Warren G. Bennis: Generous Company

8

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

Influences and Motivations: From Scholar to Administrator and Back 128
On Becoming a Scholar 129
On Becoming a University Leader 131
On Returning to Scholarship 132
Key Contributions: Foundations for Developing Groups, Organizations, and Leaders 134
Group Dynamics 134
Planned Change and Organization Development 135

T.G. Cummings (✉)
USC Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA
e-mail: tcummings@marshall.usc.edu

© The Author(s) 2017

D.B. Szabla et al. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Organizational Change Thinkers*,
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-52878-6_2

Democracy 136
Leadership 137
New Insights: Rethinking Organization Development and Change 138
Legacies and Unfinished Business: Actionable Knowledge for a Better World 140
References 141

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)

References

Ashgar, R., (2012). Democracy is inevitable: Why Warren's way still works. *The Huffington Post.* http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rob-asghar/democracy-warren-bennis_b_1596930.html

Bennis, W. (1956). The effect on academic goods of their market. *American Journal of Sociology, 62*, 28–33.

Bennis, W. (1959). Leadership theory and administrative behavior: The problem of authority. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 4*, 259–301.

Bennis, W. (1969). *Organization development: its nature, origins, and prospects*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Bennis, W. (1989). *On becoming a leader*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Bennis, W. (1990). Retrospective commentary for republication of Is democracy inevitable? Harvard Business Review, 68: ??

Bennis, W., & Shepard, H. (1956). A theory of group development. *Human Relations, 9*, 415–437.

Bennis, W., Benne, K., & Chin, R. (1961). *The planning of change: Readings in the applied behavioral sciences*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper and Row.

Bennis, W., Schein, E., Berlew, D., & Steele, F. (1964). *Interpersonal dynamics: Essays and readings on human interaction*. Illinois: Dorsey Press.

Bennis, W., & Biederman, P. (1997). *Organizing genius: The secrets of creative collaboration*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Cummings, T. (1978). Self-regulating work groups: A socio-technical synthesis. *Academy of Management Review, 3*, 625–634.

Cummings, T. (2007). Reflections on the field and beyond: An interview with Warren Bennis. In T. Cummings (Ed.), *Handbook of organization development* (p. 675). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Cummings, T., & Cummings, C. (2014). Appreciating organization development: A comparative essay on divergent perspectives. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 25*, 141–154.

Cummings, T., & Srivastva, S. (1977). *Management of work: A socio-technical systems approach*. Kent, OH: The Comparative Administrative Research Institute.

Mitroff, I., & Bennis, W. (1993). *The unreality industry: The deliberate manufacturing of falsehood and what it is doing to our lives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mohrman, S., & Cummings, T. (1989). *Self-designing organizations: Learning how to create high performance*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Sample, S. (2003). *The contrarian's guide to leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E., & Bennis, W. (1965). *Personal and organizational change through group methods: The laboratory approach*. New York: Wiley.

Shepard, H., & Bennis, W. (1956). A theory of training by group methods. *Human Relations, 9*, 403–414.

Slater, P., & Bennis, W. (1964). Is democracy inevitable? *Harvard Business Review, 42*, 51–59.

Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*, 384–399.

Further Reading

Bennis, W. (1993). *An invented life: Reflections on leadership and change*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Bennis, W. (1998). *Managing people is like herding cats*. London: Kogan Page.

Bennis, W. (2010). *Still surprised: A memoir of a life in leadership* (p. 2010). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Bennis, W., & Biederman, P. (2009). *The essential Bennis: Essays on leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.