



# ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT ODC NEWSLETTER

Organization Development and Change Division

R. Wayne Boss, Editor

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## ODC PROGRAM IN CHICAGO: A CELEBRATION OF OUR PAST AND SOUNDINGS FOR OUR FUTURE TRAJECTORIES

Ronald Fry  
Program Chair  
Case Western University

We offer a big “thank you” to all the members that submitted papers, symposia and did the reviewing to prepare for Chicago’s meetings. Through your efforts, we hope to have another successful and stimulating program. From 144 papers submitted, 70 were selected (48 for paper sessions, 12 for interactive sessions and 10 for visual session) through the generous efforts of over 285 reviewers. In addition, 33 symposia were submitted, 20 accepted and 12 made it into the final program—with ODC the lead sponsor of eight. We were co-sponsors with nine different divisions, and two of our symposia were selected as Showcase Symposia: “The Challenges of the Scholar-Practitioner: A Symposium in Honor of Edgar Schein” and “Innovation Implementation in Health Care: Saving Good Ideas from Destruction.”

### ODC Theme Session and Distinguished Speaker

The kick-off to our scholarly program will be the keynote theme session, “Research in Organization Change and Development” led by Dick Woodman, Bill Pasmore, and Abraham Shani, along with several of the contributing authors to Volume 17 of their series on Research Advances in ODC.

We are thrilled to have Jane Dutton, the Robert L. Kahn Distinguished University Professor of Business Administration and Psychology, University of Michigan, who will speak on “Booster Shots: Strengthening Change Agents for Sustainable Change.” A summary of Jane’s message or possibility and responsibility will be included in the next *Newsletter*.

### Recognizing the ODC Founders

Our overall program will begin with a unique PDW and reception in honor of the early ODC Division

(See Fry, page 2)

## REFLECTIONS ON FIVE YEARS OF SERVICE

Frank J. Barrett  
Division Chair  
Naval Postgraduate School

It has been a pleasure to serve on the ODC board the past five years. I remember when my friend, Mike Manning, was first encouraging me to run for a position on the ODC board. He said “It will be fun and you’ll make a lot of new friends.” He was right on both accounts. I will miss the Board meetings,

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**ODC DIVISION EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE 2008-2009**

*Frank Barrett, Division Chairperson*

Naval Postgraduate School  
Phone: 831/656-2328 Fax: 831/656-3407  
Email: fbarrett@nps.edu

*Ann Feyerherm, Division Chair Elect*

Pepperdine University  
Phone: 310/568-5544 Fax: 310/568-2312  
Email: ann.feyerherm@pepperdine.edu

*Ron Fry, Program Chair*

Case Western Reserve University  
Phone: 216/368-2060 Fax: 216/368-6228  
Email: rxf5@case.edu

*Inger G. Stensaker, PDW Chair*

Norwegian School of Economics and Business  
Phone: +47-55959669 Fax: +47-55959870  
Email: inger.stensaker@nhh.no

*Jim Ludema, Division Representative*

Benedictine University  
Phone: (630)829-6229 Fax: 630-829-6211  
Email: JLudema@ben.edu

*Ryan Quinn, Representative-at-Large*

University of Virginia  
Phone: 434/924-7735 Fax: 434/555-1212  
Email: quinnr@darden.virginia.edu

*Ian Palmer, Representative-at-Large*

RMIT University, Australia  
Phone: +61 3 9925 1412 Fax: +61 3 9925 5624  
Email: ian.palmer@rmit.edu.au

*Quy Nguyen Huy, International Representative-at-Large*

INSEAD, France  
Phone: +33 1 60 72 44 98 Fax: +33 1 60 74 55 57  
Email: quy.huy@insead.edu

*Tim Goodly, Executive Scholar-Practitioner*

CNN Worldwide  
Phone: 404/827-3800  
Email: tim.goodly@turner.com

*Jude Olson, Executive Scholar-Practitioner*

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company  
Phone: 817/777-6700 Fax: 817/777-0949  
Email: jude.g.olson@lmco.com

*Andre Avramchuk, Student Representative*

Fielding Graduate University  
Phone: 626/381-6956  
Email: arttooz@aol.com

*Eric A. Goodman, Web Page Master*

Westwood College  
Phone: 303/691-5714 Fax: 303/691-5701  
Email: egoodman@westwood.edu

*Gavin Schwarz, Secretary/Treasurer*

University of New South Wales  
Phone: +61 2 9385 7278 Fax: +61 2 9662 8531  
Email: g.schwarz@unsw.edu.au

*R. Wayne Boss, Newsletter Editor*

University of Colorado  
Phone: 303/492-8488 Fax: 303/494-1771  
Email: wayne.boss@colorado.edu

*(From Fry, page 1)*

pioneers, who served as the early division chairs. Thanks to the initiative and perseverance of Glenn Varney (Bowling Green University) and our PDW Chair this year, Inger Stensaker, we will be able to gather Tony Raia, the official “founder” of the ODC Division, and six of our first seven division chairs: Craig Lundberg, Bob Golembiewski, Frank Friedlander, Larry Griener, Warner Burke and Michael Beer. In addition to their wonderful memories and stories about the early years of the ODC Division, and their challenges to those who carry forward ODC research and practice that they will share at the event, they will submit short essays and reflections that will be available on the ODC website and an upcoming issue of the *ODC Newsletter*. I urge everyone to take a look. From these sometimes profound notes one can see how “alive” the original themes of change and development remain today in our Division, as well as the tensions that hold them together.

### **ODC Paper Awards**

We are proud to feature rigorous and significant research being done by our members. Each year we devote a significant amount of the Executive Board’s time to selecting the very best of what our Division has to offer. This year’s award winning papers are:

*Best Paper:* “A Discourse Based Theory of Organizational Change” by David Grant, University of Sydney and Bob Marshak, American University.

*Best Student Paper:* “Transformational Leadership and Organizational Change: The Impact of Vision Content and Delivery,” by Mark Howarth, University of Queensland and Alannah Rafferty, University of Queensland.

*Best Paper Based on a Dissertation:* “Ambidextrous Organizational Design: A Process Perspective” by Volker Mahnke, Copenhagen Business School.

*Best Action-Research Paper:* “Beyond Programmatic Change: Building Reservoirs for Resilience” by Liisa Valikangas, Helsinki School of Economics.

*Rupe Chilsom Theory to Practice Award:* “From Social Engineering to Community Transformation: Amul, Grameen Bank, and Mondragon” by Vijayan Munusamy, Center for Creative Leadership—

Singapore, Susan Mrazek, University of Hawaii, Manoa and Dharm P.S. Bhawuk, University of Hawaii, Manoa.

### **Best Reviewers**

Simply put, none of the programming in any of the Academy meetings is possible without the time and effort our members put into reviewing paper and symposia submissions. It is this peer review that drives the quality of the sessions and symposia that make it to the program and represents the backbone of our scholarly identity within the Academy. Over 285 reviewers this year did more than 500 reviews. From all of them, four were rated by the authors and our Executive Board as the “best of the best” and two were awarded our Best Reviewer recognition. They are: Ann Langley of HEC Montreal and Konstantinos Grigoriou of Georgia Institute of Technology. Also in this very top rated group are Jean M. Bartunek (Boston College) and Eric Lamm (San Francisco State U.). Congratulations to these exemplars and thank you , again, to all who served.

### **ODC Social**

Our Division’s annual reception for all members and guests is known for its high energy, great turnout and engaging conversations. This year will be no exception. With live jazz performed by a quartet formed and led by our own outgoing Division Chair, Frank Barrett, at the piano, the evening event will be perfect for making new connections, reconnecting, and/or listening to great music.

### **Thank You!**

This program would not be possible without help from a lot of people. I was assisted by Garima Sharma, my graduate assistant and doctoral candidate at Case Western Reserve University. The ODC Board Members, current and past, were of immense help in assisting with thinking through issues and doing extra reviews.

Another big thank you goes to those 24 people, who volunteered to be chairs and discussants for all our ODC sessions. It is obvious that this program is a product of all of us. Thank you so much for being a part of the creation of the program.

Finally, the largest contribution to a successful scholarly program comes from the Reviewers. From the entire ODC Division, we wish to recognize and thank them again:

Michael Abebe, U. of Texas Pan American; Kristie A. Abston, U. of Tennessee; Devi P Akella, Albany State U.; Ronald Alexandrowich, York U., Canada; Brad Altemeyer, South Texas College; Bjørn Willy Åmo, Bodo Graduate School of Business, Norway; Phyllis R. Anderson, Governors State U.; Ruth Archer, Michigan Technological U.; Frank Edward Armstrong, Ferris State U.; Terry R. Armstrong, Colorado Technical U.; Mark Gordon Axler, Henley Business School, United Kingdom; Denise Barros Azevedo, U. Federal do Rio Grande do Sul-UFRGS-Porto Alegre-RS, Brazil; Norbert Bach, Ilmenau U. of Technology, Germany; Diane Bandow, Troy U.; Heather Christine Banham, Okanagan College, Canada; Cheryl Bann, Capella U.; Cassie B. Barlow, U.S. Air Force; Jean M. Bartunek, Boston College; Maria Graca Batista, U. dos Acores, Portugal; Thomas E. Becker, U. of Delaware; Joseph Abiodun Bello, Covenant U., Nigeria; Makida Bey, Aston U., United Kingdom; Calvin E. Beyer, Argosy U.; Deborah Blackman, U. of Canberra, Australia; Dave Bouckenooghe, Vlerick Leuven Gent Management School, Belgium; Brian W. Bridgeforth, Columbia Southern U.; David S. Bright, Wright State U.; Tina Broberg, Aarhus U., Denmark; Benedicte Brogger, BI Norwegian School of Management, Norway; Catherine Bucumi-Sommer, U. of Nantes, France; Barbara Benedict Bunker, U. at Buffalo; Ruth Anne Burris, U. of Phoenix; Clifford L. Butler, Capella U.; Steven D. Caldwell, U. of South Carolina, Upstate; Vera L. Cançado, Faculdade Novos Horizontes, Brazil; Marilyn Jane Carter, Benedictine U.; Min Z. Carter, Auburn U.; Richard Carter, Macquarie U., Australia; Susan Cartwright, Lancaster U., United Kingdom; Vincent Cassar, Sirota Survey Intelligence, Malta; Marie-Christine Chalus-Sauvannet, Cerag, U. of Grenoble 2 - ISEOR, U. of Lyon 3, France; I-Shuo Chen, National Chiao Tung U., Taiwan; Kuanwen Chen, Newcastle U., United Kingdom; Shih-Yu Cheng, National Cheng Kung U., Taiwan; Holly H. Chiu, Rutgers U.; Samia Chreim, U. of Ottawa, Canada; Allan H Church, PepsiCo, Inc.; David Coghlan, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland; April Coleman, Argosy U.; Jordi Comas, Bucknell U.; John Conbere, U. of St. Thomas; James Conklin, Concordia U., Canada; Dorianne Cotter-Lockard, Fielding Graduate U.; Nicholas Darko, U. of Cape Coast-Ghana, Ghana; John Davenport, Regent U.; Malcolm R. Davies, Learning At Work, Australia; Jeanette Davy, Wright State U.; Daniel K. Dayton, Capella U.; Leon De Caluwe, Vrije U. Twynstra, Netherlands; Gina Di Nola, Colorado Technical U.;

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*(From Barrett, page 1)*

the sense of community, and the opportunity to think strategically about the division. And I look forward to continuing friendships with several kind and good-hearted people I met during my service on the board.

Over the last five years the ODC board has been very actively strategizing about the division, discerning trends, articulating dilemmas and challenges, planning opportunities. I'd like to review a few of the trends

I've seen. As of August 2008, the division had 2,862 members. We are more diverse than other divisions in that we have a healthy distribution of academics, practitioners, and students. Our strength lies in this diversity, a point I will expand upon below.

*Scholars and practitioners.* AoM has been eager to continue the dialogue between the worlds of scholarship and practice, and for the last several years the AoM has been eager to include executives. ODC has been a leader in this area. For the overall academy, 9% identify as executives/practitioners. Within our division, 21% of our members identify as executives/practitioners.

We serve a more diverse membership than many other divisions. The ODC board feels strongly that the inclusion of academics, practitioners, and students makes us a creative and exciting division that refuses to separate scholarship and practice. In fact, the Executive Board decided to expand membership of our board from one to two executive/practitioners. In the past five years we have had senior executives from GE, Hewlett-Packard, Kaiser, CNN, and Lockheed on our board. Their contributions have been indispensable. ODC needs to remain committed to rigorous research *and* managerial relevance.

In fact as I look over the programs the last few years, I notice that there's somewhat of a bi-modal distribution in submission of papers to the annual meeting. One thread is practitioner oriented—consistent with the founding humanistic values of the field of Organizational Development. Several applied programs have evolved in the last several years, including executive doctoral programs and organizational development programs. There is a second thread of papers that focuses on the dynamics of change. These papers tend to be more scholarly and empirically rigorous, yet less focused on implications for managers and leaders of change. As we grow as a division, we hope that these two worlds will continue to influence one another. We need to continue the dialogue between academics and practitioners and in fact continue to stand for the Lewinian notion that practice and research/theory should not be separated.

The board is very much aware of these trends. We want to encourage change agents and consultants to publish research on change. In an attempt to encourage more change agents and practitioners to write about change experiences, Quy Huy, two-year board rep, has agreed to lead a PDW next year on writing case

studies using qualitative research methods.

*International membership.* Five years ago we set a goal of increasing our international membership. As of 2009, we have 1,002 international members—roughly 35% of the Division. For the last five years ODC has co-sponsored an annual conference with the University of Lyon in France. Since 2003 the Executive Board has included an international representative. The board has included representatives from universities in Australia, France, England, and Norway. This has strengthened ODC in several ways. The last several years several of our top rated papers and symposia include international scholars. In 2007, of the top ten rated papers, seven were from Europe or Asia.

*Students.* Students make up approximately 1/3 of our membership. In fact, student membership has grown steadily and significantly since 2004—up 25.3%, indicating a potentially healthy future core membership and potential for continued growth. I think this reflects a number of new executive doctoral programs.

Beginning in 2008 the ODC division began holding its own doctoral consortium, separate from the OMT and OB divisions. At first we were concerned when these other divisions decided not to include ODC students, but we decided to use this as an opportunity. Thanks largely to the leadership of Representative-at-Large, Karen Jansen, we now host a two day doctoral consortium for ODC doctoral students. I think this promises to be a fruitful opportunity to welcome doctoral students into ODC.

### **Some Challenges: What Happened to Action Research?**

There are a few trends that concern me—in particular the absence of papers on action research. Each year there are fewer submissions that could be considered “action research.” Each year the *Journal of Action Research* offers an award for best Action Research paper in ODC. Four of the last five years the award was not given because we did not have a paper to nominate.

My concern actually is that our graduate programs have stopped emphasizing and perhaps stopped teaching action research. (I'm deliberately not differentiating here between action research, action inquiry, action learning). In fact, several of the leaders in the field are retiring, and I am concerned that there is a vacuum. Bill Torbert retired from Boston

College. Mike Beer retired from Harvard Business School. Bill Pasmore has moved to the private sector. With the retirement of Peter Reason, the Center for Action Research and Professional Practice at Bath University has been closed. Over the years these academic leaders guided several doctoral students in the learning potential of action research. While we have several new executive doctoral programs and OD programs, I don't see action research as a priority in the same way. And frankly I wonder if our doctoral students are learning action research. I think these transitions mark a turning point in the field of OD, and I worry that we may not be fully aware of what we are losing. Action research embodies the core values of the field of ODC—collaborative inquiry, inclusion of a diverse group of participants (not research “subjects”), ongoing data collection and theory building, active experimentation and reflection. Action research is being published in journals in other fields, such as Education and Community Development. But if consultants are continuing to do action research in corporate settings, they are not submitting them to ODC and not publishing many of their case studies in Organization Studies journals.

With this in mind, the board actively recruited Hilary Bradbury Huang to serve on the board. She is a leader in the field of Action Research and is the editor of the *Action Research Journal*. We are very fortunate to have her on the board, and her leadership is very timely. I notice too that new graduate programs on Management and Sustainability are emerging. This is an ideal setting for using action research as so many executives and organizations are in their infancy in the sustainability journey. I hope that the designers of these new programs will encourage graduate students to write action research case studies and submit them to ODC and to the journals in our field.

Several doctoral programs have embraced Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a change method. As an early developer and active proponent of AI, this is welcome news. Those of us who were at CWRU in the early 1980s are continually pleased with the growth of this paradigm. However, I notice a trend that might be worth attending to. Appreciative Inquiry emphasizes helping client systems discover their strengths and potentials as a basis for growth and development. What do we know about organizational development and learning *after* groups and organizations discover their strengths? I wonder if sometimes both clients and researcher-consultants

are so enamored by the emergence of strength based themes that not much attention is devoted to the learning that follows the initial discovery of strengths. Those who write about AI case studies often devote considerable attention to the “discovery” and “dream” phase and the client system's excitement and energy. It seems to me that we have not done enough research and theory building to help us understand the rest of the learning journey.

AI is a form of action research, and AR emphasizes the ongoing learning cycle as clients and researchers grapple with themes, experiment with new programs and behaviors, and reframe old patterns. Intervention projects are “messy” as systems go through iterative cycles, sometimes struggling to move out of routines. Those writing on Appreciative Inquiry projects would advance our knowledge if they could document and theorize the learning that continues after the initial excitement of the Discovery and Dream phases.

*Learning from other Divisions:* I have noticed the last few years that other AoM divisions have been addressing the topic of change. Some of their research is very close to home, and in many cases members of other divisions, including OMT, Strategy, and Managerial Cognition are not aware of the tradition of research in our field. The Strategy Division, for example, had several papers and a PDW on “strategy as practice.” The themes that they discussed were very close to kind of themes we have done in ODC for several years. I suspect that they are not citing literature from our tradition, and many of our members are not aware of literature in theirs. For this reason, it would be good to create more collaboration, including perhaps co-sponsorship of symposia or PDWs, with these divisions. These divisions are now writing about many of the value-based themes that have made us distinctive as a division (positive psychology, sustainability, for example). Collaborations would enrich ODC and I suspect the other divisions as well.

Overall, I am optimistic about the future of the Division. ODC is in great hands with Ann Feyerherm as division chair. The other five-year members—Ron Fry, Inger Strensaker, Jim Ludema, and Jeffrey Ford—will provide strong and provocative leadership in the future.

Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve you over the last five years, and I look forward to continuing to participate in division activities.

**2009 DOCTORAL CONSORTIUM:  
ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT AND  
CHANGE DIVISION**

Ryan Quinn  
Division Representative  
University of Virginia

If you (or one of your students) are studying change and are actively working on a dissertation, then please submit an application to the 2009 ODC Doctoral Consortium held in conjunction with the upcoming Academy of Management meeting in August! The ODC division welcomes doctoral students from all disciplines who are studying issues associated with organizational change. Broad, relevant topical areas that might be of interest include:

- Organization development
- Change management
- Strategy-as-practice
- Social movements in and of organizations
- Organizational improvisation
- Organizational learning
- Responses to change
- Network dynamics
- Institutional change
- Transformational leadership
- Innovation
- Microdynamics of change
- ...and any other change-related topics

We have designed an innovative approach to the traditional consortium experience, which received rave reviews last year. The consortium features a working paper workshop, where experienced change scholars such as Quy Huy, Inger Stensaker, and Ryan Quinn will present their own work in a way that will be a provocative learning experience. Current and past ODC Board members (such as Jim Ludema, Ron Fry, Frank Barrett, & Ann Feyerherm) will work with you to make your research more rigorous, relevant, and publishable. There will be opportunities to meet other doctoral students, to make some great connections with other leading and emerging change scholars and to be exposed to additional topics such as action and applied research, career trajectories, consulting, and ethics of research and teaching. The consortium is scheduled to begin on Friday, August 7 at 3:00 pm, includes dinner and an all day Saturday session, capped off by hearing from a panel of the pioneers in the area of Organization Development and Change and a reception for you to meet other members of the division.

The ideal candidate for this consortium will have finished his/her coursework and be engaged in preparing a dissertation proposal. Because space is limited, we expect that only one student per program will be selected to participate, but additional students from a given program may be considered on a space available basis after the nomination deadline.

To apply, please send an email with the following three documents attached to Ann Feyerherm ([afeyerhe@pepperdine.edu](mailto:afeyerhe@pepperdine.edu)) by May 15, 2009:

- A recommendation letter from your dean, department chair, or major advisor that verifies your (a) status/progress and (b) year in your school's doctoral program.
- A one-page bio summarizing the nominee's contact information, research and teaching interests, and publications. This one-page bio will be distributed among consortium participants.
- A 3-5 page (typed and double-spaced) summary of the dissertation project, including the research question, rationale, hypotheses/propositions, proposed methods and results (if applicable). This will also be distributed among faculty and consortium participants.

We anticipate selection will be made by mid-June. Any questions can be directed to Ann Feyerherm, [afeyerhe@pepperdine.edu](mailto:afeyerhe@pepperdine.edu), or Ryan Quinn, [quinnr@arden.virginia.edu](mailto:quinnr@arden.virginia.edu).

We look forward to your applications and to seeing you at the annual conference in August in Chicago.

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**ON BECOMING A LEADER:  
INTRODUCTION TO THE  
ANNIVERSARY EDITION**

Warren G. Bennis  
University of Southern California  
2008 ODC Distinguished Speaker

When I last revised *On Becoming a Leader* six years ago, the world was anxiously waiting to see if the United States would go to war with Iraq. Today we all know the tragic answer. The question that now torments the United States is when we will get out of Iraq, site of the longest war in American history. That conflict has cost the lives of more than 4,000 American soldiers, left thousands more grievously



wounded, and killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians. The war has also cost the United States more than a trillion dollars, money raised by borrowing from China and other nations since, for the first time in American history, we went to war without raising taxes to pay for it.

The United States was also suffering economically during the last revision. In 2002, the nation was still reeling from a recession that saw the stock market tumble more than 40 percent. Today, as I write this, the country is in the midst of even deeper recession, one that is being compared to the Great Depression. In a pattern that has become distressingly familiar, the current economic downturn followed a bubble. This time around, houses, not tulips, were the object of the public's frenzied buying. After soaring to absurd heights, prices of American homes are now in free fall, with sale signs blighting entire neighborhoods. The prices of food and fuel have jumped, even as American jobs vanish by the hundreds of thousands. These problems were no act of God. They resulted from lack of leadership at every level, including failures by government officials and those heading the banking and financial services industries.

Crises reveal leadership as well as require it. The current financial mess elicited a relatively swift and concerted effort to address it. In the fall of 2008 lame-duck President George W. Bush urged Congress to pass a \$700-billion rescue package. Action came after a false start or two, including Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson's initially using the toxic term bailout to describe the plan. Government intervention did not stop the stock market from going crazy in October, with the New York Stock Exchange plunging hundreds of points every day for a week, then surging a record 936 points in a single day. The market turbulence coincided with the end of the fiscal quarter, which meant millions of Americans received their 401(k) statements in the midst of it. Many were afraid to open them—with good reason, since the news inside the envelopes was dire. According to the Congressional Budget Office, Americans collectively lost \$2 trillion in retirement money between July 31, 2007, and September 30, 2008. Many feared they would never be able to retire. Ever timely, *The New Yorker* spoke to the national mood with a pointed cartoon by Roz Chast. It offered this among three "Thanksgiving Recipes from the U.S. Treasury Department":

Six sweet potatoes  
One can crushed pineapple  
Your retirement account  
Mix everything together.  
Bake until the account is completely melted.

In the past, an economic catastrophe could usually be contained within the nation's borders. But this economic emergency was especially scary because we are now all citizens of an interconnected world with a linked global economy. The crisis had been triggered by the freezing up of credit markets; that had been caused by sub-prime mortgages that an under-regulated financial industry bundled and sliced into complex new securities that plunged in value. The shaky new instruments were born in the United States. But when they suddenly lost value, investors in Brazil, Ireland, Bulgaria, South Africa, China, and Qatar also felt the pain.

The *New York Times* ran a map showing affected countries blotched with red under the headline "A Crash Heard Around the World." Tiny Iceland was hit especially hard. As it teetered on the edge of economic collapse, someone jokingly put the entire nation up for sale on eBay. In a column in the *New York Times*, Thomas L. Friedman asked: "Who knew that Iceland was just a hedge fund with glaciers?" The era when an economic event in one nation caused a far-off ripple was clearly over. As Friedman so persuasively argues in two recent best sellers, today's world is flat and its institutions and interests so intertwined that what happens in Iowa can hit Shanghai like a tsunami. With the economic dominoes stretched around the globe, greed and wrongdoing in one quarter can cause trouble anywhere. And so, when unscrupulous manufacturers in China contaminated milk with an industrial plastic, the first, most tragic victims were Chinese babies whose kidneys were damaged. But because the tainted dairy products were distributed worldwide, chocolate bunnies tainted with melamine were soon being pulled from Easter baskets in Europe and the United States.

In recent decades, Americans have rarely had to face such grim evidence that their leadership had failed. We were shocked at the fragility of the economy, and shaken in our confidence that our leaders could fix the problem. The economic mess alone would explain why this is an unusually pessimistic time in the world and especially in the United States. In the months before the landmark 2008 presidential election,

many had a growing sense that the so-called American Century was fast coming to an end. Thoughtful people were not troubled by some jingoistic fear that the United States was losing its status as the world's sole superpower. Rather, many had an uneasy feeling that the country's best days were behind it. Those feelings were understandable. The dollar had become so weak against the euro that many U.S. citizens were foregoing European travel. Once a badge of honor, a U.S. passport no longer guaranteed a friendly welcome almost anywhere. And Americans were battered by nonstop criticism from European and other allies, most of it directed at policies of the Bush administration, but distressing nonetheless. The criticism surged as our meltdown proved contagious. In an op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, British writer Andrew O'Hagan wrote that "many a Londoner [is] seething at the sub-prime-mortgage disaster in America." To convey the quality of British anger at the Americans responsible, O'Hagan cited F. Scott Fitzgerald's description of the lethal disregard of *The Great Gatsby's* Tom and Daisy Buchanan: "They smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they made."

America's decline was evident on other fronts as well. Unimproved by the No Child Left Behind policy, our mediocre public schools have made the United States much less competitive, especially in math and science. A third of all American children, and half its minority children, do not graduate from high school. And then there was the psychic wound of watching the city of New Orleans—the birthplace of that most American of art forms, jazz—all but destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and government incompetence. Even as this country grappled with uncharacteristic self-doubt, other nations were feeling newly empowered. No country is jacked up higher on its nascent sense of global clout than China. Every few weeks another of the highest skyscrapers in the world opens in Shanghai. China recently passed the United States in Internet users: 253 million Chinese are now on-line, compared to 220 million Americans. The point, of course, is not that China now holds the record for computer use, but that China is now embracing on a breathtaking scale the technology that defines our time. In a sense, the symbol of this shift away from American pre-eminence was the triumphant 2008 Olympic Games

in Beijing. The most watched event in television history, the Beijing Olympics mesmerized 4.7 billion viewers worldwide.

Every decade or so I find myself writing that we need leaders now as never before. That seems especially true as I write this essay and observe the worried malaise that the country seems unable to shake off in the final months of the Bush administration. Others share my concern. A 2007 study of confidence in leadership found that 77 percent of participants felt the United States was in the midst of a leadership crisis. Slightly more (79 percent) thought the country would decline if it did not find better leaders. (The study was conducted by the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government and *U.S. News & World Report*.)

A major reason for this downbeat view was the spectacular failure of the presidency of George W. Bush (although nobody was very happy with Congress either). When I wrote the introduction to the previous edition, the new president had recently delivered his most eloquent speech—his 2001 address to Congress in the wake of the awful terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 9/11. That speech, which inspired hope about Bush's ability to lead in difficult times, was the high point of his administration.

Unfortunately for the nation, failure followed failure during Bush's two long terms in office. Invading Iraq on questionable grounds and failing to plan for the post-invasion were among the most egregious. Others included the shockingly inadequate response to Hurricane Katrina, the erosion of the nation's moral stature in the world, the assault on the rights of American citizens, the economic catastrophe—the list goes on and on. Unfortunately, in large part because of the administration's reflexive lack of transparency, we still know very little about the mechanics of these failures. That lack of transparency constitutes a serious problem in itself. Without knowing how things failed (in some cases, without knowing what things failed), the incoming administration will be seriously handicapped in its effort to change government for the better.

As president, Bush was an example of a particularly dangerous kind of leader—one with limited ability, great certainty, and enormous power. Indeed no aspect of Bush's leadership was more striking than

his assumption of unprecedented powers to the detriment of the Legislative branch of government. A single example illustrates the imperial bent of the Bush presidency. While in office, Bush used so-called “signing statements” to change more than 1,100 sections of newly passed laws. In these signing statements Bush asserted that sections of the law should be ignored because they unconstitutionally constrained presidential power. How common is it for an American president to countermand the law of the land in this way? Rare indeed. According to the New York Times, all the previous presidents in U.S. history collectively made only 600 such changes.

Much of the credit or blame for the administration’s extraordinary extension of presidential power goes to Bush’s vice president Dick Cheney. Shakespeare wrote that “truth is the daughter of time.” We will have to wait to know the actual role Cheney played in the Bush administration, but it appears that he quietly and assiduously transformed his office from one of legendary insignificance to a virtual shadow presidency. According to the U.S. Constitution, the vice president has only two responsibilities—to preside over the Senate and vote there in case of a tie and to succeed the president should he or she die, become incapacitated, or be impeached and found guilty. That modest brief prompted Ben Franklin to label the vice president “his superfluous excellency.” But John Adams, who actually served in the office, had a much shrewder sense of the paradox of the American vice presidency when he observed: “I am nothing but I may be everything.”

The numbers bear Adams out. During the 20th Century, one in three United States presidents died or became incapacitated in office (or in the case of Richard M. Nixon, resigned on the cusp of impeachment). All but Woodrow Wilson, who remained president despite a debilitating illness whose seriousness was not made public, were succeeded by their seconds in command. But Cheney upgraded his job description without waiting for a change at the top. Like the Wizard of Oz, he toiled out of public view, tirelessly influencing such momentous decisions as the nation’s oil-centric energy policy, going to war with Iraq, and adoption of such controversial policies as the use of “enhanced interrogation” techniques such as water-boarding. Many observers believe Cheney was a major architect of the Bush administration’s exceptional lack of transparency (which in no way lessens the president’s responsibility for it).

As I noted earlier, it will be years before we know the full truth about the Bush presidency. There are too few investigative journalists to go around in these days of shrinking newspapers. But we already have some meaningful measures of its unprecedented lack of transparency. Consider writer Graeme Wood’s important 2007 piece on the subject in the Atlantic magazine. Wood compared and contrasted the approaches taken by the William J. Clinton and George W. Bush administrations in making government information public. According to Wood, Clinton’s basic approach was “When in doubt, let it out.” His successor’s antithetical approach was “When in doubt, classify.” As a result of this profound philosophical difference, 20.6 million documents were classified under Bush in 2006, more than six times the number classified during the entire Clinton presidency. As someone who has advocated candor and transparency for at least a half century now, I am convinced that opacity in government is the organizational equivalent of hardening of the arteries. Opacity blocks the free flow of information, the sine qua non of informed decision making and organizational health. Without candor and transparency, organizations sicken and fail.

As we know from one-time insiders in the Bush White House, the president valued loyalty above candor. There are few absolutes in the study of leadership but there is at least one: No leader becomes truly great unless he or she accepts, even embraces, candor. Candor performs many invaluable functions within an organization. It keeps the leader from disappearing into an isolation booth of sorts, built and guarded by yes men. It forces the leader to listen to unpleasant truths and thus helps insure that he or she has all the data needed to make informed decisions. We have a tendency to admire leaders who act decisively on the basis of gut instinct. Sometimes gut reactions are a wise, efficient response that takes into account many insights and pieces of data that are hard to articulate but are relevant nonetheless. But gut reactions are often nothing more than hasty choices based on too little information. My guess is that Bush’s well-known confidence in his gut will give intuitive leadership a bad name, at least for a time. That should benefit us all.

As to candor, it is important to remember that it should be reciprocal. It needs to operate both up and down because followers also have a need to know. Leaders sometimes try to confine important infor-

mation to the executive suite. They treat it as an executive perk, like the company jet. But whenever possible, information should be shared throughout the organization, whether it is a workplace or a nation. Obviously certain trade and national secrets must be kept. But most information is not sensitive, and sharing it allows followers to make informed decisions and act accordingly. Those who are given information are brought closer to the heart of the organization. Morale improves, often boosting performance. Alternatively, lack of candor lowers morale. The worst possible scenario is one in which people are given false information. In my experience, the follower who discovers he has been lied to is never the same. Thus are enemies born.

A vivid case in point is Scott McClellan, one-time press spokesman for George W. Bush. McClellan was a faithful, even avid supporter of the president. And then he discovered his superiors had lied to him about White House involvement in the politically motivated outing of CIA agent Valerie Plame. Their lack of candor caused McClellan to mislead, however unintentionally, the White House press corps and other media covering the Plame affair. Even more devastating for McClellan was the president's belated admission that he had green-lighted the selective leaking of classified information, after McClellan had been assured Bush had not done so. Once a reliable agent of opacity for the administration, McClellan was transformed by the president's revelation. When he published his 2008 confessional *What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception*, some former Republican colleagues acted as if McClellan had lost his senses. But the former press liaison behaved as one would expect of a person who felt he had been betrayed by those he once trusted and admired. McClellan became an eleventh-hour convert to candor, with all the convert's zealous commitment to his new faith. He didn't just praise candor and transparency. In his book he argued that the White House needed a new post, a deputy chief of staff in charge of candor whose job would be to "make sure the president is open, forthright and working to transcend partisanship and achieve unity." In McClellan's plan the new deputy chief would have three assistants, including one whose sole mission was to promote and protect transparency. His or her responsibilities would include insuring that information was classified for reasons that served the national interest, not simply "to protect the

administration from revelations that are merely embarrassing or politically inconvenient."

Libraries will eventually be written on why and how the Bush presidency failed. But even now, it is important to scrutinize the former president, not to demonize him, but to learn from his negative example—to extract key lessons in how not to lead. One of Bush's major failings, I believe, was his overriding commitment to an ideology rather than to principled pragmatism. In foreign affairs, for example, Bush acted in the fervently held belief that democracy is universally desired and desirable and will ultimately triumph. That ideology proved particularly ill-adapted to the realities of the Middle East. Elections in Iraq resulted in a Shia government at odds with the country's once powerful Sunni minority and our Sunni allies in the Middle East. Free elections in Gaza empowered Hamas, an anti-Western terrorist organization that seeks the destruction of Israel, our closest Middle Eastern ally. And, because of the administration's ideological disdain for government itself, one of the most destructive forces at work during the Bush years was the corrosive drip, drip, drip of privatization unchecked by effective oversight. It caused the outsourcing of much of the war in Iraq, inadequate oversight of the financial sector and other industries, and the stealthy semi-privatization of Medicare and other government programs. The administration's overt partisanship also harmed the Justice Department and other traditionally apolitical government departments that had proud histories of striving to be meritocracies. Moreover, by acting less like the president of the nation than of the conservative wing of the Republican party, Bush further polarized an already badly divided country. There is a lesson here that transcends any single administration, Republican or Democratic. Ideologically charged approaches rarely solve complex problems. Great leaders do not try to impose an ideological template, right- or left-leaning, on problems. First-rate leaders know that every problem is thorny in its own way and inclusively and collaboratively find solutions that reflect the unique realities at hand.

In short, between my last introduction to *On Becoming a Leader* and this one, the context that I urge every reader to master has changed dramatically. Optimism has been tested by a protracted war, economic pain, and a polarized citizenry. Given this

new context, it is not surprising that the U.S. presidential election of 2008 was a riveting cliff hanger. You didn't have to be a student of leadership to be fascinated by the race. It was as important a contest as any in American history. And it was addictive. As the seemingly endless campaign approached the election on November 4th, the media ran stories on election junkies who spent so much time reading political blogs their work suffered and relationships frayed. Candidates began to pop up in the dreams of those who watched too much political coverage on-line or on TV.

In many ways, the campaign was a microcosm of the most important cultural changes of the last decade. One major development has been the technology-driven emergence of alternative media that have transformed American society, including the electoral process. The most popular on-line newspapers, such as the *Huffington Post*, have as much clout as venerable opinion-shapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Cable television has edged out network TV as the go-to source for information, in spite of, or perhaps because, many cable TV personalities wear their politics on their sleeves. The pace of campaigning (like the pace of everything else) has also speeded up to the point where the lag time between a candidate's remark and the appearance of a slick television ad countering it is a matter of hours. Thanks to Google, most of what the candidates have said in the past can be accessed in a nanosecond. In a sense, there is no past in the blogosphere. Anything that happens in front of a camera (and almost every cell phone is a camera) can be stored forever and retrieved and disseminated in an instant. As a result, what the candidates are saying on the campaign trail is paralleled by another campaign going on in the blogosphere. In this Internet campaign, truth and lies are mixed in unpredictable ways and may be hard to tell apart; Stephen Colbert's truthiness is the perfect coinage for this new reality. In contrast to the public campaign, the candidates don't necessarily control this shadow campaign, although they can influence it. And whether it is fact-based or steeped in bias or worse, this shadow campaign shapes attitudes and has a real though unpredictable affect on the outcome of the election.

Given the seriousness and complexity of the problems roiling the nation, it is no surprise that voters followed the 2008 presidential race with a nerve-racking awareness that the stakes have rarely been

higher. With no sitting president or vice president in contention, all the cards were in the air. The election season began unusually early in 2007 and was marked by the emergence of history-making rivals for the Democratic presidential nomination. New York Senator and former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was the first woman to have a real shot at the Democratic nomination. She proved a formidable competitor in what quickly became a contest between her and the first serious African-American contender, Illinois Senator Barack Obama. First hailed as presidential material by Oprah Winfrey, Obama gave a reputation-making speech at the 2004 Democratic convention and distinguished himself from most Democratic political figures by his prescient opposition to the war in Iraq.

Obama was a phenomenon as well as candidate, able to fill Yankee Stadium with his supporters, many of them voting for the first time. A sea of 100,000 people stretched before him at a campaign rally in St. Louis. When Obama went abroad to meet with world leaders, presidents and sheiks grinned like teenagers as they shook his hand. Perpetually poised and unflappable, Obama was endorsed early by Ted and Caroline Kennedy and later by former Secretary of State Colin Powell. At the annual benefit dinner named for Al Smith, the first Catholic nominee for the presidency, Obama made fun of his cult-like following. "Contrary to the rumors you've heard, I wasn't born in a manger," he joked. For many, Obama embodied the promise of a post-racial America in which candidates were judged "not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." But at the same benefit, Obama alluded with a light touch to the unknown effect on his chances of his Swahili and Arabic names, unprecedented for someone seeking the country's highest office. "I got my middle name [Hussein]," he explained, "from someone who obviously didn't think I'd ever run for president."

After a series of bruising debates, Clinton won an unprecedented 18 million votes in the 2008 primaries but ultimately lost the nomination to Obama. Although Clinton distinguished herself in the numerous Democratic debates, particularly in her mastery of the issues, Obama chose as his running mate Delaware Senator Joseph Biden, who had also sought the presidential nomination.

The contest for the Democratic nomination was sometimes so contentious it seemed to call for net

and trident. In contrast, the Republican contest was as dull as an infomercial. The Republican candidates were all mature white men, including 9/11 New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney. And their primary strategy seemed to consist of distancing themselves from President Bush without actually uttering his name and reminding voters that they were members of the president's party. Despite being counted out early in the contest, Vietnam War hero and Arizona Senator John McCain eventually emerged as the Republican presidential candidate. A self-proclaimed maverick, McCain overcame such major obstacles as his unpopularity among hardcore conservatives and his age. If elected, he would become, at 72, the oldest person to assume the office.

But the Republican campaign suddenly caught fire in the last days of August 2008 when McCain made the stunning announcement that his vice-presidential pick was not Democrat-turned-Independent Joe Lieberman or another of the relative moderates McCain was thought to favor. Instead McCain chose 44-year-old Sarah Palin, the young governor of Alaska little known outside of party circles. A former small-town mayor, beauty queen, and self-styled "hockey Mom" of five, including an infant with Down Syndrome, Palin introduced herself to the nation in a mesmerizing speech that drew as many television viewers as Obama's convention address. In that speech, Palin—the first woman on the Republican ticket and thus a maker of history in her own right—made a bid for Hillary Clinton's many women supporters with a promise to assail the glass ceiling Clinton had cracked. As an opponent of abortion even in cases of rape and incest who believes Creationism should be taught in the schools alongside evolution, Palin appealed strongly to evangelical Christians who helped elect President Bush and had little enthusiasm for McCain.

Initially the media fell hard for Palin, much as it had for Obama. Both were hailed as celebrities and rock stars, terms the Republicans had previously used to demean Obama. Palin proved to be a gifted campaigner with a sharp edge and a populist pitch (she often mentioned "Joe Six-Pack," apparently to capitalize on the belief that Bush had won, in part, because voters would rather have had a beer with him than with Al Gore or John Kerry). Palin had a folksy touch, smiling readily, winking, and dropping

her final g's, but she also served as her party's attack dog. Without apparent qualms, she often roiled up conservative crowds by accusing Obama of "palling around with terrorists." Despite her initial appeal, she had a serious downside. With her paper-thin resume, she undermined McCain's contention that Obama lacked the experience to be president. In my view, that had been a losing argument all along. History has shown over and over again that experience per se is no substitute for good judgment in determining the quality of a leader.

To an unusual degree, the lives of the four contenders was the stuff of biopics. As so often happens in our culture, where even brands of toothpaste are marketed via their own carefully honed "stories," the race became a battle of competing narratives. McCain, who took as his campaign slogan "Country First," embodied a tale of courage and patriotic sacrifice as a former Navy pilot shot down over Vietnam who was tortured while a prisoner of war in the notorious Hanoi Hilton. Since then, he has earned a reputation as a maverick for bucking his party on such matters as immigration and cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans (positions he later reversed). Forty-six-year-old Obama had a more exotic, more contemporary story, one that emphasized his ties with the rest of the world. He is the son of a black Kenyan father and a white mother from Kansas, who had struggled to raise him in Hawaii and Indonesia. All but abandoned by his father and briefly on food stamps as a child, Obama became the first African-American editor of the Harvard Law Review. Instead of joining a four-star law firm after Harvard, he had begun his public life as a community organizer in Chicago. Obama, who acknowledged that he didn't look like the other men on American currency, ran on the promise of change.

Like McCain and Obama, Biden had experienced a life-changing event, a crucible that shaped his character and his leadership. Biden was 29 in 1972 when he was elected to the Senate, the second youngest person in history to win the office. He was in Washington, getting ready to move into his new office, when a phone call revealed that his wife and infant daughter had died in an auto accident back in Delaware. Gravely injured, his two young sons were not expected to survive. The boys recovered; Biden was sworn in at their bedside. A popular senator and devoted single father, Biden remarried and is now the father of a young daughter as well as a grandfa-

ther. A foreign-policy expert who opposed the appointment of Conservative judge Robert Bork to the Supreme Court, Biden is also known for verbal gaffes and for taking the long train ride home to Delaware each night to be with his family.

Perhaps because Palin's was initially the least familiar tale, her narrative got the most media play. Her photogenic face appeared on one newsmagazine cover after another, often accompanying text that made her sound like a cross between Annie Oakley and Wonder Woman, able to shoot and dress a moose as well as change a diaper and do the state's business. Opponents saw her selection as a cynical bid to appease the Republican base and attract women (detractors dubbed her "Caribou Barbie"). The Republican campaign hailed her as a maverick in the McCain mold, who had fearlessly taken on her own party in Alaska. In a piece in *Newsweek*, Jeffrey Barthelot and Karen Breslau described how Palin fit into a time-honored American tale. They wrote: "Palin's personal story taps one of the great American myths—the hardy woman of the frontier, God-fearing and determined to succeed against the odds. Her story could be a Capra film, or a chick flick. But as with most political biographies (or Hollywood films), the rougher edges have been burnished. To her critics, she's also shallow, opportunistic and even corrupt herself." The last was an allusion to a bipartisan investigation by the Alaska legislature into whether she improperly fired a state official. In October, the investigative body determined that Governor Palin had violated state ethics laws and misused her power but had the legal right to replace the official.

The election season underscored the fact that ours is a culture in which entertainment and news have been transmogrified into a third category that marries the two, for better or for worse, often called infotainment. When polled, young voters routinely said they get their news from "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" or "The Colbert Report," which are cable comedy shows, not news sources, to those who rely on the mainstream media. John McCain declared his intention to run for president on "Late Night with David Letterman" and returned to the show to ask Letterman's forgiveness after abruptly canceling an appearance. Cable TV pundits reported regularly on where the women of "The View" stood on the candidates. But the campaign became downright surrealistic after writer and performer Tina Fey began

playing Sarah Palin on "Saturday Night Live." Sporting the candidate's signature glasses and often quoting her verbatim, Fey brilliantly caught Palin's Fargo accent, down-home mannerisms, and serpentine syntax. Palin later made her own appearance on the show, passing Fey in the studio and replacing her on the podium.

Like Palin, who trained for a career in television, Obama is richly endowed with charisma, the personal magnetism that allows an individual to captivate and sway audiences. It is the same kind of star power that allows certain actors to own a stage or a screen. Politics, too, is a performance art, as Orson Welles made clear when he first met President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. FDR graciously said to the already legendary actor/director: "You know, Mr. Welles, you are the greatest actor in America." And Welles replied: "Oh, no, Mr. President. You are." Except for those rare occasions when candidates share the same physical space as those they hope to lead, they must have powerful enough rhetorical and acting skills to transcend the distorting effect of television and other media. They must be good enough performers to persuade the audience that they share the same dreams and interests. Such leaders have the ability to turn a crowd into a community—or a mob. Charisma is no small gift. FDR had it, JFK had it, Reagan had it, Clinton had it. Tragically, so did Hitler. But it is always part of the political equation, whether we like it or not.

More than ever since the advent of television, physical attractiveness is a constituent of charisma, albeit a controversial one. It has been noted so often it has become a cliché: virtually everyone who heard the landmark 1960 debate between Nixon and Kennedy on radio thought Nixon had won. It was only those who saw the close-up visuals—a frowning Nixon, with his five o'clock shadow, mopping flop sweat from his brow vs. a youthful, athletic-looking Kennedy, comfortable in his skin and flashing a ready smile—who knew that the victory belong to JFK. Beauty is more than symmetrical features. It can be enhanced by behavior and our knowledge of the individual. But it is routinely a factor in the leaders we choose. Some leaders are so powerful they can rise above the way they look. Lincoln used humor to mock his strange appearance, once remarking to a rival who called him "two-faced": "Do you think if I had another face, I'd appear in public in this one?" But appearance matters to voters

as well as prospective dates. An unkind but astute observer once remarked that Nixon had a face like a foot. Did that contribute to his disastrous debate? Likely it did. Certainly Sarah Palin's good looks are part of her appeal, as Republican conventioners from Indiana crudely acknowledged with T-shirts that read: HOOSIERS FOR THE HOT CHICK. And it is a fair bet that Obama's athletic grace and easy smile attracted more voters than his Harvard law degree or his tax policy.

It is no secret that ours is a celebrity culture, and that routinely means that issues get short shrift in our public discourse. In the first weeks following Palin's debut, in the grip of Palimania, Americans heard about her 17-year-old daughter's untimely pregnancy and Palin's installation of a tanning bed in the governor's residence (an act hailed as a blow to the "the sun-scare industry" by the tanning lobby). In what could be called the People magazine phase of the race, the incidental drove out the substantial, in part, because the McCain campaign kept Palin, who performed best when scripted, away from traditional media. Cable TV filled its gaping news hole with such inconsequential questions as whether McCain looked less like the presidential candidate than Palin's second banana.

All that changed when giant investment banker Lehman Brothers announced it would seek bankruptcy protection on September 15, the Dow plummeted, and people began pulling their cash out of their banks. Suddenly the campaign focused with laser-like intensity on the battered economy and the pain it was causing voters. The resonant personal stories carefully constructed by the candidates and their handlers were put aside, and the public was able to compare and contrast the candidates' very different positions on matters of real weight. For a time, the carnival-like process of choosing a president and vice president was re-linked to the next phase in the process—the one of paramount importance—how the president we choose will lead and, thus, shape our lives and those of our children and grandchildren. But just as the debate seemed finally to settle on the economy, with all its gravity, the politics of distraction re-emerged. In the last of the three presidential debates, McCain repeatedly cited a voter from Toledo, Ohio, whom he called Joe the Plumber. Before the debate was over, Joe the Plumber was being alternately hailed and vilified in the blogosphere. He was a household name by the following day.

In the final weeks, the presidential race turned really ugly. At her rallies Palin continued to accuse Obama of terrorist associations, focusing on rehabilitated Weatherman Bill Ayres. Chants of "Kill him" directed at Obama were heard from some of the angry crowds. McCain bristled when civil rights leader John Lewis accused him of allowing a dangerous undercurrent of violence to develop at his campaign events. But anti-Obama innuendo, slurs, and distortions continued to mark the McCain campaign. Automated "robocalls" from the Republican party warned anyone who picked up the phone away from Obama with charges of terrorist associations, involvement in voter fraud, and nefarious plans to redistribute the nation's wealth. Race was rarely mentioned during the campaign (until the Colin Powell endorsement was dismissed by some as an act of racial solidarity), but race was always close to the surface. Democrats feared the possible effect of an active on-line campaign that falsely but graphically presented Obama as a Moslem with ties to Al Qaeda. Supporters feared for Obama's life in a nation that has seen more than its share of politically and racially motivated assassinations. So did the U.S. government, which had assigned Obama Secret Service protection before any other candidate.

By mid-October Irish bookmakers were already paying off bettors who had put their money on Obama to win. But his supporters worried that polls that showed him ahead of McCain might be distorted by the Bradley effect. That phenomenon was named for the late Tom Bradley, the first black mayor of Los Angeles, who ran for governor of California in the 1980s against George Dukmajian. Overwhelmingly, the polls showed Bradley in the lead. But he lost the election because, political scientists conjectured, voters feared being thought racist if they told pollsters they did not plan to vote for Bradley. Race was not the only emotionally-charged issue in the 2008 campaign. Age was another. Obama, who fully exploited the Internet to raise funds, organize his supporters, and get out the vote, was the clear favorite of young, technologically hip voters. Obama even advertised on popular video games in the last weeks of the campaign. Although McCain argued that his age was evidence of his experience, many potential voters, including older ones, thought he was too old to serve as president. Their fears about his age were exacerbated by his history of malignant melanoma and by his choice of so green and controversial a running mate. McCain



supporters accused the Obama campaign of exploiting such fears when they called McCain “erratic” in frequently changing his positions and tactics.

We now know who Americans wanted as their president. But it is interesting to look back at what qualities Americans said they were seeking in a president before the election. The national study in confidence in leadership that I alluded to earlier asked that question. Five qualities or traits were identified as extremely important by half or more of the respondents. The single most important trait was honesty and integrity, named by 66 percent. Next most important—intelligence. Ability to communicate was next, followed by willingness to work with people in both political parties and the ability to bring the American people together. The least important trait was having served in the military, which just 13 percent thought extremely important. Being likeable was the next lowest in importance (21 percent). Only 23 percent believed experience in Washington was extremely important. Two other responses are noteworthy. A strong belief in God was extremely important to 38 percent of those who responded. Having new ideas was extremely important to almost the same number (37 percent).

Those top five traits were perceived as extremely important across political or ideological lines. But the study reported significant differences between Republicans and Democrats on the value of other traits. Decisiveness, a strong belief in God, and military service were more important (in that order) to Republicans than Democrats. Democrats thought experience in foreign policy, having new ideas, understanding and sympathizing with others, experience in Washington, and being likeable were more important than Republicans did. The biggest gap between the parties was this: 14 percent or more Democrats than Republicans thought the following were extremely or very important—having new ideas, understanding and sympathy with others, and being likable.

The study was published in November, 2007, and it is fascinating to see which candidates were ascendant at that time. The top choice was Hillary Rodham Clinton—33 percent of respondents said they had a great deal of confidence she would be a good president. Barack Obama was second, with 22 percent reporting a great deal of confidence in his ability to lead. Next was Rudy Giuliani, chosen by 18 percent. John Edwards followed at 13 percent. Twelve

percent said they had a great deal of confidence that John McCain would be a good president. Also worth noting is that 26 percent of respondents said they had no confidence (“none at all”) that Clinton would make a good president. That was the largest no confidence rating in the study. Nineteen percent had no confidence in Barack Obama; 20 percent had no confidence in John McCain.

When Ret. General Colin Powell endorsed Barack Obama on “Meet the Press” on October 19, Powell described Obama as a “transformational leader” who was the right president for this moment in time. The long, contentious campaign had been a “final exam” for McCain and Obama, in Powell’s view. Obama emerged as his choice because “he has both style and substance.” The former Bush Secretary of State said he thought the new president should address both the American people and the world at large to describe how his policies will be different from those of the last eight years. One of the most pressing challenges the new president will face, Powell said, is “to fix the reputation we’ve left with the rest of the world.”

In the run up to the election, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin noted that an even temperament characterized many of our best presidents. No matter what crisis Lincoln and FDR faced, they dealt with it in a calm, deliberative way. And great leaders are often able to rise above personal disappointments and hurts, even tragedies. Lincoln’s political genius included his ability to assemble a brain trust of his former political opponents into a brilliant “team of rivals.” “You can’t let resentments poison you,” Goodwin said.

It is clear that the new president will have to restore the confidence of a dispirited nation. He will have to give the country its optimism back. The very fact of his election is a giant first step in that process. As Colin Powell predicted, Obama’s election would be, not just a matter of pride for African Americans, but for all Americans. My guess is that Obama will conduct his new presidency with Lincoln, FDR and John F. Kennedy in mind (we know he read Doris Kearns Goodwin’s *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* early in the campaign). There is a time-tested pattern for inspiring American citizens. Our greatest leaders have reminded us that we are all in this together, and that we will have to make hard choices, even sacrifices. In the months ahead, the new administration will also have to

begin discovering and undoing the worst machinations of the Bush years. None of that will be possible until the reflexive, even obsessive opacity of the last administration is reversed and more transparent government restored.

Obama must also reach out to the rest of the world. It, too, needs reassuring. He will have to overcome the isolation of the United States that Bush's policies created. Many other nations seem eager to work with the new president. More than any president in our history, Obama looks like the rest of the world. That is an asset of incalculable value. Obama wasn't just the choice of American voters. He was the world's preferred candidate, in a campaign that was followed overseas as avidly as the world soccer finals. Just as international cooperation helped save far-flung banks and other financial institutions in 2008, we will need ongoing international collaboration to solve such enormous, shared problems as global warming, nuclear containment and potentially explosive economic disparity throughout the world.

A classic purveyor of hope, Obama was able to energize young voters as never before. His appeal was even more palpable than John Kennedy's. Millions of older voters who had grown cynical about government and the electoral process were also galvanized. Those voters, young and old, whose passion was reignited now constitute a precious pool of talent excited by the possibilities of public service, including government. As a nation we pay a terrible price when we stop believing in the possibility of good government. In our disdain, we cede our country to the ideologues and the hacks. Those who worked for Obama's election know the joy of struggling for and achieving significant change. Now, while the crackle is still in the air, is the time to create 21st century versions of the Peace Corps and dozens of other organizations that tap American energy and idealism.

In 2008, all eyes were on the man and the woman who sought the highest office in the land. But is a mistake to focus only on leaders. Even if we rise to become president of the United States, we spend most of our lives as followers, not leaders. In the past we have tended to think of the distinction between the two hierarchically. But, in fact, as our workplaces and other organizations become flatter and more collegial, the terms become less and less meaningful. Leadership is a temporary assignment among Google engineers, who serve for a time, then

pass the crown to another member of their small working groups. Even in more traditional organizations, a reciprocal relationship exists between leaders and followers. Leader and follower are partners in the same dance. It is our most important obligation as followers to speak truth to power. As hundreds of unemployed whistle blowers can tell you, candor is a more dangerous job than silence. Speaking truth to power always requires courage, and when the stakes are high enough, it demands true heroism. But the follower who boldly points out the elephant in the room or the flaw in the boss's preferred plan is transformed into what can only be called a leader—someone who assumes responsibility and acts in the best interest of the group. And it's not only the whistle blowers or the dissenters who need to be listened to, to be heard. We all do. A story about FDR comes to mind: Crowded, grieving masses surged along Constitution Avenue in April, 1945 waiting for his funeral cortege to pass by. As his hearse neared, a well-dressed, middle-aged man standing in the throng fell to his knees, sobbing desperately until finally regaining his composure. A stranger by his side asked, "Did you know the President?" The man could barely reply. "No...but he knew me."

As someone who remembers the Great Depression, I can assure you that the financial crisis of 2008 was an order of magnitude less serious. But it was a genuine crisis nonetheless, and they are always crucibles of leadership. Becoming a leader is not an orderly path. It is a fitful, often painful process that involves wrong turns and dead ends before great strides are made. Usually some transformative event or experience is central to finding one's voice, learning how to engage others through shared meaning and acquiring the other skills of leadership. FDR's lifetime bout with polio was most certainly his crucible of leadership. Instead of simply enduring them, we have to seize every opportunity for transformation hard times afford. In recent weeks, as the stock rocked and rolled, I thought often of what Abigail Adams had written to John Quincy Adams in the turbulent days of 1780: "These are the hard times in which a genius would wish to live. Great necessities call forth great leaders."

It is significant, I think, that Adams chose the plural, leaders. Especially now that the United States has an exciting new president, it is easy to forget that we need more than one gifted leader at a time. At the

time of our Founding Fathers when the population of our country was close to 4 million, 3.9 million to be exact, we fielded six world class leaders: Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, Madison, Franklin, and Adams. Now that we have 305 million people, we are most certainly capable of yielding a crop of 600 more world-class leaders in the United States alone.. Where are they?

You could be one of them.

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## A DISCOURSE-BASED THEORY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

David Grant  
University of Sydney

Robert J. Marshak  
American University

2009 Best Paper Award

A number of studies have suggested that discourse theory and the analysis of organizational discourse offer considerable potential for understanding the nature and complexity of organizational change. However, while these studies demonstrate some of the potential contributions that a discourse based theory of organizational change might make, they also exhibit two inter-related problems. First, independently or in combination, none of the studies attempts to provide a comprehensive or integrated discourse theory of change. Second, by virtue of the model being underspecified, the value of the observations and results of studies of organizational discourse and change are potentially open to question or even undermined.

What is therefore needed is a more explicit and comprehensive model of organizational discourse and change. Such a model would have several benefits. First it would give discourse analytic studies a better theoretical grounding and might enhance their credibility. Second, a model would demonstrate the value of understanding the important role and impact of discourse in studying and effecting change to the wider community i.e. academics and practitioners unfamiliar with organizational discourse studies.

### Constructing a Model

The core premise of our model is that basic assumptions about organizing and organizational change

are created, sustained, and over time, transformed through discourse. Thus, the ways things are framed and talked about plays a significant role in shaping how change agents, impacted employees and other stakeholders, think about and respond to an organizational change related issue or situation (Marshak and Grant, 2008).

We begin by listing a foundational proposition pertaining to organizational discourse and change:

*Proposition 1: Discourse is constructive and shapes behavior by establishing, reinforcing, and also challenging the prevailing premises and schemas that guide how organizational actors interpret experience. Therefore, changing existing dominant discourses will support or lead to organizational and behavioral change.*

In what follows we extend and elaborate further on this fundamental proposition. We do so by considering several key dimensions, nuances and intervening factors. These in turn lead to a number of additional propositions.

**Levels of Change-related Discourse.** Discourses operate at several different levels. It is possible to identify five that merit attention in relation to organizational change—the intrapsychic, the micro, the meso, the macro and the meta.

The texts within any level of discourse are linked to, and informed by discourses and the texts that operate from other levels. This inter-textuality means that it is important to identify and analyze specific, micro-level discourses pertaining to change, within say a conversation, and to then place them in the context of other meso, macro or even meta discourses.

*Proposition 2. Where a change-related discourse is apparent at any one of the intrapsychic, micro, meso, macro or meta levels, it must be considered as linked to, and informed by, other discourses operating at one or more of the other levels.*

### The Construction Through Conversation of a Prevailing Narrative of Change

Narratives are textual devices that focus on common themes or issues and which link a set of ideas or a series of events. In particular, narrative constructs that relate consequences to antecedents through event sequences in context over time appear to be

particularly relevant to understanding the unfolding of complex organizational change processes. A key discursive practice in the construction and dissemination of narratives of change is conversation.

*Proposition 3: Change processes and outcomes are influenced by the governing narratives that are constructed and disseminated through conversation.*

### **Discourse, Power and Change**

The ways in which power dynamics help to shape the prevailing or privileged discourse about a specific change and the phenomenon of organizational change is a central concern of a discourse based theory of change. Our model highlights the mutually constitutive relationship between discourse and power and shows this to be significant to the change process in several respects. For example, conversations about change related issues held among actors with differing interests will involve the meanings attached to these issues being negotiated, reinforced and privileged by those actors drawing on their various power resources. Assuming there is some social agreement resulting from these tacit discursive negotiations, a dominant narrative emerges that will influence how the change is conceived, understood, and should be implemented.

*Proposition 4: Power dynamics shape the dominant or privileged discourse about change which in turn influences change processes and outcomes.*

### **Counter Discourses of Change**

What any particular group believes is “reality,” “truth,” or “the ways things are”, is at least partially a social construct that is created, conveyed, and reinforced through discourse. This implies the possibility that there may be potentially multiple realities in any given situation. Moreover, it means that different groups or strata or silos of an organization might develop their own discourses about a particular change issue through narratives that define the way things are as they see and experience them. Often however, there is a considerable struggle among different actors and interests to establish a dominant meaning, such that discursive “closure” is rare. This leaves space for the production of “counter” discourses that may in turn come to dominate.

*Proposition 5: Discourses that are counter to the prevailing discourse of organization*

*and/or change will exist. These may be drawn upon in ways that work to the detriment or benefit of the change process and its outcomes.*

### **Discourse and Reflexivity on the Part of Change Agents and Researchers**

Considering “discourse,” at multiple levels, to be an important target and lever for organizational change requires researchers and change agents to be more reflexive about what they say and hear in relation to change than is often the case. In particular, change agents need to be sensitive to the emergence of discourses that are counter to their own, and if necessary respond to or even draw upon and appropriate these counter discourses in ways that benefit the change process.

*Proposition 6: Reflexivity on the part of researchers and change agents in relation to the discourses of change that they are involved in constituting and promulgating will increase the likelihood of these discourses successfully influencing their intended audience.*

### **Change, Discourse and Recursivity**

Discourses at multiple levels are produced, disseminated and consumed as a continuous, iterative and recursive process. It is essential then that any discourse based theory of change include an appreciation of recursivity. Instead, however, discourses are often studied as if they are constructed at a fixed point in time without considering how it is that the discourse has, over time, evolved into its present form.

*Proposition 7: Discourses of change are, over time, produced, disseminated and consumed as a continuous, iterative and recursive process. Changes to the meanings that these discourses convey, along with the socially constructed realities, agreements and mindsets that they construct, take place as part of this process.*

### **Discussion and Implications**

Our discourse-based model of change offers three overarching contributions to the theory and practice of organizational change. First, it invites researchers and change agents to approach organizational change from an interpretive orientation and with an understanding that language in its many manifestations is constructive and central to the establishment, maintenance, and change of what is and what

should be. Second, it provides a model that brings together a range of studies and ideas pertaining to organizational discourse and change that have not previously been linked into a single framework. Finally, the model emphasizes the interactive and recursive aspects of all of its components. Although perhaps difficult to achieve, the model clearly shows that researchers and practitioners should think about organizational change in more contextual, non-linear, and on-going terms.

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## BEYOND PROGRAMMATIC CHANGE: BUILDING RESERVOIRS FOR RESILIENCE

Liisa Välikangas

Helsinki School of Economics  
2009 Best Action Research Paper

Most in-company change programs fail to achieve the outcomes they seek (March, 1981). Balogun (2006) puts the upper limit at 70%. Yet despite this dismal record, few researchers (or managers) would agree that change is therefore not worth attempting at all. I propose another, non-programmatic view to the value of change: The success should not solely be evaluated on the basis of whether the outcomes named prior to the beginning of the program, and sought during its course, are achieved (March and Olsen, 1976; Robertson et al., 1993; Whittington et al, 2006) but also in the program's capacity to build reservoirs for future. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) argue that the ability to absorb external knowledge is a function of prior, related knowledge in the organization, building knowledge reservoirs. Similarly, a company's capacity to adjust to change may be a function of previously rehearsed change (cf. Nelson and Winter, 1982) or its change reservoirs.

The research concerns a 1.5-year study of building organizational capacity for change, or resilience, in a US-based consumer goods retailer and nationwide leader in its specialized industry domain. The unique opportunity (Siggelkow, 2007) was to document an

open-ended, non-programmatic change process in a successful company as it sought to build resilience for future. The process was unusual in its social movement nature that led to a number of exploratory actions, or learning-by-doing, in a community of volunteers. In the (full) paper, I discuss the theory perspective of a change process that was not directed from the top and did not seek to accomplish change in corporate strategy or structure. Instead, a collective action frame (Benford and Snow, 2000) was co-created that guided the emergent bottom-up change initiatives. The frame constituted an internal aspiration: to become a company resilient in change. I then describe the rehearsal of organizational change behaviors that sought to explore the collective action frame, learn from it through experimental practice, and infer its possible meaning to movement participants. Finally, I discuss the lingering effects of the activity in terms of potential for reservoirs of resilience, contributing to alternative criteria for motivating change activity.

## Rehearsing Change

One of the most successful consumer retailers in the USA, the Company grew fast since its founding in the early 1980s to a prominent position. The aspirational capacity to adapt to change without first having to undergo a potentially traumatic and costly crisis (Hamel and Välikangas, 2003) formed the basis for the "quest for resilience." After initial Engagement, the period called Experimentation began with a formation of eight volunteers who together designed an exhibition that was to become a key communication tool. Called the Resilience Deficiency Ward, the exhibition featured once leading retailers fallen on hard times. The point was to invite the 4,000 people (including the Company Board) who visited the "resilience hospital" to ponder on the temporariness of success and analyze the causes that brought these leading companies to the brink of extinction. The exhibit visit was the kick-off to a workshop that came to be known as Management Innovation Jam, an opportunity to innovate the Company management principles, processes and practices so that one or more of resilience impediments could be removed. The Jam ended with encouragement to develop an experimentable design for each team's management innovation idea and try it out in a small scale (which many teams did), without causing disturbance to the mainstream management system. The 250-strong

volunteer community began to hold themed monthly Resilience Clinics as regular get-togethers and discussion forums. Other activities followed.

### Reservoirs for Resilience?

What lasting effects might the program have created, if any, after its coming to an end? Beyond complacency as a seductive companion to success, authors such as Bettis and Prahalad (1995) have discussed the role of mental models as impediments to adaptation, requiring unlearning of past truths (Argyris & Schon, 1978). The visit to the Resilience Deficiency Ward (or Resilience Hospital) was instrumental in an awakening that successful companies eventually (or abruptly) fail too. Thus there was an emergent recognition of fragility of success as a result of the exhibit visit and follow-up conversations. The playfulness of the experience allowed a perspective that might not otherwise have been possible. March (1991) suggests one of the other difficulties of adaptation to be the overconfidence in exploitation behaviors, constantly rehearsed within the core business of the company. The counterpart barrier is the lack of experience in the exploration of novel areas, crowded out by exploitation routines. Thus the lack of rehearsal of necessary new behaviors becomes an impediment to change. To quote one participant: "If we don't exercise the 'change muscle' now, we won't have it at our disposal during future setbacks."

Other reservoirs include the portfolio of management innovation experiments (such as a market place for volunteering one's time to projects of interest called "eBay for HR") addressing resilience impediments (such as rigid resource allocation). There was spill-over activity to other, unrelated activities: The participants took their learnings and applied them to other work (including the attitude of experimentation and its accompanying tools). The full paper accounts for the program impact after one year and suggests theoretical underpinnings.

Miner and Mezias (1996:93) in their review claim that "surprisingly, there is almost no research explicitly addressing organizational experimentation in pursuit of inferential learning." They specify that the conceptualization of such experimental learning and its distinct features are undefined. Dewey (1916), as quoted in Raelin (1997: 566), also argued that "mere 'doing' or activity was not enough to produce learning; rather, doing should become a trying, an experiment with the world to

find out what it is like." This study details one case where learning-by-trying, or collective exploration of resilience, was embarked upon to produce future benefits in organizational adaptation. Its theoretical contribution lies in the development and demonstration of a change concept and practice that is reservoir-rather than outcome-based.

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**FROM SOCIAL ENGINEERING  
TO COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION:  
AMUL, GRAMEEN BANK,  
AND MONDRAGON  
AS EXEMPLAR ORGANIZATIONS**

Dharm P.S. Bhawuk  
Susan Mrazek  
Vijayan P. Munusamy  
University of Hawaii

2009 Rupe Chisholm Best Theory to Practice Award

When we borrow the problem solving paradigm of engineering and employ it in social sciences, per force we become social engineers, and borrowing the theories and method from engineering, we limit ourselves in identifying and solving social problems. The approach is necessarily top-down, where experts dictate what a problem is and how it should be solved (Esman, 1972). And it is not unusual to find solutions that are of no value, because either they did not solve the problem as perceived by the end users, or they created other problems, even worse than the original malady. We find many examples of how well meaning Western experts have exported their solutions, technological and social, to developing countries, with a complete disregard to indigenous solutions and issues (Bhawuk 2008) leading these societies to be worse off than before these interventions were implemented.

In this paper we argue that the problem solving paradigm of engineering is limiting and therefore not suitable for social change. Social change

requires more than rules, legislations, and procedures. It requires nurturing and empowering people so that they can transform their own communities, and thus not simply solve or navigate problems but go on to uproot the causes of longstanding problems to create a new and vibrant society. We borrow some essential principles of social transformation from community psychology and demonstrate by using three case studies how they work in India, Bangladesh, and Spain. We discuss the contributions of this research to theory building and the practice of organizational change and leadership.

**Essentials of Community Transformation**

Community psychology has also evolved from being expert driven to developing a partnership with the community in designing and implementing interventions. In solving social problems, the goal is to be faithful to the needs of the community and its members, allowing them to create their own voice and, eventually, sustain their own changes rather than telling them what their problems are and how they should go about addressing them. The social agent of change has to act much like a community researcher and have a certain degree of openness to the issues and changes resulting from the interventions. To facilitate an effective relationship between the change agent and a particular community and the creation of a program of change, change agents can learn some lessons from community psychology. These lessons are essential for leading a bottom-up community transformation and include: 1) the change agent locating himself or herself in the community as a passionate facilitator of transformation (Sarason 2003), 2) defining the problem from the perspective of the community (Rappaport 1981), 3) using multiple methods to measure the problem (Stewart 2000), 4) collaboration during implementation (Wandersman 2003), and 5) being flexible to change at any time, given the community's evolving needs.

**Summary of Cases**

We examined three cases—Amul (India), Grameen Bank (Bangladesh), and Mondragon (Spain)—and found that these support the model, presenting further credence to the community psychology approach to intervention. We found in all three cases that a social change agent is not a catalyst that leaves the chemical reaction unchanged; the change agent is also transformed in the process. Also, when people in a community come together, they transform not only their own lives but also those of many other

community members they interact with, and their unsophisticated ideas can sometimes far bedazzle the solutions proposed by experts.

It should be noted that all three organizations have instituted collaborative participation as their standard operating procedure. It should also be noted that in all of them, the founders acted in more ways than the traditional sense of being facilitators, and were deeply involved in making many major decisions with the community. They demonstrated that collaborative participation includes the social change agent and it is expected that the change agent will work in the community as a community member, rather than a distant observer.

All three cases highlight the importance of finding culturally appropriate solutions, in defining the needs of the community, measuring the variables of interest, exploring alternative solutions, and implementing the chosen solution. They also demonstrate that social transformation follows a meandering path rather than an engineered blueprint. The five principles identified here are likely to be true for community transformation in developed countries as well, especially where community building rather than developing an organization for some stated objective, for profit or otherwise, is the goal.

Across cultures, these three cases also show that the change agents for sustainable transformation cannot be short-term visitors and have to spend their entire life working with the community. In all three cases, it is clear that the change agents were totally committed to the transformation of the community and the organizations emerged as a tool toward achieving that objective. We also find that the change agents were not self-promoting leaders but cause-promoting crusaders.

## Discussion

This paper has some implications for institution building. For example, it is better to allow people in the community to define their need in their own words and to find their own solutions, however unsophisticated it may look to the trained experts, instead of following the traditional approach of “planning, structuring and guidance of new or reconstructed organizations (Esman 1972, p. 22),” which is driven by the creation of an organization as a tool to bring about change in the society. To think that organizations that would “embody changes in value, functions, physical and/or social technologies” (Esman 1972,

p. 22) can be created in a planned manner might have been in the zeitgeist of the 1960s and 1970s, but the dismal performance of development projects all over the world in the developing countries clearly speaks to the failure of this top-down scientific management approach to institution building. Thus, a shift can be noted in the community of experts that support Community-Driven Development or CDD that is founded on the basic principle of empowerment, which is closer to the protocol presented above.

It is also clear from this research that the change agents have to commit their life to achieve such transformations. This is a lesson that community psychologists and social science researchers need to internalize. This idea is not new to researchers who know that for research to have a significant impact one needs to work on a program of research rigorously testing various aspects of a theory over many years. Also, researchers generally agree that no research is considered of value if it does not have an impact on the real world. Thus, social scientists need to become humanists who get in the trenches with community members, share their tools and are committed to empower the people in the community to define problems and issues in their own vocabulary and worldview. There is perhaps not one social science theory that has impacted society and lead to social change to the same degree as any of these three organizations have done. This should assure even the skeptics that it is time for a paradigm shift in social change, and there is a need to move from expert driven interventions to people championed programs that will allow the community to transform and continue to grow spontaneously.

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**TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: THE IMPACT OF VISION CONTENT AND DELIVERY**

Mark D. Howarth

The University of Queensland

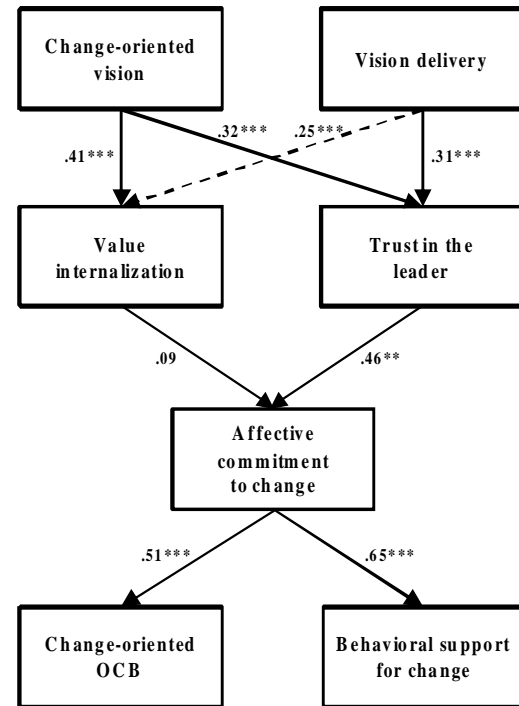
Alannah E. Rafferty

The University of New South Wales

2009 Best Student Paper

In order to survive in today’s uncertain and competitive business environment, organizations must continually adapt and change (Marshak, 2004). Despite this, the failure rate of organizational change initiatives remains alarmingly high (Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008). One potent lever that can be used to combat change failure and positively influence the success of organizational change efforts is transformational leadership. While some recent research has demonstrated positive associations between transformational leadership and employee support for organizational change (e.g., Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005; Herold, et al., 2008), we know little about the mechanisms by which transformational leaders motivate employees to support change. To address this limitation, we developed and tested a theoretical model exploring relationships among specific transformational leadership behaviors—change-oriented vision and vision delivery—and employee value internalization, trust in the leader, and change outcomes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Hypothesized theoretical model.



Standardized coefficients are shown. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . The relationship between vision delivery and value internalization represented by a dashed line was not hypothesized.

**Vision Content and Vision Delivery**

The content of a leader’s vision reflects the underlying message that the leader wishes to communicate. We define change-oriented vision as a leader’s expression of an idealized picture of the future, which is based around the values of organizational change. A leader espousing a vision of change conveys the need for change, emphasizes the constructive results that change can bring, and highlights the excitement and energy associated with change. Some research suggests that the delivery style adopted by a leader when articulating a vision is also likely to have important consequences for employees. We investigate the influence of a leader’s vision delivery—which captures the non-verbal behaviors such as the use of a captivating and varied vocal tone, maintenance of eye contact, use of animated facial expressions, and hand gestures—on employees’ responses to change.

**Theoretical Framework**

As shown in Figure 1, we propose that a leader’s change-oriented vision content will display positive

indirect relationships with employees' affective commitment to change, behavioral support for change, and change-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). We argue that these effects occur because employees internalize the leader's values and develop trust in the leader. Alternatively, we argue that vision delivery will display a positive indirect relationship with affective commitment to change, behavioral support for change, and change-oriented OCB because it enhances employees' trust in the leader.

## Method

### Participants, Design, and Procedure

One hundred and seventy six undergraduate students (average age of 20.64 years) with a minimum of three months work experience participated in a scenario-based experimental study. Participants worked an average of 16.64 hours per week. A 2 X 2 factorial design was used in which change-oriented vision (change vision or transactional vision) and vision delivery (strong or weak) were manipulated using videos of a professional actor. Upon entering the testing room, participants were provided with written information asking them to imagine that they worked for a retail organization that was about to undergo a major change. Participants completed a pre-manipulation questionnaire and then viewed one of the video manipulations. At the completion of the video, a post-manipulation questionnaire that measured the study variables was administered.

### Materials and Manipulations

*Change context.* Prior to viewing the video manipulations, participants were presented with information asking them to imagine that they were an employee working at a retail clothing store that was about to be relocated and merged with another store located at a different site. Participants were then informed that they would now be attending the monthly meeting for their store prior to the relocation. It was explained that at this meeting, John Taylor, the CEO of their organization, would talk and share some of his thoughts, and that a video recording of his speech would be shown. The video manipulation was then shown to participants.

*Change-oriented vision manipulation.* This independent variable was manipulated through the leader's speech to employees at the monthly meeting. The content of the leader's change vision speech draws on the higher-order value dimension openness to change identified in Schwartz's (1992) model of the content and structure of values. In this

speech, John Taylor issued statements that emphasized the need for change, the constructive results change would bring, the organization's capacity to achieve change, and the excitement and energy of change. In the transactional vision condition, John Taylor outlined the strategic objectives of the organization, detailed budgetary results, and presented general facts about the retail industry.

*Vision delivery manipulation.* The manipulation of vision delivery was based on the non-verbal elements of transformational leadership identified by Bass (1988). In the strong vision delivery condition, John Taylor maintained eye contact with the audience, used hand gestures and facial expressiveness to emphasize important points, altered vocal pitch, and maintained vocal fluency. Alternatively, in the weak vision delivery condition John Taylor rarely made eye contact with the audience, avoided using hand gestures, had a monotone voice, and maintained a static facial expression.

## Results and Implications

To test the hypothesized model, we compared a series of competing models using structural equation modeling. Results revealed that the hypothesized model was the best fit to the data (see Figure 1). Overall, the results highlight the importance of employees' trust in their leader in explaining how change-oriented vision content and vision delivery motivate employees to support organizational change. In contrast, the results failed to support the prediction that value internalization would explain how a leader's change-oriented vision influences employee support for change.

An important theoretical contribution of this study was that we isolated the effects of two specific aspects of a leader's vision—vision content and vision delivery—on employees. At present, the current literature provides us with only a limited understanding of the unique influence of specific transformational leadership behaviors on employees (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Practically, the results of this study provide organizations with guidelines from which to base leadership selection and development decisions on when in pursuit of personnel who can successfully lead and manage change. Specifically, organizations would benefit from training their managers on how best to incorporate values into their daily communication with employees, and on the most effective ways to be confident,

animated, and expressive when interacting with employees.

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## AMBIDEXTROUS ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN IN TURBULENT ENVIRONMENTS: A PROCESS PERSPECTIVE

Yen Tran  
Copenhagen Business School  
2009 Best Paper Based on a Dissertation

Competitive advantage in many industries rests on strategic organizational design which comprises the dynamic capability of adapting an organization to its changing environment (Teece, 2007; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). To ensure competitive success over time, firms need to balance the opposing

demands of exploration and exploitation (March, 1991), thus emphasizing the need for an ambidextrous organizational design that simultaneously houses both activities (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008). To integrate explorative and exploitative activities, the literature stresses the role of ambidextrous managers, as well as their integrative role at the apex of innovative organizations (O'Reilly & Tushman, 1996, 2008). Alternatively, it suggests delegating such integration tasks to individuals in lower levels of organizations (Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004). Taking a static perspective (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008) when examining organizational ambidexterity is not enough, also current empirical literature has neglected the organizational processes and their contingencies that bring an ambidextrous organizational structure to live.

Addressing the research question: *How do firms adapt their ambidextrous organizational design and associated integration processes in the context of increasingly turbulent environments?* This paper attempts to augment the structural ambidexterity literature by adding a complementary process perspective that is rooted in the dynamic capability literature (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Teece, 2007). Accordingly, it suggests that unit of analysis in research on the ambidextrous solution is shifted from structure to processes. In this view, to achieve a dynamic alignment between simultaneous pursued explorative and exploitative activities goes beyond what individuals (either at the top or the bottom) can achieve. The paper makes two key contributions (1) by emphasizing a process approach that unpacks the integration processes, which architects of an ambidextrous organization can use in balancing explorative and exploitative activities; and, (2) by identifying how different integration strategies evolve over time in adapting to a changing industry contexts and available synergies among exploitative and explorative innovation activities. The key contribution to the literature is to offer theory on the contingencies of integration alternatives between exploration and exploitation.

## Methodology

A longitudinal process study of a Danish company in the period from 1997-2008 has been conducted that is situated in the increasingly turbulent environment of the fashion industry. Data were collected (2005-2008) through fifty-one semi-structured interviews,

twelve participatory observations in meetings in triangulation with archival data and five industrialists' interviews. Different techniques of interviews and analysis were employed to enable real-time and retrospective longitudinal data and to avoid informant bias. The empirical study provides revealing evidence on how a fashion company has re-constructed its organizational processes to host both exploitative and explorative innovation units when adapting to the increasingly turbulent fashion environment over time.

### From Findings to Theory Development

Specifically, this study compares changing organizational solutions before and during the “fast fashion era,” an era that has been triggered by pioneering companies such as Zara and H&M. The case company went through two discernable historical phases, moving from a relatively stable to a more turbulent environment characterized by a rapidly and unpredictably changing market. The company adapted dynamically to such changes by relying on different integration processes as indicated in the figure below.

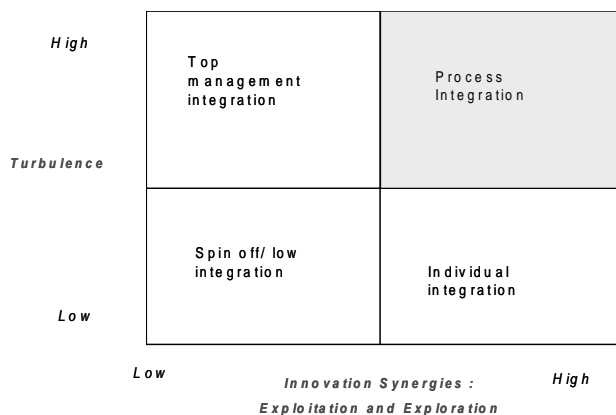


Figure 1: Alternative Integration Mechanisms for Ambidextrous Organization in Different Contexts

To balance exploitative and explorative product innovation units, the study shows that the degree of similarity between exploitative and exploitative activities leads to the pursuit of alternative integration processes in increasingly turbulent environments. In the following, the key findings are encapsulated in a set of propositions relating to the (1) *degree of market turbulence* and (2) *degree of innovation synergies*. Innovation synergies indicate the similarity of exploitative and explorative innovations. When the similarity in processes used is high, there is a potential high synergy (economies of scale, and scope)

between two innovation units, which companies can achieve through process integration (using using knowledge-management, ICT, teamwork etc). Hence, this study suggests:

**Proposition 1:** In stable environments, lower synergies between explorative and exploitative innovation increase the likelihood of firms spinning off the explorative unit or keeping low integration between exploitative and explorative units.

**Proposition 2:** In stable environments, greater innovation synergies between explorative and exploitative innovation increase the likelihood of firms relying on individual integration between exploitative and explorative units.

**Proposition 3:** In more turbulent environments, lower synergies between the explorative and exploitative innovation increase the likelihood of top management integration between exploitative and explorative units.

**Proposition 4:** In more turbulent environments, greater synergies between explorative and exploitative innovation increase the likelihood of process integration between exploitative and explorative units.

### Discussion

This study's findings have several theoretical implications. To my knowledge, this is among the first studies taking the evolutionary process perspective in order to examine how firms adapt their ambidextrous organizational design over time. The study underscores the possibility of conceptualizing such adaptive processes in a dynamic capability perspective (Teece, 2007), but also unpacks the micro-dynamics that underpin such adaptive processes in the evolution of a firm's ambidextrous organizations. Moreover, the study develops theory on integration contingencies and their interrelation. In particular, a set of testable propositions is proposed to specify different integration levels of an ambidextrous organization under the consideration of the degree of environmental turbulence and synergies between explorative and exploitative innovations.

Specifically, the paper contributes to knowledge on the process and routines of integrating and balancing between two innovation dimensions: exploration and exploitation in a structural ambidexterity. By blending knowledge from exploration and exploitation across different locations,

dynamic capabilities contribute to integrating exploration and exploitation that span such different units within a company. While some activities cannot be fully separated, and need to be hosted in the same organization, they have to be integrated, albeit carefully, to create the synergies across levels of organizations and time horizons.

One interesting consequence of the need to create innovation synergies between exploration and exploitation despite the fundamental differences is that dynamic capabilities achieve such coupling. Thus, this study expands prior work on firms' dynamic capabilities by examining dynamic integration processes, thus linking explorative and exploitative innovation in the pursuit of organizational ambidexterity. Notably, as firms operate in environments with varying speed of change and turbulence, dynamic capabilities of sensing and seizing opportunities do differ accordingly. A firm might modify existing routines and resource configurations more frequently, and this might require greater proximity between exploration and exploitation linking processes, depending on the speed and knowledge type involved in such an integration effort. Thus, future research may fruitfully expand on how related processes vary with alternative degrees of environmental turbulence and innovation synergies available to the firm.

The study also offers some managerial implications. In an effort to balance explorative and exploitative activities in an ambidextrous organization, managers can consider linking processes, including internal knowledge sharing platforms, resource sharing rules, cross-functional teams, proximity management, and social interaction, when building an effective ambidextrous organization. If the competitive environment spins too fast and unpredictably, relying on individuals is not effective because it burdens them with integration tasks that go beyond their limited human rationalities and capacities. With great synergy in developing and commercializing exploitative and exploratory innovations, integration at the routine and process levels helps firms to reach economies of scale and scope, save resources and shorten time to market. Only when there are no synergies to be realized in the two processes of making and commercializing the two types of innovation, should an ambidextrous organization rely on the knot at the top: the top management team.

**References available upon request**

## FOLLOWER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Jill Waymire Paine  
Columbia University  
2009 Susan Cohen Award

Organizations are forced to be progressively more adaptive and undergo revolutionary change more frequently than ever before. Despite the increased frequency, the intended outcomes of many change efforts (e.g., cost reductions, increased productivity, and revenue growth) often fail to be realized (Lawler & Worley, 2006). A key contributing factor to the high failure rate of revolutionary change initiatives is followers' resistance to enacting changes required for the transition (Beer, Eisenstat & Spector, 1990; Seo, Taylor & Hill, 2007). It is, therefore, particularly critical for leaders to motivate followers to overcome inertia and work toward accomplishing organizational goals (Bass, 1997; Gersick, 1991).

Research suggests that one way leaders can influence follower motivation is through their arguments about the value of change initiative goals (Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Beer, et al., 1990). Leaders are advised to frame their arguments to emphasize *urgency* by underscoring the negative consequences of failing to implement the change (*burning platform*) and *optimism* by inspiring enthusiasm and confidence toward reaching a desired future state (*vision*) (e.g., Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Beer, 1980; Beer, et al., 1990; Kanter, 2003a; Kotter, 1996; Spector, 1989; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Although the notion that leaders must communicate both urgency and optimism to galvanize individuals toward the accomplishment of revolutionary change goals is well supported, the literature is less clear about *how* and *under what conditions* these two types of arguments work as motivational mechanisms. Moreover, it is possible that the two arguments are not equally motivating to all organizational members or lead to the same follower outcomes.

While leaders' arguments for change are likely to have some independent impact, followers' attributes also need to be considered. I argue that one attribute, regulatory focus, which has been largely overlooked in organization change research is particularly relevant. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998) distinguishes between two regulatory foci, prevention and promotion, and the strategic ways through which each focus is pursued. The theory provides a framework to investigate follower attitudes toward

change and the mechanisms through which followers may overcome their resistance to it. Regulatory focus has been shown to be a reliable individual difference variable, in that people are, in general, either predominantly prevention or promotion focused (Higgins, 1998). People with a *prevention focus* have security needs that motivate them to attain alignment with their own sense of duty and obligation. In contrast, people with a *promotion focus* have growth needs that motivate them to work to achieve their ideals and goals of aspiration. Thus, potential losses are more salient for prevention individuals, whereas potential gains are more salient for promotion individuals (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Higgins, 1998).

*Regulatory fit* occurs when the way in which a person pursues a goal is aligned with his regulatory focus (Higgins, 2000, 2002). Leaders' arguments for change reflect ways to pursue change initiative goals (Cesario et al., 2004). Regulatory fit, therefore, is hypothesized to result from congruence between a leader's change arguments and a follower's regulatory focus. That is, *prevention* followers are predicted to experience regulatory fit when their leaders communicate burning platform arguments because they connote a way of avoiding losses, whereas *promotion* followers will experience regulatory fit when their leaders communicate vision arguments because they connote a way of approaching gains (**Hypothesis 1**).

Empirical research indicates that regulatory fit influences the strength of people's engagement during goal pursuit (see Higgins 2000; Higgins & Freitas, 2007). It is, therefore, hypothesized that regulatory fit will increase follower engagement during the pursuit of change goals (**Hypothesis 2**). Although the terms engagement and commitment are often used interchangeably by practitioners (Corporate Executive Board, 2004; Wellins & Concelman, 2005), theoretical and empirical research has shown that that the two are related but separate constructs (Hakanen, Baker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2007). Commitment to change has been touted for its significance with respect to follower responses to change (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002) and is, consequently, important to include as an additional outcome variable. As such, regulatory fit is also hypothesized to strengthen followers' psychological (**Hypothesis 3**) and behavioral commitment to change goals (**Hypothesis 4**).

## Sample, Method and Findings

Data used to test these hypotheses came from four organizations (i.e., multinational energy company, Internet marketing firm, healthcare company, and law firm) that were currently undergoing or had recently experienced revolutionary change. The final sample consisted of 285 employees (residing in 30 teams across the four organizations) who completed an online survey. The instrument was comprised of measures of regulatory focus (Johnson & Chang, 2008), engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006), psychological and behavioral commitment to change (Herscovitch, & Meyer, 2002; Fedor, Caldwell, Herold, 2006), and perceptions of leader change messaging. Control variables included age, education, company, and level. Regulatory fit was analyzed via cross-level operator analyses (CLOP; James & Williams, 2000).

Support was found for most of the predictions related to promotion focus. In contrast to prevention, promotion was positively related to engagement and both psychological and behavioral commitment to change. Moreover, congruence between promotion and vision did result in regulatory fit, which thereby strengthened engagement. However, there was only marginal support for the hypothesis that regulatory fit would be produced from congruence between prevention and burning platform. This particular congruence strengthened behavioral commitment. Surprisingly, two seemingly "non-fit" conditions where promotion was paired with burning platform, a supposed incongruent argument, also resulted in strengthened engagement and behavioral commitment, although to a lesser degree than in the predicted "fit" conditions. Finally, the study findings indicate that leader arguments for change have an independent impact on commitment only. Vision arguments strengthened both psychological and behavioral commitment, while burning platform arguments positively affected merely the latter. Interestingly, neither argument for change independently influenced engagement but rather had an impact on this desired outcome only when the arguments were received by promotion employees.

## Conclusion and Implications

A conclusion that can be drawn from these findings is that only promotion focus shows consistent regulatory fit effects, where "take action" arguments from leaders enhance engagement and behavioral

commitment to change. Promotion employees strive to maximize their future state. Given this, they ask whether change versus no change is the better tactic (Lieberman, Idson, Camacho, & Higgins, 1999). Both burning platform and vision arguments advocate for change. Hence, the stronger the promotion focus, the more effective is the argument in enhancing these desired outcomes. However, prevention employees generally prefer stability if the current state is satisfactory (Lieberman, et al., 1999). A burning platform argument will motivate them to do what is necessary—that is, behaviorally commit to the change, but it does not get them to engage or psychologically support the change. Therefore, it is indeed advantageous for organizations to have promotion employees during times of change.

However, leaders cannot afford to have one segment of their population unengaged or uncommitted. One potential solution is to prime all employees to be promotion focused prior to delivering their argument for change to ensure that the desired outcomes ensue. Which argument should be emphasized? The results of this study support the notion that both arguments are critical, although not for the anticipated reasons. Instead, it is because they result in different outcomes—vision on engagement and burning platform on behavioral commitment to change.

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Please address all correspondence to:

R. Wayne Boss  
Academy of Management ODC Newsletter  
Leeds School of Business  
Campus Box 419  
University of Colorado  
Boulder, Colorado 80309  
(303) 492-8488  
Email: [wayne.boss@colorado.edu](mailto:wayne.boss@colorado.edu)

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## NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS

2. Is there any important information about you or a colleague that you would like to have appear in the next issue?

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3. Please list below any recent or forthcoming publications by you or a colleague. (Indicate full citation.)

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