigate organizational change (Tsoukas 2015c). Specifically, these fields utilize an alternative language to describe emerging change, but process philosophy, in particular, has a unique way of signifying how temporality is linked to change (Garud et al. 2015, pp. 8–10). In his keynote address, Hari argued that especially the work of Herni Bergson can help us comprehend organizational change differently. As he noted:

> ...for Bergson and his interpreters...in the interest of action, attention is necessarily focused on the present, thus reducing the intensity of the whole past to a spatialized (extensive)

> conception of time. Insofar as we are typically interested in what we can do in the present, we assume that such a reduction is lasting, forgetting that the solidity of the actual is only apparent. However, the whole past does not go away. On the contrary, it may be selectively evoked in reconstructing present identity.

How does this help us better understand organizational change? As argued by Hari, it allows us to identify that organizational change is not only the result of deliberate managerial initiatives but also of a reality that is "continuous, indivisible, and qualitatively diverse," which unintentionally forges and reforges personal and organizational identities.

Hari identifies two promising avenues for future research on organizational change: firstly, he argues that we need to know more about how the past (societal, organizational, personal) influences how change is brought about by predisposing change agents and organizations to seek the attainment of certain goals. Secondly, and more importantly for Hari, new research should seek to adopt a language such as that used by Henri Bergson, William James, and Alfred North Whitehead (Tsoukas 2015c). This is because he argues that doing so would allow us to look beyond the ontology of static objects as implied in the language used to develop the until recently dominant stage-based models used that seek to account for organizational change. He is especially insistent on using a different vocabulary to think about phenomena because he takes seriously what Wittgenstein said over half a century ago: "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein 2010, p. 74). Following numerous conversations with him, it is obvious to me that he is a fervent believer in the notion that the role of researchers in the social sciences is to push the boundaries of language to draw new distinctions that will allow us to perceive further nuances in our world or even to transform our view.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Hari has issued a call to arms – he is calling us to examine change and organizing from an entirely different perspective. By following the footsteps of his beloved philosophers – Cornelius Castoriadis, Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Richard Rorty, and Stephen Toulmin to name just a few – he has left us with a choice: we can follow suit and strive to cast off the shackles of the myths of modernity and take aim at creating new ways of perceiving the world (Tsoukas 1997, 1998b). Alternatively, we can continue to uncritically accept the mythology already in place in fear of anything different. Indeed, the new, the different – like the old can also prove to be a tyranny. Therefore, it should be stressed that Hari does not advocate blindly embracing different perspectives for the sake of them being different or new. Based on his political articles published in Greek media, he is acutely aware that dogmatism can only lead to sustaining old or creating new tyrannies of myths (see Tsoukas 2015b). By being lucky enough to have been Hari's student, I am certain that if he had to leave you with some remarks on how to further research

organizational change or any other phenomenon, it would be to stay curious, be open-minded, and never stop being (self) critical.

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# Michael L. Tushman: A Practice-Informed Explorer and Organizational Scholar with a Focus on Viable Organizations

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## Sonja Sackmann

### Abstract

This paper explores the contributions of organization theorist Michael L. Tushman to the field of organization change and development. The first section gives an overview of his early professional development and important professional stages followed by his key contributions to the field. These include his early focus on innovation and boundary spanning roles in innovation systems as well as an information processing approach for understanding and designing organizations also using network analysis. His quest for phenomena-driven and practically relevant work with a focus on the entire system and processes leads to the development of the congruence model – a general model to research, understand, assess, and further develop organizations. His work with doctoral students resulted in the punctuated equilibrium model that he applied to both organizations and technological changes as external forces of change. Another important contribution is his effort in solving Abernathy's productivity dilemma by developing the concept of ambidextrous organizations. These can deal with the apparent paradox of simultaneous exploitation and exploration. Ambidextrous organizations require, however, ambidextrous leadership – a concept that he explored in detail with his long-term colleague and friend Charles O'Reilley. The final section gives an overview of the many awards that he received up to this point as well as the way in which he worked. Most of his theories and frameworks were codeveloped with colleagues and doctoral students in a dialogical fashion. The paper closes with Michael Tushman's future concerns whether the developed theories, models, and recommendations regarding innovation will still hold in an increasingly web-based society.

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## Contents

## Introduction

Michael L. Tushman is an organization theorist who contributed and is still contributing to the theories of technological innovation and change as well as the design, management, and leadership of ambidextrous organizations. His most well-known and most influential work comprises the theory of punctuated change in technological innovation, leading change, organizational renewal, as well as the ambidextrous organization and the ambidextrous leader. His early work experience at General Radio and his work as a doctoral student with MIT Professor, Tom Allen, influenced him in that he wanted to have an impact as a research scholar and teacher in the real world. In all his endeavors, he was and still is motivated to solve Abernathy's (1978) "productivity dilemma (and associated paradoxical strategic challenges), innovation streams, ambidexterity, and senior teams" (Benner and Tushman 2015, pp. 497).

Rather than taking a functional approach, Michael Tushman always took an issue or problem focus in trying to develop theories that inform practice, teach those theories to students and executives, and learn from them to further enhance the development of viable theories, or discover in his observations of organizational issues, patterns that generate ideas for new theories. (Seong et al. 2015). Furthermore, most of his work was and still is collaborative work. As such, he was

stimulated in his work by colleagues and especially doctoral students whom he inspired and most of whom became well-known scholars in their own right. Hence, Michael Tushman can also be considered a role model regarding the way in which he collaboratively generated and further developed his ideas, theories, and practice, in and for organizations who have to operate and survive in a complex world full of contradictions and paradoxes.

During his still very active professional lifetime, Michael Tushman received several awards and was recognized as an outstanding scholar (see last section). The following sections cover his influences and motivation for his work; his key contributions, especially regarding organizational change; new insights; his legacy; and the current focus in his research and executive teaching.

## Early Influences and Motivations: A Quest for Relevant Work

Michael Tushman was born in 1947 in Worcester, Massachusetts, as the eldest of three children. His parents valued education but did not push him into any particular career. Even though his father was an engineer, his uncle who was a famous professor of materials sciences at MIT had a much bigger influence on Michael Tuchman's choices regarding his academic career.

At age 18, Michael Tushman started his studies in electrical engineering at Northeastern University in Boston. Being a co-op university at the time, he was able to earn money to pay for his education as well as get hands-on experience in this major field of study. His work experience at General Radio led directly to his interest in innovation and organizations. After receiving his BS in 1970 from Northeastern University, Michael Tushman decided to continue his graduate work in organizational behavior (OB) at Cornell University, which had a fine OB group and gave him a scholarship. Given his interest in organizations and innovation, he decided to pursue a PhD at the MIT Sloan School of Business in Organization Studies after having finished his MS in 1992 at Cornell. The Sloan School of Business had a great group of scholars in his area of interest at the time.

During his doctoral studies at MIT, Tom Allen and his work on social networks, organizations, and innovation had a great influence on Michael Tushman's early research direction and research, teaching, and practice as well as his values throughout his career. While Tom Allen was his chair, additional influences came from the members of his thesis committee Ralph Katz who worked on social systems, Paul Lawrence's and Edgar Schein's work in the area of organizational behavior, as well as Kurt Lewin's spirit and practical problem focus. Michael Tushman's thesis was entitled "Communications in Research and Development Organizations: An Information Processing Perspective."

His co-op work experience at General Radio (later renamed into GenRad), a broadline manufacturer of electronic test equipment, had lasting influences on him also during his doctoral work. In the early 1990s, the company experienced a financial crisis due to problems that had started with their entering the chip side of the testing market in the 1970s, due to a lack of focus on the mainstay board-testing business

([www.fundinguniverse.com/companies-history/genrad-inc-history/](www.fundinguniverse.com/companies-history/genrad-inc-history/)) as well as increasing competition. These developments posed for Michael Tushman the puzzling questions *why* such a firm that employed many intelligent and excellent engineers could run into such financial problems that forced them to lay off a number of people.

During a job interview at Berkley University, Michael Tushman met Charles O'Reilly, who shared with him an interest in innovation and organizations, as well as an interest in connecting research to practice. This first meeting was the beginning of a still continuing friendship and very productive work relationship in the areas of research and executive education that lasts until today.

In 1976, Michael Tushman started his academic career as Assistant Professor of Business at the Columbia Business School in New York City. He became Associate Professor and Professor of Management in 1983. In 1982–1983, he went back to the MIT Sloan School of Management as Visiting Professor during his sabbatical. In 1989, he became the Phillip Hettleman Professor of Management. During this time, he developed productive work relationships with both colleagues and a number of doctoral students. Together with his colleague David Nadler, who became an assistant professor at Columbia Business School at the same time, Michael Tushman further explored the concepts of information processing (Tushman and Nadler 1978), organizational design and organizational architecture (Nadler and Tushman 1980), as well as frame bending (Nadler and Tushman 1989). Due to the interests of his doctoral students, Philip Anderson and Elaine Romanelli, he explored the topics of technological discontinuities (Tushman and Anderson 1986), organizational transformation as punctuated change (Romanelli and Tushman 1994), as well as the role of executive succession in turbulent times (Tushman et al. 1992).

In 1995–1998, Michael Tushman spent time as Visiting Professor at INSEAD, France. In 1998, he moved to Harvard Business School and in 1999 was appointed the Paul R. Lawrence MBA Class of 1942 Professor of Business Administration. He spent additional sabbaticals as Visiting Professor at MIT in 1996 and at Bocconi University, Milan/Italy, during 2010–2011. According to him, these sabbaticals deeply enriched his work and life as he mentioned in a personal conversation.

The collaboration with his colleagues David Nadler (Nadler and Tushman 1999) and especially with Charles O'Reilly and his doctoral students continued at Harvard. His work with his doctoral student, Mary Benner (Benner and Tushman 2003), continued to address and solve Abernathy's productivity dilemma (Abernathy 1978) by combining James March's concepts of exploration and exploitation (March 1991). This stream of research, in combination with the work at IBM during 2000 and 2008, inspired his work with James O'Reilley on tackling issues of organizational complexity by developing the concept and theory of ambidexterity (O'Reilly and Tushman 2004, 2008, 2016).

Michael Tushman's interest in teaching and working with many executives led to a number of teaching cases. These include Agrochemicals at Ciba-Geigy AG, the Swiss Watch industry, Greeley Hard Copy, SMA: Micro-Electronic Products Division, Corning Glass, Bedrock Productions, IBM, Compagnie Lyonnais, Artic Timber AB, BT Pl., Zurich Airport, Hema Hattangady and Conzerv, GE Money Bank, Lululemon, Zensar, HTC, as well as NASA.

## Key Contributions: Taking a System's and Co-creation Approach to Developing Organization Theories, Models, and Frameworks

Michael Tushman contributed to the field of organization theory and change in his roles as practice-informed researcher and as teacher/educator/coach. The concepts and theories that he contributed to the field of organization theory and change are manifold. They include the importance of boundary spanning roles in organizations, the congruence model as a way of understanding and diagnosing organizations, the punctuated equilibrium model, technological innovation and change and the role executives play in change, as well as the concept of ambidextrous organizations that can deal with the contradictions inherent when combining exploration and exploitation in organizational designs. In addition, he promoted a phenomena-driven and process-oriented approach to the study and conceptualization of organizations.

In his role as teacher and educator, Michael Tushman developed and coached a number of doctoral students who became fine scholars in their own right such as Philip Anderson, Mary Benner, Adam Kleinbaum, Elaine Romanelli, Lori Rosenkopf, or Wendy Smith. He helped executives further improve their practice, and he codeveloped a large number of teaching cases some of which were mentioned above. In addition, the way in which he conducted his research and co-created organizational frameworks and models in a dialogical fashion can be considered a role model for developing the field of organization theory and change further (see the last section).

The following sections discuss these major contributions in more detail by taking a historical/biographical approach in their sequence as compared to starting with the one that received most citations.

## Innovation and Boundary Spanning Roles in Innovation Systems

The topic of innovation as a means for organizational renewal and viability is a theme that runs through much of Michael Tushman's work. With his background in engineering, his early work as a researcher focused on the exploration of communication processes in research and development organizations with a focus on the innovation processes (Tushman 1977). This stream of research was based on the notion of organizations as open systems that need to be in exchange with their relevant environment and the critical issue of managing their boundaries. His research on innovation systems elucidated the importance of gathering and transmitting information to several external areas by special boundary roles that are contingent on the nature of the organization's work. His research results suggested a curvilinear relationship between the number of boundary spanning roles and project performance, in that too many boundary spanning roles may be redundant and actually impede coordination and control. Altogether, this stream of work supported the importance of taking a process-oriented perspective and creating linking pins across organizational boundaries both between the organization and its relevant environment as well as within organizations across functions and hierarchies.

Michael Tushman further specified the characteristics of boundary spanning individuals (Tushman and Scanlan 1981) as well as gatekeepers (Tushman and Katz 1980) and gatekeeping (Tushman and Katz 1982). He explored longitudinal effects of boundary spanning supervision on turnover and promotion in R&D (Tushman and Katz 1983) and contributed to the knowledge about communication networks in R&D (Tushman 1979). He also suggested ways to organize for innovation (Tushman and Nadler 1986) and manage strategic innovation and change (Tushman 2004).

## Taking a (Information) Process Approach for Understanding and Designing Organizations

Designing organizations for long-term survival is a central problem in organizational change. At the time, most models of organizations and their research were static. In Michael Tushman's early work together with David Nadler, they suggested that organizations can be viewed as contingent information processing entities within the framework of open system theory. In their effort of dealing with work-related uncertainty, they considered critical tasks of organizations collecting, gathering, and processing information of all kinds on issues such as the functioning of different components, output quality, external technology, and market domains (Tushman and Nadler 1978). They proposed a contingency or fit model between information processing requirements facing an organization and its structural capacity in processing information, based on different kinds of coordination and control mechanisms as well as organic or mechanistic subunit designs. This work can be considered a pre-stage toward developing their congruence model of organizations.

A methodological contribution at that time was the use of social network analysis for the investigation of organizational issues (Tichy et al. 1979). The authors considered this method capable of capturing both prescribed and emerging processes as well as being a theoretical framework that both guide data collection and data analysis. Since then, network analysis has received wide attention in organizational analysis, especially with the growing importance of information (compared to material) flows, organizationaln processes and social networks.

## Congruence Model

A central issue in organizational change is organizational analysis – the process of gaining an understanding of an organization's current mode of operation and its related problems, as a basis for deciding what kind of change is needed and most likely to be effective. In collaboration with David Nadler, Michael Tushman developed the congruence model as a general, dynamic model of organizations as shown in Fig. 1.

Their goal in developing this model was to reduce information complexity for managers. They wanted to help managers, "despite the mind boggling complexity

*Componets of the Congruence Model*



**Fig. 1** Key components of the congruence model contingency model (Nadler and Tushman 1980, p. 47)

of organizations" (Nadler and Tushman 1980, p. 35) to "understand the behavior patterns of individuals, groups and organizations, to predict what kind of behavioral response will be elicited by various managerial actions, and finally, to use this understanding and these predictions to achieve control" (Nadler and Tushman 1980, p. 35). The congruence model indicates which kind of components is most important in unraveling "the mysteries, paradoxes and apparent contradictions that present themselves in the everyday life of organizations" (p. 36) and thus is a tool that guides managers and their own process in organizational problem analysis.

As mentioned above, this congruence model can be seen as an extension of their prior work on organizations as information processing systems. It is also based on the notion of organizations as open systems characterized with inputs that are transformed into outputs, including respective feedback loops. In addition to the key organizational input factors, Nadler and Tushman suggest critical features for the analysis of each key factor, such as what kind of demands does the environment make on the organization and on organizational action. In this model, they conceptualize strategy as "the stream of decisions about how organizational resources will be configured to meet the demands, constrains, and opportunities within the context of the organization's history" (p. 40).

Nadler and Tushman (1980) also define the four key organizational components with critical features for analysis. They conceptualized the informal organization as emerging arrangements with the following critical features: leader behavior, intra- and intergroup relations, information work arrangements, as well as communication and influence patterns. Regarding outputs, they differentiated the three levels of individual, group, and organization that contribute in combination to organizational performance. At the organizational level, they considered goal attainment, resource utilization, and adaptability the most critical.

As mentioned by Michael Tushman himself, he has been and still is using this model as a road map in his approach to organizations and in his work with executives in addressing their problems. The model is widely known as a useful framework in and for organizational diagnosis.

## Organizational Evolution: The Punctuated Equilibrium Model

The work with his doctoral student, Elaine Romanelli, addressed the question of organizational evolution. With their general model of punctuated equilibrium at the organizational level, the researchers tried to integrate three existing frameworks of organizational evolution (population ecology, incremental, and transformational change) including predictive and nondeterministic models. Their model of punctuated equilibrium posits that organizations evolve through relatively long periods of rather stable, evolutionary phases called the equilibrium period. These are punctuated by short bursts of fundamental, discontinuous change characteristic for revolutionary periods. Revolutionary periods disrupt established activity patterns and create the basis for new equilibrium periods (Tushman and Romanelli 1985).

In testing the model, their research results refuted the idea that small organizational change could accumulate to produce nonrevolutionary transformations. Their data also revealed the mediating role of leaders, and especially executives, between these contrasting forces of change. More specifically, they found that major changes in the environment, as well as the succession of a CEO, significantly and positively influenced revolutionary transformations across three industries (Romanelli and Tushman 1994). Nevertheless, they considered these revolutionary transformations dangerous since they increase the risk for short-term failure.

## Technological Change

Michael Tushman's work with his doctoral student, Philip Anderson, addressed the issue of environmental change building on the punctuated equilibrium model. More specifically, they investigated patterns of technological change as a major environmental force and their impact on environmental conditions that have an implication for organizations and their survival. They argued that technological progress is characterized by evolutionary, incremental changes punctuated by discontinuous, disruptive, radical change. These can be competence enhancing or competence destroying. The latter ones are associated with major changes in the distribution of power and control – both within firms and industries (Tushman and Anderson 1986). Their research revealed that the locus of technological innovations for competence-enhancing breakthroughs significantly differed from that of competence-destroying discontinuities.

Across three industries, Philip Anderson's data showed that competence-enhancing breakthroughs were significantly more likely to be initiated by existing firms, while new firms significantly more likely initiated competence-destroying

breakthroughs. They also found that early adopters of technological breakthroughs grew more rapidly than the other firms and that successive competence-enhancing advances resulted in increased product-class maturity. Based on their findings, they suggested that technological discontinuities, regardless of being competence enhancing or competence destroying, may offer rare opportunities for competitive advantage for those firms that are willing to risk early adoption and hence are willing to take the risk of change under highly uncertain conditions. This stream of research led to recommendations for managing through cycles of technological changes (Anderson and Tushman 1991) and recommendations for organizational designs that influence technological process (McGrath et al. 1992).

## Ambidextrous Organizations

In this stream of work, Michael Tushman addressed what Abernathy (1978) called the productivity dilemma. Based on his research and observations in the automobile industry, Abernathy (1978) suggested that the very focus on productivity gains by increasing efficiency caused its decline since this short-term focus inhibits flexibility and the ability needed for long-term survival. In addition, Abernathy considered both activities incompatible and questioned that they could be performed both simultaneously by an organization given their mutually exclusiveness. In his work with Mary Benner, Michael Tushman questioned the widely used process management focus of the 1990s for purposes of innovation. They expanded this focus and its related literature by arguing that organizations need both activities for their survival and that both can be performed simultaneously despite their contradictory nature. The organizational design answer was ambidexterity defined as the ability to sustain both efficiency and exploitation with exploration and especially technological innovation. Benner and Tushman (2003) explored how both technological and organizational contexts moderate the relations between process-focused activities and organizational adaptation. They argued that an ambidextrous organizational form or dual organizations having tight coupling with subunits and loose coupling across subunits could solve Abernathy's productivity dilemma.

Achieving such an ambidextrous organization requires, however, ambidextrous leaders (O'Reilly and Tushman 2011; Tushman 2014; Tushman et al. 2011) and ambidextrous leadership (Probst et al. 2011), an idea that grew during Michael Tushman's work with Charles O'Reilley at IBM. They argue that ambidextrous leaders cannot only deal with the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in organizational designs. Ambidextrous leaders can also recognize the importance of explicitly designing organizations that exploit and explore simultaneously. Hence, ambidextrous leadership is a framework in which all leaders across organizational levels can deal with the tensions and paradoxes associated with different kinds of strategies and innovation activities.

This stream of work had tremendous impact on research in strategy, organization theory, designing, and hence changing organizations as well as leadership development and recommendations for leaders and their decision-making.

## New Insights: Gained and Further Developed in Dialogues with Colleagues, Doctoral Students and Executives

Michael Tushman has always focused on crucial issues or problems and raised fundamental questions to address in his research, rather than acting as a scholar trained in one field of expertise. His quest for relevance (Tushman and O'Reilly 2007) is probably one of the reasons why his work is so widely cited. His ideas start(ed) from careful observations of real-world phenomena, as was the case when he worked with General Radio. The question why a company with so many intelligent engineers was failing and had to lay off people was a real concern and puzzling question to him. Having been influenced by open systems theory and the relevance of organizational environments, their different degrees of turbulence and the critical issue of boundaries, including the impact on people by his mentors Ralph Katz, Paul Lawrence, and Edgar Schein, Michael Tushman developed a holistic approach to the study of organizations and their environment including organizational members. His need for a larger picture surfaced in the congruence model for organizational analysis. It contains all those components that he addressed in his later research – be it the environment and its technological change, innovation processes, evolution and the changing nature of organizations, the design and change of organizations facilitating positive performance, as well as the role of leaders in such a change process.

The exchange of ideas with colleagues and doctoral students was critical for Michael Tushman in developing these ideas further. In this process, he was always a curious explorer and reflective discussant, as reported by one of his doctoral students. Since he recommends working with smart doctoral students to colleagues for advancing organizational science (Seong 2014), I would like to cite a longer statement from Philip Anderson, one of his early doctoral students, about his mentor, teacher, and coach Michael Tushman. At the time, during his doctoral studies, Philip tried to make sense of what was driving cyclical patterns of destruction, followed by dominant designs.

> Mike and I had a series of discussions about this. One day in his office, I told him that having thought hard about the problem, it seemed to me that creative-destruction theories were mixing apples and bananas because two different types of technological change could kick off such waves. Some built on what the companies already knew how to do and amplified their strengths, even if they had to walk away from some sunk costs. Others fundamentally undermined what they knew how to do. This was why sometimes creative destruction destroyed incumbents but other times it did not. Mike immediately realized the importance of this idea—it was an *organizational* explanation for creative destruction [as compared to Schumpeter's economic one]. It transcended the "organizations are always inertial" mood of the times and linked punctuated-equilibrium approaches to technological and organizational change.
>
>   I was a second-year doctoral student at the time; I was capable of coming up with an intriguing idea, but not developing it into a landmark paper. Mike took the lead in developing the concept into a theory, which became the basis for my doctoral thesis. He suggested we think of two papers on this subject, one that he would take the lead on and first-author, while I would take the lead on the other and first-author it. My real apprenticeship in learning how to write influential papers came from working with Mike over and over to refine what

became our most-cited paper, published in Administrative Science Quarterly in 1986, with the second paper appearing four years later.

This was the characteristic way in which Mike worked with doctoral students. Once they had spent some time becoming steeped in organization theory, he shared with them the many things he found interesting and discussed where he thought the field would go. Each doctoral student took up the torch in the area that he or she found most interesting. I am not an engineer, and I knew very little about technology before I went to Columbia, but the link between technological and organizational change is what interested me the most, so that's what I studied. The late and greatly missed, Beverly Virany, shared Mike's interest in executive teams. Lori Rosenkopf, a "real engineer" who knew much more about technology than I did, was interested in how communities shaped technological standards, so Mike expanded into that area with her. Mary Benner became interested in why an emphasis on process excellence (at that time, ISO 9000 qualification and the Baldrige Award for quality were all the rage) paradoxically constrains innovation. Wendy Smith became interested in how executives manage paradoxes. Adam Kleinbaum shared interests in organization design, combining that with insights into social networks. This is not an exhaustive list of his students, just illustrative.

This long quote is taken from an e-mail sent by Philip Anderson, in response to my question of how he experienced his work as a doctoral student with Michael Tushman. Not having worked with Michael Tushman myself, I could not do a better job in characterizing his way of developing new ideas and insights taking the field further in a process of co-creation with his doctoral students.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Continuing the Path of Co-exploration, Exploitation, and Impact

Michael Tushman's legacy is well illustrated and documented in the list of many honors and awards that he received:

| 1996 | He was elected Fellow of the Academy of Management |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 2005 | He was named Lecturer of the Year at CHAMPS, Chalmers University of Technology |
| 2008 | He received an honorary doctorate from the University of Geneva explicitly for his work on the relationships between technological change and organizational evolution |
| 2011 | He received the Sumantra Ghoshal Award for Rigour and Relevance in the Study of Management from London Business School |
| 2013 | He received the Academy of Management Career Achievement Award for Distinguished Scholarly Contributions to Management |
|      | He received the Academy of Management Review Decade Award for his paper with Mary J. Benner, "Exploitation, Exploration and Process Management: The Productivity Dilemma Revisited" (Academy of Management Review, 2003) |
|      | The 2013 Apgar Award for Innovation in Teaching |
| 2014 | He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) |
|      | He was recognized as Foundational Scholar in the Knowledge and Innovation Group of the Strategic Management Society |
| 2016 | He received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Academy of Management's Organization Development and Change Division |

Each one of the contributions discussed in the prior section was an innovation to the field of organization theory and change and set new standards. The work on information processes pointed out the importance of taking a process perspective for studying and conceptualizing organizations. The work on boundary spanners and gatekeepers illuminated the importance of managing organizational boundaries and connecting organizational subunits for innovation and effective performance. His curvilinear findings on the amount of information useful for performance were supported decades later in neurologically informed studies on information processing and decision-making at the individual level. The congruence model expanded open systems theory and combined it with contingency theory into a framework guiding managers and change practitioners in their effort to understand an organization's mode of functioning as a basis for the choice of most effective interventions.

His work on organizational evolution and the punctuated equilibrium model both expanded and specified existing phase models of planned organizational change (e.g., Lewin 1947; Lippitt et al. 1958) at the organizational level combining evolutionary and revolutionary phases of change (e.g., Greiner 1972) but refuting the idea that small changes could accumulate to transformational change. The research on technological innovation expanded his work to include environmental change and specified conditions under which organizations could actually use these rare conditions for competitive advantage.

The conceptualization of ambidextrous organizations solved Abernathy's productivity dilemma, by combining exploration with exploitation within the boundaries of an organization and thus reconciling apparent paradoxes and contradictions. This stream of research had implications not only for organizational design and change but also for strategy and management education, since ambidextrous organizations require ambidextrous leaders and ambidextrous leadership. It has stimulated work elaborating the concept, documenting its effects on organizational outcomes, and identified antecedents and boundary conditions (O'Reilley and Tushman 2013, 2016).

In addition to the broad range of contributions regarding research topics, the span of Michael Tushman's work and his diligence in approaching an interesting question is also remarkable. His research tended to start from an initial observation, discussing it with a close colleague or doctoral students to developing a model, testing it, expanding it to other areas, developing recommendations for managers, and teaching it to executives and future managers. Given this systematic approach and rigor, his work inspired many scholars to pick up questions he posed for further research, thus building on, elaborating, and differentiating his work. The following quote by Philip Anderson illustrates this process:

> ... I want to give you some insight into the way Mike works. He starts off orienting people toward interesting puzzles in organization theory. Unlike many people who

specialized only in organization design or innovation or organizational change or executive team dynamics, his work has spanned the range of these things, and his broad interests inform one another, even though the people he works with (e.g. me) never are as broad as he is. Mike is an original thinker whose generosity of spirit allows him to bring out the best in other thinkers. He is remarkable in his ability both to create and co-create; when you work with him, he doesn't need to be pre-eminent yet he is much more than a catalyst, he is a master at recombining your ideas and his into something truly novel and significant.

Since Michael Tushman is still active, the question remains about unfinished or rather still to do business. Still being interested in the process of innovation, he has turned his interest toward the process of open innovation and its impact on organizational capabilities, its design, and leadership. The developments in the area of information technology have questioned organizational boundaries regarding the innovation process. This requires expanding the unit of analysis to the wider ecosystem. With communication costs decreasing, O'Reilley and Tushman (2013) posit that the locus of innovation will increasingly shift to the community. Hence, the larger community will become more relevant in the process of exploration and distributed innovation. What kind of leadership capabilities will be needed to lead across boundaries for long-term survival? What kind of implication will this shift have for an organization's culture and its identity?

In his recent reflection with Mary Benner on their Academy of Management Review Decade Award winning paper "Exploitation, Exploration and Process Management: The Productivity Dilemma Revisited" (Benner and Tushman 2015) and in his Distinguished Speaker address at the Academy of Management in 2016, he questions whether the developed models, theories, and recommendations still hold today and in the future. The radical environmental shifts and the new environmental conditions including our web-based societies will confront organizations with many more paradoxical pressures and dilemmas than just the productivity dilemma. With the community as becoming increasingly the focal unit for open innovation, ". . . our theories of innovation, organizational design, leadership, and organizational change must capture the tensions between these contrasting innovation modes" (Benner and Tushman 2015, pp. 508–509). In doing so, they suggest to move back from mature theory and research and "go back to basics – to go back to deeply study and carefully describing the phenomena of organizations and innovation. . . . Such a phenomena-driven, problem-oriented research may be required again to help the field generate new constructs, mechanisms, and patterns associated with exploration and exploitation" (Benner and Tushman 2015). Such a phenomena-driven, problem-oriented approach to research can be considered one of the trademarks of Michael Tushman's work. About unfinished business, I want to conclude with his words: "While progress has been made, there remains much to do" (O'Reilley and Tushman 2013, p. 333). Being full of energy, my hunch is that Michael Tushman has still a lot to offer to the field of organization theory and change in the years to come.

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# Peter B. Vaill: A Life in the Art of Managing and Leading Change

# 82

David W. Jamieson and Jackie M. Milbrandt

**Abstract**

Peter B. Vaill is both pioneer and thought leader in the fields of organizational behavior (OB) and organization development (OD). Over the past 60 years, Peter's ideas have influenced and informed numerous strands of thinking in the fields of management, leadership, and change. The common thread among these streams of thought: the relationship between organizational practice, theory, and learning. This chapter offers readers a glimpse into the career and work of Peter Vaill. Through several interviews with Peter, others who worked with him, and close readings of his writing, in this chapter we explore the themes and thinking that shaped Vaill's contributions to the field of change.

**Keywords**

Organization development • Organizational behavior • Permanent white water • High-performing systems • Theory and practice • Organizational learning • Scholar-practitioner • Management education

## Contents

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*Beyond all of the other new skills and attitudes that permanent white water requires, people have to be (or become) extremely effective learners.* Peter B. Vaill-Learning as a Way of Being.

## Introduction

Peter B. Vaill is described by colleagues and friends as an "innovator," "creative thinker," and "brilliant" human being. It's no wonder that he has been hailed the "poet laureate of management" (Kramer 2016). A pioneer in the fields of organization behavior (OB) and organization development (OD), Peter's ideas have influenced and informed numerous strands of thinking in the fields of management, leadership, and change. The common thread among these streams of thought: the relationship between organizational practice, theory, and learning.

Perhaps Vaill is best described as an original scholar-practitioner. His commitment, to what we later describe as "the field of practice," is reflected across his lifetime (over 60 years) writing, teaching, consulting, and thinking about human systems behavior and change. Leading various streams of thinking on organizational change and development (Vaill 1971) and executive and managerial learning (Vaill 1979) high-performing systems (Vaill 1982), process wisdom (Vaill 1984, 2008), and meaning and spirituality in organizations (Vaill 1998a) earned Peter notoriety and respect among scholars and practitioners alike. Throughout his career, three essential questions have become hallmarks of his work:

- How do organizations work?
- How do leaders, managers, and employees get things done?
- How can we (management educators) help them (managers, leaders, organizations, etc.) do what they are trying to do better?

In the following sections, we offer a narrative of Peter's life and career exploring these questions. We weave recent interviews (with Peter and others reflecting on his life and work) amidst Peter's essays and books, in an effort to create a semblance of a whole. And while these offerings are far from comprehensive, they offer the reader a glimpse into the depth of Vaill's experiences (events, relationships, ideas) and thinking (essays, books, and speeches) on his life in the landscape of management, leadership, and change.

# Influences and Motivations: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

> In Peter Vaill's apartment in South Minneapolis nearby to where he attended high school pictures fill the wall. Photograph's of family; A photograph of Vaill, in younger years, arms raised above his head crossing a finish line; A painting of a young boy with a toy ship at the edge of a lake. Just below the painting, a piano-keyboard filled with pages of gospel music. Flanking a corner in the room, a writing desk with two bookshelves. One filled with a collection of his work (including his dissertation) the other filled with books that have been and remain influential to his thinking. A window next to his writing desk trimmed with a banner from months gone by, a reminder of the past moments of celebration reads "Happy Birthday!"

## A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Peter B. Vaill was born in St. Cloud Minnesota, on November 5, 1936, to Stanley and Elizabeth (Brown) Vaill. When Peter's father (who worked for the phone company) was transferred from St. Cloud to Duluth for 9 years, then later to Minneapolis. Peter went on to attend and graduate from high school in Minneapolis, and then went to the University of Minnesota, earning an undergraduate degree in psychology. At age 23, (1958) Peter left for Boston and admitted as a student in the Harvard MBA program.

In early and later essays on the field of OB (Vaill 1979, 2007), Peter reflected on his early days as a student at Harvard. It was at Harvard that he would first experience the field of organizational behavior (OB), where he would develop his early training and "case method" perspective and where he would meet with the people and ideas that would shape the trajectory of his career in the fields of management and change.

There may be dozens of experiences that informed Peter Vaill's thinking while at Harvard, but two events stuck out in his recent reflections (Jamieson and Milbrandt, May 2016a, June 2016b). The first was a class that he took during his MBA studies at Harvard, 1958–1959. The class was called "Human Relations" taught by a contemporary and close colleague of Fritz Roethlisberger – George Lombard. (George Lombard was described by Roethlisberger as one of his closest friends and later became editor of Roethlisberger's autobiography, "The Elusive Phenomena" (1977).) According to Vaill, Lombard's class was heavily influenced by the works of Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) and Carl Rogers (1961) and built around practical application. It taught skills on listening and interpersonal relationships. As Peter described,

> . . .it [the course] was heavily oriented towards listening with acceptance, and empathy–Carl Rogers' hallmark. It was framed in a way to teach how to listen to the people around you, especially those who are reporting to you. . . . how to understand what their needs are. . . . how to understand what they are saying, what their feelings are. . . (Jamieson and Milbrandt, May 2016a)

The second major event was Vaill's decision to enter Harvard's newly named organizational behavior doctoral program. It was during Vaill's doctoral days that he became intimate with the perspectives of Roethlisberger and the case method.

In the 1960s Fritz Roethlisberger was the chair at Harvard and busy forming an exceptional OB department, attracting many of the future thinkers in the field. Roethlisberger had operated in the same era as Kurt Lewin, and both were researching various aspects of *human behavior in field settings* and exploring questions involving what we think of today as *engagement*, *motivation*, *turnover*, *productivity*, *and managing change.* Roethlisberger with mentor Elton Mayo was part of the classic Western Electric Company (Hawthorne Plant) studies in the 1920s–1930s where the field grew in its understanding about climate, motivations, and the *social systems of the workplace.*

Although Vaill was at Harvard for only 6 years, 1958–1964, his time there would prove formative. During his first year as a doctoral student (1960–1961), Vaill was introduced to a model of the field of OB conceived of by Fritz Roethlisberger. The model attempted to "map" the emerging field of organizational behavior. It was composed of six boxes that Vaill commented would likely be too simplistic for contemporary scholars, but at the time Roethlisberger presented it to the faculty and doctorate students at Harvard, it made a lasting impression. Nearly 45 years later, Vaill would write:

> In retrospect, this memo is perhaps of even more significance to a doctoral student and a relatively young working scholar than to a seasoned professional, for it urges us to think about how we are framing the field to ourselves, our students, our colleagues, and our professional reference groups. As we shall see, Roethlisberger wants to keep the practitioner in the picture. But the import of his memo is how keeping the practitioner in the picture then affects the theory and research that we do, and vice versa. (Vaill 2007, p. 323) (Fig. 1)
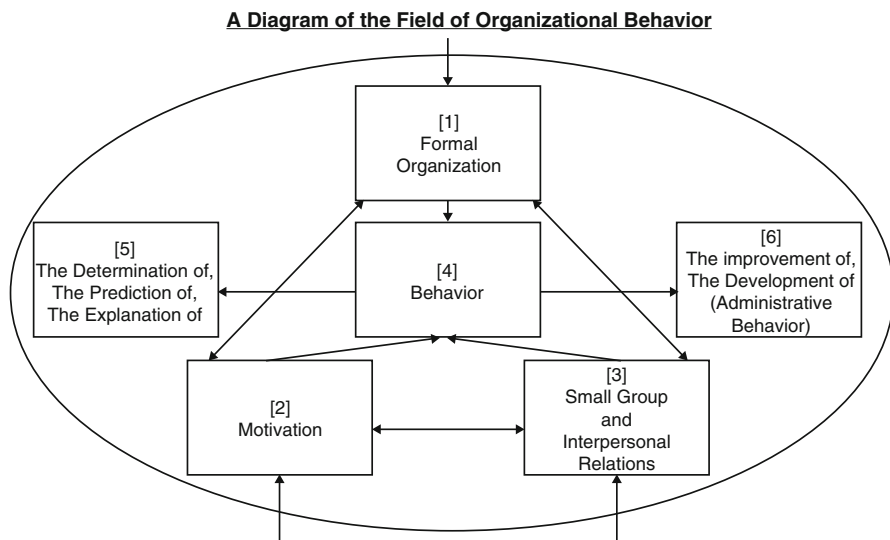


**Fig. 1** A diagram of the field of organizational behavior

To enumerate on this "import" of the diagram and "keeping the practitioner in the picture," Peter concluded:

> As Roethlisberger well knew, the relations of theory and practice are themselves matters of a great deal of theorizing. The problem abides, partly because every new theory of theory and practice creates its own new problems of practice: How is this theory to be used in understanding it and working with it (i.e., practicing) to influence the world. . . . How does any new theory, any new idea about the relations of theory and practice, help? How does practice then influence the evolution of this new theory? . . . . As I noted, Roethlisberger himself could spin much more complex models of the field than this simple diagram. Yet he does offer it as a "diagram of the field" as a basis for asking what he considered questions of the most profound importance. (Vaill 2007, p. 323)

Vaill's reflection on his mentor, and early impressions of the field, allows us to see and understand the development of his unique "framework" of the managerial leader. It also informs how we may begin to differentiate the ideas which he would spend a lifetime exploring – which he would later describe as "Managing as a Performing Art," and the "Practice, with a capital P."

## Impressions of the Organization and How It Functions

Vaill's early impressions of the field were situated in a time when "you could do no wrong" in the organization. The 1950s and 1960s were a golden era in which leaders and managers had the luxury of "good profit margins and stability." As a result, there were new innovations, ideas, and experimentation emerging under the banners of organizational behavior (OB) and organization development (OD): Peter was at the epicenter of both. He learned from the original thinkers, participated in early research and practice that led to many further developments in the fields, and began teaching the next generations of managers and other practitioners.

Paul Lawrence was Vaill's dissertation chair. Lawrence's early work was captured in *administering change* (Ronken and Lawrence 1952) and later he contributed to the quality of work life (QWL) movement. The major headline from *administering change* that stuck with Vaill was the idea that change goes better when people have a shared understanding. Peter later commented:

> He [Lawrence] had five propositions about the forces that facilitated change and inhibited it. . . . but the shorthand was that when people were all on the same page, change went more smoothly. When people were not, things were rocky and communication either didn't occur or it mis-occurred (sic). . .but the most interesting thing was how the jobs they were doing influenced their perspectives on what the "page" even was. Compatible perspectives produced good communication, conflicting perspectives produced less effective communication. Understanding this "pin-pointed the "change problem." (Jamieson and Milbrandt, May 2016a)

These early learnings about the need for people to "get on the same page" (for change to work) were confounded by individual perspectives. The realization that

your perspective of what the "page" was changed depending on your job would inform Peter fundamentally throughout his career. The early influences of Roethlisberger and others (Argyris, Likert, Lewin, Maslow, Rogers, and Lawrence) are traceably woven into Vaill's thinking and subsequent writing.

As Vaill worked toward his dissertation, he continued to refine his perspective. Ultimately, Vaill would reject the "scientific" ideals dominating the field of management – the notion of an absolute truth (based on what can be objectively measured). Instead he would embrace the idea that there are multiple truths (based on subjective experience and meaning). From then on Vaill's guiding question would be, "From whose point of view is this true?"

As Vaill pursued his dissertation work, thoughts around the dilemma of "multiple points of view" and the experience in organizations became more concrete. Namely, he was perplexed by the idea presented by Argyris (1957) that the needs of the healthy individual and the needs of the bureaucratic organization were incompatible. To Vaill these ideas revealed a need and passion to better understand (1) how "the hierarchies" within the organization worked and (2) how managers made meaning from their experiences and this meaning influenced their thinking and action (practice). It would be a mixture of good fortune and serendipity that he would be encouraged to work on a large-scale research project that provided him the opportunity to better understand the nature of these competing needs.

Paul Lawrence, who was teaching at Harvard was involved in a big research project at the time collecting data in 11 large organizations. What Vaill did was go into the companies, first with Lawrence and later on his own, to survey the different jobs and departments, using a questionnaire that had been developed to score different dimensions of the jobs, such as creativity, the amount of interaction they had with others, etc. As Vaill described it:

> Paul (Lawrence) was doing a large scale study on the relationship between the structure of industrial jobs, blue collar jobs, and the feelings and behaviors that people had in those jobs. . . . there was a lot of talk at the time on quality of work life and job design and that sort of thing. (Jamieson and Milbrandt, May 2016a)

As Vaill researched the various companies, he was looking at not only the organization and how it was structured but also observing how the people functioned in their environment and with each other. He commented on the process stating:

> We went around to several companies Paul had access to [a paper mill, a chemical plant, an IBM plant]. . . . and we would go in and talk to the personnel people and they would take us down to the factory floor and we would walk around and look at different jobs and departments until we finally isolated a collection of jobs – a set we thought could be studied. (Jamieson and Milbrandt, May 2016a)

Peter wrote short cases on each of the organizations and for his dissertation wrote an in-depth analysis of one of the companies (the Fuller Brush Company and Brown Paper Company). These cases were never published; instead, they ended up being absorbed into the "Harvard system" and used for classroom teaching. Through his

experience, researching in ways that combined theory with practice, Peter developed a point of view that would become instrumental to his life and work – that of a scholar-practitioner.

## The Makings of a Scholar-Practitioner

A year after completing his dissertation, Peter was hired by Robert (Bob) Tannenbaum to teach at UCLA and who, according to Peter, thought he was getting a "systems and technology" expert. Vaill reflected:

> To an extent he (Bob Tannenbaum) did get that, because I was interested in the systems and technology, and I also had the desire and readiness to understand OD, and all that was being talked about it. . . . The Harvard point of view, the Case Method point of view, gives you a strong feeling of wanting to immerse yourself in some particular situation and that's what the OD consultant had to do is immerse in particular situations. (Jamieson and Milbrandt, June 2016b)

Working closely with Tannenbaum was a wonderfully rich experience and an opportunity to go deeper on the humans-in-organizations side of his interests. Bob was a proponent of "use of self" and the deep personal work needed to be healthy and capable of being your best. Without the humanistic values of *authenticity* and *intentionality*, organizations were designed to operate in ways that caused people to play games and behave in very unhealthy and inauthentic ways (Massarik et al. 1985).

Vaill's first year, 1964, as a professor at UCLA, under the leadership of Tannenbaum, placed him squarely in the mix of a very large-scale OD project at TRW Systems:

> Bob got me involved right away. Shel Davis, who was the main OD guy, had recruited a line-up of experts that included, (Richard) Dick Beckhard, Herb Shepard, Bob Tannenbaum, and there were a couple of other big names. Anyway it was a tremendous line-up. . . . and the consultant and department manager together were co-training. And after training all of the department managers in T-group facilitation, the OD consultant and the department manager would run T-groups for everybody. . . . and the whole idea was to get the people talking to each other. . . (Jamieson and Milbrandt, May 2016a)

As it would turn out, the experience of applying, innovating, and creating ways to help the leadership at TRW Systems develop their organization would prove to be another stroke of good fortune and serendipity for Vaill. According to Vaill, Sheldon Davis was a "scholar-practitioner." He was a leader who was ready to try new things and could integrate them. Davis had tremendous energy for this, and when asked how he kept it up quipped "Love the people, hate the system!" (Milbrandt 2017). In retrospect, this rare combination of qualities Davis embodied would be something Vaill would reflect on throughout his career. In these interactions at TRW with the externals (including Beckhard and others in the lineup) and the internals (Shel Davis and other managers) that Peter would see the "crystallization" of major innovations and concepts in the field of OD come into use.

Another notable influence during Vaill's time at UCLA was his interactions with Eric Trist. Trist had been instrumental in publishing a body of work in England involving the creation of the socio-technical systems theories and practices for improving workplaces and their effectiveness (Emery and Trist 1965). Trist's perspective on socio-technical theory – which involved the simultaneous optimizing of the technical and social aspects of organizations – had a huge impact on the emerging fields. Bringing to attention a need for research on outcomes of work and quality of work life, the socio-technical theories would later influence streams of thought on organizational engagement and satisfaction. While Vaill was at UCLA, Trist was a visiting professor in the Socio-Tech and Work Design Center led by Lou Davis. According to Vaill, he and Trist would become close colleagues. These interactions, no doubt, added greater depth to Peter's thinking on the systems view of organizations.

Throughout these experiences, informed by pioneers in the fields of organization behavior (Roethlisberger, Lombard, Lawrence, respectively) and organization development (Beckhard, Shepard, Tannenbaum, Trist), Vaill crystalized a line of thinking that would be unwavering – Peter would begin and end his career with an eye toward understanding leaders and the organizations from a perspective of experience, meaning, and practice.

## On the Frontiers: Early Years in the Fields of Management and Change

It was 1966, Peter, in his later years at UCLA, found himself at an "Industrial Network" meeting at a Holiday Inn, in Montreal (Vaill 2005). Tannenbaum, who couldn't attend, asked Peter to go in place of him and represent the university. As Peter recounts it, there were two important things that took place at that meeting: (1) The network changed its name from the "Industrial Network" to the "Organization Development Network" (ODN) and (2) the leadership transferred from Jerry Harvey to Warner Burke. (The late Jerry Harvey, also a professor of management and later at George Washington with Peter, would become a lifelong friend and colleague.) Peter would go on to attend nearly every ODN meeting from the 1970s through the 1990s. Peter was also present when the leadership changed again from Warner Burke to Tony Petrella in the early 1970s. Peter recalled how during the Burke and Petrella years the organization grew from its founding, with about ten organizations represented in the Industrial Network, to more than 3000 members in the ODN when Petrella took over.

Peter also had many opportunities to work with NTL. Founded in the late 1940s by Kurt Lewin, with the help of Ron Lippitt, Leland (Lee) Bradford, and Ken Benne, NTL was a diverse mix of academics and practitioners from various backgrounds ranging from disciplines in the social sciences (psychology, social work, organizational behavior, sociology, political theory) to education (adult and organizational development). In its zenith, NTL was the place where scholars and practitioners who were interested in understanding "group dynamics" and social systems came to learn

(Kleiner 2008). It was in this context that the innovation of the "training group" otherwise known as the T-group flourished. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the T-group experience would be the dominate method used in Bethel labs. In many ways, these labs and the T-group infused the field of OD with its original energy (Bradford et al. 1964).

According to Vaill, his introduction to NTL was in the early 1970s. Peter was invited to study a subject that had received very little attention: "The world of the OD practitioner." The research involved several weeks at NTL's 1970 summer head-quarters in Bethel, Maine, conducting in-depth interviews with consultants going through NTL's "Program for Organizational Training and Development." That summer, Beckhard was head of the program Peter was investigating.

A year later, Vaill completed his first on the topic of OD publication entitled, "Practice Theories in Organization Development" (Vaill 1971). According to Vaill, this study brought some attention to the field of OD and attempted to begin to define it from the bottom up. In understanding how OD professionals and managers made sense of their practice, Peter felt he was bringing some focus and clarity to defining OD. Themes found in Vaill's later writings are echoed in his conceptualization of "practice theory." Vaill writes:

> In the development to date of the OD field, two other subjects have received a great deal more attention then has the OD practitioner's own frame of reference. The first area is the study of organizations, and particularly what is wrong with them.... The second major area is how the OD practitioner, the agent of change SHOULD act if he wants to influence the system – an evolving body of prescriptions for effectively influencing organization events.... The basic thesis of this paper, however is that these two areas of OD should not continue to develop without being tempered and tested against the practical realities of the OD practitioners situation, that is against how the organization seemed to be TO HIM.... .practice theory is, literally, a personal theory guiding practice, bearing some relation to public, objective theories, about organizational situations, but in no sense identical with them. (Vaill 1971, p. 162)

Another key event during this period was that Vaill, shortly after receiving tenure at UCLA, and despite his deep admiration and love for Bob Tannenbaum, accepted a position at the University of Connecticut. This would prove to be a pit stop – as only a few years later, in 1973, an invitation would come from Gordon Lippitt (who Vaill had met at NTL) to interview for the deanship at George Washington University (GW) School of Government and Business Administration. At GW, Vaill would find a cohort of kindred spirts who would come to support him as a leader, colleague, and changemaker. Peter's entry into GW put him on the fast track to becoming a spokesperson for OB, OD, and management education.

## In the Trenches: Middle Years Managing the Art of Change

Accepting a dean's position, in the School of Business and Public Administration, at George Washington (GW) moved Peter into a new phase of his career: administration. Although Peter only spent 5 years as dean, he spent another 20 years as a

professor and director of what was initially called the "experimental doctoral program." According to his close colleague Erik Winslow, who was part of the team that received him at GW, Peter was part of a dream team that Gordon Lippitt had assembled which held enormous influence over the school at the time Vaill was there. The "team" was comprised of Peter Vaill, who studied with Roethlisberger and Tannenbaum, Erik Winslow who studied with Fredrick Herzberg (1976), and Jerry Harvey (1988) who studied with Robert Blake (Blake and Mouton 1964). It was a confluence of those influences (Tannenbaum, Herzberg, and Blake) along with Maslow (1943) and McGregor (1960) that really created the powerful team that shaped GW business school – which was one of the largest in the country (Dent 2002).

When Vaill accepted the deanship, he was only 37 years old.

In his first year as Dean, 1974, Peter delivered a commencement speech to the graduating class – entitled "Management as a Performing Art." Nearly 15 years later, Peter would publish his first book, with a similar title. Winslow reflected on the early development of Vaill's thinking:

> The three of us were talking- Jerry Harvey, myself and Peter once about managing and the roles managers have to play and he laughed and said, "Well, that's because managing is a performing art." And he wrote a speech about that. And Jerry Harvey kidded him and said, "How are you going to make a speech about managing as a performing art if you aren't going to do a performance?" And I couldn't believe it- Peter took a recorder- he took it with him to where he was giving the speech and before he started his speech he played a song on the recorder! And then he said, "That's to introduce my topic, "Management as a Performing Art." And I thought that was so creative. And quite frankly such a risk-taking behavior. . . . but was brilliant, just like Peter. (Milbrandt September 2016a)

Embedded in this early speech were the seeds for Vaill's central argument, then and now – business schools and business educators needed to change the way they were preparing the leaders of the future to lead future organizations. Vaill began to communicate, with urgency, this perspective pointing out quite early that the golden era in which the field of management was born would not return. Therefore, the concepts, theories, innovations, and checklists for how to manage it were ineffective. These models did not address the realities that managers were experiencing in "the trenches." These theories did not help leaders in their practice of leading organizations. Peter's advice to the teachers of management and change: *turn to practice to reinvigorate scholarship.*

Through Peter's various professional organizations (NTL, ODN, OBTS, ASTD), he would exercise and demonstrate his commitment to this end. Peter worked tirelessly to challenge and expand the boundaries of his own and others understanding of their practice. Longtime friend and colleague, Marvin Weisbord, recalled his work with Peter at NTL, first in workshops and later in sessions with the PSOD program. As Weisbord reflected, Vaill is, and was, an astounding designer of process, insightful on the social aspects of learning, and a creative idea stimulator. Having worked with Peter across decades, Weisbord offered key illustrations of Vaill in these areas. In describing a learning process Vaill designed (called ESAC –

an acronym for Educational System for Accelerated Comprehension), Weisbord laughed with joy:

> Oh, I haven't thought about this in years. Here is how it works: You are trying to teach something to a group. And you give them a presentation and instead of lecturing them for an hour or half an hour, you give them some of the basic concepts and a little task. Then you put them in small groups and you say, "What's your understanding of this and how to apply it?". (Jamieson and Milbrandt, June 2016c)

Later, Weisbord commented on the instrumental role that Peter played in leading and transforming the NTL, as an organization. He reflected:

> Peter was part of what we called the gang of four who re-organized NTL in 1975-which at that time was coming apart. . . . The social model- the whole idea that there was this elite group- called the fellows of NTL the 40 or 50 mostly academic members and then there were the grunts, like me, who were practitioners, and there were other issues around race and gender and other stuff – and so it really was a cultural re-organization. . . . and Peter was one of the four members who were asked to figure out how to organize NTL – it was Barbara Bunker, and Edie Seashore and Hal Kellner, and in 1975 they held a forum – So they got 60 of us together, and I don't know how they picked us, but we went to Washington and we spent two or three days thinking and re-organizing the future of NTL. Peter was really instrumental in the process. (Jamieson and Milbrandt, June, 2016c)

According to Weisbord, Vaill's's ability to stimulate ideas and new insights was an experience he had of Vaill time and time again. Vaill's creativity, his drive to experiment with design, was instrumental in Weisbord's development of his own process, *Future Search*.

As Weisbord explained it, the 1986 lab would be the last he and Peter ran together at Bethel. It was a 2-week lab designed for experts in the field of change. Weisbord commented he was anxious to experiment with the Future Search process, which was part of the design. The first week, they (Vaill and Weisbord) ran the lab according to the original plan, and it was the "worst lab ever." The second week (after making some adjustments) was the "best ever." As Weisbord described it, Vaill's ability to *experiment with experience in ways that he and others could use what they were learning* was a hallmark of working with him. Weisbord later reflected:

> In fact, Peter is the one who added "helpful mechanisms" to the six-box model (as found in "Productive Workplaces," 1986) as a catch-all to the things that I found didn't fit in the other boxes. He and I were talking one day, and I couldn't figure out what to do with these things that didn't fit. And I said, These things are helpful mechanisms. . . and he said "Then why don't you call it that?" And later he liked to say "that (helpful mechanisms) is the most useful box of all." That captures him in a nutshell. . .In the end it's what you do to help integrate. . . . (Jamieson and Milbrandt, June 2016c)

Weisbord concluded, Vaill's focus on what was useful stuck with him as he later helped developed his ideas on "acts of leadership" (being a good innovator, helping people collaborate across boundaries, etc.). Vaill's creativity with and concern for how things "worked" was one of his greatest gifts.

## Key Contributions: A Life of Leading and Learning

Peter B. Vaill's life has been filled with writing and thinking but also leading in learning. As an educator for nearly 45 years, Vaill's interactions with others ranged from teaching in formal academic settings to presenting among peers. It is difficult to ascertain the impact of these interactions to those whose life Vaill touched. In speaking with a former student, Eric Dent, who is now an Endowed Chair in Ethics at Florida Gulf Coast University, we found a story that echoed Peter's own experiences as student at Harvard:

> I started an MBA program at George Washington University in 1984. I was planning to major in finance. So as you know every MBA student has to take the core courses and so I was taking a required organizational behavior class and he (Vaill) was my professor. . . . And while I was taking that class there were some things that were happening at work (related to what I was learning in the class) and that changed my interest from computer science and the physical sciences to human behavior. After that class the trajectory of my life changed from a career field in one area to a life-long interest in human behavior. (Milbrandt, July 2016b)

And later when describing Vaill's approach in the classroom, Dent reflected:

> You are going to get a pretty one sided story from me, I am a huge Peter Vaill fan. I think he is one of the wisest people I have ever met. I was always very impressed that he didn't teach from notes, which was different from the other faculty I had met at that time. He just seemed to know the material inside and out. He was able to place things in historical contexts and come up with incredible examples that seemed to illustrate in real ways the concepts that he was teaching. (Milbrandt, July 2016b)

In a different interview with William (Bill) Monson, who worked with Vaill in the executive MBA program at the University of St. Thomas (UST), Monson commented:

> I met Peter through a paper he wrote, the paper was titled "Notes on Running an Organization" and I made an immediate connection with him having never met him because he had such clarity on the topic. (Jamieson and Milbrandt, June 2016b)

Further reflecting on Peter's approach with students, Bill added:

> . . . . he was always careful not to privilege the art of management, or the science of management, but let's talk about the practice of management. What its really like for the person in the position called manager. And one of his core contributions, was his way is to go about this which was a reflexive process. (Jamieson and Milbrandt, June 2016b)

In Peter Vaill's own writing, he would eventually address the topic of teaching, identifying this role as both primary and important to his identity. In a reflective essay on his teaching, Vaill (1997) wrote:

> . . . .I have functioned as a teacher/speaker/presenter/workshop facilitator on the average of at least 2 or 3 times a month for my entire career. . . .to capture the diversity of my experience in this chapter, I do not use the words teacher and student and classroom to talk about my work. I refer to myself as a presenter, to those I am presenting to as participants and to the setting in

which I am doing it as sessions. These words for me do better justice to the range of my experience and to the fact that so many important learnings have occurred outside my role as a teacher of students in a classroom. (pp. 261–262)

In scope of Vaill's career, whether as the presenter or participant, this much seems true: Vaill's sense that good leading is learning and good learning is being aware of the opportunities and conditions needed to maximize learning for yourself and others.

## Efficacy at the Point of Action

Perhaps it is in Vaill's earliest work and writings that we can see the greatest fire between his words, and we can see the solidification of his argument that leaders and organizations need to pay more attention to the experience, to the act of managing, to developing a consciousness and awareness which informs *how* things *happen* or *don't*.

In an article Vaill published on the field of OB, entitled "Cookbooks, Auctions, and Claptrap Cocoons" (short title, 1979), Vaill writes:

I simply cannot imagine an academic field which lacks any of the components of OB: Its interest in action and its connection to the work of affairs; its eclectic intellect and relative freedom from preoccupation with the fine difference between psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, political science and economics... If we were more interested in action we would attach more importance to the experience. . . . We would be awed and humbled by the obvious fact that most of the time, most people make plans and are actually able to carry them out. We would ask, "How is that?" "How is that?" (Vaill 1979, p. 3)

This question and the preceding statements imply a train of thinking which would lay the foundation of Vaill's later work. The observation that leaders will need to let go of the formulas, the cooked up theories, and the "generalized" checklist of "what to do" in order to answer the better question, "how to do it?" To illustrate his concern for the "checklist trends" and often "impracticality" of theories that were constructed apart from practice, he offered the analogy:

We've all heard managers and students ask for a cookbook (and among ourselves we speak condescendingly and even disdainfully of such needs). But what would the cookbook look like as written by a contemporary, OB professor? Well, it would probably take a systems view and discuss at great length the interactions of the cook, ingredients, utensils, sink, stove and diner. Reading it, one would not be able to tell if it was addressed to the spoon, the salt shaker, the cook or the dough. . . . As the field of cookbook theory matured, sub-specialists would emerge. We would produce a doctoral field in salt-shakers. Two-factor theories of the cook's motivation would be offered. . . .ultimately the heavy-hitters in cookbook theory would be sitting in endowed chairs, satraps in a game which, long since, had relegated the cooks to the sidelines. (Vaill 1979, p. 4)

Vaill's laser-like focus on practice and study of how managers and organizations "got things done" would be consummate throughout his career and eventually prompt Peter to look at the role of leading and learning, in increasingly complex environments: in other words, twenty-first century organizations.

Midway into his career, Vaill set into motion his thoughts on this in what he described as "high-performing systems" (Vaill 1982). As Vaill conceived it, "high-performing systems" were ones in which the leaders "share three commitments – time, feeling, and focus – that enable them to project and maintain a clear and effective sense of purpose among all system members."

- *Time* refers to the observable and consistent long hours leaders devote – Vaill clarified in his later reflections on this that these leaders are not necessarily "workaholics" but typically stay longer hours than their counterparts who are not members of a high-performing system.
- *Feeling* refers to the clarity, respect, and devotion for which they express to the system and the people that work in it.
- *Focus* refers to an uncanny thoroughness of understanding of the work. Knowing what two or three things that need to get done and moving into action on them.

In these early comments, Vaill's sense of urgency and call for change is both unwavering and unapologetic: "Managing as a Performing Art" (1989) was a concept whose time had come.

## Shifting the Paradigm

By the mid-1980s, Peter Vaill's sense that the management theory being taught in schools was outdated and the literature being used to teach MBAs was ineffective in preparing them for the "real world" was growing. It was at this time that he and a colleague were facilitating a session at the ODN conference called "My Practice." The session was meant to explore the current experiences of managers, leaders, facilitators, and other participants who attended.

As Peter reflected on this session and his growing observations of the increasing levels of change, uncertainty, and turbulence that management and leaders were facing, he offered that "leaders and managers are in a position of stepping into the dark with most of the initiatives they propose. They don't know what's going to happen next." In response to this suggestion, a participant who remains unknown offered his experience stating:

> Most managers are taught to think of themselves as paddling their canoes on calm, still lakes...they're led to believe that they should pretty much be able to go where they want, when they want, using means that are under their control. Sure there will be temporary disruptions during changes of various sorts – periods when you will have to shoot the rapids....but the disruptions will be temporary, and when things settle down you will be back on calm lake mode. But it has been my experience, he concluded, that you never get out of the rapids. (Vaill 1989, p.)

Of course, hindsight is the best foresight. If today's readers pick up *Managing as a Performing Art* (1989), they may find themselves sucking air through their teeth as they shake their head in awe at the relevance "permanent white water" holds today.

Vaill's insights in Managing as a Performing Art are unchanged by time, and are as relevant now as when written. The metaphor and its meaning to organizations illustrate the feeling today's managers often talk of as "putting out fires," "going backward," and the feeling of being incapacitated in their ability to "get a handle on it." In permanent white water, leaders are sailing at breakneck speed into the unknown, propelled forward by forces they have no control over: the continuous, roaring white water beneath them. Peter's essential point is that it is incumbent upon leaders to stop putting their attention on how things got done on placid waters and turn their attention to how things are getting done in "white water."

In another well-known essay that followed, *Notes on Running an Organization* (Vaill 1992), Peter expanded upon his thinking on the need to learn from and observe the experience of practice commenting:

> Theory and practice do not "integrate"; they dance with each other, sometimes lustily, but just as often ploddingly or with one lording over the other or warily and with stony indifference. But it also must be said that in a school of administration, management, leadership, or practice, if theory and practice do not dance with each other somehow, the learner will graduate not knowing much about practice nor having gained any increment in concrete skill nor remembering any of the theories that were intended to be relevant in the future. (Vaill 1992)

Ultimately, in his writings, Vaill planted the seeds for a new paradigm: *Learning as a way of Being*. As Vaill points out, the model of the organization in which leaders can assume to know what to expect is becoming obsolete, that the emphasis on technical and rational solutions, or "off-the-shelf" remedies were no longer useful – if they ever were! Replaced with an increasing need to manage unknown thinking and action, organizations and the people in them need to learn how to manage the challenges of permanent white water, where the reality is chaos and uncertainty.

Vaill grounded this new paradigm in the following key assumptions:

- Reality is socially constructed.
- That the nature of "being" is subjective (there are many truths, perspectives, and meanings).
- The most effective leaders (in "permanent white water") will seek to understand and learn from their experiences and from the perspectives of those who report to them.

These key assumptions offer a compelling new vison of organization in the "new age" in his hallmark thinking on the art of managing permanent white water that came to maturity in his second book, *Learning as a Way of Being* (1996).

## Toward a Human Image of the Organization

The value of *Learning as a Way of Being* (1996) lies not so much in the ready-made skills or steps offered to the reader but rather a perception of consciousness and the

processes needed to develop it in future organizations. Vaill challenges his readers to consider these frames (old and new) of the needs of the individual and the organization stating:

> The permanent white water in today's systems is creating a situation in which institutional learning patterns are simply inadequate to the challenge. Subject matter is changing too fast. Learners are interweaving their learning with work responsibilities and expecting their learning to be directly relevant to these responsibilities...The problem is to envision what learning can be and how it can go on giving... while the traditional paradigm for conduction is not designed for the task and is in many ways inadequate under the current conditions. (Vaill 1996, p. 41)

Vaill goes on to define an approach and development of whole-person learning – or learning "that goes on all the time and extends to all aspects of a person's life. . . . " (Vaill 1996, p. 43) in seven types:

1. Self-directed learning
2. Creative learning
3. Expressive learning
4. Feeling learning
5. Online learning
6. Continual learning
7. Reflexive learning

In Vaill's typology, learning becomes the antidote to "white water." And Vaill is quick to point out that learning in organizations is necessary at all levels. To do this, Vaill suggests we must (collectively) shift our attention from understanding what has been (past performance metrics, ROI, profits, and loss) to what is becoming (new insights, synergies, invention) from the static (the tried and true, past successes, old pathways) to the dynamic (interactions, experiences, collaborations, innovation) from what is fixed (what we do) to what flows (how we are doing it). In this new frame of the organization, we can do better than surviving permanent white water – we can master the experience of it.

After writing *Learning as a Way of Being: Strategies for Survival in a World of Permanent White Water* (1996), Peter left GW for an appointment as an endowed chair in the newly forming Opus College of Business, at the University of St. Thomas (1997–2003), and helped develop a cutting-edge executive MBA program. Within that period at St. Thomas, Vaill would publish his third book, *Spirited Leading and Learning: Process Wisdom for a New Age* (1998), and various other commentaries on the field of OB and OD.

## Process Wisdom: The Heart of Organizations

Vaill's early and later work on *process wisdom* is spread throughout his writings and teachings. He was regularly commenting on what managers did well (process), what

didn't work well (process), and the need for new ways of acting (process) in the growing landscape of permanent white water. In one of Vaill's more recent chapters on "Process Wisdom" in Thomas Cumming's, *Handbook of Organization Development* (2008), he pulls together his earlier and current thinking on the role of process in social systems and organizations. In this chapter, Vaill emphasizes how process affects learning and subsequently all we do – and poses the question, if content is constantly changing, in what ways might our processes need to change too?

Vaill highlights eight virtues *process wisdom* brings to an organization in change. He Vaill argues that process wisdom:

1. Surfaces the *what* and the *how* in the organization, what the organization is trying to do, and the goal development and formal goal-directedness
2. Calls out the social (relationship) changes needed or implied by any change
3. Identifies the unintended consequences of leadership initiatives
4. Anticipates events that will need to happen as part of understanding how people may be affected by the changes
5. Helps to see beyond the immediate context of an action, into the larger system
6. Anticipates downstream disruptions to social process
7. Teaches others how to see and use process wisdom and provides a common language to more deeply explain what people are experiencing
8. Understands the element of the "unknown" when facing a "process frontier" and creates ways to authentically help people maintain experimentation and learning

In Vaill's *Spirited Leading and Learning* (1998), he continued to expand the challenge of the managerial leader being twofold – to recognize the importance of purpose and meaning in what people are doing (as they see it) and how to help one's self and others to determine what's missing and what needs to be worked on.

Themes in *Learning as a Way of Being* (1996) and *Spirited Leading and Learning* (1998), as well as in later essays (Vaill 2005, 2007, 2008), build to this general and final conclusion: Organizational life demands learning that is more personal, person-centered, and relevant to the needs of the individual, in order to serve the human system which Vaill contends is "the only side of the organization!" In this spirit Vaill rejects the dominant image of the organization, what he refers to as the "material-instrumental" perspective, offering an alternate vision of organizations, with a five-way bottom line (Vaill 1989). Vaill writes:

> I have concluded that it is possible, to talk about five ongoing and intertwined streams of valuing – a "five-way bottom line"... My alternative to the M-I model is a view of the organization, as an intertwined stream of energy that keeps it going from the individual and joint actions of people as they work out their sense of what is important, of what they need to do in their own present reality to fulfill and continue to pursue their sense of who they are. The five categories are simple and easily recognizable. I call them the economic, the technical, the communal, the adaptive, and the transcendent. (Vaill 2009 Conference Paper)

This highly "conscious" awareness on development was integral to Vaill's concepts of "Spirited Leading and Learning" (1998). As Vaill surmised, a leader's ability to

understand meaning and purpose in their own life is the measure of their ability to develop such consciousness in others. And without this understanding of self – this whole-person consciousness – Vaill contends organizations cannot and will not survive the "rapids" of permanent white water. Ultimately, Peter invites us to become explorers, to abandon the idea of being learned to become *learning beings*, and to abandon the image and meaning of the organization as an economic engine and replace it with a construct that is more resilient, robust, whole, and humane. Peter points to key elements of this transformation:

- The practice of becoming *learners* versus *learned*.
- The practice of balancing what is technical (techniques, skills, competencies) with what is social (the social nature of human beings, our values, our assumptions, our desires and needs).
- The practice of valuing the process as much as the product. While work life has a utility, product, or service, leaders must attend to the process (purpose, meaning, and ways of working that honor the people who are and make up the organization).
- The practice of framing organizational scholarship and (i.e., management, OB, OD, ODC, HR, and all its various factions) management education in the landscape of application.

The culmination of the past 60 years of Peter's thinking on the topic of the person and the organization offers managers, educators, change agents, and change thinkers a compelling alternative: a new image of the person and the organization. In this new image, the needs of the organization are *not* conflicted with the needs of the individual but rather contingent on them. Vaill's thinking comes full circle in his final published thoughts in *Spirited Leading and Learning* and his chapter on *Process Wisdom* (2008).

Through his own self-study and observations of the field of management and change, Peter has offered a compelling bridge – to help the current and next generation of change thinkers begin to develop a body of consciousness around "practice wisdom."

## New Insights: A Leader's Impact

In addition to the wide influence that Peter B. Vaill has had in scholarship (nearly 3000 citations from various articles are cited through "Google Scholar"), Vaill has also had impact in the field of practice and our own (the authors) work. Dave Jamieson reflected on Vaill's early influence, which for him began as early as 1970. Jamieson writes:

> As a young, new doctoral student at UCLA, we all had a desk in "student cubicles." On one vacant desk there were copies of many articles, working papers of faculty and previous students (most mimeographed!). Many of Peter's early essays were there, for students to read. The earliest concepts that I read about that stuck with me were "practice theory", the "*art* of managing" and "high performing systems" papers. (Some of which were recently

found in my personal archives, that have moved multiple times!) From my doctoral studies to today I had a strong orientation to practice and to develop the capability to lead change. And Vaill's earliest work resonated with me immediately. By graduation, I was already beginning a consulting career and working as a professional association leader.

Almost from the start, the image of the organization as a system was central in my thinking and speaking; additionally high performing teams became a mainstay in my work, as was my continual pursuit of my own "practice theory" which has never abated. In the beginning I chose to pursue a scholar-practitioner life and was passionate about exploring how theory could inform practice and vice-versa. As my experience accumulated, teaching provided the platform to clarify my own thinking on practice. Soon, I began to develop models and frameworks derived from my developing practice to help explain what I was observing. All of my work was informed and supported by others' theories and research, but was always slightly different based on the practice sources. This scholar-practitioner focus enabled me to successfully teach managers and later change agents, as they could relate to the 'practice theories' more easily and found great usefulness in the courses.

Although Peter and I did not meet one another at UCLA (we met much later) Peter's indirect influence on me can be in evidenced by the early writings on the topics mentioned above. Much of my own writing, alone and with others, is heavily influenced by practice or has been written to impact practice. Some of my current presentations express this: "How We Change Needs to Change," "Changing How We Change", "Why Organization Change is so Difficult and What We Can Do about It", "Learning Masterful Practice", "Mastering Consultation" and, "Suppose We Took OD Seriously" explore these current questions. Similar themes are evident in my other writing:

From books such as:

- *The Facilitators Fieldbook (1999, 2006, 2012)*
- *Consultation for Organization Change (2010)*
- *Consultation for Organization Change, Revisited (2016)*

To chapters and articles such as:

- *The Critical Role of Use of Self in Organization Development Consulting (2016)*
- *"Exploring the Relationship between HR and OD" (2015)*
- *"Exploring the Relationship between Change Management and OD" (2015)*
- *"The Practice of OD" (2008)*
- *"Values, Ethics and OD Practice" (2006, 2014)*
- *"Front-End Work: Effectively Engaging with the Client System" (2009)*
- *"Aligning the Organization for a Team-Based Strategy"(1996)*
- *"Design as the Bridge between Intention and Impact" (2015)*
- *"The Heart and Mind of the Practitioner: Remembering Bob Tannenbaum"(2003)*

- *"You are the Instrument"(1991)*
- *"What it Means to be a Change Agent"(1990)*

Finally, Peter and I were both embraced and inspired by Bob Tannenbaum and his central thinking about "use of self." And later, at the University of St. Thomas, although at different times and in different roles, I have continued to both concentrate on leadership, organization development and adult learning and, in the last 10 years, digging deeper into the "use of self" concepts – developing, writing, researching and teaching about it, especially as it relates to helping professionals of all types; and leaders and change agents, in particular. (Jamieson et al. 2013; McKnight and Jamieson 2016) As Peter wrote in his last book:

> . . .all true leadership is indeed spiritual leadership, even if you hardly ever hear it put that flatly. The reason is that beyond everything else that can be said about it, leadership is concerned with bringing out the best in people. As such, one's best is tied intimately to one's deepest sense of oneself, to one's spirit. My leadership efforts must touch that in myself and in others." (Vaill 1998a)

For Jackie Milbrandt, who is currently a doctoral student in the field of organization development and change, Vaill's "permanent white water" and "learning as a way of being" have taken a prominent role in her early impressions in the overall field of study. Milbrandt writes:

> As a newcomer to the study of the field of OD and Change, I first learned of Vaill's work during my involvement with a project involving the *Journal of Management Inquiry's* "Six Degrees" podcast series (JMI Six Degrees 2016). The project involved a team of about a half-dozen interviewers and a list of 50 or more of the great thinkers in OD. The goal of the project was to capture various perspectives on the early and current thinking in the field of OD. Looking through the list, Peter Vaill's name jumped out at me. At the time, I had only really heard of his work through references to him – but that quickly changed. The more Peter and I talked, the more I became immersed in his writing and thinking about the nature of organizations and change. Of his many ideas, two have captivated my imagination and interest. Namely, the connectivity between personal experience and learning, and the perspective that change is not only continuous but accelerating.
>
> My current understanding of "permanent white water" and "learning as a way of being" have shaped my development and how I perceive the challenges of the time. In a world which I experience growing more diverse, complex, and turbulent – it is of critical importance to me to embrace the enormous challenge of learning and sharing what I learn in ways that help people collaborate across different perspectives, time zones, and cultures. This has presented a need for new models and ways of thinking about organizations and change. For myself and others in the field of OD and Change I find an urgent need to learn how to do this in order to function in today's volatile, unpredictable, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) context (see Bennett and Lemoine 2014; Pasmore and O'Shea 2010). And, I have found myself reflecting on the broader questions – What are the intersections between learning and change? And how can I find ways to support both in organizations?
>
> In a recent presentation (co-facilitated with David Jamieson and Ken Nishikawa at the ODN 2015 titled "Connecting the Dots: Global Communities of Practice in the Field of OD") issues of globalization, the need to balance social and technical systems, and rapid change were at the forefront of the discussion. Reoccurring concerns over how to "develop conditions for psychological safety," "mechanisms to transfer and develop new knowledge" and how to

create spaces for "innovative" and novel approaches were discussed. The depth and attention to which Peter Vaill spent (a life-time) observing, thinking, and writing on these topics – and the insights he offers – in my view make his work relevant and valuable to my own understanding as a current scholar-practitioner and to generations in the foreseeable future.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Reframing the Human-side of Enterprise

During and after Vaill's time at GW, he made key contributions to various networks and associations he was connected to as a consultant, scholar, and educator. People who worked closely with him over the years expressed their love and respect for him, and his incredible insights, generosity, and creativity he offered to them personally, and the organizations to which Vaill belonged.

As an active member, Vaill held various roles at the Center for Creative Leadership and continued to work with NTL. As a long-standing, active member at the OB Teaching Society (OBTS) and attendee of their annual conference (OBTC) and lifelong member of the OD Network (ODN), he received various honors and awards. In 2002, the OBTS awarded Peter with the "David L. Bradford Outstanding Educator Award." The same year, Peter received the ODN's "Lifetime Achievement Award." A few years later in 2007, he was awarded OBTS's "Peter Frost Mentoring Award." The people who knew him well commented on his ability to make the complex clearer, create spaces for personal reflection, show his own vulnerability, and approach all his work with humility. He was a critically thinking, reflective scholar-practitioner!

And like most good scholar-practitioners, he was integrative, bridging across disciplines, weaving perspectives and concepts together, and producing new understanding.

In a final interview with Peter, he presciently reflected on his current and developing thinking and observations – in three areas:

1. On transforming the image of people-in-the organization to people-as-the organization." Vaill offered:

> For almost 60 years we've been living with a massive misconstruction of the nature of organizations. Since Douglas McGregor published his famous book in 1960, the "Human Side of Enterprise," for the whole of the succeeding 56 years, we've accepted that construction – that there is a human side of enterprise. . . . and then there is all the business stuff; that's a misconstruction. The more correct construction is as follows: There is only one side to organizations and that's the human side. (Milbrandt, July 2016b)

2. On resurrecting the ideas of *spirit* and *purpose* into organizational thinking. On this, Vaill reflected:

> Since World War II almost no one, among the big names so to speak, in behavioral science has attached anything to the human being you might call a spiritual nature. That the feeling of being-that there is a higher meaning and higher purpose; the feeling of having a higher-

self that is up above all this craziness that is in the world. For some people it is the feeling of being blessed, processing or seeking God's grace – for others it is things to do with spirituality. (Milbrandt, July 2016b)

3. On defining leadership as a landscape of practice, Vaill concluded:

And finally, this whole field of practice – we just don't have a good understanding of what practice is – We have theory and then we have the trenches – that is not a deep understanding of practice – so I am working on a whole approach to practice that tries to transform that. (Milbrandt, July 2016b)

## Conclusion

While so many in the field were building islands, Peter B. Vaill was building an arc made up of new ways of thinking, practicing, and approaching change  through helping the "people who are the organization" renew hope, purpose and spirit in the work. We have some work ahead of us. But where do we begin?

As Vaill so often pointed out, we (as a field at large) have been asking the wrong questions. The vast majority have been looking at the outcomes in organizations "what happened" – instead we might be looking at the processes "what is happening?" We (as a field at large) have been trying to frame practice inside theory – instead we might try to frame theory in practice. As it would seem, in general, we have been barking up the proverbial wrong tree.

In essence, after nearly 60 years in the field of scholarship and practice, Vaill concludes that we have more questions than meaningful answers. He leaves us with some hints to what these may be:

- What do we really know about practice, if we do not question what *it* is?
- How can we support organizational learning and development if we do not more fully understand how *we* are learning and developing?
- How can we expect to understand the whole, if we do not understand ourselves?

As Vaill suggests, it is incumbent upon the next generation not only ask these questions (which are both timeless and timely) but to reflect on them and our experiences to inform our learning and leading change in the twenty-first century. For more than 60 years, Peter B. Vaill has dedicated his life to these questions and more. He has devoted a career to shaping the perspective of the fields of management, leadership, and change by creating "learning" and "learning spaces." Retired now, and no longer teaching formally, Vaill's essays and articles serve as a placeholder for others to explore. The questions posed and the insights shared, through numerous books, articles, and essays, gently beckon to us – inviting, challenging, and coaxing us to embark on a journey into the *art of learning, managing* and *leading change.*

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# Karl E. Weick: Departing from Traditional Rational Models of Organizational Change

# 83

Dave Schwandt

## Abstract

Karl E. Weick is one of management's and organizational science's most influential social psychologists. He, more than most theorists, is responsible for pointing to the prevailing theories of management and organizational change and asking very pragmatic questions such as: "Is this plausible? What are we missing? What if we say this?" This chapter focuses on only four concepts within his large body of work: (1) organizing as a human process; (2) collective interpretation and loose coupling; (3) sensemaking; and (4) surprise and managing the unexpected. These concepts represent major departures from traditional rational models of organizational change. They are not necessarily labeled organizational change phenomena per se; however, each of them has been and remains critical to understanding human actions in the continuous flow of social change.

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## Introduction

> Every experience enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experience. (Dewey 1938, p. 35)

When Karl Weick reflects on his early days growing up in the Midwest, he usually recounts his adventures with locomotives and train yards. If he does not choose trains, he tells of his early love for music, and specifically jazz. His selection of these two remembrances as being significant was not based just on the excitement of travel or the beauty of jazz, but rather the processes that individuals were employing that made them important to him: "From the beginning I was hooked on the problem of coordination and collective improvisation" (Weick 1996b, p. 288).

For Weick, the "problems of coordination and collective improvisation" have provided a logical thread of conceptual continuity for his contributions to organizational change and management theory. His early perceptions have now become concepts such as organizing, enactment, sensemaking, interruptions, and mindful management of the unexpected. Although he has added differing venues for his perceptions, he remains concerned with the human condition and how we coordinate with each other and survive in unexpected situations in which surprise is always a possibility.

Surprise may occur differently for locomotive engineers than it does for jazz musicians; however, the combination of their cognitive processes with their contexts produces similar complex questions concerning the formation of human meaning. The complexity of the questions that interested him would require knowledge of both the individual and the collective level of analysis. He recognized early that knowledge of just psychology, or just sociology, would not be enough to understand human interactions and cognition.

## Influences and Motivations: From Laboratory Psychology to the Management Sciences

After finishing his undergraduate degree in psychology at Wittenberg College, Weick attended Ohio State University (OSU) for his graduate studies (M.A. and Ph.D.). While at OSU, his curriculum spanned a broad spectrum of expertise including counseling and clinical psychology and organizational behavior. Weick's graduate work culminated in his dissertation research in human cognition and behavior.

Reflecting back on his early research (after 30 years), Weick noted its significance as a precursor to his later research concerning enactment and dealing with the unexpected:

> What continues to interest me about that study is that not only does it capture the effect of cognition on action. It also captures the effect of action on cognition. It does the latter more by accident than design. Even though I designed the study to create the cognitive dissonance, I also accidently created the conditions later found to induce strong behavioral commitment. (Weick 1993b, p. 6)

With Weick's initial interest in what people actually do and think, it is not surprising to find that he aligns with classical thinkers such as William James (1950) and John Dewey (1950). They offered him more than a worldview; in their writings they were using society to pose similar questions that Weick had concerning human behavior and cognition in organizations. Their commitment to the importance of the ongoing and recurring nature of human interactions, both at the individual and collective level, elevated the importance of human nature and conduct. Their pragmatic, and at times constructionist, philosophical or metaphysical ideas remain a part of Weick's ontology and epistemology today. He cites their work often in arguing for a need to understand not only why people act as they do in organizations but how they cognitively and emotionally cope with the puzzles of their environments.

After graduating with a Ph.D. in "organizational psychology" (the title of the degree is said to have been created at OSU for him and one other's plan of study because they were beyond the "standard curriculum"), Weick took academic positions at Purdue University and the University of Minnesota and was a visiting professor at the State University of Utrecht, the Netherlands. At Minnesota he was professor of psychology and also the director of the Laboratory for Social Relations. Much of his work during this period related to dissonance, perceived equity in pay, use of the laboratory as microcultures, and human productivity. It is also during this time period that he published the first edition of *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (1969).

In 1972, Weick accepted an appointment as professor of psychology and organizational behavior at Cornell University (receiving the Nicholas H. Noyes Endowed Chair in 1977). While there he became the editor of the well-known journal, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, and remained the editor from 1977 to 1985. After leaving Cornell and spending 4 years at the University of Texas as the Harkins and Company Centennial Chair in Business Administration, in 1988, he accepted the position of Rensis Likert Collegiate Professor of Organizational Behavior and Psychology in the Stephen M. Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, where he now serves as distinguished university professor, emeritus.

Each of Weick's career choices has moved him closer to the management sciences as opposed to the laboratory psychology that characterized his early career and education. His research and writing agenda have also increasingly reflected his

early questioning of coordination and collective improvisation. The path that Weick selected for both his early preparation and his subsequent theorizing and research has allowed him to "change the conversations" in not only organizational sciences and social psychology but in how we see social change and human nature (Gioia 2006).

Through these various career moves, and many accolades such as Best Dissertation, Best Journal Article, Best Book, and Scholar of the Year, Weick has become one of the management and organizational science's most influential social psychologists. He, more than most theorists, is responsible for pointing to the prevailing theories of management and organizational change and asking, "Is this plausible? What are we missing? What if we say this?" He does this while motivating new discussions, elevating our concern for the human condition, and managing not to alienate other thinkers. It is important for him that humans are not portrayed as just environmental reactors or cultural dupes, but that they have choices that can, through their actions, enact their environments, thus creating different situations and new variations.

## Key Contributions: Organizing as Respectful Interaction and Sensemaking

In this section, I discuss four advancements that stem from the work of Karl E. Weick. Each has had a direct impact on our understanding of organizational change (or, as Weick would say, "organizing"). The discussion that follows is couched in the theme of this volume, organizational change, and does not come close to representing the complete scope of Weick's long career achievements. There are risks involved in attempting to single out only four contributions from a career that spans five decades and has produced more than 200 journal articles, books, book chapters, and uncountable presentations. The same risk was mentioned by Weick in a review of Gerald Salancik's legacy (Weick 1996a), in which he provided the following caveat:

> What I underline, quote, and cite in Salancik's work may well be the very ideas that bored him and misrepresents what he felt were his best insights. I'm sorry if that is blatantly true. If it is, it probably means at a minimum, that I don't 'know' myself, nor did he. That notwithstanding, misrepresentation is an inherent risk in an understanding such as this and comprises its normal, natural trouble. (p. 565)

I invoke this same caveat for what follows.

Before we begin, it is important to note that Weick sees organizational change as a process that is continuous rather than episodic, nonlinear rather than linear, emergent as opposed to planned, and incremental rather than punctuated by the radical occurrence of a change action (Weick and Quinn 1999). In this context, he sees the role of change agents as facilitators that:

- Recognize, make salient, and reframe current patterns
- Shows how intentional change can be made at the margins

- Alters meaning by new language, enriched dialogue, and new identity
- Unblocks improvisation, translation, and learning (p. 366)

He believes that "what matters is the extent to which the program [of change] triggers sustained animation, direction, attention/updating, and respectful interaction" (Weick 2000, p. 233).

The four concepts that I have drawn from Weick's large body of work are (1) organizing as a human process, (2) collective interpretation and loose coupling, (3) sensemaking, and (4) surprise and managing the unexpected. These concepts represent major departures from traditional rational models of organizational change. They are not necessarily labeled organizational change phenomena per se; however, each of them has been and remains critical to understanding human actions in the continuous flow of change.

What follows is a description of these four concepts and their implications for our understanding of organizational change. It is my aim to (1) describe Weick's gentle but radical departure from prevailing thinking; (2) show that there is a consistency to his quest to understand how people coordinate and improvise – both at the individual and collective levels; and (3) demonstrate the resilience of these four concepts over the past 50 years of theorizing (Weick 2014). I allow the chronology of Weick's work to guide the sequencing of the four concepts to emphasize their interrelatedness over time.

## Organizing as a Human Process

Weick's seminal work, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, published in 1969 and significantly modified in 1979 (Weick 2015a), not only introduced a new way of using language but also turned the idea that "humans think then act" on its head. For Weick, it is "humans act then make sense of what they have experienced." He intentionally used the progressive tense (past, present, and future) of the verb form "organizing" in the place of the traditional noun form of "organization" to demonstrate the ever-changing and never-ending nature of the processes that humans employ to organize their actions and thinking. (As discussed later in this section, this use of language has in fact become one of Weick's signifiers.)

In the late 1960s, organizational development, strategy, systems planning, and human resource management promoted rational models to understand change in a rational world. Following appropriate steps of the models would lead to organizational effectiveness. (Of significance was the publication of Daniel Katz's and Robert Kahn's (1966) book titled *The Social Psychology of Organizations* that is a more rational, cause-effect, and research-based explanation of social behavior in organizations.) Weick's definition of organizing – "a consensually validated grammar for reducing equ – vocality by means of sensible interlocked behaviors" (Weick 1979, p. 3) – requires discussions of human interpretation, enactive processes, and humans' inability to predict outcomes as linear extensions of past behaviors. His process of organizing moved us away from the traditional objective, rational, and

linear models of the 1960s and 1970s to one that requires interactive processes that are interpretive, subjective, and nonlinear in nature. Many have rightfully identified this book not only as seminal but as a game changer in thinking about organizations and their development (Czarniawska 2005).

Weick developed four subprocesses of "organizing," incorporating and extending the social psychological concepts of Don Campbell's (1965) evolutionary epistemology. These mutually interdependent sequential subprocesses are *ecological (environmental) change*, *human enactment* (Weick replaced Campbell's "variation" with "enactment" and added feedback loops among the subprocesses), *selection*, and *retention*. Weick's book devoted a full chapter to each process; however, here we focus on only one of the processes of organizing – the concept of *human enactment*.

Weick's inclusion of the concept of human enactment as part of the evolutionary process of organizing was game changing because it insisted that we understand ourselves as part of our environment and that we understand the environment as part of ourselves. The prevailing rational models focused on scanning the environment to identify threats to the organization's well-being and then reacting to the threat. Enactment, however, emphasized the mutually reciprocating relationships between human actions and the characteristics of our perceived environments. "People, often alone, actively put things out there that they then perceive and negotiate about perceiving" (Weick 1979, p. 165). This concept of enacting has been captured in one of Weick's better-known phrases, "How can I/we know what I/we think until I/we see what I/we say?" (p. 134).

Many of these ideas of organizing flew in direct opposition to those advocating rational decision-making models and planning, in which managers and employees would follow prescribed routines or recipes for a successful organizational change. In reality, many of those prescribed, planned changes failed (upward of 75%) (Burke 2011) because the focus was on the "plan," not on human processes:

> It is our contention that most "objects" in organizations consist of communications, meaning, images, myth, and interpretation, all of which offer considerable latitude for definition and self-validation. (Weick 1979, p. 157)

Before we leave Weick's concept of organizing, it is worth noting other concepts and language that were, at the time, "jolting" for the field of organizational change. Here is a sample of these jolting themes, with their page reference from *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (1979):

- People do not have to agree on "goals" to act collectively; **they first agree on means** (p. 91).
- **Ambivalence** is the optimal compromise. All actions embody "ambivalence" to deal with incompatible demands of flexibility and stability (p. 229).
- **Ecological change** provides the enacting environment the raw materials for **sensemaking** (p. 130).
- **Enactment** is to organizing as variation is to natural selection (p. 130).

- When things are clear, **doubt**; when there is doubt, treat things as if they are clear (p. 221).
- To doubt is to discredit **unequivocal information;** to act decisively is to discredit **equivocal information** (p. 221).
- Chaotic action is preferable to orderly inaction (p. 243).
- Enactment is the only aspect of the organizing process where the organism directly engages an external "environment" (p. 130).
- **Ignorance is functional** (p. 120).
- Everything flows, **adaptation can preclude adaptability**, and things keep falling apart (p. 120).
- **Loose coupling** promotes adaptation (p. 120).

The concepts listed in bold appeared time and again in Weick's later theorizing. As he moved closer to the management sciences, it became apparent that understanding these concepts required more understanding of the organization's environment, structure, and information. His later work not only focused on the level of human actions and cognition but also allowed him to integrate his consideration of collective cognition and structuring as part of organizing.

## Collective Interpretation and Loose Coupling

To better understand organizing dynamics and change, one must understand the relationships between internal interactions, perceptions, beliefs, and the nature of the external environment. Weick's commitment to human enactment is found not only at the individual level of analysis but also at the collective level of the organization. Both levels are critical to the evolutionary process of making meaning of information and learning. This commitment was furthered in a paper he coauthored with Richard Daft (1984) in which they proposed organizations as "interpretive systems."

The authors defined interpretation as the organizational process by which information from the environment is given meaning based on managerial actions with the environment. The organization's ability to interpret its environment can be analyzed using a two-dimensional matrix. The first dimension of analysis is management's beliefs about the analyzability of the external environment (dichotomized into analyzable or unanalyzable), and the second dimension is the extent to which the organization intrudes to understand its environment (dichotomized into passive or active). With these two dimensions, the authors constructed a schema that delineates four modes of organizational (collective) interpretation (and samples of managers' scanning, decision-making, and interpreting behaviors): *conditioned viewing* (passive and analyzable, e.g., routine detection, formal data), *undirected viewing* (passive and unanalyzable, e.g., nonroutine detection, informal data, hunch, reactor), *discovering* (active and analyzable, e.g., formal search, surveys, active detection), and *enacting* (active and unanalyzable, e.g., experiments, inventing the environment, testing, learning by doing). This suggested framework allows managers to evaluate their actions in relation to their beliefs and an ever-changing environmental

ecology. It characterizes interpretation as a distributed practice that must include the larger and more complex relationships of organizing and structuring.

Earlier, Weick (1976) turned to a more direct analysis of the impact of human actions on organizational structuring by expanding the concept of "loose coupling" (Glassman 1973). Using public educational organizations as his venue, he analyzed the concept by pointing out potential functions and dysfunctions of this mode of social coupling. He drew an image of loose coupling entities (events) that "are responsive, but that each event also preserves it own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness" (Weick 1976, p. 3). This characterization of interacting systems allows for potential organizational change to occur through interactions, while also allowing for the preservation of entity identity. The loosely coupled system's coordination and interactions are dependent on "soft" structural mechanisms such as value congruency, flow of information, and modes of communications. He went on to explain that "these 'soft' structures appear to develop, persist, and impose crude orderliness among their elements" (p. 2) and that "loose coupling also carries connotations of impermanence, dissolvability, and tacitness, all of which are . . . potentially crucial properties of the 'glue' that holds organizations together" (p. 3).

Weick delineated seven assumptions about the configurations of loose coupling. Each assumption has both a function and a potential dysfunction, with the dysfunction shown in parentheses:

- Lowers the probability that the organization will have to – or be able to – respond to each little change in the environment (possibly not responsive)
- May provide a sensitive mechanism (possibly oversensitive)
- May be a good system for localized adaptation (may resist standardization)
- May be able to retain a greater number of mutations and novel solutions, in terms of the identity, uniqueness, and separateness of elements, than would a tightly coupled system (or may prevent diffusion of information)
- Allows any breakdowns in one portion of a loosely coupled system to be sealed off and not affect other portions of the organization (or possibly leads to isolation)
- Allows more room for self-determination by the actors (or actors may resist)
- Should be relatively inexpensive to run because it takes time and money to coordinate people (nonrational system of fund allocation) (Weick 1976, pp. 6–9)

The functions/characteristics of loose coupling were revisited in a review of the literature by Orton and Weick (1990), in which they developed a typology of loose coupling that incorporated causes of, types of, direct effects of, and compensation for loose coupling. In addition, the model addressed organizational outcomes such as persistence, buffering adaptability, and effectiveness. Their discussions refined the idea of loose coupling by considering both tight coupling and loose-tight coupling alternatives in their typology. However, they left us with one piece of advice, "To state that an organization is a loosely coupled system is the beginning of a discussion, not the end" (p. 219). Over the last four decades, the fields of management and organizational development have focused on these organizing dynamics by

leaning toward organizations as ever-changing loosely coupled systems with less emphasis on managing loose-tight structuring (Burke 2014).

Weick's view of collective interpreting and structuring (coupling) as part of organizing has implications for what information is considered, how organizing impacts the meaning of that information, and how the cognitive process enacts, in a reciprocating manner, the ecology of the environment. It is in this context of meaning making that we see the importance of how managers (and others) communicate and make sense of their worlds.

## Sensemaking

In the 1990s, Weick moved his organizing ontology into a more specific epistemology and comprehensive analysis of how people make sense of what is going on around them. Weick's sensemaking contribution emanates from his analysis of human venues that are characterized by the existence of multiple meanings, ambiguity, complexity, disintegrating structures, and, in many cases, unexpected interruptions to routine organizational life. In "The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations: The Mann Gulch Disaster" (Weick 1993a), he analyzed the tragic failure and death of 13 forest firefighters in 1949 (MacLean 1992).

Weick described sensemaking as a process of assigning meaning to what we observe. It "is about contextual rationality – it is built out of vague questions, muddy answers, and negotiated agreements that attempt to reduce confusion" (Weick 1993a, p. 636). In the collapse of sensemaking, Weick used contextual concepts such as interlocking routines, habituated action patterns, improvisation, respectful interaction, deviation amplification, and bricolage to convince us that the ideas of sensemaking are applicable to most organizations – independent of the severity of their missions.

Two years later, Weick expanded his sensemaking analysis into a book, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Weick 1995a), where he made the concept available to a broader audience of managers and change agents. In his unobtrusive manner, he saw the book as "a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities, rather than as a body of knowledge" (p. xi). The book opens with a discussion of physicians making sense of, and discerning meaning from, the examination of injured children in emergency rooms and failing to consider the possibility of injuries due to parental child abuse. The use of this example, as opposed to firefighting, portrays the collapse of sensemaking as an outcome that all of us could suffer. His characterization of sensemaking reveals his past convictions concerning organizing and interpretation: "To talk about sensemaking is to talk about reality as an ongoing accomplishment that takes form when people make retrospective sense of the situation in which they find themselves and their creations" (p. 15).

He clarified the characteristics of sensemaking by delineating seven of its properties: (1) grounded in identity construction (through human interaction), (2) retrospective (thinking after we act), (3) enactive of a sensible environment (with the sensemakers part of their environments), (4) social (with people's actions shaping

each other's meanings and sensemaking processes), (5) ongoing (with flows as the constants of sensemaking), (6) focused on and by extracted cues (which are simple, familiar structures that are seeds from which people develop a larger sense of what may be occurring), and (7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (with a focus on plausibility, pragmatics, coherence, reasonableness, invention, and instrumentality) (Weick 1995a, pp. 17–62).

For Weick, "sensemaking is grounded in both individual and social activity and whether the two are even separable will be a recurrent issue . . . , because it has been a durable tension in the human condition" (p. 5). For example, the sensemaking characteristic of *social* stems from his perceptions that "social order is created continuously as people make commitments and develop valid socially acceptable justifications for their commitments. Phrased in this way, individual sensemaking has the potential to be transformed into social structure and maintain those structures" (Weick 1993b, p. 26). This interaction between sensemaking and the collective structure (Weick and Roberts 1993) develops a language of organizational mind from the actions of heedful interrelations. "The concepts of heed, intelligent action, comprehension, recapitulation, and resocialization come together in the concept of collective mind as heedful interrelating" (p. 368).

It is important that we understand that Weick's sensemaking contribution redirects the focus from the traditional system's control over the individual to a situation that places more responsibility on the actions and thinking of the organization's members. It draws attention to the impact of our actions on others' meaning, the awareness of organizing cues, and the realization that plausibility is more the measure of our actions than accuracy. Incorporated into these characteristics is individual and collective interdependence. Weick's work in sensemaking highlights a lesson that organizational change professionals have learned: that is, both the individual and the collective levels of sensemaking are necessary for the development and maintenance of the capacity of an organization to adapt. If we want to prepare organizational members for a future that we cannot specifically predict, then we have to focus on their capacity to make sense of the unexpected.

## Surprise and Managing the Unexpected

The development of the sensemaking concept from the analysis of disasters pointed to a failure of sensemaking by the individuals involved. In many respects, the failure was seen as not being able to, as a group or organization, understand the "unexpected" quickly enough – whether it was a change in the direction of a wildfire (Weick 1993a), a misunderstanding in the speech-exchange system (Weick 1990), or making sense of blurred images of a damaged space shuttle (Weick 2005). These cases contributed to Weick's interest in organizations that are confronted with

complex situations and yet are successful in spite of the "unexpected" nature of their environments.

He turned his attention to types of organizations that have been labeled high-reliability organizations (HROs) to better understand the dynamics of sensemaking in environments of continuous change and potential surprise. It appears that what was missing in the case of the disasters was mindful organizing (Weick and Roberts 1993). This lack of mindful organizing was linked to the inability to detect error (Weick et al. 1999):

> While there has been some recognition that cognitive processes are important in high reliability functioning, what has been missing from these accounts is a clear specification of ways in which these diverse processes interrelate to produce effective error detection. (Weick et al. 1999, p. 36)

Weick and Sutcliffe again broadened the audience with the publication of *Managing the Unexpected: Sustained Performance in a Complex World* (3rd ed., 2015). In this work and prior editions of the book (Weick and Sutcliffe 2001, 2007), the authors stayed true to Weick's theoretical threads in earlier works (such as the concepts of sensemaking, heedfulness, enacting, and organizing) as they developed in more detail five principles of mindful organizing and management of the unexpected. They made it clear that these principles, although derived from HRO theory, are applicable to a wide range of cases and demonstrate the collective commitment and competence required for mindful organizing. Each principle is characterized by the cognitive actions of individuals and the collective and the increased importance of sensemaking:

- A preoccupation with failure, characterized by doubt as a mind-set and institutionalized wariness (p. 45)
- A reluctance to simplify, characterized by thinking and questioning out loud and reviewing assessments as evidence grows (p. 62)
- A sensitivity to operations, characterized by heedful interacting and integrated/shared mental maps (p. 77)
- A commitment to resilience, characterized by accelerated feedback, treatment of past experiences with ambivalence, and a mind-set of cure rather than prevention (p. 94)
- A deference to expertise, characterized by listening with humility, being wary of centralization and hierarchy, and creating flexible decision structures (p. 112)

In all organizational changes, we encounter interruptions as we manage the emergent, and many times unexpected, consequences of change. By evoking these principles, the authors challenge those theorists that profess a focus only on success, simplifying, standardizing, managing critical paths, planning, and centralizing control when confronted with the unexpected. If we are concerned with organizing and

sensemaking and the human condition is always in flux, then one can argue that in all types of organizations, we have to learn to manage the unexpected. It is obvious that the five principles derived from HROs apply to most organizations. Weick and Sutcliffe (2015) provide us with insight as to "how" we might manage the unexpected aspect of human nature:

> Ask yourself, can I alter our ways of working so that it is easier for people to puzzle over small disruptions, question familiar labels, understand what they are currently doing, enhance their options, and identify the expertise that is needed? (p. 159)

## New Insights: The Pragmatics of Theorizing

Weick's contributions, as briefly outlined above, have had a large impact on how we envision organizations, not as "things," but as people organizing, enacting, interpreting, loosely/tightly coupling, sensemaking, and managing the unexpected. However, I believe that one of Weick's most significant contributions to the field of organizational change and management has been the demystifying of the actions and thinking associated with theory building. I have come to value his epistemological contributions that "What Theory Is Not, Theorizing Is" (Weick 1995b, p. 385). That is, "theorizing" is a process rather than an end.

I came to academia in 1990 after 10 years of practice as the director of organizational development at a federal government agency. My experience in this role left me with observations and questions concerning the efficacy of our ability to change organizations: Why could not we reach a stable organizational state? Why had our "models" of change not achieved their stated goals? What happened to the "laws" governing social interaction? And, why did managers so vehemently discount the idea that managerial theory is useful?

It was my intent to explore these questions and to hopefully develop a network of scholar practitioners that would promote organizational change, not only from a "data"-driven perspective but also from a theory-practice foundation. Of particular concern was how I would be able to convince my students (managers and executives with 10–20 years of experience) that theory was not a bad word and that good theory could be useful, that social theory could provide an explanation for what we experience. I believed Kurt Lewin when he said that there was nothing so practical as good theory.

Of course, as new academics do, I turned to the literature. This is where I discovered a recent paper written by Weick entitled "Theory Construction as Disciplined Imagination" (1989). This paper (winner of the Best Paper of the Year Award from the *Academy of Management Review*) opened up new avenues to the world of building useful theory in the social sciences. Weick, again in opposition to traditional models (e.g., theory building as a logical problem-solving approach), introduced theory building in the social sciences not only as a "process" of *theorizing* but one in

which imagination was seen as a positive, as opposed to a negative that required controls:

> Theorizing is viewed as disciplined imagination, where the 'discipline' in theorizing comes from consistent application of selection to trial-and-error thinking and the 'imagination' in theorizing comes from deliberate diversity introduced into the problem statements, thought trials, and selection criteria that comprise that thinking. (p. 516)

Weick equated theorizing to sensemaking (p. 519), with variation and conjectures being useful where " a greater number of diverse conjectures produces better theory than a process characterized by smaller numbers of homogeneous conjectures" (p. 522). Again disrupting prevailing thinking, Weick stated that plausibility is a substitute for validity, with plausibility being assessed by a variety of selection criteria such as what is "interesting, obvious, connected, believable, beautiful and/or real" (Weick 1989, pp. 523–527). With this new perspective, one must always be vigilant since the line between "that is interesting" and "that is in my best interest" can become very blurred in the world of organizing (p. 528).

The "theorizer" must keep in mind that "theories in organizational studies are approximations" (Weick 1995b, p. 386) and thus are always open to change. It means we have to be ready to "drop our tools" (Weick 1996b, 2007) and consider alternative explanations. This means that theorizing can be trying and hard work. Weick viewed the theorizing process as "cogitating and racking one's brain" – with brain racking taken from Talcott Parsons' idea of theory building (Isaac 2010). He felt that "racking is an appropriate description because it preserves the effortful struggles in theorizing between such dualities as variation and retention, living forward while understanding backward, perception and conception, and concreteness and abstraction" (Weick 2014, p. 178).

Returning to my entry into academia and my students, portraying social theory building as a process of theorizing or sensemaking changed the rules of engagement for scholar practitioners. Instead of a set of "laws" (nouns) that should explain behaviors in organizations, my students now could picture theory as an ongoing effort to understand relationships of action and cognition in complex environments. It provided a different perspective on the word "theory"; theory was now seen as theorizing (the action verb). This conceptualization became invaluable as my students were becoming scholar practitioners. Theory was no longer a dirty word. They saw what Weick meant in this statement:

> A disconfirmed assumption is an opportunity for a theorist to learn something new, to discover something unexpected, to generate renewed interest in an old question, to mystify something that had previously seemed settled, to heighten intellectual stimulation, to get recognition, and to alleviate boredom. (Weick 1989, p. 525)

It opened a window for them, not only into research and theory building (and their dissertations) but also into how they saw their practice as managers. This meant that

they were capable of theorizing from their experiences as conjectures to be developed through diverse thinking, action, and imagination.

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: Continue on the Journey of Understanding

Karl Weick's legacy continues to grow. He is actively pursuing a better understanding of people's thinking and actions in environments that are complex and self-organizing. For example, in a recent paper in which he explored the role of ambiguity, he opened his argument with the premise, "To increase ambiguity is to grasp more of the situation" (Weick 2015b, p. 1). Once again we see that he is challenging the traditional idea that simplifying ambiguity makes it more manageable. And once again, after five decades, he is still asking us to complicate ourselves, believe there is no one "best way," and appreciate the journey of understanding rather than seeing it only as a destination of our thinking.

Part of Weick's legacy is quite apparent in the contributions outlined above. In addition, his legacy includes those that have incorporated and built on his understandings. They include Sutcliffe on managing the unexpected in high-reliability organizations (Weick and Sutcliffe 2015), Barbara Czarniawska on organizational theorizing (Czarniawska-Joerges 1992), Dennis Gioia on sensegiving (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991), Rob Stones on strong structuration (Stones 2005), and Taylor and Van Every on communication and emergence (Taylor and Van Every 2000).

What is not apparent from these discussions is that he has approached his quest for understanding people as they coordinate and collectively improvise with vigor, enthusiasm, and faithfulness to the concepts he professes. Let me share a brief example. We were very lucky that Karl agreed to visit and teach our scholar practitioners at George Washington University over the last 27 years. When he visited, he would start off by talking about his topic (sometimes organizing, sometimes sensemaking) and then he would grab a chair and sit down in front of the class and say, "I really would like to hear what you have to say about this topic." Of course, that started a conversation between the students and Karl that went on for hours. Sometimes he would even pull out his news reporter notebook from his coat pocket (he always has it with him) and would take notes on "interesting points that came up." Of course, the students would say, "Did you see that? Karl Weick took notes on what I had to say. Wow!"

## Conclusion

Karl Weick has always been open to questioning his own work, listening to the world around him, and changing his perceptions and conceptions if he senses a different route. He is truly intrigued by potential variations in his own and others'

conceptualization of organizing. The perceptions and concepts that he has pursued over the last five decades still urge him onto addressing his first interests in coordination and collective improvisation.

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## Further Reading

## As Further Reading, I Would Suggest the Following Books that Provide a Scholarly/Research Perspective to Weick's Work (with Complete Citations Provided in the Reference Section):

*The Social Psychology of Organizing* (2nd ed., Weick 1979)
*Making Sense of the Organization* (Vol. 1, Weick 2001, and Vol. 2, Weick 2009)

## The Following Books Provide a Broader Scope for the Scholar Practitioner:

*Sensemaking in Organizations,* 1995
*Managing the Unexpected: Sustained Performance in a Complex World* (3rd ed., 2015, with K. M. Sutcliffe)

## The Following Papers Provide Insights for Change Agents:

"Fatigue of the spirit in organizational theory and organization development: Reconnaissance man as remedy" (1990)
"Collective mind in organizations: Heedful interrelating on flight decks" (1993, with K. H. Roberts)
"Drop your tools: An allegory for organizational studies" (1996)
"Drop your tools: On reconfiguring management education" (2007)
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# Marvin Weisbord: A Life of Action Research 84

Martin D. Goldberg

**Abstract**

Marvin Weisbord's work – as professional author, business executive, organizational consultant, researcher, Future Search method founder, and cofounder of its global network – spanned 50 years. He was a partner in the esteemed consultancy, Block Petrella Weisbord Inc., and he was a prolific writer and thinker, as well as practical craftsman, in the field. He is widely known for his multi-edition, *Productive Workplaces: Dignity, Meaning and Community in the 21st Century* (2012), chronicling the history of organizational improvement, the rise of its seminal concepts, and how he absorbed them in his own personal and professional development and in case studies. He worked and learned from many of the greatest names in organization development (OD) and was influenced intellectually most profoundly by Kurt Lewin. He saw in Lewin's "action research" less of a technical change methodology than a way of thinking about and addressing organizational life and its dilemmas, using one's own and others' experience as the major source of change. This chapter describes the arc of his professional, conceptual, and practice development as an embodiment of action research. It also covers six enduring contributions of his – value-based perspectives, principles, and practices – and explores limitations and renewed possibilities of Weisbord's legacy to the future of the field.

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## Contents

## Introduction

I finally met Marvin Weisbord in November 2014 through a video interview I conducted with him as part of Pepperdine University's Master of Science in Organization Development (MSOD) Founders Video Series (Law et al. 2015). As a nonacademic organization development (OD) practitioner interested in theory, I had incorporated his ideas into my work for many years. We immediately connected, a tribute to his warmth, presence, and enthusiasm, qualities that have always shined through his books and articles. I set out to capture the evolution of his experience-based change learnings – the "whole elephant in the room," as he would say. This was no small task, given the scope of his 50-plus-year career as writer, business executive, researcher, and organizational consultant, as well as Future Search founder and codirector of its global, nonprofit network. Through all, he interwove eclectic threads of OD thinking in an emerging synthesis of concept and craft.

During his entire career, Weisbord sought to hear and bring together others' voices as part of a bigger picture "to help improve the conditions of things," both human and situational. He was keen on understanding how diverse schools of organizational thought informed his firsthand experiences. He avidly absorbed lessons from the sages of participative management, intrapersonal and group dynamics, sociotechnical redesign, systems theory, and large-scale change, but he never lost sight of basic common sense. He was equal parts practitioner, observer, sensemaker, and thinker, influenced by so many, as he lovingly credited in his professional odyssey, *Productive Workplaces: Dignity, Meaning and Community in the 21st Century* (2012), an unconventional work that evolved in successive editions over decades, much like Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. It is a rich chronicle of Weisbord's experience, a history of the field, and a critique of his own work, in which he revisited cases and revised his thinking to follow-up on organizations' years after he had worked with them.

This chapter begins with a synopsis of Weisbord's career. Through a few "marker" stories, I want to convey a sense of his *personal* future search: the experiences, influences, and questions that impelled him from one career phase to another and

from which his practical wisdom emerged. Moreover, I want to highlight his dedication to *action research* – even before he knew the term – immersing himself in experience, then letting his mind roam free on the implications for theory and practice. It is no wonder he found a special kinship with Kurt Lewin, "the practical theorist" (Marrow 1969). Looking back over the course of his professional life, Weisbord saw Lewin's action research less as a technical method than as a way of thinking about organizational dilemmas. In this sense, action research became the red thread running through his work. He also came to see it as a missing "ribbon" around much of how the field is practiced today, affecting its vitality and renewed future possibilities. But I anticipate the end of our story here. Let's begin at the beginning.

## The Arc of Weisbord's Journey: Influences and Motivations

Weisbord did not set out to do the kind of work for which he eventually became widely known. His intent, from his early days growing up in Pennsylvania, was to be a professional writer. In the 1950s, he wrote and sold general interest magazine articles during college and graduate school at the University of Illinois and the University of Iowa, having studied journalism and social science; he also served as a US Navy journalist and taught journalism at Pennsylvania State University. Additionally, he took post-master's courses in American Civilization at the University of Pennsylvania. Having married and started a family, Weisbord supplemented his writing income by joining his father's family firm during the 1960s. But he continued to publish articles and wrote two books, *Campaigning for President* (1966) and *Some Form of Peace: True Stories of the American Friends Service Committee at Home and Abroad* (1968). These books sought to understand individual stories and how together they formed larger social patterns, reflecting his abiding interests in experience-based social inquiry and his ambitions as a professional writer.

Meanwhile, his experience as a business executive in his father's direct mail, business forms manufacturing firm led him to practical dilemmas in work organization and participative management. For example, he wrestled with how to incent shop floor workers to maximize productivity, how the effects of absenteeism on work output could be reduced, and how infighting between work groups could be alleviated. Weisbord experimented with self-managing work teams in the mid-1960s, on the counsel of a friend and compensation specialist, Don Kirchhoffer and his RCA training colleague Bob Maddocks. Weisbord witnessed firsthand how informal social factors and work design affected performance on the shop floor and how changes in wage-incentive schemes, his first hunch, were not enough. Kirchhoffer gave him a copy of Douglas McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), which Weisbord said "blew his mind." Maddocks introduced him to systems thinking, a fundamental shift from his previous piecemeal way of addressing work problems. Moving the business from supervisory-led functional departments to self-managing teams – in which workers could directly coordinate and control their own work – Weisbord was struck by how a team of new, young workers learned, taught

each other their jobs, and outperformed their peers, while some former supervisors complained about a loss of power and status, despite assurances of employment and no downgrade in pay.

There were pluses and minuses with the changes he introduced. Some of the reluctant supervisors eventually left, and some of the hourly workers who stayed did not take hold of the participative path. But some results proved remarkable. In order processing, throughput increased 40% and absenteeism and turnover went to nearly zero. Workers' self-esteem shot up when – after finishing their work early – they sought out and found other productive business contributions to make.

During this time with the family firm, Weisbord proceeded with trial and error, trying to make sense of what he saw. Deeply impressed with McGregor's *Human Side*, he also wanted "something more specific." He found it in McGregor's posthumous book, *The Professional Manager* (1967). A chapter on the redesign of a circuit board manufacturing plant, part of Non-Linear Systems Inc., informed Weisbord's practical efforts at establishing the self-led teams, and his trying out a pay-for-knowledge scheme to support multi-skill learning. This was his first acquaintance with sociotechnical approaches, which he would later delve into fully. He also read Rensis Likert's *New Patterns of Management* (1961), where he was attracted by how Likert quantified and systematically operationalized the management orientations of McGregor's Theories X and Y. Likert's work underscored what became Weisbord's central takeaway from McGregor: Business is a *human* enterprise and requires placing the existential human factor at the center of productive work. McGregor was also an eye-opener, because Weisbord saw how, without ever intending to, he had been caught up in bureaucratic, control-oriented Theory X assumptions in his management of the business. This recognition helped free him to experiment as he did with the self-managing teams. This first foray into sociotech also provided a root experience in which he began to see that, at bottom, the business and human dimensions of organizations are not antithetical, as they often become in practice and ideology. They are inextricable. Important technical tasks and business outcomes could not be obtained without real attention to the *inner quality* of the human experience, not just human behavior. By the same token, business, economic, market, and technological factors, along with flexible work design structures, were essential to address. After all, they were the *practical, dynamic context* in which purposeful work – and human growth in organizational settings – happened.

Weisbord left the family business in 1968 with the aim of dedicating himself to magazine and book writing. Despite his rich learning and accomplishments, he considered his years as a manager "wasted" for not doing what he really wanted. Later, he came to realize that his business experience laid the groundwork for a career in consulting, OD, and a new focus in his writing. This awareness began when his friend Bernard Asbell, a professional writer, asked Weisbord to join him in a consulting project with the Ford Foundation's Division of Education and Research. "Why me?" Weisbord asked. "I don't know anything about consulting." Asbell replied, "All we do is interview people and write a report – what you do all the time – and we can figure out the rest. Besides, they pay $100 day a day – each." Weisbord, having a family to support, thought, "Why not?" The two began the

project, and one evening over dinner, Weisbord talked with Asbell about a new book idea he had been mulling over: the effects on a community when it is bypassed by the building of a superhighway. "Why would you write about that?" asked Asbell. "All you do is talk about those work teams in your business. That's what you should be writing about." Asbell was prescient, and there was Weisbord's future unfolding right in front of him.

He decided to explore the topic with a set of articles, the first of which was a 1969 assignment from *The New York Times Magazine* to write about NTL T-Groups, unstructured, experiential learning labs in human relations, radical in concept. He called NTL cofounder Bradford, who invited him to lunch along with then-NTL staffer Charlie Seashore. They agreed that Weisbord could participate in and write about a group, even though he imagined they thought him a bit naive. They introduced him to Bill Dyer, a then-top T-Group "trainer." With the participants' consent, Weisbord sat in the group as an observer, taking copious notes. He was captivated by what he saw and felt during the weeklong event. He identified with the mid-managers in attendance, as well as Dyer in his special facilitative role, attuned to what was happening moment-to-moment. As it turned out, the article was never published. But Dyer read the manuscript and wrote that he considered it the best ever written about T-Groups, aligned with what he was trying to accomplish descriptively and conceptually. The piece was not published until it was included in the third edition of *Productive Workplaces* (2012).

Weisbord began reading more deeply in the thinking and history of the emerging OD field that was burgeoning with new publications. In 1969 and 1970, he read the entire new Addison Wesley OD series, including books by Richard Beckhard, Ed Schein, Warren Bennis, and Paul Lawrence, all of whom he would subsequently meet and learn from. He read Chris Argyris' *Intervention Theory and Method: A Behavioral Science View* (1970) and Likert's *The Human Organization: Its Management and Value* (1967). He began writing articles on management topics for IBM's provocative *Think* magazine, the editor of which he knew from his graduate school days in Iowa. The Ford Foundation project led to consulting assignments, and he dove into Alfred Marrow's biography of Lewin, *The Practical Theorist* (1969). When he encountered Lewin, Weisbord was hooked. "This is where I knew I belong," he said.

Lewin's writings, from their first in the 1920s through the 1940s, were a huge influence on Weisbord. He saw the principles and practices of action research as not just a method but as a way of engaging with people and ideas. "Lewin's organizational change theories enormously attracted me after my experiences as a manager," Weisbord wrote. "And 'action research' soon formed the core of my consulting practice."

Lewin conceived a novel form of problem solving that might be called "doing by learning." Lewin wed scientific management to democratic values and gave birth to participative management. And he did much more. He taught that to understand a system, you must seek to change it. This led to one of the key managerial insights of the last century: Diagnosis does not mean just finding the problem, but doing it in such a way as to build commitment for action. His was an unprecedented idea. While solving a problem, you could study your own process and thereby refine the theory and practice of change. He also pointed the way

toward collaborative consultation. Lewin showed that even technical and economic problems have social consequences that include people's feelings, perceptions of reality, sense of self-worth, motivation and commitment. It is not given to consultants to sow the seeds for change (a screwy notion that spells trouble), but *to discover what seeds are present and whether they can be grown* [emphasis added]. We owe that precious insight to Lewin. (Weisbord 2012, pp. 80–81)

Weisbord saw Lewin's pioneering discoveries as profound: in interpersonal, group, organizational, and social dynamics; in fundamentally humanizing Frederick Taylor's insights (e.g., "scientific management") while still seeking precision; and in articulating a way to think, learn about, and encourage interdependent change *to the extent that conditions for change – themselves subject to discovery – were present*. Weisbord's appreciation of Lewin only deepened over time. He came to see Lewin's advances as permeating the entirety of OD.

Professionally, he came a member of NTL Institute and his consulting practice began to blossom. Weisbord partnered with many consultants, continuing to learn, co-learn, and try out many emerging techniques. At NTL, Warner Burke supported him in training workshops and facilitating labs. He also worked with Gail Silverman, Peter Vail, Allan Drexler, Ronald Lippitt, and Tony Petrella. During the 1970s, in consulting, he spent several years working with Paul Lawrence in nine academic medical centers. Their project evolved from Weisbord's first major change effort with Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in its metamorphosis to a coeducational institution. Drawing upon Likert's ideas, he helped create a participative structure using "linking pin" planning councils, to rethink the mission, organizational structure, and budget process.

His lessons learned included appreciating the difference between relatively easy-to-grasp organizational change concepts and procedures and actualizing meaningful movement in the face of turbulent social conditions and real-world stakeholder constraints. Whether or not the change efforts produced the structural outcomes or "deliverables" as intended, the mutual support of the planning councils proved fertile for the medical school's future. This work resulted in several research studies that Weisbord copublished under the auspices of NIH and the Association of American Medical Colleges (1978). It also led to his provocative essay, "Why Organization Development Hasn't Worked (So Far) in Medical Centers (1976)." Of the latter, years after revisiting some of the key players of the case, Weisbord said that he had "learned the wrong lesson from experience" because there had been enduring value in the collaboration and connective tissue created by the intervention itself, notwithstanding the lack of immediate structural effects. In a similar vein, drawing upon the work of Likert and his colleague Floyd Mann from the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research, Weisbord focused on other consulting projects that used survey research. He was struck by Mann's emphasis on the importance of feedback and dialogue in addition to the use of survey instruments, even though Weisbord was instinctively drawn to the measurement of "soft" factors like decision-making. At the end of the day, survey "findings" came alive only through their relevance to people's actual experiences. This thinking was also consistent with how Weisbord came away from his NTL training work. He found the human relations lab

moments – critical as they were – to be meaningful only insofar as he was able to connect them back to his real-world experience of improving organizational life.

He first heard the cobbled expression "realife" (as in, "Yes, that's fine for a workshop but what happens when you try it back in *realife*?") from Peter Block. Weisbord had met Block and Petrella at an OD Network conference in 1970, and by 1974, he joined their partnership after working on projects with each of them and with Petrella at NTL team building labs. Block Petrella Weisbord Inc. became one of the most renowned OD and learning firms in the world, from the mid-1970s through the mid-1990s.

Despite differences in their areas of focus, the partners shared similar orientations as non-PhD practitioners strongly interested in ideas. As Weisbord put it, they were hard-nosed businessmen committed to improving work systems *and* their human dimensions. By nature, they were each imaginative innovators and design-thinkers. They found natural synergies to build on and learn from: Block the philosopher-advocate and teacher-trainer par excellence; Petrella the gifted practitioner, team builder, and large system change interventionist; and Weisbord ever the journalist-observer in the way he worked, bringing people together to coevolve a bigger future.

One of Weisbord's deep learnings came from seeing Petrella's innovations in team building technique, both of them having been influenced by the human dynamics of Mike Blansfield's "Team Effectiveness Theory (Weisbord 1985b)." The classical form of team building was that of interviewing each of the team members and summarizing the findings into themes that were then fed back to the team for consideration, deliberation, and action planning. This method in essence followed Lewin's course of providing feedback to "unfreeze" the system.

Petrella was struck by the oddity of the interventionist's being the one who summarized the findings and provided the feedback, since the team members were the ones with the perceptions in the first place. All the more, given that the aim of team building was for the members to get closer. He hit upon the idea of interviewing each member in front of the others, based on what he or she was willing to share. This way, the members owned responsibility for sharing their perspectives and engaging with each other directly, creating fuller unfreezing of the status quo, an immediate picture of the whole, and greater possibilities for the future. Each had to decide on the extent of his or her self-disclosure and willingness to trust others from the get-go. This illuminated the observations Weisbord had made while working with Asbell, when he wondered aloud, "Why are we as the consultants writing the reports when the participants are the ones who know what's happening?" With Petrella's innovation, the team building task could now be seen practically, as a matter of *structuring the context* in which the members could share their own thinking and put the bigger picture together for themselves. This influenced Weisbord to take another look at his more general consulting approach. Prior to his years with Block Petrella Weisbord, he had formulated his well-known "Six Box Model" published in *Organizational Diagnosis: A Workbook of Theory and Practice* (1978). The six-box model had roots in Weisbord's prior experience with the family firm and Maddocks' systems thinking influence. When Weisbord conceived it, the six-box model – purposes, structure, relationships, rewards, helpful mechanisms, and leadership – aimed to provide a practical assessment tool: where to look for

issues and where to offer help. But as he continued his own development, he became uncomfortable with the idea of "diagnosis" as a more discreet phase of work that an OD "expert" performed. He found the concept of diagnosis to be too far removed from the necessary work that organizational members must do themselves to *own* the assessment, and he found the idea of diagnosis too fixed to deal with the increasing speed and dynamism of organizational change. Weisbord began to reframe Lewin's "unfreezing, moving, and refreezing" as part of a nonstop change process. He came to think of the six-box model as a set of snapshots depicting where a system is at any point in time. The model was most useful when clients collected their own data, developing commitment to act.

His understanding of systems thinking deepened as he met and worked with Eric Trist as part of his continuing work with Block Petrella Weisbord. Trist had studied Lewin's work and was a colleague of the pioneering social psychiatrist Wilfred Bion at London's Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. Weisbord grew close to Trist until the latter's death in 1993. Trist also introduced his collaborator Fred Emery and wife Merrelyn to Weisbord. Beginning in the late 1970s, Weisbord had many conversations with the Emerys about their and his work. He became immersed in sociotechnical and open-systems theory and practice, appreciating these approaches' revolutionary implications for the workplace. Among the many lessons he learned, Weisbord became more explicit in his grasp of work design as the central *task* focus of systemic change efforts (a key learning from the fiery, no-nonsense Fred Emery), as well as his understanding of human dynamics – some of which were unconscious – as the central *process* focus needed (a learning from the more empathic Trist). Trist and Emery's own collaboration provided Weisbord with a wide-angle lens for comprehending his experiences as a whole, helping him crystallize his lessons from business, consulting, and NTL around large-scale change.

Two more points about Emery and Trist are noteworthy to mention before turning to the final chapter of Weisbord's professional life, his work developing Future Search and the Future Search Network. His takeaway from Emery on the need for participants to transform objective work processes in no way diminished Weisbord's attention to the human dynamics always present as people worked the redesign tasks – for example, ways they would engage or disengage, project, and counterproject with each other and the change facilitator. He considered this subjective dimension the heart of transformation efforts. Emery thought this soft, but Weisbord persisted: Unless *inner* emotional experience was touched – not merely shifts made in work process and behavior – then the fuller productivity, meaningfulness, and motivating power of the change would be in question. "This was something the Emerys never quite got, despite their big contributions," Weisbord recounted (Law et al. 2015). Trist encouraged Weisbord toward "a conceptual emboldening" for *Productive Workplaces*, resulting in Weisbord's "learning curve" formulation (described more fully in the next section of this chapter). This was a conceptualization that not only framed the book but the entire evolution of the field. Even more was the personal effect of the relationship on Weisbord and the role model that Trist provided. Weisbord fondly remembered:

Eric was my friend, colleague, mentor, gentlest collaborator and toughest critic. For 15 years I had enjoyed his calm presence, dry wit, boundless compassion and intellectual rigor. Eric had a quality shared with his mentor Kurt Lewin. That was the ability to find a kernel of truth in every statement, a seed of constructive possibility in every experiment, no matter how outlandish. I had seen Eric many times take a novel idea, turn it this way and that, and hand it back to its originator richer, fuller, and more insightful. (Weisbord 2012, p. 198)

Weisbord's interest in large-scale conference formats represented a culmination of his preceding work, as he brought people together to work on whole systems improvement themselves. He had already known Merrelyn Emery and her work with her husband and Trist in the search conference format. He got to know Lewin's student Lippitt, who had pioneered large-group, future-oriented community meetings with Eva Schindler-Rainman. Weisbord was especially struck by the opportunity to apply the conference approach to organizations and, before long, also applied it to wider social communities too. He came to realize that too much emphasis was placed on the "change agent" to sew an organization together through cascading interventions, teaching people, and the like. Rather, he saw that the issues needing tackling were imminent and from the start required a practical, holistic perspective that no one stakeholder group possessed. It was the dilemma of seeing the "whole elephant" in a way that connected to the real-world experience of everyone involved, up, down, and across organizations, and often those outside it. Later, he came to characterize this as "making systems thinking *experiential.*"

Moreover, he had found in his earlier consulting work that customary OD approaches seemed to take too long before people inevitably "hit a wall," where constructive movement at the enterprise level got stuck. This, too, reflected the truth of Lewin's maxim: "The way to understand a system is to try and change it." Only in action would the limits of what the system is really capable of be discoverable. Reciprocally, if the "field of action" was orchestrated in such a way that new kinds of interactions were possible (e.g., getting everyone in the room to address whole systems concerns), then the hold of some of the past limits could be let go of. From Lippitt, Weisbord learned that all parties with a stake in future success needed a way to get real with each other quickly, to let go of what was holding them back, and to focus on common ground. He connected with others concurrently working with large-group meetings, including Billie Alban and Kathleen Dannemiller. He also studied the Tavistock conference method from England that had especially influenced Trist. The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations was established in England at just the time NTL was being launched in the USA, influenced heavily by psychodynamic traditions employed in the social sphere, i.e., sociodynamics. Its experiential conference on group relations offers a somewhat more structured approach than T-groups to get at deep issues of power, authority, and human effectiveness in organizational life. Weisbord noted that Fred Emery, unlike his collaborator Trist, was "never a fan of the Tavi conference – it was too personal!" (Personal communication, 2016).

The distinctive Future Search approach is discussed in the next section. But it originally appeared in the first edition of *Productive Workplaces* in 1987. That year,

Weisbord took a leave of absence from Block Petrella Weisbord to be a senior research scientist at the Norwegian Institute of Technology in Trondheim, where he studied pioneering approaches to work design and large-group dialogue. He came to see the conference approach as different from OD – e.g., getting "everyone" in the room to improve whole systems themselves, integrating head and heart, body and soul in a larger environment than a single organization. Continuing his own development, he became involved with the body/mind integration work of John and Joyce Weir (1975) and their understanding of "self-differentiation," which would inform his stance as a facilitator in large-group conferences. In 1987, he met Sandra Janoff, a teacher in an experimental school where city and suburban children formed a self-managed learning community. Janoff's experience mirrored his own work with businesses, and together they began to refine Future Search principles and practices. By 1993, they had cofounded the Future Search Network. For the next 20 years, they conducted scores of conferences for businesses and communities around the world and trained more than 4,000 people in applying their principles for large-group success.

True to his original intentions, Weisbord continued writing throughout the consulting and Future Search phases of his long career. He captured his learnings in dozens of OD articles, many coauthored, and served as an associate editor of NTL's *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* from 1972 to 1978. In 1974, with Howard Lamb and Drexler, he wrote *Improving Police Department Management Through Problem-Solving Task Forces*, based on their work with an urban police force, and he refined the six-box model in a textbook, *Organizational Diagnosis,* which was published in 1978. His magnum opus, *Productive Workplaces*, first appeared in 1987; his "revisited" version of it was released in 2004 (and voted by the OD Network as one of the most influential OD books written during the last 40 years); and the 25th anniversary edition was published in 2012. In 1992, he solicited work from 35 international authors and published *Discovering Common Ground*. He and Janoff jointly authored *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There! Ten Principles for Leading Meetings That Matter* (2007); *Future Search: Getting the Whole System in the Room for Vision, Commitment and Action* (2010); and *Lead More, Control Less*: *Eight Advanced Leadership Skills That Overturn Convention* (2015). Finally of note, continuing to innovate and reflect his enduring journalist sensibilities capturing life in action, he cofounded Blue Sky Productions with Allan Kobernick and Janoff in 1987, recording more than 30 videos on workplace improvement and case studies. Weisbord was indeed a prolific author and more. We now turn to a view of his most enduring and fundamental contributions.

## A Distillation of Weisbord's Wisdom: Key Contributions

There is no question that Weisbord's contributions and influence on others in the field have been vast. But, for me, some contributions from his life's work stand out more than others, rising to a "first principle" order. For example, his six-box model was an innovative (and still widely studied) way to think about organizational diagnosis. However, I believe that the summit of Weisbord's journey yields a more

fundamental set of six learnings – conceptual and practice methodology reflections that can be distilled from his lifetime of action research. Each of these contributions has a distinctive Weisbord "ring" to it, despite his comprehensive collaboration with others and his drive to learn from (and with) so many. They are:

1. "Everybody" Improves Whole Systems
2. Human Systems Facilitation: Don't Just Do Something, Stand There
3. Putting the Socio Back into Sociotech, the O back into OD
4. Techniques that Match Our Values
5. The Future Never Comes, It's Already Here
6. The Learning Curve: Organizational Improvement Past, Present, Future

## "Everybody" Improves Whole Systems

This is the core principle behind the Future Search method. Weisbord's conception of the evolution of the field is treated in the final, sixth principle of this section. But suffice it here to say, Weisbord understood that if indeed we are confronted by what are inherently whole systems matters, then addressing them must be an all-hands effort *as a matter of principle.* Given the complexity and speed of organizational and other social system change, no one leader, person, stakeholder group, or constituency can grasp the whole of the systemic situation. All are needed to help one another see the situation, envision future possibilities, mobilize for action, and enact the future. The spirit of this, and a detailed approach, is captured in Weisbord and Janoff's *Future Search: Getting the Whole System in the Room for Vision, Commitment and Action* (2010), a work itself that evolved over three editions and 15 years of practice and learning. Regardless of the technical approach to large-group conference methods – Future Search, Open-Space Technology, Real-Time Strategic Change, or others – Weisbord came to see this principle as basic for meaningful, systemic change, one that did justice to both task achievement and human fulfillment.

In practice, getting everybody in the room for a Future Search conference means at least a "3-by-3" representation of those affected by a particular strategic concern – three functions wide and three functions deep, or more, where 60–100 people (with authority information, resources, expertise and need) are convened in a 3-day working session on the critical issue or opportunity at hand. People are invited to "come as you are," bringing their experience and thinking to bear. No prior effort to change them or train them in behaviors, skills, or systems models is needed, nor is the goal to "manage resistance" or advocate change on the part of the facilitators or meeting sponsors. Instead, it is to have the right people show up at an appropriately structured meeting in which they feel safe to share their experiences and speak heartfelt thoughts about the topic. This applies equally to executive leaders. In this, the preconference design task, done jointly with selected client partners, is to fashion a safe space for the collaborative work of the conference. This follows the general insight of Petrella's team building innovation discussed earlier, applied to the whole systems realm. The idea of getting "everybody" in the room as a large-scale meeting

concept was derived from Lippitt and Schindler-Rainman. Related core ideas for Future Search that Weisbord and Janoff (2007) identified are:

- *Explore the global, "whole elephant" context for local action and before trying to fix any part.* Again, this is a task for participants in the conference, not the work of an "expert" diagnostician, allowing all parties to "talk about the same world" and codiscover that they all share the same basic dilemmas (derived from Emery and Trist and reflecting Weisbord's transcendence of his own Six Box Model).
- *Focus on common ground and future action, not problems and conflicts.* This energizes people for concerted action and limits taking participants back down the demoralizing path of irreconcilable differences (derived again from Lippitt and Schindler-Rainman, while also anticipating the later work of Appreciative Inquiry).
- *Have people self-manage their own groups and be responsible for action.* This means that people in relevant small groups within the large meeting format directly address their own piece of the puzzle once the bigger picture and common future priorities are identified. They then report out to the plenary for feedback, dialogue, and next steps (drawing on Weisbord's early experience with self-managing teams and influenced by Emery and Trist).

These core ideas directly inform the basic Future Search agenda: Day 1 addresses "where we've been" (past); Day 2 addresses "where we are" (present) and "what we want" (future); and Day 3 includes "how we get there" (common ground and action). Traditional and innovative conference techniques are used in the Future Search approach, including storyboarding individual, group, and the organization's (or community's) historical development; focusing on people's *experience* as the biggest source of useful information; and creatively imagining and dramatizing preferred futures for all to consider.

One notable feature of Future Search is that the time devoted to "action planning" gets considerably compressed compared to many other methods because of the immersive sharing of past and current experience and future thinking. Commitments for salient action are more immediately mobilized and zeroed in on by the process itself. Participants are "living into" the desired collaborative future by virtue of the conference design, which gives them room to experience it right in the room in the rapid, 3-day setting. The sought-after future is crystallized in the "here and now," with less gap between past and future to be analytically debated and bridged. Follow-on actions and reconvening to discuss and extend progress on priorities become natural outgrowths, assuming the right conditions and people's readiness to attend to them hold.

Because of their design, Future Search conferences have been successfully held in a wide variety of countries and cultures around the world and across sectors: arts and culture, business, communities, congregations, education, environmental, government, healthcare, social services, technology, and youth. Weisbord and Janoff (2007) described multiple examples with outcomes of Future Search conferences, including community building in a Northern Ireland city, reducing sectarian conflicts through

alliances for economic renewal, work with UNICEF to demobilize child soldiers in Southern Sudan, global work connecting IKEA with NGOs to redesign its supply chain aligned with environmental sustainability, and dozens more, both commercial and social in impact. The Future Search Network site at http://www.futuresearch.net/network/videos/index.cfm also has several videos that show conferences in action and interviews with participants from across the globe. Reflections on some limitations and future possibilities of Future Search concepts can be found in the last section of this chapter, "Legacies and Unfinished Business: A Renaissance of Action Research?"

## Human Systems Facilitation: Don't Just Do Something, Stand There

Throughout his career, Weisbord understood that those seeking to engage others in bettering organizational and social conditions are best served by a stance of genuine curiosity. His instinct was always to hear the myriad voices at play and follow where the emerging story led, as a whole and in its rich detail. This perspective completely informed his work in business, OD, and Future Search. As he gave up his Theory X assumptions as an executive, assumptions that never naturally suited him, he saw the results of his experiments with self-led teams and let them shape the next steps he took.

In his OD work at NTL and with Block Petrella Weisbord, he followed the course of people's experiences – including his own – as he carefully listened and intervened. So by the time he arrived at Future Search principles and practices, he had come to a different concept of the facilitator's role: The facilitator was not only *not* there to diagnose and "lead" change but he or she was to simply stand alongside those in the system who were seeking to improve their worlds and were ready enough to get in the room together and try. The facilitator's contribution was thus to help set the stage for people to do the work themselves – which also included a major contribution, as a consultant with expertise, in structuring and qualifying the context to promote collaborative dialogue. But Weisbord's stance as facilitator in the sessions, once begun, was reflected in the title of his 2007 book on facilitation principles and practices (written again with Janoff), *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There.* Weisbord and Janoff described it as "no ordinary meeting book."

> We aim to help you free yourself from the burden of having all the answers to the mysteries of human interaction. We will introduce you to a philosophy, a theory and a practice that is at once radical and simple. To apply our ideas, you will not need to worry about anybody's behavior but your own. (Weisbord and Janoff 2007, p. ix)

Ten principles for facilitating "meetings that matter" are covered in this pithy volume, starting with those for leading meetings and including those that will be familiar from Weisbord's Future Search concepts: Get the Whole System in the Room; Control What You Can, Let Go What You Can't; Explore the "Whole Elephant;" Let People Be Responsible; Find Common Ground; and more. But two of the principles in the book's second section, "Managing Yourself," deserve special

attention because they capture deep aspects of "self as instrument," an uncommon bridge from the intra- and interpersonal to the practice of large-scale change: Make Friends with Anxiety and Get Used to Projections.

Understanding anxiety in oneself – and how it links to the anxiety those in the client system experience – is fundamental for Weisbord, especially given the complexity and uncertainty of large-scale change. Expecting anxiety (not trying to quell it for predetermined "success") is key. So is getting comfortable with the inherent projections and countertransferences that abound with all of the voices in the room. Both habits are essential to remain *present and helpful* – that is, to not simply do something out of anxiety and projection but to just stand there, really experience what is happening in the moment, and be of help. These are deep legacies from Weisbord's active years at NTL. While he and Janoff offered a range of practical suggestions to cultivate these practices, it is clear they are seen as self-mastered, emotional competencies.

For Weisbord, change readiness of system members and facilitators depends on recognition and acceptance of the inherent anxiety that change provokes. He cited Claes Janssen's concept (2011a, b) that people cycle through "four rooms of change": contentment, denial, confusion, and renewal (then back to contentment). Weisbord contended that it is only in confusion – the room of uncertainty, high anxiety, but also possibility – that people are most receptive to working together for change. Rushing people off of anxiety in order to have things tidy does not make for real interpersonal contact or headway on substance. Nor does pushing them when they are in the room of denial.

In a related way, those facilitating change are well served by staying aware of their own hot buttons to clearly recognize projections that others put on them, as well as their own tendencies to project. And they best allow the group to handle its own issues. This is one reason Weisbord came to see that the facilitator's role should be made smaller and smaller, not larger. This is a tough discipline, as all of us at times may be tempted to *talk* models and *make* things happen, which is the opposite of action research. One practice that Weisbord and Janoff found helpful was applying John and Joyce Weir's invention of "percept" language (1975), a technical way of thinking about what is being said in the room when one's own hot buttons – conscious or unconscious – are pushed, to get a clearer picture about what is "out there" versus inside our own heads.

But whatever the technique used, Weisbord saw the value in continuing to learn about oneself, coming to terms with uncomfortable, denied, "shadow" parts of the self. This allows facilitators to invite others to really share their views and not get triggered in overreacting to what is happening in the room, either through distorted perceptions or unhelpful actions. He wrote:

> There is a lifetime of personal work for each of us in contacting the shadow side of our natures, integrating the voices that tug us away from creative and humane impulses. We're never finished, and the right time to do it is every day. (Weisbord 2012, pp. 477–478)

In my interview with Weisbord, he shared a thought from his learning with John Weir: "If all human beings come from common ancestors – call it Adam and Eve or our species' evolution – we each have all the genes of everyone who has ever lived. So the more parts of ourselves we discover and truly integrate, that extends the range of humanity with which we can productively work (Law et al. 2015)." This reflected another Weisbord hallmark: the convergence of the deeply intrapersonal and being in the widest world outside of us.

## Putting the Socio back into Sociotech, the O back into OD

Along with his business partners Block and Petrella, Weisbord shared the view that the human and actual work dimensions of an organizational system cannot really be pulled apart. They are not, as referenced earlier, antitheses, but twin aspects of a common, human systems root that must be dealt with to more surely move forward. In practice, many consultants and academicians specialize in one side or the other, with the human side frequently treated as behavioral, cognitive, or other "soft" matters and the work side seen as other "hard" factors – strategy, structure, technology, rewards, work design, and the like. Still many others will seek to combine them into a complex model (cognitive again). Regardless, for Weisbord, something is still missing: the *felt,* human side of enterprise – the world of what people actually experience and what they actually do. In fact, Weisbord said that the notion of an "organization" is a kind of reification; it is only people who make things happen, or, as the case may be, not. The "organization" acting is as much of a fiction as a desk jumping up to do the work. But that doesn't mean the *organizational context* is not in play, particularly "the real work" that goes on and how people perform it.

Some practitioners refashioned sociotechnical approaches – the robust theory for having people redesign their own work, which Weisbord learned from Emery and Trist – into a highly technical work variation analysis. The human behavior component became de-emphasized and lacked the vitality it had at the origins of the approach, going back to early Tavistock projects, grounded in Bion's sensibilities. Weisbord wrote, "Just as Taylor's sophisticated integration got reduced to time and motion study, so did sociotechnical systems become for many people a package to be installed like new software (Weisbord 2005, p. 6)." I found this in my own training in sociotech in the mid-1980s. It felt very mechanistic to me, with "human factors" tacked on for good measure. Weisbord recoiled at this trend, although he identified certainly with the way the actual work of an organization was performed. After all, it was his learning with Emery and Trist that gave him clearer insight into what he had done with the family firm work teams years earlier. But he continued to see and write about the human experience at the center of the equation. In this, we might say that Weisbord helped "put the socio back into sociotech." His lifelong practice of experiencing what is happening first and theorizing later also attests to this. So

does his interest in the inner world of the facilitator, in the way he or she engages with a large work system or social community.

Conversely, Weisbord with his partners Block and Petrella held to the view that behavioral or personal growth activities, stripped of their "realife" organizational context, were unproductive for large-scale impact. "Alas, people improved themselves more than their organizations," he said.

> To remedy this, OD consultants invented team building to enable transfer of [T-Group] training (in the 1970s, I was a builder of some of the best losing teams in American industry). The strategic flaw of team building is exposed by systems theory. You can change a system only in relationship to the larger system of which it is a part – other functions, customers, suppliers, regulators and community. Don't misinterpret me. Team building and training are existentially valuable activities. In both settings, people can learn to be open, confront conflict, collaborate, appreciate differences, diagnose problems and set goals – all worthy activities. What people cannot get this way is influence, let alone power, over policy, procedure, system and structure. (Weisbord 2005, p. 5)

Human lab learnings, when not connected back to real work situations – and when the stakes of interaction are at their highest – may run counter to actual movement. As a field, OD could as quickly drift into fuzziness, "where the rubber meets the air," as some sociotech consultants characterized OD at the time. It was the polar opposite of sociotech's mechanistic drift. Weisbord articulated that it was important to "put the O back into OD (2012)." Real performance, task accomplishment, and organizational and market context mattered, as had been his instinct from the start. Moreover, as he became more learned about OD, he recognized that when the "human side" is isolated from practical consequence, the promise of the field is missed: *humanness is embedded in practice*, not cold theory, another trace from Lewin.

## Techniques That Match Our Values

Seeing the tendency for sociotechnical approaches to become reduced to mechanistic models, Weisbord drew another important implication:

> Around [1990], I was invited to a manufacturing meeting in a famous paper company that is no more. The plant managers talked nonstop about the "multiskilled work team model" that a consulting group had put in – and how much resistance it stirred up. The company had *sacrificed participative values on an altar of canned techniques. We are always at risk to leave our values in the attic when we fall in love with great looking new techniques* [emphasis added]. (Weisbord 2005, pp. 6–7)

His understanding of the limitations of techniques, models, and the "science of organizational improvement" again owes a debt to Lewin. Weisbord came to see "social science" as an oxymoron, as elegant and precise a thinker that Lewin was, himself. Efforts to change large-scale human systems cannot proceed on classical

scientific grounds, because their conditions are unique, dynamic, and non-replicable. As change facilitators, we are left with showing up as we *are*, with our presence, learning, and whole being. This requires us to keep our own baggage – attitudinal or intellectual – out of the way. Only in this way can we really meet clients where they are, a truism in OD (Shepard 1975).

But just here, a paradox arises. What we *are* includes our values. If our values truly are values – woven in the fabric of our being and not objects we can trade like so many interchangeable "parts" – then they remain with us when we are present to help organizations. This does not mean that all things that strike us as a "value" of ours may quite be core. They may stem from unrecognized shadow parts of the self, covering deeper issues, thus serving as a kind of pseudo value. This is why self-work for Weisbord, and so many other masters of the craft, is an enduring faith and act. So the trick for Weisbord is not simply casting aside techniques or models but understanding ourselves deeply in our core, so we make best use of "techniques that *match* our values." He put it this way:

> No matter what strategies we choose, if we organization designers want job satisfaction, *we still are stuck with finding techniques equal to our values*. Techniques cascade down the generations like Niagara Falls. Values move like glaciers. Techniques fill whole bookshelves. Values take up hardly room at all. I can still say mine in eight words: *Productive workplaces that foster dignity, meaning and community*. (Weisbord 2005, pp. 7–8)

These may not be values shared with all those in the field, but they are Weisbord's. And they doubtlessly resonate with many. Weisbord himself saw Future Search and other large conference methods as simply one type of strategy to meet these values, one that he expected would be eclipsed over time. The burden thus remains on today's and new generations of practitioners to innovate approaches that take us ever more to our largest aims.

## The Future Never Comes, It's Already Here

Perhaps the grandest practical wisdom coming from Weisbord is his understanding that "the future never comes, it's already here." In a stunning passage in the last chapter of the same name in *Productive Workplaces* (2012), the innovator of Future Search wrote:

> Let me tell you about the future as I have experienced it for the last 50 years. The future never comes. Today is the future you imagined yesterday. It's slipping into the past by the second. When Frederick Taylor was born in 1857, every story in this book lay in the future. Now all are past. You cannot guarantee that what you wish for will happen. Improving companies, NGOs and communities can be existentially satisfying work if you avoid the megalomania of believing you build for the ages. There are no "secrets," whether from Attila the Hun, Socrates, Joan of Arc, Machiavelli, Freud, Mother Teresa or Vince Lombardi, that you do not already know. Leave tomorrow to the cosmos. Today's work requires every ounce of energy you have. (p. 472)

So if the future is now, how do better futures come into being? Weisbord's basic answer is that the future is *enacted* one step at a time in light of a bigger vision, dream, or goal we hold out there. Thus, better collective futures are based on what people practically do together today, then the next day, then the next day after that – all in light of a shared image of the future. Importantly, and contrary to what many consultants urge, that future image does not need to be worked out in great detail or lead to a blueprint. It should serve only as a reasonable facsimile of what a future *could be*, a *perceived* north star, as it were, to help inspire those on the journey to take steps each day, learning from them in real time as they move toward it. The journey can bring the destination more sharply into focus, uncover unexpected features, shaping and even shifting it. After all, we see the star only from the telescopes of today. In this way, better organizational and community futures *unfold* from the present, influenced by what happens today. They are coenacted by their players, not engineered – not simply cranked out from a plan. They happen, as Weisbord likes to say, "one meeting at a time." For this reason, he is skeptical of the language of "transformation" and "culture change," finding it grandiose. Similarly, his experience in complex change showed him that preplanned deliverables, detailed roadmaps, and project plans have little value. "We cannot go 20 moves down the chessboard," Weisbord declared (Law et al. 2015).

Practically speaking, then, for Weisbord, big change really amounts to a process of "getting to the next meeting." For example, when one productive conference is completed, leaders are wise to schedule, then convene, the next meeting, realizing that many smaller conversations, one on one or group, planned, and unplanned, would happen in between. Scheduling the next meeting itself shows commitment to the future, and a series of them provides a kind of glide path to the future as it is "lived into," real time.

Consultants can add the most value here through their support in orchestrating conditions for this, and for helping to design the meetings so that dialogue on matters that mean most to people can happen. One such effect in the large conference format is that people start to experience new possibilities, relationships, and shared commitments *right in the room*. The change is happening before their eyes, and they are in the thick of it! These same principles can apply to small group meetings as well, although their impact will be limited to the extent that the right people for systemic reach attend. Finally, one can see that the trajectory of this fits for individuals in their own development. I have tried to show how this can be seen in Weisbord's own career. Whether for an individual, group, or enterprise, this process represents another important facet of action research.

## The Learning Curve: Organizational Improvement Past, Present, Future

When Trist reviewed a draft of *Productive Workplaces* in 1985 and suggested that Weisbord add a "conceptual emboldening" to the work, Weisbord was startled. He had not heard that phrase before and wondered if it was possible. He soon

understood that Trist was asking him what overall conclusions could be drawn from his case experiences and his work with many of the field's pioneers.

> On a piece of scratch paper, I sketched what I had lived through in my work during the previous quarter century. Such was the origin of "The Learning Curve" that ties together the chapters of this book. (Weisbord 2012, p. xxvii)

Indeed, the learning curve does more than that: It provides a conceptual frame to understand the evolution of the field, past, present, and future. This is inclusive of OD, but broader still. Strictly speaking, OD – however one may define it – is part of a larger field of organizational improvement.

Overall, the concept depicts movement in four historical phases that build on each other. It represents basic ways that key organizational issues have been addressed, including the primary focus of improvement and who primarily attends to the issues. Weisbord termed the concept "a "learning curve," because he saw it reflecting the ever-widening insights of organizational stakeholders and improvement specialists. But, as discussed below, it will be apparent these are not strictly phases. Rather, they are ways of thinking about and acting on organizational improvement (Fig. 1).

Not everyone moves through these in the same manner or even at all. And each of these ways remains dominant for some, as well as situationally appropriate, to this



**Fig. 1** Organization improvement learning curve (Weisbord 2012)
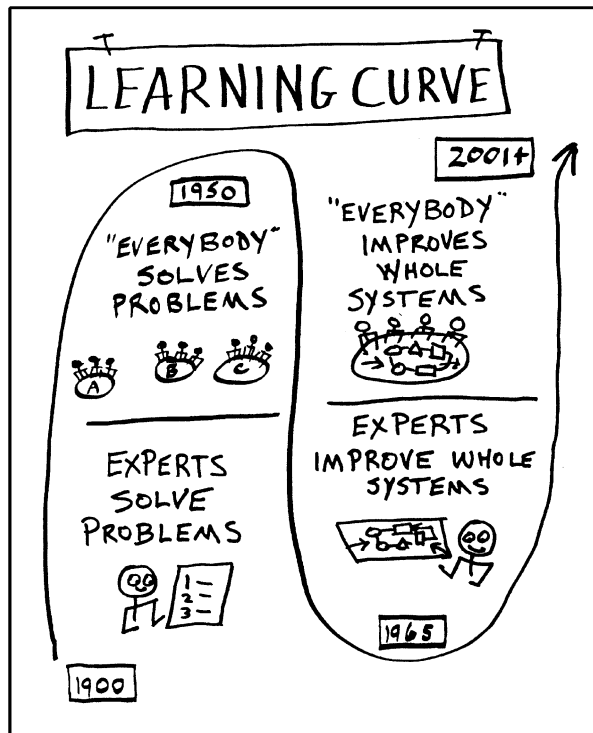
day. Still, the concept reflects a broad sweep of development over more than a century of efforts of organizational improvement.

The first phase, beginning at the turn of the last century, shows Taylor's influence on the application of "scientific" principles and practices to organizational improvement. Weisbord credited Taylor with an ethos to create a more democratic world that could lift the lot of all workers, based on the intervention of experts. In Taylor's day, these were industrial engineers, but they soon became experts of all kinds, doing interviews, conducting assessments, and performing analyses, then formulating solutions to problems of efficiency, work flow, technology, and the like. Many "expert" consulting firms of all sizes still operate with this approach.

Beginning in the 1950s, "human relations" insights began to take hold in practice, with employees' more broadly attending to solutions. This shift reflected earlier findings such as the Hawthorne studies, Lewin and Lippitt's discovery of "group dynamics," and the experiential learnings at NTL and Tavistock. The rise of team building, employee opinion surveys, behavioral and attitudinal training, interpersonal mediation, participative performance reviews, process consultation, and other similar activity came to the fore. Consultants with this orientation now served in more facilitative roles and helped participants address and tackle the issues themselves ("everybody solves problems"). The problem focus areas were, by and large, treated as discreet.

In the mid-1960s, as reflected in Weisbord's own journey, systems thinking started to break through in organizational improvement practice. Earlier work, such as Ludwig von Bertalanffy's general systems theory (1952), began to have an impact. Presenting problems in one area were increasingly seen as challenges of a "whole, open system," where economics, technology, strategy, structure, and other factors were now essential to consider. Weisbord succinctly summed up the definition of systems thinking: "Everything is hooked up to everything else!" (Weisbord 2005, p. 2). With employees and other stakeholders still involved, consultants tended to serve as experts to drive the work of change – given the complexity of the models – with increasingly sophisticated assessments and comprehensive solutions recommended to clients. This modality, where "experts improve whole systems," was dominant in organizational improvement strategies for the remainder of the century. It still characterizes many, if not most, of the large, worldwide consulting firms today. The economics and business models of these big consulting firms largely require this "expert" approach, as many of my colleagues and I found in years as partners with them.

The breakthrough of large-group process in which "everybody improves whole systems" began with the early conference methods in the 1970s; Weisbord worked more and more with that in the mid-1980s and beyond. As a more widely adopted way of addressing systems change, he dated the onset of this phase in the early 2000s, after groups such as the Future Search Network and other consultants concentrating on large-group methods made significant headway in achievements and use of the approach across the globe. The deep human dimension of the human relations movement returned, but now it was contextualized in what people did to work on large-scale strategies and actions that they drove. And instead of systemic information that consultants mined and complex models they introduced, the

approach was now basically rooted in the experience of those in attendance and their sharing and making sense of that experience together for the future. The consultant's role was now to assist the client in preconference planning to structure the process and then stand back and let things happen. The aim was to enable all to fully own the change to the extent of their readiness – and then some, given the dynamics of the mobilized, forward looking community.

Weisbord saw the milestone where "everybody improves whole systems" as the frontier of thinking about organizational improvement. But he remained too much of a historian to think that anything lasts forever, so he believed the future of that improvement would doubtlessly lead elsewhere. Speaking at a forum on organization design, he said that large-group interventions are not "the end of history."

> Every method has its limits, as we all are destined to learn. Our ancestors have given us priceless gifts, but none has prepared us for a world of cellphones, email, virtual teams, the kind of BlackBerries that nobody but a dog would chew on and, more to the point, a global economy that is consuming resources at a rate far beyond our ability to replace them. Indeed, sustainable organizations may have no future in an unsustainable world. The future of organization design does not rest on any particular methods. It lies with the values of the people in this room. The pioneers whose work I have mentioned – Bion, Emery, Lewin, Likert, Lippitt, Maslow, McGregor, Taylor and Trist – all belong to the ages. They have no more to tell us. Look around you, friends and colleagues. *We* are the ones who are now up to bat. (Weisbord 2005, p. 8)

## New Insights (Maybe Only Old Ones, Rediscovered)

Weisbord has influenced my own practice in OD in many ways. I first read his work after I began internal organizational consulting in the mid-1980s. His initial design efforts with work teams and pay for knowledge influenced an earlier project I had started: an employee-led effort to restructure a note center for mid-market Imperial Bank in California, where teams of specialists could process and document commercial loans with greater flexibility, speed, cooperation, and efficiency than if they had remained isolated specialists working through the conflicts of branch and headquarters offices. I had been impressed with both the task outcomes and human bonding that occurred in the effort. Weisbord's work added a conceptual understanding to what I was doing. The first article I read of Weisbord's was "Participative Work Design: A Personal Odyssey," *Organizational Dynamics* (1985a). This was an early piece that would become part of the first edition of *Productive Workplaces* (1987).

Not unlike Weisbord, I had first begun doing work at my company in task- and human-oriented change without formal training in the field, although I had studied theory in social science years earlier as a UCLA graduate history student. Weisbord's *Productive Workplaces* (1987) was first published as I attended Pepperdine's MSOD program after switching to business as a profession in the late 1970s. At Pepperdine, I was also introduced to large-scale methods by Dannemiller. I later applied large-group conference approaches in my work at the bank and in launching large client-consulting project teams when I joined KPMG Consulting in the mid-1990s.

As I worked over the years and began my own OD firm, I continued to experiment with large-group methods. I believe that two specific learnings are worth sharing, not because they are especially original but because they represent a kind of independent rediscovery through my own experience of conclusions at which Weisbord had arrived, thus validating his teachings for me.

The first of these has to do with a learning that *the promotion of confidentiality in team building and large-group intervention, far from fostering trust and group effectiveness, actually erodes trust and reinforces power distance between group members*. This occurred to me as I was doing interviews of a 30-member organizational unit for World Bank in preparation for a 2-day retreat of the entire team to consider its way of operating, given the constraints it faced in the institutional, operating environment. I had begun by interviewing unit members, assuring them confidentiality of what they were sharing with me and that I'd only report aggregate themes. But as I interviewed those from the top, middle, and bottom of the hierarchy, it dawned on me that the things they talked with me about were the very items they should be sharing directly with each other. After all, lack of trust and connecting with each other about what was happening in each of their worlds – and in a way they could do something constructively about – was the central issue that presented. Midway through the scheduled interviews, I began talking about the prospect of having each of the team layers – starting with the two co-leads – simply talk with each other, fishbowl style, about what their current worlds were like, with all others of the unit seated in a circle around them. Team members, including the co-leads, responded positively to that suggestion. I would sit to the side of the group in the middle, listening in, T-Group style. The only prompts were the few words hung around the room on flip chart paper – "Experience in your roles to date? Dilemmas? Frustrations? What you want from others in or outside the room?" – to guide their self-led discussions. After they concluded, those on the outside were invited to ask any questions for clarification and to say what they'd heard that they appreciated. No solutions or recommendation was invited. Those were reserved for day 2 of the retreat in structured rounds, where each of the natural work groups, in light of day one, would propose different operating models for the unit, drawing, describing, or dramatizing them in any way they'd like for wider discussion and next steps. For day one, as each of the hierarchical layers took their turns in the fishbowl, nothing about process was charted on the walls. But the entire unit left that first day – a day devoted to understanding, no action – with a rich picture of the status quo, dynamics, and all. There was no consulting interpretation. It was theirs. In day 2, they self-managed a discussion on the implications of day 1 thoughts, then crafted future operating model options and next steps. Notable in day 2 was how the co-leads stepped up to facilitate the whole unit in a way that shifted the perception of their power, their sincerity to share it, and the empowerment in the room. I didn't need to do a thing. I could just stand there. It was startling to behold!

Key takeaways from this case are twofold, each reinforcing Weisbord teachings. The first were the palpable shifts observable in the room, positively affecting the sensitivity of content shared, trust, leader-employee relationships, and the emergence of a shared systems perspective which drew from each of the participant's

experiences. My role as consultant was significant in helping stage the basis for the conversations ahead of time and in between the days, but it was very understated in what was done during the retreat. The other takeaway, as noted above, was with understanding that confidentiality is not something to be reinforced in the consultant's method, but a phenomenon to be unpacked. This lays more solid ground for joint, owned action to happen.

The second key learning is how I have repurposed the use of an S-Curve framework when I work with large groups. I use it as a way to conceptually depict a systemic state of confusion during a period of watershed change – the gap period between the old maturing first curve and the yet-to-emerge second curve. I have found that this can help people recognize that current conflicts ascribed to others, rife in these situations, are indeed part of a systemic condition. This affects the way current dynamics are played out in efforts to reenvision and resist potential futures. Once seen, I have found this can be liberating for players in the room to move beyond symptomatic blame. And it provides a way to systemically portray Weisbord's understanding of confusion, as the "one room in change" where anxiety and possibility dwell and where actual movement, enacted together a step at a time, is possible.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: A Renaissance of Action Research?

Weisbord's legacy looms large. I have sought here to illustrate the ways his thinking unfolded and identify key contributions to the field, which, beyond being technically influential, have enduring importance to the *spirit* of our work. I want to focus now on two last things. First, his legacy of dialogue in organizations, including some reflections on ways it has been seen as limiting. Lastly, I want to take a moment and ponder Weisbord's legacy as a whole – how he embodied and breathed fresh life into Lewin's seminal idea of action research – and what it hopefully signifies for the future of the field.

Weisbord's Future Search encapsulated most of his prior learnings and was part of a line of work of others in large-scale organizational and community interventions. All relied on experience-based dialogue as primary fuel for change. Weisbord and Janoff's *Future Search* (2010) briefly compared and contrasted the method with others in the field, and a more comprehensive side-by-side comparison of approaches can be found in Barbara Benedict Bunker and Alban's *The Handbook of Large Group Methods: Creating Systemic Change in Organizations and Communities* (2006). Moreover, the language of "conversations" and "dialogue" in organizations today is widespread. One scholarly piece of work in this vein, Patricia Shaw's *Changing Conversations in Organizations: A Complexity Approach to Change* (2002), is especially noteworthy, given the nature of its radical critique.

Essentially, Shaw's approach to large-scale change is to think of it as a "temporal" process. She described Future Search, Open Space, and other methods of large-group dialogue as more "spatially" oriented; hence, their focus is on convening all

the parties in a room, bounded by specific, often transformational intent. In contrast, she described an approach in which the consultant is invited into the world of work as it flows in time, without convening special meetings, to help people as they naturally meet to understand their work dilemmas in fuller ways. The consultant inquires into the stories people tell themselves about their organizational lives – e.g., What is happening? Why is it happening? For what importance? – so their narratives may be deconstructed or more fully threaded together across the organization. In effect, the consultant joins the team – not as an expert, nor as a neutral facilitator, but as a participant-observer, including sharing his or her own views and questions as may be deemed relevant. There are no "outside" systemic goals of sponsors, intents or tasks "superimposed" upon the groups. The process simply follows where the dialectic of the conversation leads. Shaw thus saw "conversing as a way of organizing" and as transformational activity in itself. She wrote:

> I am describing a mode of working that does not proffer a blueprint for practice; that does not define roles or select working models. Rather, I am describing how we may join ongoing conversations as participant sense-makers, helping to develop the opportunities inherent in such conversations. I am suggesting that this involves moving into the constraints, restrictions and premature closures as they materialize in communicative action so as to sustain exploratory meaning making. I am drawing attention to vital, informal, shadow processes that more dominant systematic perspectives render rationally invisible. These are the ordinary, everyday processes of organizational life that offer endless opportunity as we move from conversation to conversation. (Shaw 2002, p. 70)

And while Shaw maintained at least an implicit criticism of Future Search as being too structured and controlled – a critique that goes farther than Weisbord's own intentions to "let go," since Future Search amounted to an expert design to promote substantial dialogue in the first place – she ended with this note:

> Future Search events regularly [produce] the enthusiasm, collective focus and new action plans that its advocates suggest. The experience often generates optimism and goodwill. My question is not, "Is this worth doing?" Much may come of such events. Much *will* come of them and this will bear a complex relation to the hopes, fears and aspirations of the participants. My question is how to work with the ongoing conversational life of organizations in which such events may occasionally arise. (p. 151)

Shaw raises important questions for the sustainability of the conversation and action once it is evoked in a conference method. It is easier said than done to get commitments even to the next meetings, action teams, and the like. So Future Search, as Weisbord recognized, was no panacea. But his attraction to this approach in the latter part of his career was that he "never had to go to meetings again, where the right people, up and down and across, weren't in the room where meaningful work could occur" (Law et al. 2015). He had attended so many meetings that were dead ended or dead on arrival and that Future Search represented a step forward and hopeful alternative.

Regardless, Shaw provided for an interesting critique. On the one hand, she accepted, if even in subtle terms by virtue of her anthropological approach, Weisbord's principle of "everybody improves whole systems." But she then

essentially rejected the strategy of getting the whole system in the room in specially structured ways as a means to that end. "I am not trying to gather in one place a 'microcosm of the whole' . . . but rather working as part of loose webs of relationship both legitimate and spun through a multitude of other kinds of relating" (p. 145).

It may be that Shaw's critique veered off too one dimensionally into dialogue, with the risk of no overarching work task driving the focus of conversations. It may be that such an approach to dialogue may be too loose and *not timely enough* for broad change, when needed under "realife" conditions – responding to the demands of markets, missions, and milestones and as felt by a mass of organizational or community members themselves. I have seen these flaws in large-scale dialogue efforts where there was either a failure to sufficiently stitch together heterodox dialogue for explicitly desired enterprise effect or where the dialogue itself broke down into programmatic vaporware. And it may be that this conversational flow does not create enough leverage for strategic or structural impact that can improve people's lives and collective outcomes. If so, the need for more concentrated interventions, Future Search and others, will persist. Indeed, perhaps Future Search, as a structured event, may in the end be but one in a battery of enterprise interventions – including coaching, counsel, strategy, team building, other pieces of work redesign, teaching, and he like, *conceived in terms of their systemic effects* – needing to be synchronized to help organizations move through large-scale change. I have often worked this way myself, and Weisbord's partner, Tony Petrella, was explicit in this in the course of his whole system consulting work. My own experience and graduate studies led me to see that the consultant, if he or she is to remain engaged, needs to follow the path of resistance as it presents, working backward until the core of the systemic difficulties, often denied, surface and can be more fully handled (Goldberg 1993).

Perhaps Shaw's understanding veers in the direction that Weisbord himself anticipated in his understanding that large-scale conferences are *not* the end of history. This may prove especially so in their ability to cope with the speed of change ushered in by ever-increasing technology innovations and the diversification of organizations into ever flatter, more dispersed, and complex network forms. And if Shaw can demonstrate that her approach helps people gain control over changes in work processes, policies, systems, structures, and technologies that benefit people widely, hers may be one of the voices at the new frontier.

One of Shaw's similarities to Weisbord is that her thinking arose from her queries to herself, working as a practitioner. Theory came after practice, including wrestling with the ideas of those who preceded her in light of her experience. So, in a way, we come full circle to Lewin, the practical theorist. This would have a certain joy for Weisbord, who embodied the very life of action research.

When I asked Weisbord what he saw as the future of OD, he gave me his frequent answer: that OD can be anything that anyone calls OD and that helps people in organization or community progress. "Who really knows what OD is?" he asked. "OD has had an 'identify crisis' as far as I can remember (Personal communication 2016)."

But Weisbord also has what might be called "a hope within a hope:" that OD, at its best, has something more to it than that. He told me that he thought OD, for all of its heterogeneity, lacked "a kind of ribbon around it" to give it shape and greater value. Amidst the scads of techniques and models, he thought that the missing ribbon was "action research," a way of approaching life with an open heart and mind, curiosity, and reflection on inner and outer things – helping people find greater meaning in their lives and work. That ribbon served him well throughout his own journey. With a little luck – and grace, perhaps – a kind of rediscovery of action research might be possible. Might today's very moment of massive economic, technological, and institutional change point to a renaissance of action research?

Helping people study and improve their own situations seems to me worthy work, if someone will pay for it. We used to call that "action research," the part of Lewin's great legacy that remains for me fresh, flexible and adaptable. You can do action research on any aspect of organizational life. You just need people who want to do it. If the next generation learns how to adapt action research, that would be a great blessing.

Making the world better one person, one meeting, one organization at a time could keep you psyched for a lifetime. I believe that all work that fulfills you and helps others is existentially valuable. (Personnel communication 2016)

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Tomas G. Thundiyil and Michael R. Manning

### Abstract

Richard (Dick) W. Woodman is a unique contemplative scholar who built his name in the field with his scholarship as well as his charming personality and satirical nature. The following chapter covers Dick's personal history starting with growing up in rural Oklahoma, followed by his service in the US Army, and then his extended contributions to the profession. We discuss his life experiences and some of his lasting influences on the field. Early in his career, Dick helped popularize the concept of creativity in the field of management and organizational behavior by publishing one of the most highly cited and still actively researched theories on organizational creativity (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, Acad Manag Rev 18:293–321, 1993). This was followed with several other important streams of scholarship including an emphasis on bridging scholars and practitioners as well as a focus on strengthening methodologies in organizational change research. In addition to this scholarship, Dick has also directly shaped the direction of research and practice in organizational change and development over the last 30 years as editor of two of the most influential publications: *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* and *Research in Organizational Change and Development*. We end this essay with a discussion of his lasting legacy in the change arena. Although recently retiring from a 38-year career as an endowed professor at Texas A&M, Dick continues to write and contribute to change scholarship. He encourages us to strengthen change research methodology, and his legacy of scholarship on creativity and change provides the conceptual basis

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for ongoing research with the interactionist model of creativity. He also challenges the field with two fundamental issues/questions: (1) individual changeability – how does the organization affect, and how do individuals change during and following episodes where an organization attempts to change? and (2) a temporal model of change – how might the field better incorporate an understanding of temporality and change in order to extend beyond the Lewin model by creating a more dynamic process model of change?

| Keywords |
| --- |

Organizational creativity • Creativity and change • Individual changeability • Change research methods • Temporality and change

## Contents

## Introduction

Richard (Dick) W. Woodman has been one of the most influential academics in the field of organization development and change over the last 35 years. He has held a faculty position at the Mays Business School at Texas A&M University since 1978 and just recently retired as the Lawrence E. Fouraker Professor of Business and Professor of Management. Woodman was editor of *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* from 2005 to 2010 at a very critical period in the life of this journal. Also, with his long-time colleague, Bill Pasmore, he created and edited the annual research series – *Research in Organizational Change and Development* (*ROCD*) – that has provided the space for many change scholars to explore and develop new emergent themes in change research. In addition, his scholarly contributions to the field have been highly influential.

## Influences and Motivations: The Military and the World of Practice

*Early Life Influences.* Dick Woodman grew up in Elk City, Oklahoma as the oldest in a family with two boys. Dick's father was president of the local savings and loan, and both his parents were very influential instilling the value of education and service early in his life. During his formative school years, Dick was always very interested

in math and science. He developed a value for "always doing a good job" and started working at the age of 12 picking cotton and caddying at the local golf course. Another influential aspect from his family was a commitment to service to our country. Woodman's grandfather served in WWI, and his father served in both WWII and the Korean War. In addition, an ancestor fought in the Revolutionary War and another in the War of 1812. When Dick started college at Oklahoma State University, he enrolled in ROTC and upon graduation was commissioned as a military intelligence officer in the US Army.

At Oklahoma State University, Dick studied engineering, in particular electrical and industrial engineering. These met his interests in science and math. Upon graduation with an engineering degree, reporting for active duty was delayed so that he might also complete an MBA at OSU, and he did this in a year's time. While in the MBA program, Woodman had his first introduction to the behavioral side of business. Right after graduation, at the height of the Vietnam War, Dick entered the Army in the role of military intelligence officer. He was assigned to the Army Security Agency Group Korea and became the commanding officer at Camp Alamo, a base camp on the DMZ which was the northernmost outpost of the American Army in the Republic of Korea. The troops at Camp Alamo operated a forward intelligence site located on top of a mountain a few miles north of their base camp. From this outpost Dick had a bird's eye view overlooking T-Bone Ridge – the same mountain range and valley in which his father over 18 years earlier had commanded troops in a highly contested and deadly aspect of the Korean War.

His military experience had a dramatic impact on Dick, and to this day he refers to this as a Hotel California experience ("You can check out, but you can never leave."). Dick never dwells much further on his Army experience, but it is clear from his reserved acknowledgment that it had a significant impact. One can get a glimpse of this impact from reading a New York Times article that was written by 25-year old First Lieutenant Richard W. Woodman and published on December 31, 1970 (Woodman 1970). From this reflective editorial, we can see the beginnings of a budding scholar, well aware of the moral dilemmas of war and the personal costs to individuals and society. The essay is also an early illustration of the talent Woodman has with the written word, something we all have benefited from in his scholarly writings over the years. To this day Dick stays connected with his Army experience via the network of an Army Security Agency website for veterans, personal communications, reunions, and working with veteran's support organizations. In recent years he has written several letters of support for men under his command who were exposed to Agent Orange, assisting them to receive disability claims.

Woodman served in the Army from 1969 to 1971. Both immediately before and after active duty, Dick held a series of positions (staff specialist in human resource planning and management development) in the oil industry from 1971 to 1972 with Sun Oil Company in both Tulsa (before) and Dallas (after). Shortly, however, he was lured back to hometown Elk City, Oklahoma, to join First Federal Savings and Loan Association as a vice-president of the firm where his father was president.

Although quite successful at an early age, he still felt there was a better fit for his talents. He enjoyed reading books in psychology, sociology, and anthropology and wondered how the behavioral sciences could be applied to business and management. After some introspection he decided that an academic life might be a better fit for him. He felt that research, writing, and teaching would fulfill his curiosity and be a rewarding occupation. So he contacted a former professor at OSU – Wayne Meinhart – who by that time was head of the Management Department. Dr. Meinhart invited him to campus to meet with several faculty to explore his interests. Among the faculty he met with that day was a newly minted assistant professor – Mike Hitt. Later, Dr. Hitt became a longtime colleague with Dick at Texas A&M. Dick then focused on graduate schools with doctoral programs of interest. He found Stanford, University of Washington, and Purdue University to his liking. Then, by surprise, a month or so after his visit to OSU, Wayne Meinhart called and offered a visiting faculty position for the Spring of 1975. Teaching 12 hours – two sections of principles of management and two sections of marketing – Dick embarked on his academic career. A major life transition was made as he pivoted away from his successful career in banking to an academic life.

Dick entered the doctoral program in the Department of Administrative Science, Krannert Graduate School of Industrial Administration, Purdue University, in the summer of 1975. His new wife and life companion Linda also joined him in West Lafayette. Dick fell in love with Purdue and the academic life right away. He was enthused that organizational behavior was a viable topic of study in business schools. The Administrative Science group at Purdue was a small tight-knit group of doctoral students and faculty. The faculty included Jack Sherwood and Don King, both leaders in organization development and the sociotechnical systems movement, as well as Howard Fromkin, a renowned social psychologist and research methodologist. Fellow doctoral students who have since developed their own prominence over the years included Bill Pasmore, Russ Lloyd, Jerome Adams, Dan Ganster, Paul Tolchinsky, Mike McCuddy, Conrad Jackson, Marci Fusilier, and Mike Manning. Dick jumped right in with both feet, not only with his coursework but also with research studies he initiated on his own and with other doctoral students. The Information Privacy Research Center provided some support. In addition, a state-of-the-art behavioral science laboratory existed within the Krannert School. This behavioral lab had an observation deck overlooking multiple rooms with one-way mirrors for observation. Video cameras, microphones, and recorders were in each room. There was a master control room, managed by a full-time engineer hired solely to assist researchers with any technical needs. All this made it possible to conduct very sophisticated experiments. It was a behavioral scientist's dream laboratory.

Woodman was particularly drawn to Jack Sherwood and his personable, easy-to-get-to-know style. Dick was impressed with Jack in many ways. Jack was a living "action figure" in that he was a scholar practitioner and one of the top organization development consultants at the time. Jack was also a member of the NTL Institute, a training institute founded in 1946 by Kurt Lewin and associates where the infamous T-Group was invented, and an APA Fellow. Along with his academic duties, Jack

offered national workshops to train organization development consultants and teach sociotechnical systems principles. His writings and thoughts on high performance-high commitment (HP-HC) work systems were in Dick's words the "best articulated on this topic even today." In particular Jack's mentoring helped Dick gravitate to the field of organization development, and he attributes Jack's experience and knowledge of OD as being the foundational source to his research and writing.

By the time Woodman received his PhD (summer, 1978), he had four publications (Woodman and Sherwood 1977; Woodman and King 1978; Hanes et al. 1978; and in press Woodman 1979), and his dissertation research on team development shortly resulted in three major publications in highly desired journals, including *Psychological Bulletin* (Woodman and Sherwood 1980b), *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* (Woodman and Sherwood 1980a), and *Group & Organization Studies* (Woodman 1980). But it was one of Dick's beginning intellectual endeavors at Purdue that would become a major research interest throughout his career. During his second year at Purdue Woodman wrote a qualifying paper on creativity that coincidentally at the time was not well received (most felt then this was a topic out of bounds for a business school). Dick took great satisfaction in publishing this qualifying paper practically verbatim as originally written (Woodman 1981). More importantly, his subsequent work on creativity has had a major influence.

*Early Career Influences.* Woodman left Purdue with four academic job offers and he chose Texas A&M University, not only for the opportunities that existed there but because it was close to Oklahoma where he had significant family obligations. In 1978, Texas A&M was an aspiring institution. The oil boom of the 1960s and 1970s provided top salaries to faculty in the business school, and they accumulated a group of young faculty from the best universities. Dick joined the Department of Management led by Don Hellriegel. Hellriegel and John Slocum (then at SMU) quickly invited Dick to join in the authorship of the third edition of their highly acclaimed Organizational Behavior (West Publishing, later South-Western College Publishing) textbook that had many editions over some 20+ years and has been used in teaching thousands of undergraduate business students OB concepts. Also very early in his career at Texas A&M, Dick began teaching a doctoral seminar in research methods along with a graduate course on organizational change. He continued to faithfully teach these two courses until his retirement.

## Major Contributions: Shaping the Field

Dick Woodman's influence on the field of organizational change and development spans far and wide. Not only has he published one of only two pieces of satire ever to appear in the *Academy of Management Review*, "The Devil's Dictionary" (Woodman 1979), but he also served as editor for two of the premier publications in the area of organizational change and development (i.e., *Research in Organizational Change and Development, The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*) and developed several prominent streams of research.

*Research in Organizational Change and Development.* One of the grandest contributions Dick has made to the field of organizational change and development was the research series that Woodman and Pasmore cofounded with JAI Press in 1987, titled *Research in Organizational Change and Development (ROCD)*. Not only did this position Dick and Bill as leading scholars in the organizational change arena, but their efforts opened publication opportunities for many other scholars to publish in the field. *ROCD* has been on the cutting edge of change research, publishing a number of influential articles that address some of the most pressing questions in organizational change and development scholarship. For example, several original pieces of groundbreaking scholarship have first appeared in *ROCD*, including the first published article on appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987), the dichotomy of organizational change theory (Porras and Robertson 1987), and the competing values model of organizational culture (Denison and Spreitzer 1991). Also, when the advancement of the discipline was predicated on particular questions, *ROCD* made it a priority to address these questions and advance the field. For example, when scholars began to call into question the efficacy of change interventions, *ROCD* published several meta-analyses in answer to the calls for research (e.g., Macy and Izumi 1993; Robertson et al. 1993).

However, it is not only the content of this publication that has been impressive but also its longevity. For 21 volumes, Woodman and Pasmore edited the series, and now the annual scholarly book series is on volume 24, and the editorship has been passed along to Debra Noumair (Columbia) and Rami Shani (Cal State Poly). Because of Dick and Bill's efforts of service and strong collaborative chemistry, the Organization Development and Change Division of the Academy of Management has established the Pasmore-Woodman Award given to honor research collaborators who, through their joint research endeavors and collegueship, produce impactful research. The Emerald Group (current series publisher) provides a cash stipend for the annual winners. *ROCD* was established to be a forum for change scholars to share cutting edge conceptual and empirical scholarship without the constraints (e.g., on length) typically seen in journal publication. This has allowed researchers to share their latest thoughts and the emerging trends in both research and practice.

*The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science.* During Woodman's career as a change scholar, there has been considerable chatter about the impending death of organization development (c.f. Bartunek and Woodman 2012). Although many change scholars mock the idea of OD's demise, in the early 2000s, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* was in serious trouble. It had missed publication dates due to an insufficient number of manuscripts and other complications and was promptly dropped from the Thompson Reuters Social Science Citation Index. To fall off this list is very problematic for a journal, since it means that tenure committees do not recognize publications in these journals as meeting quality standards, and subsequently potential authors are skeptical about submitting articles. To not be part of the Social Science Citation Index runs the risk that a journal can enter a death spiral toward irrelevance. Fortunately, Bob Marshak

jumped in as acting editor for a year until a permanent editor could be identified. Dick Woodman was the choice to be the new editor of JABS, challenged to steer the journal back to academic standards. His service to the profession and dedication to JABS were unparalleled as he revived JABS. Woodman increased the number of manuscript submissions, met publication deadlines, bolstered the editorial board, and increased the number of citations of JABS articles. After Thompson Reuters conducted another review, JABS was reestablished as a journal listed in the Social Science Citation Index. Not only did this editorship influence Dick's scholarship, his commitment also had a great influence on the field of organization change and development. Without Woodman's influence, the flagship journal in our field most likely would not have continued, at least not with the reputation that it holds today.

*Strengthening research methodology.* Another area where Woodman has had considerable impact has been on strengthening the scientific rigor in our field by improving research methodology (e.g., Woodman 1989a, b, 2014b). For example, Woodman has argued for strengthening the "evaluation research" component of the field. In 1989, in the third volume of *ROCD*, Woodman issued a call. In this influential piece, during a discussion of statistical issues (i.e., evaluation biases, confounds, and statistical meaningfulness/significance), Woodman astutely noted that both quantitative and qualitative research lead to an emphasis on certain aspects of each statistical issue (e.g., Woodman and Wayne 1985) and therefore, studied independently, would be insufficient to effectively examine change. Dick suggested ways to combine qualitative and quantitative research with the hope for a greater use of "combined paradigm" studies (Woodman 1989a). In addition to advocating in his chapter of *ROCD*, Dick continued this type of advocacy for this increased rigor in numerous other publications (e.g., Pasmore et al. 2008; Woodman 2014b; Woodman et al. 2008).

Dick has also pushed for strengthening evaluation research through increased rigor in research design. For example, Woodman and Sherwood (1980a) utilized a true experimental design during a team development intervention with 67 groups in an engineering survey course. This study represents one of only a handful of "true" experiments conducted to evaluate an OD intervention. The intervention was designed to improve work group effectiveness by diagnosing problems of the work group. In 2008, Woodman and colleagues advocated for greater rigor in evaluation research suggesting the use of several different research designs, including, true experiments, quasi-experiments, nonexperimental survey research, longitudinal field research, and mixed method study design. Again, and more recently, in a response to a detailed examination of internal validity in organizational change research, Woodman (2014b) argued for the use of quasi-experimental designs because they have the advantage of being strong on internal validity plus are much more likely to be feasible than "true" experimental designs in most organizations. When you couple Woodman's scholarship on strengthening research methods with his teaching the doctoral research methods class at Texas A&M, it becomes clear that Woodman has made an enduring commitment to strengthening rigor in change research.

*Organizational creativity.* As mentioned previously, Dick has also had a strong interest in organizational creativity. He has long considered creativity in a complex social system to be a "special case" of organizational change (Woodman 2008b; Woodman et al. 1993). More specifically, Woodman argues that organizational creativity is "a subset of the broader domain of innovation. Innovation is then characterized to be a subset of an even broader construct of organizational change" (Woodman et al. 1993, p. 293). As such he has argued that linkages between the fields of organizational creativity and organizational change are both logical and valuable (e.g., Woodman et al. 1993; Woodman 2008a). To underscore the value of Woodman's work on this topic it is worth mentioning that out of the countless number of publications on his vitae, the interactionist theory of organizational creativity is his most cited journal article. Dick's theory of organizational creativity (Woodman et al. 1993) has been described in the literature, several times, as a prominent theory of creativity. For example, Shalley and Zhou (2008) note, "there are two main theoretical models that have guided the area of organizational creativity, that of Amabile (1988, 1996) and Woodman et al. (1993)" (p. 12). More recently, Zhou and Hoever (2014) structure their review of the workplace creativity literature using the basic interactionist premises of Woodman's conceptualization. They attest that "... Woodman et al.'s (1993) interactionist model of creativity constituted an important stimulus for the then nascent research on workplace creativity." (p. 350). They credit Woodman's novel approach to workplace creativity, codetermined through the interaction of actor and contextual factors, as the intellectual stimulus that moved the field forward.

Woodman's seminal theory grew out of earlier work by Woodman and Schoenfeldt (1989, 1990). In the 1989 chapter, the authors explored the interactionist perspective on individual creative behavior. In the 1990 paper, the authors advanced a theory of individual creativity grounded in an interactionist perspective, which, the authors argued, incorporated important elements of three historical perspectives used to explicate creativity – personality, cognitive, and social psychology explanations of creativity. Then finally, in 1993, Woodman brought this interactionist model of creativity into the organizational context, and he later traced out the development of the interactionist model of organizational creativity in a management encyclopedia (Woodman 2013). The 1993 paper is the most heavily cited paper from volume 18 of *The Academy of Management Review* (Corley and Gioia 2011). Further, as of May 19, 2016, the article has 3,308 citations according to Google Scholar. This major contribution is summarized in Fig. 1, a reprint of the original Interactionist Model of Organizational Creativity that appeared in this landmark publication.

Following this seminal piece, Woodman has made several additional contributions to creativity. He has further argued that organizational creativity is a special case of organizational change (Woodman 2008b) and has advocated for a deeper understanding of the intersection of these two literatures. He has conceptualized barriers to creativity (Kilbourne and Woodman 1999), suggested a model for managing creativity (Woodman 1995), and proposed a way to examine the role of relationships in creative action (Chakrabarty and Woodman 2009).
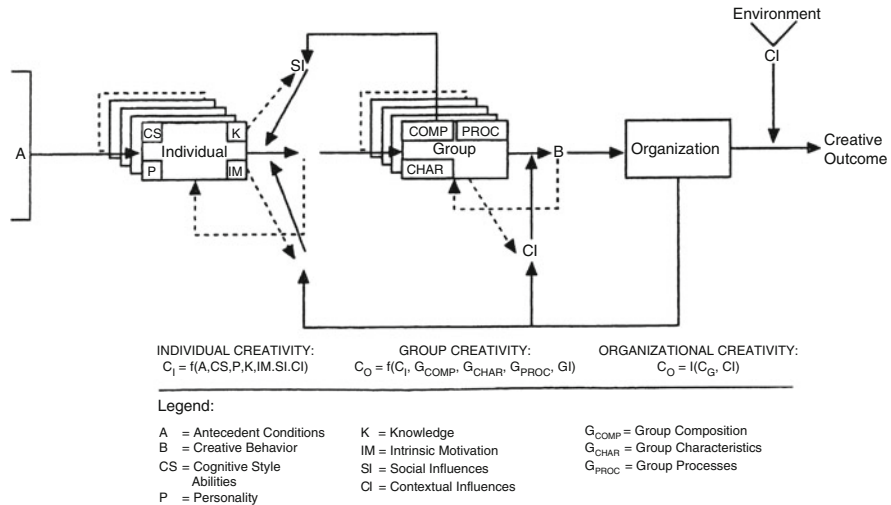
**Fig. 1** An interactionist model of creativity from Woodman et al. (1993)

*Scholar-practitioner application.* As many scholars have written about the scholar-practitioner divide (e.g., Hay et al. 2008; Rynes et al. 2001), Woodman has made several attempts to bridge the divide. We suggest that one of the themes that occurs across Dick's research, that has spanned the length of his career, is that his work speaks to the "scholarly" practitioner and helps develop the practical application of OD and other change work (Hay et al. 2008). For example, in one of his early publications, Woodman (1980) differentiated between T-groups and team development to ensure each method of training could be "applied appropriately" and to facilitate "communication and intelligent decisions concerning their utility" (p. 141). Through this paper, he considered the idea of how practice and theory are related, which he also considers through several other articles (e.g., Woodman 2014b).

Another group of Woodman's practitioner-scholar research centers around what is happening in practice. For example, McMahan and Woodman (1992) surveyed Fortune 500 industrials to understand the actual practice of OD that occurred within the firms. This study uniquely ventured away from the traditional theory-heavy focus of academic research and shifted the attention to what organizations are actually utilizing. The authors explored several ideas, such as, how much of the outside experience base is generalizable, what are internal OD practitioners doing, and to gain an understanding of how OD is used within firms. Similarly, Woodman and Muse (1982) authored a chapter where they review techniques and methodologies that have been successful in improving work group or organizational effectiveness in the private sector.

Relatedly, Dick has several pieces that deal with the implementation of principles across spheres. For example, Lau et al. (1996) examined the applicability of OD theory across cultures. More specifically, the authors compared OD practices in

Hong Kong and the USA to better understand the applicability of OD principles in an Asian context with the intent to develop international theory and practice. In a similar vein, Woodman and several coauthors have examined the role of management during the implementation of technology (Thach and Woodman 1994), creativity (Woodman 1995), and work groups (Woodman and Pasmore 2002). In the last piece, the authors introduced a model to diagnose the needs of a work group prior to focusing on team building. Throughout the years and all through his work, Dick Woodman has focused on developing the application of scholarly research to OD practice.

## New Insights: Seeing the Fundamental Essence in a Complex World

Although it is clear that Dick Woodman has made invaluable contributions to understanding organizational change and development, a deeper look at these contributions suggests a pattern in his writings. To understand Dick Woodman's contribution to organizational change, it is important to understand Dick Woodman. As noted above, he grew up in Elk City, Oklahoma, a small town in Oklahoma with a population of less than 10,000 people at the time. The small town upbringing has been a strong influence for Woodman. In fact, during classes and meetings, Dick often refers to "his small town country boy" way of understanding things to remind people to keep things simple and not to neglect the basic fundamental aspects of arguments. Some scholars have the ability to uncover complexities of human behavior. They complicate and reshape what we take for granted by illustrating how behavior is more complex than we thought, often leaving both scholars and practitioners frustrated searching for how one might manage all these complexities at the level of application. Only a few scholars, like Dick Woodman, can do the exact opposite. He has the uncanny skill to take the complex, stand above the fray, and help us understand human behavior in a more easily communicated manner, while still reflecting the complexity of the context. This straight talk also provides good potential for practical action, which in the end is the ultimate goal of research. Woodman eloquently explicates this talent throughout his research. And, as many know – budding organizational scholars in his doctoral seminars, students attending a conference doctoral consortium where Dick is a faculty member, scholars who are receiving Dick's reviews from a paper submitted for publication, etc. – Dick's talent of clarifying the complex, providing concrete actionable options, and conveying this in a caring and thoughtful way is unparalleled.

We can see this in his written work when Woodman (2008b) provides commentary for published articles. One example comes in 2008 when he was invited to provide comments on articles in a special issue of the British Journal of Management. When providing commentary for Marshak and Grant's (2008) piece in the journal, he cited Burrell and Morgan's advancement on the continua of ontology and epistemology. He highlighted this piece to provide readers (and possibly himself) a way to understand the paradigm of thought from which the authors made their

contribution. By providing this pathway, his simplicity served as a bridge for scholars to gain better access to influential theory on organization development.

In another example, when Woodman commented on Palmer and Dunford's (2008) article in the same issue, Woodman brought the author's argument back to the basic assumptions underlying human action, which were raised in Rychlak's (1968) discussion of theorizing about human beings. By illuminating a path from which readers can view and appreciate the contribution of the authors, Woodman contributes to not only the reader and the author but to science itself.

Another example is the commentary Dick and Jean Bartunek provided for the book *The Psychology of Organizational Change: Viewing Change from the Employee's Perspective* (Oreg et al. 2013). At the end of this book, Woodman and Bartunek offered a context from which to understand the summation of contributions. More specifically, the authors made connections between all of the articles and in turn tied the contributions of the book to the interactionist perspective (Woodman and Bartunek 2013), with a reminder of the person-situation interactions that lie at the heart of organizational change and development. Through their writing, Woodman and Bartunek are able to connect the reader between the scholar's work and where it contributes to the larger picture of organization change and development.

Just as Woodman does with providing summaries of articles, he also brings this simplicity into developing an understanding of phenomena. For example, in his work on creativity, he does not get bogged down (or allow the readers to get bogged down) in the complexity of a theory that has provided a fundamental framework for research for more than 30 years. Rather, he uses the simplicity of a few sentences to introduce readers to the complex phenomenon he discusses, "the behavior of an organism at any point in time is a complex interaction of the situation and something else – this something else is the nature of the organism itself" (Woodman and Schoenfeldt 1990, p. 10). He further elicits in his interactionist theory for creativity, "group creativity is a function of the interaction of the individuals involved and group characteristics, group processes, and contextual influences" (Woodman et al. 1993, p. 296). Using his self-professed "country boy" mentality toward understanding phenomena, not surprisingly, the premise for his seminal theory on creativity (Woodman et al. 1993) was a comprehensive, yet simple to understand, interactionist model for organizational creativity. In this research, Woodman and colleagues examined individual creativity, group creativity, and organizational creativity by suggesting how the level of analysis (i.e., individual, group, or organization) interacts with the situational influences relevant to that level.

Similarly, this simplified and fundamental view of change continues through his comments on several other change phenomena. In his 2014 piece, Woodman (2014b) comments specifically on the art and science of several prominent features of change research. Similarly, in commenting on evaluation research, Woodman notes that it has two purposes "(1) to make valid inferences about effective and ineffective organizational change efforts and (2) to understand change phenomena and processes to contribute to theory development in the organizational sciences" (p. 469). Again, by breaking down evaluation research into two simple goals, Woodman gains facility with delineating how the science of organizational change

may seem at conflict and that the art of organizational change can be used to pursue the two simultaneously. In his section on organization development, Woodman argues that all change research, with possibly the exception of appreciative inquiry, begins with a diagnosis. He argues that the process may be different for different types of change, but he also argues that an organization must be understood before it can be effectively changed. Thus, he suggests, a dialogic OD diagnosis occurs in the "meaning-making" process through the change endeavor. Woodman argues that although dialogic OD (e.g., Bushe and Marshak 2009) may not use diagnosis as a formal step, in order to know when to change something and when to keep things the same, it is imperative that a specific actor has some understanding of what needs to be changed or improved, which is a diagnosis. In a final example, Woodman's take on theory is that "theory articulates the organized common sense that represents the sum total of knowledge about organizational reality" (p. 467). Although this comment is not groundbreaking, Woodman astutely boils down what theory is to an academic into one simple sentence. Further, this point boils down Dick's take on the important, but fine line that OD plays as a bridge between academics and practitioners (e.g., Bartunek and Woodman 2012). Although each example that is highlighted above covers a different aspect of organizational change, the common theme that comes across is that, for Dick Woodman, no matter how complex the ideas, there is brilliance in its simplicity.

## Legacies and Unfinished Business: Individual Changeability and a Temporal Model of Change

Dick Woodman has, without a doubt, left a lasting legacy on both the field of organizational change and development and the organizational sciences more broadly. Not only has his work as an editor of two highly regarded outlets for organizational change guided the field for decades, but much of his scholarship still receives attention today. As noted above, Woodman's interactionist model on organizational creativity (e.g., Woodman et al. 1993; Woodman and Schoenfeldt 1989, 1990) continues to shape creativity research, while his more recent research on innovative behavior (Yuan and Woodman 2010) has received a highly cited paper distinction through Web of Science. Also, Woodman's work on change schema (Lau et al. 2003; Lau and Woodman 1995; Woodman and King 1978) is continuing to receive considerable attention from change scholars and has continued into a viable research stream. Despite the forthright success with research (as an editor and scholar), there are at least two areas that remain unfinished for Woodman.

*Individual change.* The first stems from a book chapter he wrote with Todd Dewett in *The Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation* (Woodman and Dewett 2004). Drawing on a theme of his research, bringing together multiple perspectives (e.g., Woodman 1989a, 2014a; Woodman et al. 1993), Woodman offers an interactionist perspective for organizational change. He and Dewett suggest that the role of the individual's effect on organizations has been examined voraciously, while the role of how organizations change individuals is barely examined. And, in

order to understand organizational change, we must understand one fundamental premise to changing organizations, which is how people change. More specifically, in order for an organization to change, people must change – they must believe, think, and act differently. Further, Woodman and Dewett identify three dimensions in which people change: changeability, depth, and time.

The first dimension, changeability, refers to the extent to which an individual's characteristics vary through the change process. When an organization changes, it must determine what aspect of the individual it will attempt to change, and the effort needed will be dependent on the level of changeability. For example, in an organizational culture change, it will not suffice to focus on changing task-specific behavior, which is highly changeable. Instead, the organization must focus on changing norm-regulated behavior, which is harder to change and therefore has lower changeability. Similarly, when determining what type of cognitive change is needed, an organization may implement a change initiative that focuses on changing the highly changeable "task behavior" or the less changeable "knowledge about the organization." The authors suggest four types of individual change, behavioral, cognitive, affective, and conative, and suggest that organizations should consider these factors when deliberating the change endeavor.

The second dimension, depth of change, was drawn on Roger Harrison's (1970) term, which refers to the magnitude of individual change. For example, it is one thing to make a small procedural change to affect job behavior; it is something altogether different to completely alter all behaviors required to complete a task. Therefore, organizations ought to consider the magnitude of change that occurs for the individual when considering different change endeavors. The third dimension is time. The notion of time in organizational theory is sorely needed (Bartunek and Woodman 2015; Pettigrew et al. 2001; Woodman and Dewett 2004). Not only has time been neglected in theory but it has also been neglected in research. This is despite the fact that time has been shown to be extremely important for investigating change.

Although, since the initial publication of the book chapter, there have been many references to the chapter, little work that we are aware of has explicitly examined the premise of the chapter. However, in a dissertation that examines employee alignment with a strategic directive, Thundiyil (2015) uses social cognitive theory (e.g., Bandura 1989) and the theory of change momentum (Jansen 2004) to examine how changes in knowledge about the interventions can affect changes in knowledge of the behaviors needed to affect change and the actual behaviors. The results provide some preliminary support for Woodman and Dewett's model of individual changeability and encourage future research on the topic of changeability as a way to align employees with a change initiative. Overall, this area of research is mostly unexamined and will remain an area with fruitful opportunities for some time to come.

*Moving beyond Lewin.* Another legacy that Woodman leaves for scholars to develop as he enters the twilight of his career is a temporal model of change (Bartunek and Woodman 2015). In an early article that introduced the Special Research Forum on Change and Development's Journeys into a Pluralistic World

in the *Academy of Management Journal*, Pettigrew et al. (2001) distinguished process as a major analytical challenge facing the field. Drawing on Van de Ven's (1992) explication of three ways to study processes, the authors proposed the most meaningful approach to studying change. The authors recommended exploring change processes as continuous rather than as movements between states. They then recommended exploring process in relation to time, history, linkage to action, and linkage to performance. This importance was later echoed in Woodman and Bartunek's summary chapter in *The Psychology of Organizational Change: Viewing Change from the Employee's Perspective* (Woodman and Bartunek 2013).

Once again, in a follow-up review of the field led by Jean Bartunek, Bartunek and Woodman (2015) considered in much greater detail models of organizational change. More specifically, they began with the most prevalent model of organizational change, the unfreeze, change, refreeze model (Lewin 1947) in the context of the shift from traditional organization development (OD), also termed diagnostic OD, to dialogic OD (Bushe and Marshak 2009, 2014). Through this review, the authors consider the change of OD through a Lewinian freezing lens and note the incompleteness as a tool to examine the dynamic nature of change. Instead the authors encourage the field to explore a new, more sophisticated model of change that examines several temporal dimensions of change, namely, sequence (e.g., stages, temporal order of events), timing (e.g., deadlines, presence of alternatives, environmental responsiveness), pacing (e.g., speed of change, momentum), rhythm of change (e.g., repetitive cycles of change, times of accelerated/slowed activity), and monophony/polyphony (e.g., types of entrainment, aligned or overlapping events, number of strands, sequencing, pacing, and rhythms).

Although Bartunek and Woodman brilliantly identified temporal dimensions related to change, their goal was not to conclusively theorize on the temporal dimensions of change, but instead, to approximate the temporal elements of planned change. The work that remains is manifold. To start, the temporal constructs noted above need to be developed more fully, and a deeper understanding of how the terms interrelate will be important. Also, empirical research that can carefully measure the temporal elements that were discussed can provide a gateway to better understand the underlying temporal structures of planned change. This research could assess the efficacy of different processes and their implications for change. A third area for future research would be to examine the individual's effects on the temporal dimensions. More specifically, for example, scholars can examine the role a leader plays on the temporal sequence of events within a change endeavor.

## Conclusion

Dick Woodman's simplified view is not the elementary view that individuals have when they are trying to grasp a new topic. Rather, Dick's understanding of events is more than that. It is the simplicity that exists on the other side of complexity. It is the simplicity that can only exist when people have such a strong grasp of the content that they can see through the mess to what the complexity holds. And then at this

point, they can rework the piece to boil it down to its fundamental essence. Dick Woodman is a master at boiling things down to their fundamental essence and being able to tie this essence into the greater contribution. It is this significant contribution that Woodman leaves the field of organizational change and development along with his legacy as being the editor of the two most influential publications in organization change.

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# Therese Yaeger: Lifting Up the Voices of the Field

Rachael L. Narel

**Abstract**

Therese Yaeger, Ph.D., has been a key contributor in the field of Organization Development for two decades. Beginning her career in the corporate world, Yaeger came to learn about the role of a scholar-practitioner through the MSMOB program at Benedictine University. She has since transitioned to academia focusing her research and publications on Appreciative Inquiry and Global OD. Therese is currently the Associate Director of Benedictine University's Ph.D. in OD program and was a key partner in its development and implementation. At the same time, she continued to consult to corporate and created executive development programs for some of the largest corporations in the Chicago area.

In addition to consulting and teaching, Yaeger has collaborated with colleagues and students on countless publications and presentations on a myriad of topics in the field. She has been involved in numerous roles in both professional and academic associations. Therese is a connector and has brought together scholarship and practice as well as people and organizations to continue to make key contributions. A humble yet prominent force in the field, many more years of exciting contributions are still ahead.

**Keywords**

Benedictine University • Therese Yaeger • Organization development • Appreciative inquiry • Global OD

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## Contents

## Introduction

Therese Yaeger is an example of a true scholar-practitioner who is always thinking about change. Change in research, change in the field, change in the business environment, change in classroom techniques and technologies. While her key contributions and primary research interests have been in the areas of Appreciative Inquiry and Global OD, she has always kept a pulse on new topics and techniques. A lifelong learner, Therese is constantly searching for new knowledge through interactions with students in her classroom, by participating in conferences, and through her work in the field. Everyone who knows Therese marvels at her limitless energy and passion for her work.

This chapter illustrates the contributions that Therese has made in the field of OD, both individually and through her collaborations with colleagues and students. It is influenced by my personal experiences with her over the past 10 years as both a student in her classroom and as a coauthor and copresenter. It is informed by review of her work, discussions with her colleagues and students, and interviews with Therese about her background and perspectives. It is my pleasure to provide this chapter as part of this Change Thinkers Handbook to share how Therese has masterfully brought people and ideas together to the great benefit of our field. It will discuss her influences and motivations to enter the world of OD and contributions yet to come.

## Influences and Motivations: A Winding Path to OD

Therese F. Yaeger was born on the south side of Chicago into a big Catholic family. Loving, smart parents, bright, supportive siblings, and the love of education made for a well-rounded childhood. As one of the oldest in a large family, time management, multitasking, and the ability to deal with unexpected disruptions were the requisite familial skills. Family mattered, and family values included the assumption that hard work paid off, that one must be goal-driven, and focus on the positive and potential in self and others.

At 16, Yaeger started traveling abroad and quickly fell in love with the world. Over the years, she would travel to various countries in Europe and Central America working part-time jobs to save for trips. During her travels, she was fascinated by other cultures and felt "out of her comfort zone" yet comfortable at the same time. Her interest in the global arena continues today, as it enriches her teaching of International OD in graduate and doctoral coursework.

All during her 20s, life was fast-paced. Fearless at 20, she married and started a small business with her husband, while working full-time in downtown Chicago. Also in her 20s, she and her husband Paul started a family. She continued school-work and helped start other small businesses. Still, family mattered and life was full.

Long before she studied organizational behavior and organization development concepts in graduate school, in the 1970s and 1980s she experienced first-hand numerous challenges in corporate situations. These challenges included a lack of employee involvement, employee resistance to change, the need for improved teamwork, and the inappropriate use of consultants that often crippled organizational change efforts. Similarly, she realized that in order for successful change to happen, it required the buy-in of involved constituents. Yaeger explains, "Seeing a consultant or manager come in and say, 'we are going to do things differently now, we are going to do this, this and this.' Everybody in the room was nodding their head, and then those same workers would go out to the water cooler and say, 'That's not gonna happen.'" That kind of autocratic, top-down approach to change reinforced her belief in the importance of organizational change strategies that included job motivation and improved training. Additionally, she watched the struggles of technology implementations and thought, "there has got to be a better way to implement change." The reward for hard work and her ability to multitask enabled her to manage family, career, and her husband's small business. In her 30s, still pursuing her love of learning, she enrolled in the Masters of Science in Management and Organizational Behavior Program at Illinois Benedictine College (now Benedictine University) in the Chicago suburbs.

## Early OD Influencers

While in the OB/OD program, Therese not only learned foundational OD concepts, but she also read the OD classics, such as the 1969 OD Six-Pack published by Addison-Wesley. Other impactful readings included Edgar Schein's work on culture, Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham's work on job motivation, and Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y.

For Yaeger, McGregor's *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960) provided insight into management, leadership, and change that truly resonated with her. She found McGregor's Theory Y "fundamentally right," and his self-fulfilling prophecy merely confirmed her assumption that employees left their boss (not the organization). In *The Human Side of Enterprise,* McGregor stressed the importance of human poten-tial, managerial assumptions, and motivation – concepts that intrigued her. McGregor, for Yaeger, was also a perfect model of the ideal scholar-practitioner

having not only having worked as a consultant with leading organizations, but through publications, bringing his theories to the world of managers (McGregor 1957, 1960, 1967).

In graduate school, as part of Benedictine University's Contemporary Trends in Change Management Lecture Series, she was introduced to numerous OD/OB scholars such as Richard Hackman, Michael Beer, Thomas Head (Sorensen's primary coauthor), Susan Mohrman, and Victoria Marsick. Being able to engage with these scholars in person allowed her to deepen her knowledge and appreciation for their contributions and increased her excitement about the field, an early lesson that later influenced her teaching in bringing these same experiences to her students. There, she was also introduced to David Cooperrider's theory of Appreciative Inquiry. Similar to McGregor's work, Cooperrider's "appreciating the positive potential in others" (Cooperrider et al. 2005) had been her approach to people since her childhood, so it just made common sense to her. What surprised her was realizing that not everyone in the world approached human dynamics this way. Yaeger knew that she needed to find ways to share this knowledge with others so that they could understand the theoretical foundations of this research and how it could be applied in organizations.

In the mid-1990s, while working and writing with the MSMOB Program Director, Dr. Peter Sorensen, she was invited to assist in the start-up of the new Ph.D. Program in Organization Development at Benedictine University. With her past knowledge of business start-ups and her keen sense of maintaining a fledgling organization, she cautiously accepted.

While Yaeger thinks it was "mere coincidence" that she was offered the opportunity to help start-up Benedictine's Ph.D. program, it was Peter Sorensen who saw in her the passion, knowledge, and commitment to make the doctoral program a reality at the small liberal arts Catholic college. "Her core values of OD and her roots in the Catholic community were just what the program needed for the program's success at Benedictine," Sorensen explained. As a result, in 1996, the first doctoral program at Benedictine University began with 17 doctoral students from across the USA, which included consultants, executives, and HR experts. In the very first doctoral course, she worked with David Cooperrider, and heard first-hand his theory of Appreciative Inquiry.

Another opportunity arose as a result of meetings with David Cooperrider. As "Coop" was a former graduate student of Sorensen's at the former George Williams College, the three (Yaeger, Sorensen, and Cooperrider) discussed the need for a compendium of AI readings. In short order, Sorensen accepted the role of Guest Editor of OD Network's journal, the *OD Practitioner*, and Cooperrider along with Peter agreed to dedicate the special issue to Appreciative Inquiry. So, in 1996, with Sorensen and Cooperrider, Therese helped create the first *OD Practitioner* Special Issue on Appreciative Inquiry. To date, this 1996 issue of the *OD Practitioner* has been reprinted more than any other issue in OD Network's history.

Fast-forward 3 years, and in 1999, the idea of an "AI book" became reality. With David Cooperrider, Peter Sorensen, and Diana Whitney, Yaeger created the first book (a reader) of articles dedicated to Appreciative Inquiry entitled *Appreciative*

*Inquiry: Rethinking Human Organization Toward a Positive Theory of Change* (Stipes Publications).

Within 3 years, this book was incorporated into graduate curricula at more than two dozen schools including Stanford University, Harvard University, Case Western University, and countless organizations including healthcare and religious organizations. Her goal of promulgating AI to a broader audience had been met as through this work it was reaching both scholars and practitioners. As for the *OD Practitioner,* by 2000, the OD Network had invited Sorensen and Yaeger to publish yet another special issue dedicated to Appreciative Inquiry.

## Mentors

Yaeger believes that mentoring has been a critical element to her learning – she has been fortunate to have strong mentors in her OD journey. Dr. Thomas Head was one such mentor. Tom and Therese met in the early 1990s, and over the next two decades, they researched, published, and presented on numerous management topics including Global OD, McGregor's legacy, and Appreciative Inquiry. Tom chaired Yaeger's dissertation, and even in his passing in 2015, they were still working on publications together. To honor Tom Head, at Benedictine University today there is a "Yaeger & Head OD Library" that houses classic works from the OD greats, along with the dissertations of Benedictine University Ph.D. in Organization Development program graduates.

Another mentor of hers was David Cooperrider. Not only was he a key influence in her early work, but Cooperrider was willing and excited to be a part of her dissertation committee which involved OD and global consulting. Similar to her early experiences in international travel, "Coop" pushed Therese out of her comfort zone and challenged her to take her research to a deeper level. He encouraged her to see the Global OD world through the not-for-profit and social responsibility sectors. David helped provide the positive vision for her research, made connections, and supported her every step of the way. A third mentor and role model is Dr. David Coghlan of Ireland. While Therese remembers this relationship in terms of mentoring, it was actually a 1997 interview by Therese of David Coghlan that appeared in the OD Journal that began their friendship. Therese emphasizes that David's writing discipline, his passion for teaching Organization Development, and his expertise in action research are elements that strengthen this life-long friendly mentorship. David has regularly visited her classroom at Benedictine as a visiting scholar, and they also continue to collaborate at Academy of Management.

It is not surprising, through understanding Yaeger's background, influences and shortly her key contributions, that one of her most influential colleagues was Peter Sorensen. Peter recognized early on that Therese would become an invaluable member of the field and worked to provide her as many opportunities as possible to grow and contribute through teaching, publishing, and collaborating with leading scholars. Sorensen and Yaeger have continued to partner over the years not only on the graduate programs at Benedictine University but on countless publications and presentations.

## Key Contributions: A Scholar-Practitioner at Work

With books and publications, and a dissertation finished in 2001, the corporate arena again appeared inviting. In 2006, Yaeger took a sabbatical from Benedictine University to join Motorola Incorporated as the Director of Global Organization Development. She then returned to Benedictine University as a tenure-track faculty member in both the Ph.D. and MSMOB programs, where she continues today.

At Benedictine University, again with a track record of successful start-up efforts, she developed executive development programs for some of the largest corporations in the Chicago area including John Deere, Motorola, and McDonald's. With Sorensen, she created an OD certificate for the US Postal Service, wherein hundreds of US Postal managers completed graduate OD coursework in team building, organizational assessment, and Appreciative Inquiry. Committed to bringing knowledge of OD to organizations, Yaeger leveraged her skills as a practitioner to work directly with the people in organizations giving them the information and skills to help enact change. She knew not everyone would be able to come to Benedictine and so in living out the University's value of "community" she brought the education to them.

In the external consulting arena, Therese has consulted in government, healthcare, manufacturing, and education – she has even been called in to "consult to consultants" such as internal OD consultants within corporations. Leveraging her skills as both an educator and practitioner, she empowers them with the latest research and tools in the field to make them more effective in their work. Yaeger has indirectly assisted hundreds of companies by enhancing the skills of those actually doing the work through these programs. This has also enabled her to stay relevant in practice as well as scholarship as these consultants also present her with their current challenges and efforts. She has had many interesting and exciting opportunities presented to her and she finds it hard to decline interesting work even as busy as she is; especially when it will be enriching for both her and the organization. However, over the years she has learned the key components of a successful engagement is never a one-time fix. For that reason, she won't take work if she feels she cannot leave the organization better than how she found it.

Beyond teaching, Yaeger considers her key contributions to be her research and publications, and her professional roles to make meaningful contributions to OD (i.e., reviewing, Editorial Boards, officer roles, etc.), and collaboration. She has found volunteering in a variety of roles has provided her with broader exposure to research in the field and opportunities to connect with others which in turn leads to further collaborations and contributions.

## Published Contributions

The importance of publications was something Yaeger realized early in her academic career. In reading a 1985 article entitled, "ODs Top Ten: Who they are, how they got there" by Hillman and Varney, she quickly understood that although each of the OD greats identified in the article came from various walks of life, publishing was an OD

key to success. In her opinion, if you want to make an impact in OD, it is necessary to go beyond consulting to writing and publishing – consulting, education, and publishing are key.

The influence of David Cooperrider included his participation on her dissertation committee, as well as his influence on her various publications on Appreciative Inquiry. After the first AI reader, a second expanded edition appeared in 2001, and a third edition was published in 2005 (an arrangement with Stipes Publishing insists that no royalties were to be received by the authors).

"I believe that was the beginning of a powerful contribution to increase knowledge of the concept of AI to a more people – now just 15 years later, on Amazon's website, there are more than 1,500 books on the topic of Appreciative Inquiry," Yaeger contends.

Another Appreciative Inquiry work coauthored by Yaeger included "Assessment of the state of Appreciative Inquiry: Past, Present and Future," in Woodman and Pasmore's *Research in Organizational Change and Development,* Vol. 15, with Sorensen and Bengtsson (2005). Yaeger wanted to capture the increased use of AI in organizations to share its successes and continue to evangelize how appropriate it is to address positive change. "Feedback from the Positive Question – The integration of Appreciative Inquiry with survey feedback: from corporate to global cultures," with Sorensen, in Cooperrider and Avital's Advances *in Appreciative Inquiry* (2004) allowed Therese to leverage both her knowledge of AI with her knowledge of Global OD to illustrate its applicability throughout the world in all types of organizations.

Consistent with her readings in graduate school, the early influence of Douglas McGregor's work is reflected in a number of her writings. In 2006, while rereading McGregor's Human Side of Enterprise, she realized that Theory X and Y was approaching 50 years old, and 2007 would be the appropriate time to reflect on McGregor's theories at the National Academy of Management. The AOM session entitled "Doing well by doing good: The legacy of Douglas McGregor in today's corporate world" was presented with Ed Schein, Warner Burke, and corporate executives. As result of this session, in 2011, Yaeger was the Guest Editor of a special issue of the *Journal of Management History* entitled "Honoring Douglas McGregor and The Human Side of Enterprise." Through this work, she was able to collaborate with leading scholars including Edgar Schein, Warren Bennis, Marvin Weisbord, Peter Sorensen, Matt Minahan, and Warner Burke to revisit and honor McGregor's work. Her interest in McGregor currently continues – in 2015 with Sorensen she published "Theory X and Theory Y" in *Oxford Press Bibliography.* Finally, for this *Change Thinkers Handbook,* both Sorensen and Yaeger authored the Douglas McGregor biography.

## Professional Roles

Yaeger considers her work in and with the national Academy of Management to be one of her major contributions. Since 1998, she has appeared in the Academy of Management annual programs more than 50 times. Her influence and contributions have included numerous showcase and all Academy panels, from historical panels

that involved sessions dedicated to McGregor, Likert, and Jaques, and topics covering "meaningful research," the OD Six Pack, Global OD challenges, and Appreciative Inquiry. OD scholars who have participated on panels with Yaeger have included Edgar Schein, Warner Burke, Michael Beer, Jay Lorsch, David Cooperrider, Tom Cummings, and Chris Worley. Through these collaborations, Yaeger has continued to bring new perspectives on current and future trends in the field to both students and scholar-practitioners. Bringing diversity of thought together has provided new insights leading to innovative research.

An active member of many OD and management communities, she has presented both nationally and internationally at the Eastern Academy of Management, Southern Academy of Management, Southwest Academy of Management, and internationally with the MC Division of the Academy of Management in France, Switzerland, Denmark, and Austria. In these forums, she has continued to share leading research in AI and Global OD as well as other contemporary trends in the field. Through these organizations, she has also worked hard to raise up the voices of new doctoral students through collaborative work.

Her influence in the field is also reflected in her positions as Past Chair of the Management Consulting Division of the Academy of Management, the President of the Midwest Academy, and countless Track Chair roles for the Midwest and Southwest Academy of Management. Her contributions have been recognized by the Southwest Academy with the Outstanding Educator of the Year Award (2010); the Benedictine University Researcher of the Year Award (2011); Organization Consultant of the Year Award from the OD Institute (2010); and the Kathy Dannemiller Share the Wealth Award (with Sorensen) from the OD Network (2008), among others.

Yaeger admits the new learning she experiences when working in the background of conferences and journals. This includes her work as conference reviewer, journal reviewer, and the importance of staying current through the role of an Editorial Board member. "I prefer to be the guide on the side than the sage on the stage," she jokes as she references Alison King's 1993 work on education, "but it's the truth!" Joking aside, she maintains positions on Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, *Revue Sciences de Gestion* (France), and the *OD Practitioner*, and has reviewed for numerous journals. Again, hard work pays off (in new learning). Even her volunteer work as judge on various committees for the OD Network, the ODN-Chicago Impact Award, and INC Magazine's "Top Small Company Workplaces" Award 2011 – even National Women's Associations – are opportunities for hard work but immeasurable payback. "The learnings from these committees and their discussions are enormous – you learn about and explore cutting-edge OD work that documents great change efforts that may positively impact future OD projects," says Yaeger.

## Collaboration

Since the mid-1990s, for the Benedictine University OD Program, Therese has hosted the majority of the OD greats as part of the Benedictine Contemporary

Trends in Change Management Lecture Series, with such scholars as Edgar Schein, Robert Blake, Warner Burke, Billie Alban, Kathie Dannemiller, Edie and Charles Seashore, and Peter Vaill. For the doctoral coursework, she has also hosted OD scholar-practitioners such as Dick Woodman, Rami Shani, David Coghlan, Andy Van de Ven, Anthony Buono, David Jamieson, Chris Worley, and Robert Quinn. For Yaeger, being able to collaborate with so many OD scholars is like "being a kid in a candy store." Through the Ph.D. coursework, she has been able to sit with many notable thinkers featured in various chapters of this book and specifically mentions scholars like Hackman, Mohrman, Bartunek, and Cummings. She fondly remembers how excited both she and Robert Blake were when they first met and how Robert Blake gave her a stack of Managerial Grid books. As a result, in the 1990s, they began to collaborate on writing projects.

The influence of Head, Sorensen, and Cooperrider is reflected in her extensive teaching and publications in international OD including *Global and International Organization Development* (2011) now in its 5th edition, and *Global Organization Development: Managing Unprecedented Change* (2006). These works built upon her dissertation focused on the Global OD consultant. Through that research, Yaeger found these individuals were driven by the core OD values while at the same time possessed a unique ability to recognize and overcome cross-culture challenges they encountered. She has worked to bring emerging work in the field together in a way that contributes to the effective practice of OD. As OD has become more strategic and global, she has focused on topics such as Strategic OD, Global OD, and positive change. Her research has helped illustrate how we can sustain integrity and the core values of OD while addressing these issues, which are increasingly critical for the field. Here again, Yaeger partners with her students to continue to explore challenges in the application of OD on a global scale through scholar-practitioner collaborations in the field.

Yaeger has been a collegial influence on her colleagues over the years including her closest, Dr. Peter Sorensen. Yaeger and Sorensen have collaborated on more than 100 publications and presentations in the last 20 years. They were instrumental in developing and implementing the Ph.D. program in Organization Development at Benedictine University. They and their students have published and presented numerous books, articles, and papers in the areas of global, strategic and positive organization development. Together, with their faculty colleague Ram Tenkasi, the Ph.D. students have literally presented papers throughout the world, countries, and continents including Scandinavia, Europe, France, Africa, China, India, and Latin and South America. A number of their students have established doctoral programs modeled after the Benedictine program. They have mentored and been part of five generations of students in organization change.

In addition to her academic writing and collaborations, she has used her consulting engagements to help contribute additional case work to the field. One such publication with Homer Johnson (formerly of Loyola University) and Peter Sorensen is entitled *Critical Issues in Organization Development: Case Studies for Analysis and Discussion*, where they compiled 30 case studies into one book where both academics and practitioners address an OD challenge and value the differing

responses from OD experts. Providing a diversity of research, these cases represent 90 OD consultants with expertise in the various areas of case topics including strategy, resources and the bottom line, power and ethics, conflict, and global and culture. Based on real situations, this work allows professionals and students to read and reflect but also allows the consultants to share their experiences. Yaeger was initially invited to be one of these case respondents and realizing the importance of this work became more involved with case writing and development.

In 2006, Sorensen and Yaeger created the book Series entitled Contemporary Trends in Organization Development through Information Age Publishing. Since then, more than six Benedictine Ph.D. graduates have contributed to the series, namely, Dalitso Sulamoyo on OD in Africa, Linda Sharkey with Paul Eccher on Optimizing Talent, Deb Colwill on OD in education, and Gina Hinrichs on Large Scale Change. The IAP OD book series will soon have ten books on innovative approaches to change.

## New Insights: Collaboration Creates the Best Outcomes

A lesson learned early on in Therese's career was that it is not just enough to consult and teach – publishing is critical to being successful in OD. Knowing its importance, in working to reach the broadest audience to share research on Appreciative Inquiry and Global OD, Yaeger has focused not only on presenting at conferences but on partnering to publish readers and articles on these topics as well. She stays relevant on current trends in these topics through consulting work in the field and through the experiences of her students.

Yaeger embodies the spirit of a true scholar-practitioner with her work in both academia and business settings. However, it is also obvious that Therese is a true collaborator in the field as most every presentation or publication has been in conjunction with other scholars, practitioners, or her students. As Mirvis and Lawler (2011) remind us, cocreation with others truly creates useful research, and Yaeger is an exemplar in bringing people together to bring new insights into the field.

I will never forget sitting in the Vancouver Club at the 2015 MC Division AOM Annual Members and Friends Event and listening to Therese as the keynote speaker. In her speech, she humbly accepted the honor creatively tying her personal history to musical greats over the years. Notably, she paralleled how Frank Sinatra and Sammy Cahn worked together to create amazing (and award winning) music to how OD scholar-practitioners must do the same for the benefit of the field. I turned to a fellow student from my Ph.D. Cohort and said, "I really would love to accomplish a tenth of what she has done in her lifetime. Amazing." Yaeger has had a profound impact on so many in the field, especially the development of students into scholar-practitioners.

I consider myself fortunate that Yaeger took me under her wing and has always found time in her busy schedule to help me along my scholar-practitioner journey. We were introduced during my time in the MSMOB program at Benedictine during Research Methods. Therese always begins class the first evening discussing the

leading experts in the field using Hillman and Varney's 1985 "ODs Top Ten" article. She makes explicit to hopeful future OD consultants that writing and publishing are necessary for one's OD consulting success. As someone with a passion for education who has worked in the corporate world, Yaeger opened up an entirely new world of knowledge for me as to how to become a larger part of the academic community.

Prior to her class, I had never heard of a scholar-practitioner before. From her first-hand experience, Yaeger discusses how organizations need people who have a blend of both research and practice that can speak the language of the business to the corporate audience while understanding theoretical foundations. Corporate executives want to know that OD isn't just theory but that it works in real situations. Alternatively, she reminds us of Lewin's quote "there is nothing so practical as a good theory." I was so excited to learn from her how I could take the knowledge I had been gaining in traditional and contemporary organizational theory and apply it to my work in the corporate arena; helping my company and others understand the change needed for optimal performance coupled with the knowledge and experience on how to implement that change.

A few years later, I came back to Benedictine for the Ph.D. program. We were able to work more closely together, and she agreed to be the chair for my dissertation. Seeing in me what I did not see in myself, I did not realize the full implications of the journey I had embarked upon. As she would always remind fellow students and myself we just needed to "trust the process" and I am glad that I did. She continually lives up to what she feels is her role to "lift it up, make the invisible visible."

The influence she has had on both my work and me personally over the past few years is immeasurable. First, I gained a broader and deeper exposure to Yaeger's work on Strategic OD, Global OD, and Appreciative Inquiry; the last, in particular was a strong influence on my dissertation research in the area of thriving in teams. I had always approached my work in organizations from the positive mindset. Her writing validated my thinking and opened me up to new possibilities in the application of AI at multiple levels in the workplace. The program continued to reinforce the concept of scholar-practitioner every step of the way, so the knowledge I gained could be immediately applied and I could bring back results from the world of business to discuss its implications to theory.

Change in organizations and the world of business is inevitable. Helping people adapt to it – often quickly – is of paramount importance. "Organizations are made up of people – if you address that first, everything else is a little more obvious to work with. Knowledge of change processes, knowledge of change theories, but above and beyond that you need the people skills that are important," she explains. Yaeger and I agree that change is happening at a more rapid pace than ever before and new approaches need to be brought to light to help organizations survive and thrive in the dynamic world of business today. We also agree that the people actually doing the work are critical to the organization and need to be viewed as a key element to the whole of the organizational system when thinking through any change effort.

For me, as chair of my dissertation, Therese helped shape my research as it evolved from general ideas along the same themes of change and people in organizations. What started as a broad topic of Organizational Agility transformed through

insights gleaned in both the classroom and through readings she provided on AI, learning, dynamic change, strategy, structure, and the evolution of organizational theory. Through Benedictine University's Contemporary Trends in Change Management Lecture Series, my doctoral courses, and at Academy of Management, Yaeger took the time to introduce me to scholars in the field that could provide new and additional insights on my research. She is a connector – always seeming to know the right people at the right time to help with introductions for research projects, publications, and job opportunities.

Every time I needed to refine and move in a new direction, Yaeger knew exactly where to point me to go deeper into the topic. Similar to how Cooperrider influenced her, she encouraged me to look at my topic from multiple angles and submit papers to regional conferences for broader community feedback. Her questions made me step back and continually analyze my research and findings. The result of this work provided a new model of a Thriving and Agile Team that can be utilized by the academic world for further research and is immediately useful to organizations that are looking for ways to meet the needs of the new dynamic world of continual change. We are continuing to build on this model for the benefit of both scholarship and practice.

Yaeger has chaired or been on the committee of countless dissertations. Her work with students has led to new insights in a multitude of areas of OD including newer topics such as virtual teams, sustainability, and conscious capitalism. Similar to McGregor, Yaeger's work has not only influenced the development of others in the field but she has collaborated with many up and coming scholars and practitioners on writings to help give them their own voice and visibility. This has kept her close to new and exciting OD developments while supporting the growth and development of those newer to the discipline. Yaeger is a continual learner and a perpetual knowledge seeker; she feels that OD is about learning as much as change. She brings these connections to her students and colleagues as well.

Most importantly, however, I will forever be grateful to Therese for providing me with the means to more fully enter into the world of scholarship. Every time she would reach out with opportunities to publish or present, I would leap at the chance to grow and stretch myself in new ways. At times, this was not easy, but again Yaeger saw what I was unable to see. I recall one week during the holiday season where I was working on a qualifying paper for my Ph.D., research for a submission to International Academy in Lyon, and editing a book chapter. I have yet to comprehend how I was able to accomplish all of that, but through that exercise, I learned how to manage continual research and writing while working fulltime and still finding time for family and friends. Early in the Ph.D. program, that was a very important lesson to learn that still benefits me to this day as a scholar-practitioner.

I entered the Benedictine University doctoral program in OD with a blank CV and am leaving with one that is much more significant and includes publications in journals, a book chapter, paper presentations in the United States and internationally, and teaching as well. This was accomplished in two and a half short years. As someone who had successfully made a transition from corporate to academia, Therese shared with me her experience and knowledge as to how to enter this new

phase of my life. While I had to put in the effort, she saw in me the potential and provided the opportunities. I have watched her do this countless times for other students as well. Not all students will take her up on her offers, but those that do benefit immensely. On a daily basis, she continues to build up our field with more scholarly practitioners who are refining existing theory, contributing new knowledge, and applying it directly to organizations through practice.

What is also notable for this biography is that Therese is a woman, and less than 20% of the biographies found in this book focus on females. While Yaeger has mentored and influenced countless women in the field, there were fewer leading females in the field of OD at the time of her studies and all of her mentors were male. She knows that at times she has been called in as the "token" female for a consulting project, but she has always used it positively to continue her learnings and gain knowledge. She realizes that with her husband of 40 years, she is a role model to her four daughters and to others in the field, and she strives to help create opportunities for even more women.

Yaeger has been an exceptional role model for me. Professionally, as a woman in the IT field, I have had similar experiences to Yaeger and being able to work with another woman who understands and relates to the same challenges was refreshing, especially as I was also entering a new field that was foreign to me. In my professional work, I continue to mentor women entering the IT field and hope that in the world of OD I can "pay forward" the support and mentoring Therese has provided me to encourage other women entering the field.

## Legacy and Unfinished Business: The Journey on the Winding Road Continues

As the Guest Editor for the 2011 special issue of the *Journal of Management History* honoring Douglas McGregor, Yaeger quoted Blaise Pascal (1670) claiming, "Let no one say I have said nothing new: the arrangement of the material is new."

The contributors to this special JMH issue included Warren Bennis, Marvin Weisbord and Warner Burke, and some contributors wanted to republish their earlier writing on McGregor's theories. Hence, Yaeger needed to explain that not everything was new – Warren Bennis insisted on reprinting "Chairman Mac," and Marvin Weisbord wanted a portion of his *Productive Workplaces* reprinted. Hence, Yaeger still has an undeniable sense of nothing new about her.

With respect to this profile, it was a challenge at first collaborating with Yaeger on her for the foundation of this chapter as she truly feels she does not fit the list of change thinkers. Being published among such notable scholars triggers her latent imposter syndrome. In her perspective, she started much later in the field than others and states that she has contributed no new theory or innovative technique.

It is interesting to see how Yaeger's journey, as has been reviewed here, has already paralleled many ODs Top Ten. Her emergent career as an OD scholar-practitioner started in the world of business, working through years of focused education, and now strongly affiliated with the Ph.D. and MSMOB programs at

Benedictine University amid consulting and engaging in practice – all while reiterating that "family matters." She has published extensively and has been involved in numerous professional and academic associations. In fact, one could argue that Yaeger is one of the most influential integrators in our field, helping bring together not only theory and practice, but people as well.

It is easy to see why Yaeger is so influential. She embodies the core values of OD and enthusiastically approaches every effort continuing to stretch herself and challenging those around her to do the same. Similar to her earliest travels, she pushes out of her comfort zone while being comfortable in knowing herself at the same time. While Yaeger has contributed much to Organization Development already, she has many years of continued contribution ahead of her in both the areas of scholarship and practice. She feels we are actually just starting in the nascent field of OD and change.

Still today, she is a significant figure in the continued development of the Benedictine OD doctoral program, contributing to the establishment of one of the preeminent programs in the OD field and the success of over 200 Ph.D. alumni. The OD Program at Benedictine University has grown considerably over the past decades, and she is excited to get newer generations of OD scholar-practitioners and having them develop as change agents and practicing scholars. As the Benedictine program has evolved over the years, Yaeger delights to see the increase in publications and books from Benedictine students. These have been a result of high quality research in addition to practical application of the concepts of the Ph.D. in OD program brought back into the field.

From her earliest influences and motivations, to key contributions, to new insights, Yaeger continues to focus on OD's historical contributions such as the impact of McGregor, Likert, and Cooperrider. She believes that students should review and reflect on the work of organizational scholars that are still relevant today. For example, McGregor defined Theory Y in the 1950s and now, so many decades later, the contributions of his concepts are being questioned. "It is as if somebody gave us the recipe for organizational success and we still don't understand it," Yaeger stated. She hopes that we, as organizational members, will continue to progress and help organizations get a little closer to understanding Theory Y as McGregor intended his theory to be discussed.

Her advice to students who aspire to be ethical OD consultants reflects the key learnings and influences illustrated throughout her own journey. It includes (a) reading and rereading the works of the early scholars in the field; (b) traveling to understand other cultures unlike your home country; and (c) finding good mentors. OD is not learned in one course or 1 year, so in the meantime, enjoy learning about yourself and others.

Yaeger has been a humble yet prominent force in Organization Development for two decades now. A quote we discussed during her interview for this chapter is so appropriate to summarize her life thus far: "Well behaved women rarely make history." While this quote has been attributed to several women over the years including Marilyn Monroe and Eleanor Roosevelt, ironically its earliest origin is from an academic paper in the journal *American Quarterly* in 1976 by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. As a student at the University of New Hampshire, where she earned

her Ph.D., Ulrich wrote this paper to continue her goal of recovering the history of women who were not featured in history books of the past. It is exciting to see how far we have come in 30 years from the predominantly male dominated ODs Top Ten list, to Yaeger and other women now being featured in this Handbook on *Great Thinkers in Organizational Change*.

Yaeger contemplates her future contributions. Outside of her professional OD world, she focuses on family and close relationships with friends (the same people who provided the early interest in her OB/OD studies). More global research awaits as well. Professionally, however, she again reiterates her excitement about the nascent field of OD and how many research prospects lies ahead for doctoral research. Assuredly, she will continue to be a leading role model for her daughters and future women in the OD field. It will be exciting to see her continued contributions to the field in the years to come – opportunities abound.

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# Erratum to: Barbara Czarniawaska: Organizational Change – Fashions, Institutions, and Translations

Hervé Corvellec and Ulla Eriksson-Zetterquist

The book was inadvertently published with the incorrect chapter title. This information has been updated as "Barbara Czarniawska: Organizational Change – Fashions, Institutions, and Translations".

The Table of Contents has been updated in FM.

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