

**RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL  
CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT**

# RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Series Editors: Abraham B. (Rami) Shani and  
Debra A. Noumair

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DEVELOPMENT VOLUME 25

**RESEARCH IN  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
CHANGE AND  
DEVELOPMENT**

EDITED BY

**ABRAHAM B. (RAMI) SHANI**  
*California Polytechnic State University, USA;*  
*Politecnico di Milano, Italy*

**DEBRA A. NOUMAIR**  
*Columbia University, USA*



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## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

<i>Kajsa Asplund</i>	Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden
<i>Jean M. Bartunek</i>	Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA
<i>Pernilla Bolander</i>	Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden
<i>Sarah J. Brazaitis</i>	Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, USA
<i>David Coghlan</i>	School of Business, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
<i>David Cooperrider</i>	Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, OH, USA
<i>Asha N. Gipson</i>	Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, USA
<i>Todd D. Jick</i>	Columbia Business School, Columbia University, NY, USA
<i>Elise B. Jones</i>	Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA, USA
<i>Mitchell Lee Marks</i>	San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA, USA; <a href="http://JoiningForces.org">JoiningForces.org</a>
<i>Philip H. Mirvis</i>	Philip H. Mirvis & Associates, Ipswich, MA, USA
<i>Debra A. Noumair</i>	Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, USA
<i>William A. Pasmore</i>	Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, USA
<i>Danielle L. Pfaff</i>	Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, USA
<i>Staci Lynne Ripkey</i>	New York University, NY, USA
<i>Christine M. St. John</i>	Teachers College, Columbia University, NY, USA
<i>Kinithi D. M. Sturtevant</i>	The Maw Sturtevant Group, NY, USA
<i>Marvin Weisbord</i>	Bryn Mawr, PA, USA

*Andreas Werr*

Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm,  
Sweden

*Richard W. Woodman*

Texas A & M University, College Station,  
TX, USA

# PREFACE

The Annual Research in Organizational Change and Development Series has reached a milestone. The current issue is the 25th volume marking the silver anniversary of the series. The first annual research volume was published 30 years ago by JAI Press (1987). Earmarking this achievement we have asked several of the authors that contributed to the first few volumes to contribute a reflective manuscript that captures the evolution of the field through their perspective during the past 30 years. The volume includes six such contributions. This volume continues the tradition of providing insightful and thought-provoking chapters. Seven of the manuscripts are based on a 30-year longitudinal reflection and introspection about the Organizational Development and Change (OD&C) field, specific change and development orientations, emerging research trajectories in OD&C, and the evolution of foundational concepts over time. Other contributions focus on the role that identity plays in achieving strategic change; the merger process of two academic institutions; and the power of using a systems psychodynamics frame, attending to group dynamics, conducting psycho-social research, and viewing self-as-instrument as a rigorous method of sense-making when engaged in OD&C research and practice.

This silver anniversary of *Research in Organization Change and Development* beyond the reflective perspective on the field by some of the contributors continues the tradition of providing insightful and thought-provoking chapters. The chapters in the volume represent a commitment to maintaining the high quality of work that many of you have come to expect from this publication. This volume provides opportunities to understand the roots of the field, its evolution through theoretical development and emerging practice, an invitation to explore the philosophy of OD&C research, an examination of the possible need to reboot change management, examination of the impact of research on the field's development for the past 30 years, and a suggested ambitious research agenda for current and future scholar-practitioners in the field.

The first and the last chapters in this volume capture reflections on past, present, and future research trajectories in the field. William A. Pasmore and Richard W. Woodman, the founders of this annual research series, note current shifts in our world that trigger the need to rethink what we know and how we intervene. They claim that these shifts and their effects on individuals, organizations, and societies open up exciting possibilities for the advancement of our field that can be achieved through research and action. In the last chapter, David Coghlan poses the question as to how we can learn about the philosophy

of OD&C research from the 24 published volumes of ROCD – that include 202 chapters. He adopts and advances the process of interiority and invites the readers to engage with the questions themselves and thereby enact interiority with OD&C itself.

The original articulation of Appreciative Inquiry in organizational life was advanced in a chapter that was contributed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva and published in the first volume of ROCD in 1987. Using the original manuscript, David provides personal reflections, key points of emphasis, clarifications, or editorial commentaries after three decades of theoretical development and practice. Organization transformation within the OD context, as opposed to the business strategy context, was first published by Jean M. Bartunek and Meryl Louis in the second volume of ROCD in 1988. In this volume, Jean M. Bartunek and Elise B. Jones examine how the theory and practice of organizational transformation evolved during the past three decades. Marvin Weisbord reflects on four decades of his development as a scholarly-practitioner in the field working on improving work places while building on the metaphors of flying and learning how to fly. Todd D. Jick and Kinthi D. M. Sturtevant, based on ongoing collaboration, reflect on the last 30 years of the change management field and suggest that strong evidence from both academe and industry indicate the need to rethink methods and frameworks; the role and skills of change leadership for the future; and collaboration between academics and practitioners.

Collaboration continues to be one of the tenants of our field. Phil H. Mirvis and Mitchell Lee Marks, the second recipients of the Pasmore-Woodman Award (AOM 2016), reflect on co-researching and co-doing Merger and Acquisitions Integration for over 35 years. The authors reflect on how their thinking, research methods, and interventions developed over time; how they derived theory from practice and applied theory to practice; and how their shift in perspectives from academe toward scholarly-practice influenced their thinking and writing. Collectively, these seven contributions take a longitudinal perspective, include personal reflections, and challenge the scholars and practitioners in the field to integrate some of the learning gained into current practice and theoretical development but also begin to address some of the emerging challenges in the field.

Several of the challenges faced by the field are explored in three contributions, each of which emphasize a distinct theme, namely: the need to pay attention to the role that performance management can play in the implementation of strategic change; the increasing challenges that OD&C face in facilitating the merger process; and the need to reconsider the importance of group dynamics in OD&C work as there has been a move away from considering irrational and unconscious dynamics in organizational life and more attention focused on rational and observable behavior that can be measured and quantified. Kajsa Asplund, Pernilla Bolander, Andreas Werr apply a conceptual framework to an empirical study of a strategic change initiative in a school organization that was

supported by a new performance management practice. The study contributes to our understanding of individual- and group-level heterogeneity in reactions to strategic change, and also to a more nuanced conception of identity threat. Staci Lynne Ripkey presents a case study of inter-institutional merger in higher education as an example of an organizational adaptation strategy. She examines what can be learned about how a merger in higher education may be carried out strategically from studying the described experiences of individuals involved in a specific case of inter-institutional merger, and how the theoretical perspective of organizational ambidexterity may help shed light on the process of inter-institutional merger. Debra A. Noumair, Danielle L. Pfaff, Christine M. St. John, Asha N. Gipson, and Sarah J. Brazaitis introduce the tool *Beneath the Surface of the Burke-Litwin Model* that invites consideration of how the overt behavior of individuals, groups, and entire systems is linked to covert dynamics. This more comprehensive view of organizational life provides scholar-practitioners with a systemic perspective, a view of covert dynamics by organizational level, and support for the ongoing development of one's capacity for using self-as-instrument when engaged in OD&C efforts.

This volume of *Research in Organization Change and Development* continues the long established tradition of providing a special platform for scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners to share new thought-provoking research-based insights. The chapters in the volume represent a continuous commitment to the high quality of collaborative work that many of you have come to expect from this publication. In addition, collectively, the volume represents tremendous diversity: multiple generations of authors including the creators of the ROCD series, a former AOM President and senior scholar, winners of the Division's Pasmore-Woodman Award, few founders of the field, well-established thought leaders and colleagues at various stages of career including newly minted OD&C researchers and practitioners; colleagues from inside and outside the United States; historical pieces that are foundational and current work that opens up new avenues of inquiry as well as multiple research methodologies. Together, these chapters and the collaborative engagements they represent, contribute to a sustainable trajectory of research that will broaden and deepen the field of Organization Development and Change.

From our editorial perspective, one of the best parts of our work on this series is that our collaborations with the authors always bring new learning, whether in the form of making history accessible and relevant, challenging assumptions, extending theory in creative ways, or integrating perspectives that heretofore have remained separate. The series has been around long enough to substantiate the claim that we have published some true classics in the field of organization development and change. We have also provided scholar-practitioners across career stage, sector, and geography with a platform to share their work and for colleagues to learn from each other in order to inform future collaborations. Moreover, the ROCD Series have provided reliable sources for contributing to the ongoing development of Organization Development and Change theory, research, and practice.

This silver anniversary of *Research in Organization Change and Development* volume demonstrates that the drive toward understanding and mastering the process of Organizational Development and Change in a rapidly changing environmental context has been and continues to be a driving force in the development of the field. This volume affords new opportunities to understand the roots of the field and build on its foundation by considering current developments in research, theory, and practice. Together, these chapters and the collaborative engagements they represent, contribute to a sustainable trajectory of research that will broaden and deepen the field of Organization Development and Change. It is our hope, that as you read through this volume, you will consider your own thoughts and practice and possible contributions to the field and contact us to suggest topics for future volumes.

Abraham B. (Rami) Shani  
Debra A. Noumair  
*Editors*

# THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

William A. Pasmore and Richard W. Woodman

## ABSTRACT

*Given the opportunity to reflect on the three decades of research and practice that have passed since the first volume of Research in Organizational Change and Development was published, we note a number of shifts in our world that are causing us to rethink what we know and how we intervene. These shifts, and their attendant effects on individuals, organizations, and society, have opened up exciting possibilities for the advancement of the field. These advances can be achieved through combined research and action, aimed at producing new insights into core topics like motivation, leadership, and organization design. We suggest an ambitious agenda for current and future scholar-practitioners that we hope will stimulate enough thoughtful work to help fill the next three decades of volumes of Research in Organizational Change and Development.*

**Keywords:** Creativity; organization development; leadership; motivation; teamwork

## INTRODUCTION

We had the great honor and privilege of launching the annual series, *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, in 1987 and continuing as its co-editors for the next 20 volumes. Now, three decades after the first volume

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appeared, we are honored again by the invitation we received from the current editorial team of Rami Shani and Debra Noumair to reflect on “What’s changed?” since we began. From what we see, the changes have been significant, suggesting that we need a fresh look at the foundations of our understandings about even the most widely accepted approaches for explaining behavior and improving organizational effectiveness.

Let’s step back and look at the tectonic plates underlying our beliefs about organizations and how they have shifted. For each, we will examine what we once believed to be true and what we think is changing as forces such as technology, globalization, generational shifts in values, and organizational innovation take hold.

## MOTIVATION

*What it was.* It seems that the earliest and most powerful thinking in psychology and social psychology began with questions about why people do the things they do. In Organization Development (OD), we wondered about the causes of behavior in groups and organizations. Kurt Lewin, who many consider the intellectual founder of our discipline, was deeply concerned about the motivation of his fellow citizens in Germany who joined and supported the Nazi movement prior to and during World War II, and he brought that puzzlement with him when he emigrated to the United States to avoid persecution. He studied the reasons that people did or didn’t respond to influence attempts (Lewin, 1943), the comparative effectiveness of different styles of leadership (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938), and the dynamics that occur in groups (Lewin, 1947a, 1947b). His famous formula,  $B = f(p, e)$  explained that a person’s behavior was a function of both their personality and their environment, which was a departure from Freudian psychology which held that personality was the dominant factor in explaining behavioral choices. Lewin’s situational perspective opened the door to understanding the influence of a whole range of factors on motivation: the Nazi party, leadership in general, team dynamics, organizational structure, peer pressure, climate and culture, and so forth. That took us down the road to social psychology, which is a core discipline underlying our work in OD. Maslow, Herzberg, McGregor, Skinner, House, Lawler, Hackman & Oldham, and McClelland are but a few of the names that at one time or another took up the topic of motivation in organizational settings.

What most of these theories had in common, perhaps with the exception of McClelland’s, was that motivation was thought to be *transitory* as it was affected by immediate conditions and rewards. The stick and carrot approach still underlies a lot of how people are managed in organizational settings. On the one hand, we have merit bonuses, pay tied to units produced or sold, and greater self-determination as a benefit of achieving higher rank. On the other

hand, we see promotions withheld due to poor performance, the threat of being fired or punished for breaking rules, and massive pay gaps between ordinary souls and captains of industry.

*What has shifted?* We believe that we have overestimated the importance of transitory, situational influences on motivation, and underestimated the influence of more stable and enduring personal goals that transcend temporary circumstances. While it's certainly true that temporary motivators can achieve salience in a person's life at a given moment in time, in the long term they are overshadowed by something deeper that is becoming more figural in our lives. Particularly for millennials and Gen Z'ers, it's evident that seeking challenge and growth, rather than short-term rewards, has begun to dictate choices concerning jobs and assignments. It seems that once the urgent pressure to conform, or to provide for one's family, or to seek and find love is satiated, the focus returns once again to the ultimate question: "what am I doing to make the most of this one life I have to live?" This is not just a re-introduction of Herzberg's two-factor theory or Maslow's self-actualization at the top of the hierarchy of needs. This is a more fundamental shift, fueled by generational changes, the way we organize, and the state of our global society and planet. Several trends point to the emergence of a "new deal" at work; one that requires that we rethink motivation as we have previously conceived of its function.

### *From a Hierarchy of Needs to Needing and Wanting It All*

The first trend is a departure from a focus on achieving individual self-fulfillment to a much larger and more balanced picture of one's life in society. Millennials and Generation Z'ers have been left a real mess to manage; economic meltdowns, environmental catastrophes, intractable political disagreements, never-ending cultural conflicts, ineffective governing bodies, global plagues, mass-migrations, and more. On the flip side, they have at their disposal technologies that are unprecedented in human history and seem to have no bounds when it comes to making the impossible possible.

The idea of finding self-fulfillment in a world that is crumbling around you without taking on the challenge of doing something about what is happening is a ridiculous proposition to young people. *A job for life? No worries as long as you get a good paycheck and health benefits?* Whyte's "Organizational Man" (Whyte, 1956) may have been an accurate description of life in the 1950s but not so today.

As a result, Millennials and Generation Z'ers are fleeing structures that tie them down and bind their freedom of expression. They have no desire to "live off the land" as a generation of hippies tried to do in the 1960s. It's not about withdrawing from society; it's about creating a new and different one. They are attracted to organizations that provide time and space for them to use their creativity, make real contributions to society, take time off to try one's hand at a startup, or allow them to join temporarily rather than making a lifetime commitment.

They don't want one thing, self-fulfillment, they want *everything*. Wealth is still in fashion, but coupled with a social purpose and being part of the side that is trying to solve problems rather than create more of them. Love and families are still in too, but not with the formal, ritualistic, and legal ties that make relationships difficult to change when change is called for. They want to be superstars at something but also have time to enjoy life to its fullest, whether it be through work, a cause, a sport, or a hobby. They want to live debt-free and never-ever feel that they have to work in a job that they don't enjoy just to survive.

### *The New Psychological Contract*

The result of these shifts in motivation is that the psychological contracts between employers and employees have changed (Rousseau, 1995). While it used to be the promise of a secure job for life in exchange for one's loyalty and obedience, the "new deal" calls for voluntary, temporary effort in exchange for decent pay and opportunities to do interesting stuff that might lead to whatever is next. The emphasis is on building one's CV, not on working toward a gold watch. Learning is paramount, preferably surrounded by people who are doing exciting, cutting edge work with the newest technologies in organizations that either are or have the potential to become fabulously successful. This is not just the aspiration of a privileged, North American or European upper class. People all over the world are using the Internet to make geography and personal history irrelevant. The world is the new worksite and contributors to solutions can join in from almost anywhere.

Employers who need stability in their operations are finding it increasingly necessary to make concessions in exchange for the commitment of employees' time and energy. More flexible working arrangements, flexible benefits, more engagement in decisions, more opportunities for sabbaticals, more on the job development, allowing pets at work, providing hot meals and play spaces, big windows and free transportation, the list goes on and on. One organization we know said, "We need to create some really fabulous learning experiences to keep our people excited about being here; we don't care what they are or how much they cost. They just have to be better than anything anyone else has." This is the new "arms" race. It's easy to get people to join organizations virtually and temporarily; it's harder to get them to commit to stay.

### *Irrational Expectancies*

Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) was based on the idea that individuals made rational choices about engaging in some behaviors versus others based on an assessment of whether the behaviors in question were likely to lead to a valued reward. What's different today is that there is no trust in the "work hard – earn success" formula that has been the backbone of the American Dream.

Too many have witnessed dreams shattered as real estate markets have imploded, global economic shifts have ripped away jobs, or political upheavals have led to the destruction of places and societies. The new expectation is that nothing is guaranteed. With that as a basic assumption, engaging in irrational behavior makes perfect sense. *Walk away from a well-paying job and join an untested startup; or start something on your own. If it doesn't work, sleep on someone's couch until the next great opportunity comes along. Repeat until the "big one" comes along and you earn enough to be free forever.* Taking irrational risks is the only way to get to a place for which there is no rational way to get there.

### *Authority*

With these shifts in motivation and employment expectations, authority as we have known it stands on shaky ground. The idea that force can be used to compel someone to do something is being tested continuously. Unless there's a good reason, a vision, or an explanation that makes sense, authority carries about as much clout as a rubber sword. *"Brandish your positional authority all you like, I'm still going to do what I like as soon as you get out of my face."* *"Try forcing me to do something and then watch me leave."* *"See what you can accomplish once I'm gone."*

We recognize that power and influence can be exerted through informal as well as formal means (French & Raven, 1959). Yet in today's *I want to be treated like a person* work cultures, we need to understand more clearly how one should go about leading and influencing. In a level-playing field, flat-organization world, where does one derive authority? How is respect earned and how broad is the application of authority that one derives from it? How do people who are not bound by organizational allegiance, defined roles, or past success decide who to follow and for how long? Sense making is occurring everywhere; but how sensible is that sense making, and how enduring? To take a perspective offered by Elliott Jacques (1964), what is the "time span of discretion" – the time between when someone acts and someone else recognizes that they are right or wrong - for people exerting authority in a virtual network? We believe that improving social processes in informal relationships is an exciting new frontier for social scientists and OD practitioners.

This brings us to another incredibly popular topic in our field, leadership.

## **LEADERSHIP**

*What it was.* Leadership once was the study of great leaders (Burns, 1978). The idea was if some people were clearly great leaders, others could learn by emulating what they did. Then leadership became more situational

(Hersey & Blanchard, 1969) when it was recognized that the followers of a leader influenced the way leaders led. Then leadership became a collection of competencies (Boyatzis, 1982; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2003) which anyone could develop and apply as the nature of the job dictated. For the most part, all of this had to do with leaders in formal positions of authority, who could use their power as a last resort to demand compliance with their directives. While Argyris (1957) recognized that the needs of organizations and individuals were frequently in conflict, what choice did individuals really have? Jobs were located in organizations and if one wanted to work, one accepted a certain loss of freedom.

*What has shifted?* It seems that everything we read about leadership today is prefaced with “non”; *non-hierarchical, informal, non-traditional, non-existent*. Whether it’s *Teal* or *Pods* or *shared*, leadership is anything but the old model of a “boss”. Listening to what some current leaders are saying, the best solution would be to do away with leadership altogether. It’s as if we have been trying our best to research, develop and perfect leadership for the last century and have now reached the conclusion that leadership as a hierarchical concept simply isn’t going to work.

People are allowed to lead as long as others are excited about following them. At the same time, when someone better comes along, loyalty to a formal leader is by no means guaranteed, which causes some “would-be” leaders to be surprised. But, we should not be. As long ago as 1938, Chester Barnard in the classic *The Functions of the Executive* famously argued, in effect, that “authority” for the leader ultimately comes from the followers, not from the formal hierarchy, role, or position.

We may have witnessed the beginning of the end of leadership as we know it during the Vietnam War, which was a war that many fighting it didn’t support. When soldiers were far away from their base and out of range of observers, formal authority sometimes broke down. A few soldiers decided that one way to deal with over-zealous leaders was to “frag” them – blow them up with a hand-grenade. The practice caught on. Leaders came to fear being leaders.<sup>1</sup>

Today, followers in organizations don’t frag their leaders, they simply walk away. Leaders who believe they have absolute control by virtue of their positional authority have discovered that they do not. They blame their leadership issues on the “weakened commitment” of new generations of employees. The fact is that command and control leadership has been losing potency everywhere that choice of employment is an option. Too many leaders continue to invoke the military as their metaphor for leadership in an age of voluntary conscription. If leaders can only influence *those who wish to listen*, and only for as long as that makes sense to the listeners, the whole idea of formal leadership authority in an organization breaks down.

Leadership of the future will be something entirely different than we have known, more akin to the subtle attempts to influence others that occur during a lunchtime debate among a table of friends. Although it will operate differently,

leadership will still be extremely important because its outcomes, however they are achieved, will still determine the direction of effort and expenditure of energy by those who wish to engage in collective activity.

To understand leadership of the future, we need to observe it as it emerges, wanes and waxes. Leadership is visible during discourse and is more a temporary agreement that evolves as conversations between leaders and followers take place over time. Here are some things we need to understand about how leadership is changing.

### *From Leader to “Us”*

The focus needs to shift from the leader to everyone who leads, whether they hold formal positions of leadership or not. What an organization accomplishes has as much to do with the sum total of all leadership efforts by individuals, teams, departments, and units as it does with the formal chain of command. If they admitted the truth, leaders today would acknowledge that they often don't know exactly what their people are doing from moment to moment or day to day. Even now, leaders must trust the wisdom and commitment of their followers to do the right thing most of the time. The future will require that leaders develop trust in others to do the right thing, even if those people are faceless, non-employees who are members of a virtual community. It's already happening in open-source coding and open innovation. We expect the trend toward virtual, time-and-task-limited collaboration to intensify.

Another trend, growing interest in “shared,” “collective,” or “interdependent” leadership is taking us in the right direction. The idea is that leadership is shifting from the heroic, charismatic individual model to one in which everyone participates in determining direction, creating alignment, and inducing commitment to shared goals and aspirations (Palus, McGuire, & Ernst, 2012). Like many other things in life, achieving success is easier if we all pull together. Just how we achieve this state of collective consciousness and spontaneous aligned action is something scholars need to investigate.

### *Matching Leadership to the Moment*

While contingency models of leadership introduced a few variables that could influence the way in which leadership is demonstrated, the conceptualization of leadership was the individual leader adopting different styles of leading. Here, we advocate a futuristic look at organizations and leadership by offering the notion that leadership across different challenges may involve different people, rather than expecting one leader or even one group of leaders to possess the knowledge they need to lead effectively in every situation. We see this as virtual

projects are undertaken as a form of collaboration among internal and external experts who can contribute to a problem. Formal leaders may launch such initiatives, but have little to do with organizing and guiding the actual work. As these forms of organizing take hold, we expect the notion of “leader as all-knowing controller of everything” to give way to leader as a *facilitator of others assuming leadership*, even under more normal conditions.

### *Authenticity over Privilege*

Since motivational shifts have changed the nature of the psychological contract, leaders who depend upon authority alone to generate compliance will find doing so increasingly difficult. What followers want, it seems, is respect and authenticity. Respect and authenticity go hand in hand. If a person respects another deeply, it is less likely that the person will try to manipulate the other. Instead, they will act with authenticity: share the challenge, admit their own limitations, ask for assistance, and be appreciative of the other’s support. In the past, subordinates “looked up” to their leaders with a mixture of fear and awe. In the future, the right to lead will be earned through authentic dialogue in an active partnership with others who are capable of assuming peer status as they collaborate in achieving shared ambitions. This is more than “influencing without power” which can still be manipulative and contrived. It is being an authentic human being who is self-aware, emotionally available and not afraid to ask for help from anyone.

### *Learning Leadership through Enlightened Trial and Error Coupled with Augmented Decision Making*

There are many definitions of leadership. Most of them are a variation in the theme of “facilitating action to achieve a purpose or goal”. As change accelerates, business models become more short-lived and new technologies enable what is currently impossible, who can say what goals are to be achieved let alone how to achieve them? We like the notion of leadership as a learning process, drawing more on design thinking than project management as a guide to action (cf., [Brown, 2008](#)). Experimenting rapidly and consistently will allow faster adaptation to new threats and opportunities if coupled with rich feedback that enables enhanced decision making. Big data analytics are just entering our skillsets as leaders. As they become more commonplace and applied to an increasingly wider set of decisions, the rich, real-time feedback they offer can make leading less of a guessing game and more of an informed choice. The idea of “augmented leadership” is just taking form as we write this and will be a fascinating field of study for years to come.

### *Building a Leadership Brand*

More and more organizations are asking the question, “What is our leadership brand?” These organizations understand that great leadership can be a magnet to attract and retain top talent. The idea that individual leaders in an organization might be required to demonstrate a common approach to leadership is a departure from the past. Historically, leaders have done what fits their strengths and preferences as individuals. Now, they are being asked to support a “coaching culture” or “rich feedback culture” or “development culture”. Demonstrating an observable behavior such as holding meetings with subordinates to discuss performance is one thing; making the meetings productive is quite another. Over time, with improved assessment methods and more importance allocated to bottom up ratings of engagement and supervisory effectiveness, the scene will change. Leaders who truly “get it” will develop reputations as leaders who followers seek out for a better work experience and more favorable future. With even more external attention to leadership reputation, even top leaders will need to demonstrate that they know what it means to lead effectively. In the past, leadership style was a personal choice and concern for people was a “nice to have”; in the future, because effective leadership is so tied to talent and organizational performance, it will become another important focus on par with measures such as achieving financial targets.

## **TEAMWORK**

*What it was.* Teams used to be small face-to-face groups with a shared goal. Teams have been a fascinating focus for research, as we have looked into how they form and develop (Gersick, 1988; Tuckman, 1965), how they make decisions (Collins & Guetzkow, 1964), group dynamics (Lewin, 1947a, 1947b), roles (Bennis & Shepard, 1956), size (Van de Ven & Delbecq, 1974), composition (Jackson, 1992), team leadership (Lewin & Lippitt, 1938), groupthink (Janis, 1971), and endings (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), to name a just a few topics that have been explored. By now, we should know everything there is to know about making teams effective but the consequences of poor teamwork are apparent at every level of society on a daily basis. Is no one listening?

*What has shifted?* The biggest shift to date has been that teams have become virtual, larger, and less stable in terms of membership. With the very recent appearance of better technology supporting virtual teamwork, we expect this trend to become amplified. All of us work as members of virtual teams right now; we just don’t always realize it. We count on other people, some of whom we have never met and don’t even know are on our “team” to do their part to help us achieve success. In the future, we will have more information available

about who “out there” can help us and better ways to get to know them and begin working with them in a collaborative manner. Open innovation and supply chains initiated the move to open frameworks for teaming (Edmondson, 2012), where people join our teams because of their attraction to our cause or their ability to contribute. Now, these same ways of organizing are being applied to startups, societal problem solving, lending, survey research, and a wide array of other needs. We know very little about such things as what makes a virtual, digitally supported team effective or ineffective, how members should be screened before allowing them to join, how patterns of trust develop (for better or worse), how leadership emerges, how decision making takes place; in short, everything we *think* we know about face-to-face teams today. All of these deserve investigation; here are a few areas that may be of additional interest.

#### *When Does a Team Exist?*

Given the virtual nature and temporary membership in teams of the future, for practical purposes, when does a team exist? This is not a trivial question, since the person or entity behind the formation of a team may care deeply about the mission of the team or have a great deal at stake in forming a team that can address a particular challenge. As the call to create a digital team is issued, who notices, who responds, and how committed they are to the success of the team all matter a lot. If a key contributor drops off midstream, is the team the same team or is it a new team? If 95% of the players turn over, is it a new team or the same team? We have asked the same questions about organizations, of course. If an organization exists for a long enough period, 100% of its original members will eventually be replaced. Is it the same organization? In the case of virtual teams, is the mission, not the membership, all that matters? As long as the mission endures, is the team the same team? This doesn't make sense, given what we understand about the significant, delicate nature of team dynamics. Would we accept that a complete change in team membership is not enough to say that a new team has taken the field?

#### *Team Development*

In an important related question, how do we develop a virtual team? Does it go through the same developmental phases as face-to-face teams? If we can't do team building in a traditional way, how will we do it? What difference will it make if not all the members of the team “attend” the team building or if those who do leave the team at some point? Is there a ceiling that is imposed on the effectiveness of virtual teams because they are virtual? Or is their potential to achieve success unlimited because they can always reach out for new talent to

join the team as they encounter obstacles? How does the work of virtual teams compare to intact, face-to-face teams? What are the strengths and limitations of each? If you are a “convener” of a virtual team and you care about its performance, is there anything you can do?

Over time, as virtual teams with temporary members interact, how can we influence the dynamics of interactions among members of the team to be inclusive, collaborative, and positive versus exclusionary, self-centered, and pessimistic? In face-to-face teams, especially in work settings, we have to “put up with” members who ruin our day. In voluntary virtual teams, we can simply choose to leave if other virtual team members behave in ways we don’t appreciate. Can conveners or facilitators influence the dynamics of virtual, voluntary teams? Or, if precious contributors are turned off, is there no choice but to start again and hope that they will rejoin a new assemblage of individuals? What are the ways in which norms can be established and enforced? How can members be given constructive feedback that enjoins them to do things for the greater good that they would prefer not to do? Is there a way to measure the level of commitment among members of the team and to intervene if it drops below some critical mark?

#### *Team Performance and the Knowledge-Resource Allocation Gap*

Virtual teams are often formed to solve problems or achieve purposes that the convener could not achieve alone. This implies that those who join a virtual team bring something of value to the party; knowledge, skills, technical expertise, connections, or talent, for example. At some point along the way, decisions will need to be made about going with system A or system B; locating operations in this geography or that one; turning right or turning left. The people on the team with the most expertise to make the decision may not be the conveners. The conveners may be the ones who bring resources to the table, or it may be others in the team; but somehow, eventually, real choices tied to real resources must be made. Bets are placed, and the rewards for winning and penalties for losing are real. In an intact team, a formal leader may have the responsibility to make the determination of how resources are allocated; if he or she must depend on the superior knowledge of subordinates to guide such choices, at least the leader has the satisfaction of looking those people in the eye, testing their confidence in their recommendations, and in some way sharing the responsibility for the outcomes. Say goodbye to that in the virtual teaming world; the people with the expertise are people you may not know or ever see; they may have little at stake in making recommendations; and for all you know, they could be giving you bad advice or even working on another project with a competitor. Mostly, thus far, it has been evident that people who join and work in virtual teams are well-intended, conscientious, and honest. It’s as

if McGregor's Theory Y applies to the virtual world as well as to those who go through job interviews. Yet there are hackers and scammers and even terrorists in our world; even though they are a small minority, as we have seen, it takes only a few to cause very large problems for the rest. How do conveners come to know who to trust and when to listen to the advice of people who claim to have subject matter expertise? What happens when members of a virtual team take the team in a direction that the convener hadn't intended and may not want it to go? Does it matter if experts meet one another virtually while working on one team, discover a breakthrough idea and decide to pursue it through forming their own team? When teams are virtual, membership boundaries are porous and conveners have no real ability to control the actions of team members, how can the probability that a bet will pay off be optimized? As we know, while there is wisdom in crowds, there is also danger (Kahneman, 2011; Surowiecki, 2004).

## ORGANIZATION DESIGN

*What it was.* Organization design used to mean either the authority relationships depicted by an organizational chart or the alignment of elements of an organization in service of its strategy (Chandler, 1962; Galbraith, 1977; Nadler, Gerstein, & Shaw, 1992). Underlying these notions of organizations was the fundamental belief that an organization's design could be made clear, optimized, or even perfected for a particular purpose. While there was recognition that the "white space" on the organizational chart was as important as the boxes and that the "arrows" in models connecting elements were as crucial to understand as the elements themselves, the goal was still to find the one or two best ways to organize to achieve a given strategy. The focus was also "within the walls" of an organization, considering only the people who are full- and part-time employees.

*What has shifted?* Organizational strategies are evolving more quickly and boundaries are increasingly hard to define. Partnerships with suppliers and customers are as important as any work that goes on internally and it would be a mistake not to imagine that a great deal of thought and effort these days goes into structuring the nature of these relationships. As noted during our discussion of virtual teams, important innovation efforts may include key individuals who are not members of the organization at all, but whose contributions are essential to success. Even though our relationships with virtual employees may be temporary, it would be an oversight to imagine that the only people who matter are the ones who receive a full- or part-time paycheck. If we could take a videotape of each and every piece of work that is done during a single day to advance the agenda of an organization, we would see evidence of people

and activities that don't appear on the organizational chart but are clearly value-added. If we don't start designing for this more complex reality versus an over-simplified view of things we control directly, we are leaving some of the most important phenomena in organizational design to chance.

### *New Organizational Forms*

We hear about Google and Zappos adopting new organizational forms such as holocracy and teal organizations that are intended to operate with less hierarchy and more opportunity for people to “run to where they are needed” versus being trapped in jobs with restrictive lists that set out what people can and can't do (Robertson, 2015). This is not an entirely new phenomena; self-directed teams, autonomous work groups and employee-owned cooperatives like Mondragon and Amana were popular in the 1970s and 1980s (Whyte & Whyte, 1991). Why didn't these forms last, and what is it about our current context that is bringing features of these ways of organizing back again? What will make them more successful or enduring than their predecessors? How will we come to grips with the idea that trusting smart people to know what to do is better than a centrally planned economy? Years ago, Warren Bennis, one of our strongest proponents of organizational democracy wrote that “A funny thing happened on the way to the future” (Bennis, 1970), referencing the fact that his prediction that democracy would replace hierarchical organizing within a few decades didn't come true. What makes us more confident that new forms of organizing will “stick” this time? How are these organizations really working? How good are the choices that individuals and teams are making now that they have the freedom to choose, as compared with organizations that direct activities from the top-down? How could these new forms of organizing be improved? There seem to be many important questions but few answers.

### *From Organization-Centric to Network-Centric*

We have focused on organizations as the major actor in our work and research because it is convenient to access their leadership and members. Today, we recognize that important work is happening in the networks that extend beyond an organization's boundaries. Supply chains, links to customers, partnerships, and alliances are critical to the performance of organizations. It may be that what is going on *outside* organizations is more important these days than what is going on *inside*. In any event, we need to understand how networks form, develop, function, dissipate, and reconfigure themselves over time in service of loosely coupled to tightly coupled goals. We are in this together, for certain; but how deep is our commitment and what affects it? Who is responsible for innovation? Who gets to decide how things are done? Organizations, even if we

see them as the “center” of a network are no longer in the driver’s seat. Understanding how to build and influence an emerging network would seem to be an important competency, yet it is not being taught in many business schools or in schools of public policy. Networks, more than individual organizations, will determine the course of our future, locally and globally. How does one practice organizational network development versus OD as we know it? Lawler and Worley in their book *Built to Change* (2011) recommend that we “manage the surface area of the organization” – meaning the number of people inside the organization who have direct, important relationships with entities on the outside of the organization. Sounds important; how do we do that?

### *Global versus International*

We have now truly moved past the point where there is utility in maintaining a strong national headquarters that presides over an international collection of locations. We know that local cultures matter, local customs matter, local regulations matter, local tastes matter, local brands matter, and so forth and so on. Local leaders are more than just tired of being forced to comply with decisions from headquarters that tie their hands and diminish their chances of success. They are calling for change and finally, people are listening. That seems like a good thing, but what does it mean to manage the polarities between global and local decisions concerning products, brands, employment arrangements, culture, leadership, distribution channels, and advertising strategies? How much should be invested to grow business in one location versus another and what determines how such choices should be made? Of all the multi-national corporations that exist today, very few are operating as truly global entities. What would it take for more to make the shift? How do deep biases regarding cultural diversity act as barriers to processing information and coming to optimal decisions? What should be done to address differences in ethical and moral standards within a connected, global enterprise? One reason we ask these questions but don’t find answers is that we don’t see much work in our field being done by global teams of researchers or practitioners. We tend to be as locally rooted as the organizations we study. Until we address the balance of power regarding claims of legitimacy in our field, we will continue to hear primarily North American and European-centric interpretations of reality. Reality is more complex and deserves to be understood from multiple perspectives.

## **ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT**

*What it was.* OD was primarily about planned change in organizational settings (Burke & Noumair, 2015). The predominant image was “from-to”; a change

that would transform the organization and those in it from a less productive or less influential state to a more productive and more influential state. OD started out focused primarily on teams and organizations then eventually expanded to include individual coaching at the micro level and intergroup and even inter-organization societal change efforts at the macro level. OD has maintained a strong value base including the view that individuals and groups should have a say in what happens to them. OD practitioners are not to impose their own views of the future on others, but instead share options with those who must live out the results of their choices (Schein, 1969). OD values also included the belief that potential is unlimited as long as people are willing and able to learn.

*What has shifted?* Things have gotten considerably more complicated since 1960s. Organizations are facing multiple complex changes simultaneously. The idea of “from-to” is giving way to continuous change (Pasmore, 2015), learning-driven innovation based on design thinking iteration rather than long-term strategies (McGrath, 2013), game-changing acquisitions (Mirvis & Marks, 2003), massively expensive and important investments in IT and R&D, more virtual teaming (Powell, Piccoli, & Ives, 2004), open innovation (Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke, & West, 2006), supply chain partnering (Gattorna, 2006), the operation of multiple business models at the same time (Slywotzky, 1996), and global expansion into cultures and geographies that are almost completely unfamiliar to their parent organizations.

In this world, is team building still critical (Dyer, 1987)? What about survey feedback (Nadler, 1977)? A large group intervention (Bunker & Alban, 1977)? These interventions were intended for systems that are bounded in membership and capable of being influenced by decisions made at the top. Now, with multiple systems interacting and many changes happening simultaneously, where should we focus our efforts? The following are just a few of many possibilities.

#### *Change and Development across Quasi-Stable Systems and Networks: The Nominal Organization*

Our traditional thinking about organizations leads us to see them as far too bounded, isolated from their environment and static. Organizations today are flexible, engaged in a wide variety of external relationships and dynamic. Many of the defining characteristics of an organization are being challenged as people partner in open-source networks, with suppliers and customers, in emergent startups or holacracies and across borders. While the “organization” has an initial reason for forming, that purpose evolves as new members join and bring news ideas or capabilities. The actors may come and go, but the identity of the partnership is retained to a greater or lesser extent in a quasi-stable system or network.

These kinds of less than completely loose associations are capable of remarkable creativity and productivity. Linux, the computer operating system

and Wikipedia are examples of what can be achieved by an open-source community made up of people who contribute voluntarily to something they care about. Another example would be a large assembler like Airbus that relies on its many suppliers to design, produce, coordinate, and maintain quality across organizational and geographic borders. A single misstep in producing an A330 aircraft could produce a fatal safety problem and yet no top-down, hierarchical system of control could possibly manage the complexity of the hundreds of thousands of interactions that must take place to insure that every detail is managed correctly.

If organizations of the future will exist as quasi-stable networks among members of spatially separated, temporally asynchronous, voluntary, heterogeneous, culturally diverse individuals and entities, what can OD offer to help these quasi-stable networks form, achieve high levels of effectiveness, and sustain themselves in the face of centripetal forces that work against their survival? These organizations barely exist; a term to describe them would be “*nominal organizations*” as in nominal groups. Taking up the study of nominal organizations will require different tool sets and perspectives. Rather than studying something that is, we will study things that are in the process of becoming, are temporary, and may never “be” in the sense that we think of organizations today. And yet, nominal organizations are places where humans come to find and make meaning, to influence one another, to innovate and to achieve. They are important. In fact, they may be the most important organizational form of the digital era. How do we encounter and support nominal organizations?

We would suggest beginning by getting into the game. Using action research, we need to experiment in order to learn how to do this complex work, just as we did in order to learn about group dynamics and intergroup conflict. The future is racing away from us and we won't catch up to it by continuing to use methods developed for another time and another world. We have crested our S-curve of understanding and need to jump onto a new one, even though at first it will feel less secure and less effective than the one we are riding now. Can OD learn from the innovative organizations in Silicon Valley and elsewhere in order to try something new, to re-envision itself, to be more relevant in an age of fast-moving possibilities?

Can we provide the social routines and supporting operating mechanisms that allow people to work together productively across these kinds of boundaries on an instantaneous basis, even if only for a short time? Can we invent the designs for these kinds of organizations so that they can fulfill purposes that demand continuity when the basic building blocks we use are ephemeral instead of solid? Can we partner with the providers of digital technologies to create new platforms for interaction that enable what heretofore has been impossible? Can we understand how to promote trust among complete strangers who approach one another with different assumptions, cultural biases, and degrees of commitment?

*Influencing Behavior in Flat Organizations and Communities: From Social Movements to Organizational Movements*

Sociologists are far ahead of us in understanding the genesis, evolution, maturation, and disbanding of social movements. How do like-minded people find one another, come together, influence thought and action, and achieve purposes that individuals acting alone cannot? These are questions that have interested sociologists for decades and it's time that those of us in OD follow their lead. Nominal organizations are much more like social movements than they are like traditional bureaucratic organizations. People develop a sense of their identity, as defined by their expertise, organizational memberships, culture, or purpose. They search or are found by others who share that identity or are seeking complementary skills, perspectives or capabilities. They begin to interact through various forms of direct and mediated discourse, leading to iterative explorations of mutual interests and opportunities. Once the "movement" begins, others are attracted as they learn about who else is involved or what is being considered. All of this takes place based in part on social networks and in part on random searching. Once people connect, influence begins to take place. People are influenced by ideas, goals, opportunities, or assertions. They in turn influence through their responses, their behaviors, and their commitment. Once momentum builds, leaders emerge because they are active, cogent, role-models, or resource-controllers. They are not "appointed" as in formal organizations but rather are either self-appointed or nominated by others. Their claim on leadership may be solid or fleeting. In nominal organizations, as in social movements, things change.

The external environment plays a shaping role in the work of the nominal organization, making some things desirable or important and other things irrelevant or impossible. As the nominal organization acts, the environment may react, taking the whole enterprise in a different direction. Like the movement for racial equality or efforts to protect the natural environment, the movements and their leaders morph over time as some routes are blocked and new pathways open.

Using social movements as a metaphor, is OD's place to simply observe them or is it OD's place to seed them, help them grow, and harvest their benefits? How do those who care to do this work identify opportunities, get hired and compensated? If they contract, who do they contract with? If diagnosis is important, what data should be collected and from whom? It's a new world, one which OD currently doesn't know how to navigate. We will learn how from trial and error. Bold experiments will tell us more than incremental probes. Learning will be critical to success.

*Creating Conditions for Optimal Action Learning*

Nominal organizations need to be nimble, quick learners. We know something about learning. We understand how individuals learn, how groups develop, and

how organizations can adopt learning practices rather than assume their going-in assumptions are correct. While learning in a nominal organization is different because it is difficult to identify the person or group responsible for learning, many of the mechanisms used to learn today will still be useful tomorrow.

Action learning is a valid process for identifying opportunities and discovering what works and what doesn't (Coghlan & Rigg, 2012). Although it will take an understanding of how virtually networked, social-movement-like organizations can be influenced to learn, the need to learn will eventually drive learning experiments. People in a nominal organization are eager to figure things out; to know whether to stay; to understand their role; to see what's possible. They pay attention to cues from others that present opportunities to learn or to share what has been learned. Like explorers covering new ground for which no map exists, they are eager for local knowledge or to hear stories from other explorers who have passed their way. This energy can be harnessed and used to help the community advance more rapidly than if left to get it right on its own. OD practitioners can accelerate the development of nominal organizations, enhance their impact, increase the commitment of their members, and do almost all the things that they do for traditional organizations today; but they will have to learn to work differently. There probably won't be a "room" with walls to hang flip chart paper. Digital communication will replace face to face. New tools that allow people to share, debate, and capture ideas will mediate exchanges. Time and space will become irrelevant, which is good for those of us that are a bit tired of having to get on a plane to do our work. Bitcoin will replace currency,<sup>2</sup> and language barriers will eventually come down, allowing everyone to fully participate in even the most critical discussions.

What we do with that input is what matters. Can we in OD invent better processes for reaching agreement (if not consensus) among people who today seem more interested in their differences than their similarities? Can we help people form nominal organizations that capture their imaginations and inspire them to do things that they could never achieve by commuting into the office from 9 to 5? The challenges are enormous and could be enormously satisfying.

Of course, comprehending and enacting OD's future will require that we combine practice with research, as we always have. In research, there is much that is left to be done, and we posit a few thoughts about that next.

## **ADDITIONAL TOPICS FOR CHANGE-RELATED RESEARCH**

In the previous pages, we have explored possible shifts in our understanding of motivation, leadership, teamwork, organization design, and OD. In each of these arenas, we have asked literally dozens of questions, any one of which,

alone or in combination with others, could provide a potentially impactful research agenda for new scholars in our field. In addition to the previous specific (and implied) questions, there are several lines of inquiry for change-related research that we believe have enormous potential to inform both our practice and our science. Here are some thoughts on additional topics that we hope inspire future contributions to ROCD.

### *Creating Ethical Organizations*

Despite decades of research on ethical behavior and an increasing focus on ethics in graduate education in business schools (among other places), it is hard to be sanguine about the level of ethical behavior extant in today's organizations. Why has the focus on improving ethical behavior seemingly had so little impact? We certainly recognize that the seriousness of this shortcoming might be debatable in contrast to organizational behavior over the past century or two; one could well argue that things are better than they used to be. Nevertheless, it is not that difficult to find disturbing ethical lapses in organizations in our society. A casual perusal of the business press, on-line news stories, or your daily newspaper finds no shortage of ethical challenges. [Bartunek and Woodman \(2012\)](#) have argued that OD has tremendous untapped potential to help society create truly ethical organizations. This effort would seem to match much of the field's strengths historically, well in keeping with the founding values of OD. What would it take to create organizations that are more just, more ethical, more consistent with the desire of many for organizations to play a more positive role in people's lives and in society? It is easy to regard progress in this arena, we suppose, as a "pollyannish" endeavor, best left to philosophers and moralists – not the "stuff" of managerial action. We view this quite differently. Let us explain.

We do not believe that the vast majority of human beings are essentially unethical or even amoral. So – why does human behavior in complex social systems fail to maintain and reward the ethical standards that most people aspire to? Could it be that there is still a great deal to learn about ethical behavior? Could it be that there is a great deal to learn about understanding the unintended consequences of managerial and organizational actions? Could it be that we could do a better job of designing and managing organizational cultures that reinforce ethical behavior? It does not take a great deal of imagination to guess that the answers to these questions are yes. Research on ethical behavior in organizations is really in its infancy, despite several decades of work at this point. Certainly some promising work has been done. Our colleagues at the University of Michigan, for example, with their research on and advocacy of positive organizational scholarship have shown much promise (cf. [Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012](#)). We are intrigued by research that suggests the

probability of ethical decision making can be increased by developing greater awareness of the unintended consequences stemming from managerial actions. Decision makers are sometimes blind to the ethical dilemmas inherent in complex, nuanced situations. As such, it is tempting to simply believe that training designed to increase the decision maker's ability to diagnose such dilemmas and better appreciate potential unintended consequences will reduce the probability of unethical decisions. Unfortunately, research indicates that ethical decision making is extremely complex in social settings (e.g., Loe, Ferrell, & Mansfield, 2000). There is a great deal that we do not yet understand about this problem which appears to be a crucial one for effective organizational change and improvement.

As with other areas of research, good science is partially a function of asking the right questions. We believe that valuable research outcomes could be attained by pursuing the following types of questions regarding ethical behavior.

1. How can OD improve the ability to understand ethical dilemmas faced by managers and other employees?
2. How can we improve the ability of individuals to more deeply appreciate the ethical consequences of actions taken by the organization? Will this improve the probability that ethical decisions are made?
3. Can we develop a deeper understanding of the role of organizational culture in fostering ethical decision making? How can this knowledge be utilized effectively in OD change programs?
4. How do we balance the essential necessity for profits and economic success with the necessity to contribute to the greater good of society in terms of sustainability, equal opportunity, responsible corporate citizenship, and the like?

Fundamentally, we are suggesting that the field of OD can help design and manage complex social systems such that they are truly ethical in both spirit and operation. For young scholars, there is a career's worth of research possibilities in this domain.

#### *Developing More Complex Process Models of Organizational Change*

Process models of organizational change have been important for the change and development field since its beginnings in the 1940s. Organizational change is, literally by definition, a process that unfolds over time and change scholars have long sought to develop a rich understanding of this process for both theoretical and applied reasons. Despite the obvious need for a valid theory, the field has not exactly covered itself with glory in developing useful and valid models of change processes in complex social systems. Consider, for example,

that the predominant model of organizational change processes continues to be the “unfreeze, change, refreeze” three-step model introduced by Kurt Lewin in 1947 (Lewin, 1947a, 1947b). While there are certainly other perspectives extant, none have attained anywhere near the attention and acceptance of Lewin’s model that was based on his force field conceptualization (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015). Scholars in both the change and development arena and the wider organizational sciences often appear to assume that this three-step change process is the best way to talk about the organizational change journey. This is even more amazing when one considers that Lewin was writing about changes in the levels of group performance and not about the larger, more complex organization which is more typically the focus of the field’s work. Our observation here is not, in any way, intended as a criticism of Lewin’s significant, paradigm-challenging contributions to change theory. Rather, as Bartunek and Woodman noted, “We imagine that Lewin would be astonished at the widespread and creative ways his model has been (socially) reconstructed and bemused that change scholars and others would use it to attempt to describe complex polyphonic changes in organizations” (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015, p. 177).

The field has a strong need for a more complex process model (or models) of organizational change. A number of years ago now, in an article that introduced a special research forum in the *Academy of Management Journal*, Pettigrew, Woodman, and Cameron (2001) identified a need for more valid process models of organizational change and argued, in particular, that change processes needed to be examined with relation to time, history, linkage to action, and linkage to performance. The response of the field to this call for action has been underwhelming to date. Recently however, Bartunek and Woodman (2015) have proposed a temporal, process model that focuses on sequence, timing, pacing, rhythm, and polyphonic (as opposed to monophonic) dimensions of organizational change. Our intention here is to repeat the 2001 “call” referenced above and suggest that an extremely promising research agenda for the field exists in the further development and testing of richer, more comprehensive process models of organizational change. Among the research questions that might be pursued would be the following:

1. What sequences are present in organizational change? Are there specific events located within these sequences? Does the order of events change across sequences?
2. What roles do deadlines play in change processes? What is the relationship between information availability and the timing of particular change actions? How can we discover the “right” time for a change?
3. Does the pace of change remain the same or does it vary? What conditions might cause a “change of pace?” What is the role of momentum and/or inertia in the change process?
4. Are there repetitive cycles in the change? What do these rhythms look like – are they variable or not? Punctuated or regular?

5. If change is polyphonic rather than monophonic (and it is), how many different types of sequencing, timing, pacing, and rhythm exist in the change? Are these interdependent or independent of each other? What types of influences exist and do these vary across time?

These are just a few of the many questions raised by the [Bartunek and Woodman \(2015\)](#) proposed “temporal approximation” of OD and change. There is considerable research that could be done to provide the field with a much-needed process model of organizational change in complex social systems. We invite you to have at it. Taking note of how long Lewin’s process model of change has remained popular, the young scholar might well anticipate making an impact on the field in this domain that would last for a long, long time.

### *Building the Capacity to Create into the Organization*

In the field of organizational change and development, there is a great deal of attention paid to building change capacity into organizational systems and cultures. It is certainly accepted wisdom that organizations simply must have the capacity to change in order to survive. In addition, it is generally conceded, sometimes reluctantly, that organizations do sometimes need to innovate or create as well. Still, like the construct of empowerment, the construct of creativity is not well integrated into our understanding and management of organizations, rather it exists more in the realm of socially acceptable buzzwords and slogans that management might pay “lip service” to but does not seriously strive to address. For example, as has been observed about the empowerment of employees: “Of course, our people are empowered. Still, they must carefully follow the directions and guidelines that have been developed for their work otherwise we cannot attain the necessary levels of efficiency and predictability.” Similarly: “Of course we want our people to be creative. We are interested in their ideas. Still, we can’t come to work every morning and reinvent our jobs. There is a reason why employees must do it this way.” And so on.

We believe that true creativity is not something that exists only in the firm’s R&D operations, but rather the need for creativity and innovation is fairly widespread in most organizations in most sectors of the economy. Perhaps the reason this often goes unrecognized is that the real nature of creative behavior is not well understood (cf., [Auger & Woodman, 2016](#)). In our view, organizational creativity can be meaningfully thought of as a “special case” of organizational change. A narrower construct, if you will, nestled within the broader construct of change. There are some interesting similarities between processes of organizational change and the creative process in a complex social system. For example, examinations of “resistance to change” and “barriers to creativity” in organizations reveal that often the explanatory factors (e.g., antecedent conditions, organizational policies, employee and group characteristics, etc.)

are identical in each case (Kilbourne & Woodman, 1999). An argument can be made that the fields of organizational creativity and organizational change can inform each other much more than they have to date.

There is, of course, quite an extensive literature on organizational change. Likewise, the literature on creative individuals is quite extensive in the psychological sciences. However, there is a much smaller amount of research and writing extant that focuses on creativity within organizations. However, some work on the linkages between these two domains has begun to emerge (e.g., Woodman, 2008, 2014a, 2014b). As an example of the potential linkage between creativity and change, imagine the organization as a “collective mind” – an entity that perceives and processes information, learns, considers alternative courses of action, makes decisions, and so on in a manner similar to the mind of a single individual. Milgram (1990) identified four categories of “giftedness” as a way to theorize about the creative and intellectual ability of an individual – a general intellectual ability (e.g., the ability to solve problems; to think), a specific intellectual ability (e.g., intellectual ability in a specific area such as mathematics), a capacity for general creative thinking (e.g., the ability to generate high quality, unique solutions to problems), and a capacity for specific creativity (e.g., the ability to produce valuable, original outcomes in a specific domain such as business or art). Extending this model into the world of organizations, we might envision a meaningful way to talk about the capacity of the organization to change that could be analogous to Milgram’s perspective. For example, an organization has (1) a general capacity to change, (2) a capacity to change in specific ways, (3) a general capacity to create, and (4) a capacity to create in specific domains. Reasoning in this fashion suggests some interesting new insights into both theorizing about and the practice of building “change capacity” into a complex social system. Interventions designed to change the capacity or ability of the organization to act across these four domains might well vary along a number of dimensions (strategies, actors, implementing techniques, etc.) while at the same time retaining some fundamental similarities across all dimensions. The framework has the potential to improve the ability to diagnose needed changes as well as to help “fine tune” the organization’s focus on developing needed skills and resources for change.

In our view, the potential valuable research agenda in this domain is quite large and lends itself well to a focus on the “practice implications” of research in change and development. Among the questions that might be meaningfully pursued are the following.

1. What are the similarities and differences between general change capacity and creative capacity? What organizational characteristics, attributes, and resources, are most clearly associated with each?
2. Which OD approaches and techniques might be most relevant to building creative capacity into complex organizations? Are there specific skills that are most relevant for change agents focused on creative behavior or are

most OD skills equally applicable across the differing “capacities” identified above?

3. Even though we would argue that there is no such thing as a complex social system that has absolutely zero need for creative behavior, nevertheless, creativity would seem to be more needed in some organizational functions than in others. What are the characteristics of work that needs larger amounts of creativity versus work requiring less? How can knowledge of these differences be utilized in change theory and change programs?
4. What are the important barriers to creativity in organizations? How can these barriers be overcome? When does this information provide real data for the change agent rather than simply being a way to talk about “problems” or resistance? (This is a parallel argument to the notion that “resistance to change” provides data that can be used to improve the change effort, cf., [Ford & Ford, 2010](#)).
5. Earlier we had discussed the emergence of quasi-stable networks which we have called “nominal organizations.” We also asserted that these organizations had the capacity for impressive creativity. But do they? Why take our word for it? Empirical investigations of nominal organizations might explore the creative capacity of such entities as well as the characteristics that appear to contribute to high levels of creative behavior (if it exists) in such a system. Can the creative strengths of such systems be generalized to other types of organizations?

When the possible linkages between the creativity and change literatures are explored, numerous promising avenues of research can readily be identified (cf., [Woodman, 2008](#)). The field of organizational change and development would benefit by more research designed to understand organizational creativity and its relation to organizational effectiveness, as well as more applied work focused on building creative capacity into organizations.

*Developing a Deeper Understanding of the Ways that  
Organizations Change the People Who Work in Them*

In the literature of our field, there has been an understandable focus on the ways in which people change organizations. As [Woodman and Dewett \(2004\)](#) noted: “It is axiomatic that changing individual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior is key to effective organizational change” (p. 32). Considerably less attention has been paid to the ways that organizations actually change their members over time. By this, we do not refer to the fact that folks come and go over time in any organization. Rather, we mean the ways in which the human being changes during the course of his or her working life as a result of participation in a particular organization or organizations. The changes an individual experiences across the years as a result of their organizational experiences strike us as an important, yet relatively under-explored, part of the human change journey.

There is sometimes a folklore-like belief that employees do not change in meaningful ways. “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” Some of this belief is well-founded in developmental psychology. It is widely accepted, for example, that many important aspects of an individual’s personality are established very early in life. Despite the stability of some individual differences, the reality is that individuals do change, sometimes a great deal, during the entire course of their lives. The impact of work experience is only one source for such changes, of course, but we posit that it is a significant one for many individuals. Among the most important changes in an individual across time, related to her or his work, are changes in actual behavior (e.g., job performance), as well as changes in various individual characteristics or attributes (e.g., knowledge, attitudes, motivation) considered important for effective organizational functioning.

Woodman and Dewett (2004) have advanced the beginnings of a theory of organizational influences on individual change. Consistent with the previous discussion, they posit that employee’s work experiences provide a major source of the changes in behavior, knowledge, and other individual characteristics that an individual will undergo during a lifetime. Within the firm, the major sources of such changes include the socialization resulting from joining a complex social system, the training that individuals experience during their career, influences stemming from interactions with managers and other employees, and, not surprisingly, organizational change programs that may occur from time to time during the employee’s tenure. The impact of these potential influences is moderated by the *changeability* of the behavior or individual characteristic, the *depth* of the change required for some influence to matter (or to be noticeable), and the *time* required for the change to take place.

This is seen to be a tricky business as some of the employee changes are intentional on the part of the organization (e.g., improved performance as a goal of a planned OD effort), but many changes that occur may be unintentional. It makes sense that both organizations and their participants need to have a better understanding of their shared change journey. Individuals certainly need to appreciate what they are “signing up for” when joining an organization.

Thundiyl (2015) combined the Woodman and Dewett (2004) model of organizational influences on individual change with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989) and change momentum theory (Jansen, 2004) to explore the notion of employee alignment with a strategic directive. Results of this study provide some preliminary support for the Woodman and Dewett model. However, the potential value of a richer understanding of how individuals are changed by their organizational experiences has yet to be realized. Among the research questions which could be meaningfully pursued are the following:

1. Hellervick, Hazucha, and Schneider (1992) have argued that the changeability of individual characteristics is key to understanding behavior change in organizations. The psychological sciences have a long tradition of examining the degree of changeability of various individual characteristics. For

example, some cognitive aspects of the mind are quite stable (e.g., general intelligence) while others are more readily changed (e.g., some task-specific knowledge); some attitudes, while not unchanging, are relatively stable across time (e.g., organizational commitment), others more changeable in the short run (e.g., job satisfaction). Research that developed a “hierarchy of changeability” of individual characteristics could be invaluable for change management and OD. Among other approaches, meta-analyses of existing studies could possibly be used as a starting point toward developing a meaningful hierarchy of changeability of individual characteristics influenced by organizational experiences.

2. Changes in employee behavior and characteristics have a number of possible sources as discussed earlier. Would it be valuable to understand the degree of congruency between various sources of the influences on individuals? Whether these sources are incongruent, and particularly whether or not they are at odds with the desired changes in some organizational improvement effort, could provide valuable insights.
3. It is possible that the “moderators” mentioned above of changeability, depth, and time could provide additional “vocabulary” for our understanding of resistance to change. To state an obvious example, we might posit that resistance will be highest when the organization is attempting to change an aspect of the person that is the least changeable, requires the “deepest” change, and/or takes the most time. Can a richer understanding of resistance to change be developed from this framework?
4. Not only does an organization need to worry about which changes matter the most in terms of organizational performance and job satisfaction of employees, but we need to worry about which changes matter the most in terms of psychological health and possible negative effects of work stress. We see an ethical dimension as well to research on the change journey undertaken by individuals as a result of their organizational lives.

*Improving Research Methodology in the Organizational Change and Development Field – A Final Plea*

At the risk of sounding like two old curmudgeons we shall take one more shot at suggesting that improvements in the research methodology of the field would pay enormous dividends for both our science and our practice. Among other ideas over the years, we have suggested that the field would benefit from a more collaborative approach to research that involved practicing managers, OD practitioners, and organizational scientists working together on organizations research (Pasmore, Woodman, & Simmons, 2008), the use of an evaluation research methodology that effectively combined quantitative with qualitative techniques while assessing organizational change programs (Woodman, 1989), an expanded list of

research approaches that could improve our science (Woodman, Bingham, & Yuan, 2008), and a greater use of quasi-experimental designs in organizational change evaluation studies (Woodman, 2014a, 2014b). Some platitudes:

1. In addition to being more rigorous, change research needs to increase in relevance (to both science and to practice) while becoming more reflective in terms of informing change management and OD as well as the larger organizational sciences. A key aspect of this is increased (and improved!) collaboration between practitioners and researchers. This should fit the field – OD has always been composed of practical scholars and scholarly practitioners.
2. Quantitative and qualitative research too often seem to exist in separate worlds peopled by very different actors, with differing training and research traditions. These differences can be a source of real strength, of course, but not if there are no bridges between these paradigms. As a field of applied behavioral science, OD could benefit immensely from developing research approaches that would incorporate elements of quantitative and qualitative work in a programmatic way. Our ability to design, manage, and understand complex social systems would benefit from such “combined paradigm” work.
3. Related to the above, there are a plethora of research designs, approaches, data collection and analysis techniques, and so on that can be used in organizational research. Too often our field has been dominated by a relatively narrow collection of research methods that continue to be used when superior designs or techniques are available (or could be developed with a little extra effort). This problem is not unique to our science but can plague any scientific arena particularly as it matures. Still – we can do better. Use your imagination. Don’t settle for the safe, easy approach when a better path could be followed to answer the question.
4. In terms of its research, the field of organizational change and development has a field “bias” in that, eventually, a research question must be pursued in real organizations, even though early in some research programs laboratory investigations might be quite valuable. As such, the field has always struggled with creating and utilizing “true” experimental designs in its investigations. While there are a handful of research studies utilizing true experimental designs in the literature, they remain quite rare due to the simple fact that they are really, really hard to do. In any organization, at any point in time, a large number of things are changing making it extremely problematic to attain the necessary level of “control.” Much more often than not, randomization (e.g., between treatment and controls) is impossible. And so on. These problems are well known. There is a remedy at hand that should be much more heavily utilized than it has been – quasi-experimental designs, such as non-equivalent control groups and time series designs (to mention two of the most powerful in terms of internal validity). Our literature should be full of studies utilizing quasi-experimental designs. The fact that it is not suggests that we have a great deal of work to do.

## HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Since a good deal of this chapter has already covered the implications for practice and research of the shifts that have occurred in organizations and society during the past 30 years since the publication of Volume 1 of *ROCD*, we end our ramblings with a message of hope.

The question has been asked, “Is OD dead?” With regard to the manner in which this question has typically been asked, [Bartunek and Woodman \(2012\)](#) have argued persuasively that the notion of OD’s death as a field of applied behavioral science is nonsense. However, to a larger and larger extent, many of the practices of traditional OD *are* dying. OD is clearly changing, both in the focus of its research and its practice. This change phenomenon is not new – to a certain extent, the field has been constantly evolving from its beginnings (cf., [Bartunek & Woodman, 2015](#); [Bushe & Marshak, 2009, 2014](#); [Mirvis, 1988, 1990](#)).<sup>3</sup>

Large consultancies dominate the landscape today in a way they didn’t in the 1960s. They blend some diagnosis, data feedback change management into their massive projects and even facilitate high-level workshops with boards and senior teams. They would say they are doing OD, and their clients are not demanding anything different. Small OD shops have all but disappeared, although solo practitioners still ply their trade wherever a receptive ear listens to the message of value-based, high-involvement, self-determined change. OD as it once was, the highly emotional, hands-on, high-touch open-ended mutual search for solutions, is fading. Time and scale have something to do with it, as no one can seem to afford a day let alone a week to meet to work on something. Canned solutions are preferable to a time-intensive learning journey. But rewards are also a factor, as it’s easier for practitioners to ride along on the coattails of a powerful brand with massive marketing, research, and global reach than to try to compete on one’s reputation alone.

That may be sad and even depressing but we choose to see it more as the natural order of things. The future of OD is bright, as long as we continue to evolve our mission, ideas, and ways of working. Rather than contracting with a traditional organizational client, there is much good work that needs to be done *between* clients, in networks, and in nominal organizations that we help form and grow. This work will require new research methods, new intervention methods, and new business models, to be sure. But why should we find this difficult when everyone around us is facing the same situation? With great change comes great opportunities, we tell our clients. Now, we need to take our own medicine.

From a research perspective, we hope that the familiar themes we have always addressed in our scholarly journals become recast in new light, and exciting once again. There was a time when OD scholars actually cared about reading the journals in our field because they were full of new insights and ideas that could be put to use in bringing about change in individuals, organizations

and society. If scholars take leaps along the lines suggested here or lines of their own choosing, we can reinvigorate the study of organizational change in general, and OD in particular. We can find new ways to engage one another in discourse about exciting ideas and allow non-scholars into those discussions. That's how it once was, and it can be that way again. This time, it may be millennials and generation Z'ers who lead the way in finding new topics to study in new ways, and alternatives to peer reviewed-journals and stuffy conference presentations. What happens at the intersection of new ideas and new forms of interaction among us is the stuff that produces magic. We wish for a magical time for OD, again.

## NOTES

1. We are well aware of the controversies surrounding incidents of fragging during the Vietnam War with some arguing such incidents were more rare than many believed; others arguing that such incidents were under-reported. Regardless of where the truth lies in terms of the actual frequency, a reading of military history shows similar breakdowns of leadership authority probably occurred during every major war.

2. We do not recommend, however, that you move all of your liquid assets to bitcoins. We could be wrong about this one.

3. Despite these constant changes, it is useful to remember that in human endeavors the new is always entrained with the old. "There is no human idea so long ago in time or so far away in distance as to have broken its connection with us now and here" (Tyler, 1871).

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