



# ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT ODC NEWSLETTER

Organization Development and Change Division

R. Wayne Boss, Editor

Summer 2013

Published by the ODC Division

## UPCOMING 2013 ODC PROGRAM

Sonja Sackmann  
University Bw Munich, Germany  
ODC Program Chair

ODC has put together an exciting program for this year's conference at Orlando. The innovative paper sessions, PDWs and symposia that we have accepted will appeal to those from across the Academy as well as ODC division members and often have an international flavor to them. A number of sessions address the meeting theme "Capitalism in Question" and do so in imaginative, often provocative, ways. Other sessions that will be of interest to both scholars and practitioners alike, seek to address key organizational change related issues through high quality research and dialogue that advances both theory and practice. This year's ODC program will serve as a stimulating platform for current topics ranging from leadership and change to integrity and employee engagement. Most ODC sessions will be held at the WDW Swan, Dolphin, and Coronado Springs Resorts.

### PDW Program

The exceptionally diversified PDW program includes sessions on regulatory, administrative, and leadership systems in society and organizations. Topics include, but are not limited to, climate change regulation, mergers, as well as innovation and improvisation.

The ODC Doctoral Consortium takes place on Friday, August 9, 2013, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. and Saturday, August 10, 2013, 8:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m. at WDW Coronado Springs Resort, Fiesta 1 & 2. Doctoral students and all ODC members are encouraged to attend.

### Scholarly Program

Highlights of sixteen (co-) sponsored symposia and thirteen paper-sessions include critical reflections upon organization theories and research as well as issues of awareness and virtue on the organizational level. While there were 28 symposia submissions

*(See Sackmann, page 2)*

## THE PARADOX OF FIT: HOW PERCEPTIONS OF FIT IMPEDE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Maria B. Gondo  
University of Mississippi  
John M. Amis  
University of Edinburgh  
Brian D. Janz  
University of Memphis  
James M. Vardaman  
Mississippi State University  
2013 ODC Division Best Paper Award

One of the most widely held and enduring assumptions in the organizational theory and strategy literatures is that fit is superior to misfit (Andrews, 1971; Ansari, Fiss, & Zajac, 2010). At its most basic level, the concept of fit is drawn from the perspective that organizations are most effective when their interdependent and mutually supportive parts are in alignment with each other and the external environment (Donaldson, 2001). A key component of this understanding is that as external environments change, so organizations must likewise alter structures and schemas to remain in alignment

*(See Gondo, et al, page 5)*

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*(From Sackmann, page 1)*

(17 accepted) in 2011, this year we received 22 symposia submissions of which we were able to accept 16—many in co-sponsorship. One hundred eighteen papers were submitted this year and we were able to accept 65 of them. In 2011, the ODC division received 113 paper submissions and accepted 57. We are thrilled to report that interest in our field is steady and consistently on the rise—at least in regard to the paper submissions.

**ODC Distinguished Speaker**

One event you won't want to miss is our Distinguished Speaker, Haridimos Tsoukas, University of Cyprus, Cyprus and University of Warwick, UK, who will explore the issue of *Thinking About Organizational Change as If Change Mattered: Insights from Process Philosophy*. The keynote will be held on Monday, 3:00–5:00 p.m., WDW Coronado Springs Resort: Coronado R, S, T.

**Symposia**

Symposia offer ample opportunity for meeting and engaging in discussion with members of other divisions within the Academy, since many of them are co-sponsored by two or more divisions and of equal interest to various disciplines in research and practice.

This year, we have a new format: The AAT-Symposium entitled “Virtue at the Organization Level: Fact or Fiction?” addresses this year's overall topic by posing the question of whether an organization can really be virtuous and if so, what this construct will look like. The panel symposium, co-sponsored by the ODC, SIM, and OMT divisions, will be held Sunday, 1:00–2:30 p.m., WDW Swan Resort: Swan 10.

Research in Organization Change and Development has provided a valuable platform for scholars and practitioners to share new research-based insights since 1987. Our Showcase Symposium entitled “Research in Organization Change & Development: Trajectories and Insights of ROCD Volume 21 Authors” provides an opportunity to meet with the authors of Volume Twenty-One of Research in Organizational Change and Development and engage in thought provoking discussions in small groups. The symposium is held Monday, 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m., WDW Coronado Springs Resort: Baja.

In addition, we co-sponsor two other Showcase Symposia. One is “Creating and Publishing New Management and Organization Theories,” held Monday, August 12, 2013, 9:45–11:15 a.m., WDW Yacht and Beach Club Resort: Asbury A. Contributors examine the question, “How do you create and publish new management and organization theories?” by exploring ways to overcome the obstacles that inhibit the creation and publication of new theories.

The other co-sponsored Showcase Symposium is entitled “Capitalizing on Useful Organization Research: 50 Years of Likert’s New Patterns of Management.” Contributors will discuss the work and contribution of Rensis Likert after 50 years of his New Patterns of Management book. This Showcase Symposium is held Tuesday, August 13, 2013, 9:45–11:15 a.m., WDW Coronado Springs Resort: Baja.

### **Best Paper Awards**

Out of the many outstanding papers submitted this year, the following have been selected as this year’s award-winning papers:

- **2013 ODC Division Best Division Paper:** Gondo, Maria B. (U. of New Mexico), Amis, John Matthew (U. of Memphis), Janz, Brian (U. of Memphis), and Vardaman, James M. (Mississippi State U.), “The Paradox of Fit: How Perceptions of Fit Impede Organizational Change”
- **2013 ODC Division Best Rupert F. Chisholm Theory-to-Practice Paper:** Spraggon, Martin (American U. of Sharjah), Bodolica, Virginia (American U. of Sharjah), “Toward an Alternative Form of Play in Organizations: A Practice-Based Perspective on SLAs”
- **2013 ODC Division Best Action Research Paper:** Vermaak, Hans (Sioo & Twynstra), “Planning Deep Change Through a Series of Small Wins”
- **2013 ODC Division Best Doctoral Student Paper:** Gerstrøm, Anna (Aarhus U.), “Surviving Death : Exploring Organizational Identity In Times Of Organizational Death”
- **2013 ODC Division Best Paper Based on a Dissertation:** Paranjpey, Neelima (Benedictine U.), “A Field Experiment Examining the

Relationship between Generativity and Appreciative Inquiry”

### **Best Reviewer Awards**

This year 215 people completed 417 reviews. Thank you so much to all who served! The division depends on your readiness to devote your time and effort to work with us to build this outstanding academic program. In recognition of this important work, each year we award two of the most excellent reviewers with the ODC Best Reviewer Award. Congratulations to the 2013 Best Reviewers: Danielle Zandee, Nyenrode Business U., Netherlands, and Zachary Sheaffer, Ariel U., Israel.

### **ODC Sessions & Socials**

We particularly want to call your attention to three special events you won’t want to miss:

- ODC Distinguished Speaker, Haridimos Tsoukas, Monday, August 12, 3:00–5:00 p.m. WDW Coronado Springs Resort: Coronado R, S, T.
- ODC Business Meeting, Monday, August 12, 5:00–6:30 p.m., WDW Coronado Springs Resort, Durango 1 & 2
- ODC Members Reception, Monday, Aug 12, 6:30–8:30 p.m., WDW Coronado Springs Resort, Durango 1 & 2

### **Thank You!**

This year’s ODC program would not be possible without help from a lot of people. Special thanks go to Nicola Klaus, post doctoral researcher, University Bw Munich. Nicola provided invaluable assistance in putting together and coordinating the 2013 program.

Many thanks also to the AoM staff, and especially Gabe Bramson and Jel Erica Hampson, for their helpful advice and outstanding service!

Thanks also to the members of the ODC Board who were always virtually close and quick to provide valuable and thoughtful advice. These include current and former ODC Board Members: Jim Ludema, Jeffery Ford, Cliff Oswick, David Grant, Julie Wolfram Cox, Nancy Wallis, Gavin Schwartz, Andre Avramchukz, Wayne Boss, Kate Parrot, Hilary Bradbury-Huang, Danielle Zandee, Quy Huy, Inger Stensaker, Ronald Fry, and Ann Feyerherm.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who volunteered as reviewers and session chairs. Your reviews ensure the rigor and high quality of our divisional sessions and the input you provide through your reviews is immensely valuable in the process of selecting papers and providing feedback to authors. The reviewers' names and affiliations include the following:

Rachida Aissaoui, U. of Memphis; John Matthew Amis, U. of Memphis; Phyllis R. Anderson, Governors State U.; Betty Nanor Arthur, Benedictine U.; Lee Ann Avery, Fielding Graduate Institute; Amran Awang, Associate Professor; Diane Bandow, Troy U.; Vanesa Barrales-Molina, U. de Granada; Marcos Barros, HEC Montreal; ILMA Barros-Pose, Fowler Center for Sustainable Value; Jean M. Bartunek, Boston College; Oscar Alejandro Vasquez Bernal, National Open U. UNAD; Melvin Blumberg, Pennsylvania State U., Harrisburg; Laurie A. Branch, Case Western Reserve U.; Thomas Breunig, U. of Wisconsin, Oshkosh; Bart Brock, Benedictine U.; Shannon Brown, Benedictine U.; Kim Lanette Brown-Jackson, The National Graduate School of Quality Management; Richard Grant Bush, Lawrence Technological U.; Federica Caboni, U. of Cagliari; Leon De Caluwe, Vrije U., Amsterdam; Charles G. Capps, Lipscomb U.; William Carter, U. of North Texas; Vincent Cassar, Birkbeck College, U. of London; Catherine Cassell, U. of Manchester; Maurice Mo Cayer, U. of New Haven; Lisa Lucarelli Chandler, Quinnipiac U.; Holly H. Chiu, Rutgers U.; Chee-Leong Chong, SIM U.; Kenneth U Chukwuba, Walden U.; Goo Hyeok Chung, Seoul National U.; Allan H. Church, PepsiCo, Inc; David Coghlan, Trinity College Dublin; David Conrad, Augsburg College; Bill Cooke, Lancaster U.; Raffaele Corrado, U. of Bologna; Erica Heather Coslor, U. of Melbourne; Julie Wolfram Cox, Monash U.; Wanda Curlee, Northcentral U.; Phillip E Davis, U. of North Texas; Boram Do, Boston College; Christina Annamaria Dolkiewicz, Capella U.; Denise Ellen Dollimore, U. of Hertfordshire; Debora Elam, Colorado Technical U.; Linda Marie Ellington, Florida Atlantic U.; Rebecca A. Ellis, Benedictine U.; EMEL ESEN, Yýldýz Technical U.; Susan K. Fan, Walden U.; Jennifer Lynn Franczak, Southern Illinois U. Carbondale; Stephanie Fraser-Beekman, Capella U.; Laura Froehlich, Benedictine U.; Ronald Fry, Case Western Reserve U.; Connie Fuller, Chicago School of Professional Psychology; Christopher

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We are looking forward to seeing you in Orlando!

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*(From Gondo, et al, page 1)*

(e.g., Donaldson, 2001). Therefore, when opportunities for such changes are considered, it is widely held that practices that more closely fit with the organization will be more fully, and easily, implemented than those that lack fit (Ansari, et al., 2010). A key assumption underpinning this belief is that that change participants are more committed to implementing practices they perceive to fit with the organization while practices that are perceived to lack fit are likely to be met with resistance (e.g., Fox-Wolfgramm, Boal & Hunt, 1998; Klein & Sorra, 1996; Reger et al., 1994). Given this consensus, we would have expected those aspects of a new practice that we observed being implemented at a *Fortune* 100 technology firm, TechCo,<sup>1</sup> that were perceived to fit with the organization's enduring values would have been more effectively implemented than those aspects that were perceived to lack fit. However, we found just the opposite. As such, our case gives rise to an interesting empirical question with important theoretical consequences: why was it that a change that was perceived to fit well with existing values was not effectively implemented, while a change that was perceived to be in opposition to valued ways of doing things was implemented?

### **Changing Techco**

Following the logic of a combined inductive-deductive research design (e.g., Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001), a longitudinal interpretive approach

was used that involved the creation of a single case study (Langley, 1999). We engaged in a prolonged period of in-depth ethnographic study involving the collection of data from interviews, observations, and documents.

TechCo is a *Fortune 100* technology company that employs over 300,000 people worldwide. From its founding in the early 1970s, the firm enjoyed a prolonged period of sustained growth. However, by the end of the twentieth century, maturing domestic markets, increased competition, and an emerging recession had resulted in a significant decline in market share for the company. As a consequence, internal operations came under scrutiny across TechCo, with senior executives anxious to find ways to revitalize the firm. One area that received particular attention was the new product development process, seen as both a part of TechCo that was underperforming and one that could potentially reinvigorate the firm. Thus, it was decided that a cross-functional new product development practice with widespread legitimacy would be adopted at TechCo.

Implementing the new practice required making two changes: becoming more 'process-oriented' and developing 'empowered product-experts.' Becoming more process-oriented would require overcoming the prevailing belief at TechCo that formal processes inherently constrained innovation, something that dated back to TechCo's formation. As such, this change was seen as lacking fit with the organization's established values, and consequently implementation was described as requiring a fundamental change to one of the most central and enduring aspects of the organization. Despite this apparent conflict with the very essence of TechCo, we observed that the new process-oriented approach to innovation was effectively instilled in day-to-day operations across the organization.

By contrast, the requirement that the firm create empowered product-experts was perceived as being consistent with the established personnel development practices at TechCo. The founder and other senior executives have long considered the development and retention of empowered employees as being central to the firm's success. As such, the creation of 'empowered product-experts' was widely described as fitting with TechCo's established approach for managing and motivating people, with implementation framed as requiring only relatively

minor operational changes. Nevertheless, despite its fit with TechCo's prevailing values, this change was not realized.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Data were collected over three years between 2005 and 2008 allowing us to observe the implementation of the new practice in real-time. Data were collected from real-time observations, 82 semi-structured interviews with key personnel, and hard and electronic documents. Data were analyzed using standard qualitative practices (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Langley, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### **Findings**

Our analyses revealed that TechCo had successfully implemented the change described as lacking fit with their established organizational values but was unsuccessful in implementing the change described as fitting with their established values. In working back and forth between the literature and our data, it became clear that understanding 'fine-tuning' (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) was important for unraveling this paradox as over 85% of fine-tuning activities were related to becoming more 'process-oriented,' the change that was observed as being implemented. Thus, we set out to better understand why this pattern of fine-tuning emerged. Our work revealed that how change participants responded to common interruptions to their on-going work was important for understanding the pattern of fine-tuning. In particular, two key differences were uncovered.

First, when interruptions involved the shift to become more process-oriented, change participants responded more consciously than they did for interruptions to the development of empowered product-experts. Since we could not directly "see" if a response to a particular interruption was more or less conscious, we used the discourse contained in the response as a proxy for consciousness. If the response to an interruption involved discourse that echoed the formal policy, we labeled those responses as "less conscious." If a response to a specific interruption varied from the formal policy, we labeled those responses as more conscious. Doing so provided a relatively stark contrast as 76% of the responses to interruptions to becoming more process-oriented, the change that was implemented, resulted in discourse that differed from the formal policy. By contrast, only 19% of the interruptions to

the development of empowered product-experts, the change that was unimplemented, varied from the formal policy.

Second, there was significantly more discourse in response to interruptions to becoming more process-oriented as it appeared that change participants were more likely to treat these interruptions as a symptom of a larger organizational-level problem. By contrast, the discourse underpinning responses to interruption to the developing empowered product experts indicated much less effort was made to understand why these interruptions occurred.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Our findings reveal that simply having a supportive group of individuals committed to following a practice does not automatically lead them to recognizing that it needs fine-tuning to be made to work. This is significant because it indicates that some practices may not be effectively implemented despite change participants being fully committed to doing so; thus being willing to implement a change and noticing fine-tuning opportunities are two distinct activities that are needed to effectively implement a new practice. This distinction is important for understanding implementation because overcoming a lack of commitment to changing and overcoming a lack of awareness of the need to engage in fine-tuning are motivated in very different ways.

Since these two types of active involvement are distinct, we needed additional insight into the role that fit played in change participants recognizing a need to engage in fine-tuning. Previous work on the role fit plays in implementing a practice has traditionally attended to factors that influence change participants willingness to implement a practice (Ansari, et al., 2010). Thus, from a commitment perspective, fit appears to be a universally positive attribute in the implementation of a practice. By contrast, our study demonstrates that even if change participants are fully committed to adopting a new practice, it may still not be implemented as intended if the need to engage in fine-tuning is overlooked. By redirecting attention to the importance of fine-tuning, the role of fit appears to have a much less universally positive impact on implementation. That is, the need to engage in fine-tuning is triggered by change participants perceiving that interruptions are the result of an organizational level discrepancy, and this is

unlikely to occur when the change is believed to fit with the organization's established values.

At a practical level, the identification of two types of active involvement points to a systemic explanation for not implementing a practice and supplements the popular "managers fail to overcome employee resistance" tale that has monopolized our current understandings of why implementation efforts are often unsuccessful (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008). In particular, while change is more likely to be embraced when people in the organization perceive it to be similar to or compatible with their existing power structures, interests, and values (Amis et al., 2002; Ansari et al., 2010), we explain a potentially negative outcome of such fit that has significant implications for organization change-leaders. That is, when managers note organizational consistencies with a particular change, interruptions to ongoing action are unlikely to cause change participants to question how their broader work patterns that fit with the change might need to be altered to eliminate these interruptions all together. This finding is important because it takes seriously the difference between change participants being unwilling to follow a new practice, or resisting change, and their not recognizing a need to engage in fine-tuning to make it work. As each type of active involvement is motivated by seemingly opposing forces, it is critical to make this distinction if we are to understand the paradox of fit, and ultimately organizational change.

### **Endnotes**

The names of organizations, sub-units, and people used in this paper are pseudonyms.

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**ODC DIVISION**  
**DOCTORAL STUDENT CONSORTIUM**  
**AUGUST 9–10, 2013**

Jeffrey D. Ford  
 Ohio State University  
 Program Chair Elect

We are now accepting applications for the 2013 Organization Development and Change (ODC) Doctoral Consortium to be held August 9–10 as part of the pre-conference program at the Academy of Management meetings in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Applications are due to Jeffrey Ford (ford.1@osu.edu) by June 15, 2013.

The consortium includes a dynamic and practical mix of presentations, discussions, and small group coaching sessions with leading ODC scholars designed to support doctoral students in successfully completing and launching their academic careers. The consortium is designed for students who are in the early stages of their dissertation process by giving them an opportunity to discuss the formulation of their proposals and/or research projects with their peers and a diverse group of leading international research scholars. More advanced students will gain insights into theoretical and research refinements and extensions to their research that will enhance their opportunities for publication.

We encourage advisors to nominate students for the consortium. To achieve the ideal faculty-student ratio for personalized feedback and coaching, we limit the number of participants to about 20 doctoral students. Please apply early!

We welcome doctoral students from all disciplines who are studying issues associated with the dynamics of change in organizations and other human systems. Relevant topic areas include:

- Organizational change, development, and transformation
- Leadership and organizational change
- Strategic change
- Global dimensions of change
- Change management
- Strategy-as-practice
- Sustainable organizing
- Organizational learning and improvisation
- Institutional entrepreneurship and change
- Positive organizational scholarship and change
- Organizational design
- Creativity and innovation
- Social movements and change
- Network dynamics
- Macro- and Micro-dynamics of change
- Team and group dynamics
- Change agent dynamics



- Complex adaptive systems, and other change-related topics

The consortium runs Friday, August 9, 8:30AM–5:00PM, plus an offsite group dinner with members of the ODC Executive Board, and Saturday, August 10, 8:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m. Continental breakfasts and lunches are provided. The consortium has a highly-innovative design, which has received rave reviews.

### **Day One, Friday, August 9, 2013**

The consortium begins with a working paper session in which leading change scholar, Quy Huy (INSEAD), provides feedback to this year’s winner of the ODC Best Paper Award, John Amis (University of Memphis), John provides feedback to Quy on a manuscript of his, and doctoral consortium participants chime in.

Next, students attend a PDW session on high impact exercises for teaching or consulting on organizational change. This is an exceptional session that in previous years has had long waiting lists and has received very high reviews from both practitioners and academics. It has become a “must attend” PDW for teachers and consultants, academics and practitioners.

Friday afternoon begins with round one of “Student Research Dialogues” in which three to four doctoral students gather in a table group with two leading ODC scholars to receive personalized input and support for their dissertation or other research projects/proposals (which are distributed ahead of time) to help make them more rigorous, relevant, and publishable. These dialogue sessions are consistently rated by consortium attendees as being extremely worthwhile and valuable. Among the faculty scheduled for this session include David Grant (U of Sydney), Danielle Zandee (Nyenrode Business U), Cliff Oswick (City U), Ron Fry (Case Western Reserve U), John Amis (U of Memphis), Myeong-Gu Seo (U of Maryland), Ian Palmer (RMIT U), Ram Tenkasi (Benedictine U), and Gavin Schwarz (U of New South Wales).

The afternoon ends with an expert panel of practitioners and academics addressing issues relevant to people just beginning a career in practice or academics. On the panel are Kate Heynoski (Battelle for Kids), Karen Jansen (James Madison U), and Dick Woodman (Texas A&M). The panelists represent both practice and academics and offer a range

of experiences regarding what works and what doesn’t in launching a successful career. They will engage in an interactive discussion with consortium participants on what to watch for in the early years of your career.

Friday concludes with a group dinner including consortium participants and members of the ODC Executive Board and invited guests.

### **Day Two, Saturday, August 10, 2013**

Saturday morning begins with round two of the “Student Research Dialogues.” Among the faculty scheduled for this session include Julie Battilana (Harvard U), Jean Bartunek (Boston College), Richard Dunford (University of Newcastle), Nancy Wallis (Fielding), Ron Fry (Case Western), David Grant (U of Sydney), Danielle Zandee (Nyenrode Business U), and Cliff Oswick (City U).

The morning concludes with an editorial panel including Kevin Corley (Arizona State U), Associate Editor of the *Academy of Management Journal*, Bill Pasmore (Columbia, U), Editor of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, and Rune By (Staffordshire U), Editor of the *Journal of Change Management*. They will engage in an interactive discussion with consortium participants on topics, trends, and trajectories in the field of change and provide insights regarding getting published in their respective journals.

The consortium concludes on Saturday after lunch with a session on Ethics in the *Academy of Management* by Jamie Franco (Florida International U).

The consortium offers a wealth of opportunities to meet other doctoral students, make connections with leading and emerging international change scholars, and be exposed to a range of topics that will help you successfully complete your doctoral program and launch the next phase of your career. The ideal candidate for this consortium will have finished his/her coursework and be engaged in preparing a dissertation proposal—or just finished defending the proposal—but not yet into substantial data collection. Because space is limited, we expect that no more than two students 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.

## Applications

To apply, please send an email with the following three documents attached to Jeffrey Ford (ford.1@osu.edu) by June 15, 2013.

- 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 your 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 your dissertation project, including the research question, rationale, hypotheses/propositions, proposed methods and results (if applicable). *This will be distributed to consortium faculty and participants in advance of the August sessions.*

We anticipate all selections will be made by July 1. Please direct any questions to Jeffrey Ford (ford.1@osu.edu).

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## PLANNING DEEP CHANGE THROUGH A SERIES OF SMALL WINS

Hans Vermaak  
Twynstra Gudde & Sioo  
Netherlands  
2013 ODC Division  
Best Action Research Paper Award

This paper shows that planning can either frustrate or enable the depth of change required to successfully address tough issues. I define 'tough issues' as complex challenges that often persist in organizations despite repeated efforts to fix them. The history of failed efforts refers to a competency trap of habitual ways of acting and thinking that are unsuitable for tackling the issues effectively, and to institutional mechanisms that keep dysfunctional practices in place. Because complexity is often greatest at the heart of primary processes where organizations add real value, however, these issues are especially relevant to the outside world and are also capable of triggering workers' pride and passion. The persistence of such issues calls for change that is not 'more of the same,' while the complexity of

such issues calls for more than standard recipes. Both imply that first-order change—using existing rules and procedures fitting dominant mental frames to deal with well-understood issues—will not suffice.

The paper is based on six years of action research on change dynamics in the Dutch diplomatic arena and focuses specifically on tough issues, for example dispensing foreign aid to reduce poverty. In 2003, I was asked to assist the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to increase its external impact, to build its capacity to do so sustainably, and also to create knowledge about how such innovation works. To this effect change efforts, professionalizing initiatives and academic research were intertwined over a period of six years. Most activities took place in the context of multi-year engagements with Dutch foreign embassies located in developing countries. This paper focuses on the planning aspects of this complex change endeavor.

### How Planning Frustrates or Enables Deep Change

Planning is generally associated with an engineering mindset: a blueprint that is designed once before embarking on a change and is adhered to during implementation; a linear, episodic and goal oriented plan created by a few to effect the many. We have found that such plans do little good when dealing with tough issues. This is because clarity about what works best comes from addressing such issues individually rather than from defining or studying generalities beforehand. As each layer is peeled back more complexity is revealed, inviting more study rather than action: a condition known as 'analysis paralysis'. We have found that such paralysis often breeds impatience, and that this tempts those involved to forego problem definition and analysis altogether and, instead, to create ambitious plans that offer temporary reassurances rather than true innovation. In its most extreme form this leads to copying N-step guides from other organizations or management fashions. In the consultancy sector, this initiative-itis is jokingly referred to as the 'our product is your problem' approach. Such plans however lose sight of the unique complexity of tough issues: poverty reduction or conflict resolution in Yemen turns out to be quite a different challenge than in Kenya. Also, when obstacles (or opportunities) emerge during implementation, these are not recognized as a gateway for learning, but as a dis-

ruption of an efficiently planned linear process. As our research demonstrates: there is no algorithm for complex change, no blue print for exploration, no institutionalized form for expansive learning: such ways of thinking are not only irrelevant, but destructive as well.

Higher order change does not make planning superfluous; there is still a need to make explicit choices and to structure activities. Rather than a one-off exercise, planning should be understood as an ongoing effort that allows for those involved to opportunistically take up any ideas, experiences, contributions and sponsoring on the spot when they assist participants to address the complex problem at hand. Analyzing, design and implementation are combined to become an iterative and emergent process concurrently co-produced in multiple local contexts. Key to the process is working with 'small wins' that allow people to entertain large questions in small incremental steps. These steps are a mix of exploitation, exploration and learning: a process of figuring out a concrete issue experimentally without simplifying it. It is hard to experiment with a tough issue when it remains abstract and massive. We observed that concrete obstacles encountered that at first did not stand out as significant, regularly proved to be a systemic manifestation of an issue's underlying complexity: microcosms that present doors for further investigation. We found such microcosms a very powerful instrument to directly experience and address complexity in small steps without overtaxing participants' change capacity. With this incremental approach, participants not only learn to expect obstacles, they also come to appreciate finding out about them sooner rather than later. They search for them, knowing that adversity is part of deep change and may fuel rather than disrupt it.

### **Tension between Size and Depth of Change**

The research sheds some light on a recurring confusion in which ambitious change sometimes gets equated with the size of change (the whole organization changes) and sometimes to the depth of change (we are now doing things fundamentally different). I argue that these two contrasting meanings do not go together. More provocatively, I suggest there is no such thing as large-scale deep change, nor has there ever been, nor does there need to be. When a change objective can be addressed effectively with approaches already familiar to people (a

first-order change), there is no reason to keep it slow or small. The restructuring of organizations is a good example. Many have gone through more than one during their work life and the process is generally predictable and has proven sufficiently effective. First-order changes can successfully be ambitious in terms of size. In contrast, ambitious change can also refer to the depth of a third-order change. Such an approach makes sense when addressing tough issues requires challenging existing cultures, dominant rationalities and habitual practices. Our findings emphasize the desirability of a small wins approach. By 'keeping it small,' it is also easier to avoid institutional pressures to conform, freeing up time and energy to explore innovative approaches that are often seen as controversial.

A constructive way to handle the tension between size and depth of change is by making use of the contagiousness of successful small-scale innovations. As 'positive deviants' share their successes with colleagues, new ideas spread to others ready to initiate their own exploration, thereby becoming second-order interventions. Within a few years of initiating our first change initiatives, the positive experiences within the three first embassies gave rise to many more embassies initiating their own change processes with or without our involvement. In this, we see how the size of the change can organically grow as experience aggregates and ideas become less controversial. As long as the spreading of innovation is not so fast as to erode quality or lead to backlash from non-adopters, small-scale change can be a prelude to larger changes. Eventually, when the innovative ideas and practices are no longer controversial, the change can be formally adopted and institutionalized; it then becomes a first-order change that even late adopters will have to abide by. In contrast, a destructive way of handling the tension between size and depth of change is to falsify change history. Such falsifications are common because organizational memory is biased towards formal changes, such as when management rubber-stamps an innovation after it has been successfully developed under the radar and spread organically to like-minded actors. In such instances, changes may be remembered as being brought about by management in one fell swoop. Such misinterpretations are destructive because when a need for deep change arises in the future, people may not only mistakenly assume change requires a large-scale effort directed by a charismatic leader, they

may also have lost sight of the change dynamics that actually created the previous successes.

## **Conclusion**

Our research shows that planning is not merely an innocuous support activity for change efforts; it is also an object of the change effort itself and prevailing ideas about planning need to be revisited when and where deep change is required. The findings further suggest that the complexity of issues needs to be matched by a similar complexity of change: when tough issues are at stake, the planning of change needs to be a subtle and even playful affair. A final comment: I have found it deeply encouraging as a practitioner and researcher to deconstruct my lingering beliefs that small incremental steps might not suffice to bring about deep change. I have learned to see and appreciate that small, sustained efforts can create miracles and that microcosms can become sites of transformation where tough issues are found, fertile questions arise and greater value is added in the outside world.

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## **A FIELD EXPERIMENT EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERATIVITY AND APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY**

Neelima Paranjpey  
Benedictine University  
2013 ODC Division  
Best Paper Based on a Dissertation

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was first conceptualized as a research method to drive social innovation in an otherwise deficit mode of inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). AI begins with asking the unconditional positive question to understand the “positive core” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001) or what gives life to a system when it is working at its best. The original idea of social innovation has been lost over the years and AI has been criticized for inquiring only into the positive side of human and organizational experience. AI is positively skewed (Golembiowski, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2001, 2010; McLean, 1996) and has neglected negative experiences, therefore losing an important opportunity of change as a result of such experiences (Barge & Oliver, 2003, Fineman 2003, Fineman, 2006). Several researchers and practitioners have

raised a concern over the issue that AI is losing its theoretical foundation (Bushe, 2010) and that there is a need to understand when and where AI is effective (Golembiowski, 2000). Only focusing on positive could result in AI not being successful in creating transformational change and therefore losing its appeal among OD practitioners and theorists. AI is transformational when it builds the generative capacity of organizations (Bushe & Kassam, 2005; Bushe, 2010). Generative capacity is “the capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions, to raise fundamental questions, to foster reconsideration of that which is taken for granted, and thereby to generate fresh alternatives for social action” (Gergen, 1978, p. 1344). AI is generative in a number of ways: it seeks to find new ideas and alter mental models that lead us to an emerging future, alters the social construction of reality and creates alternatives for fresh action (Bushe, 2007). There have been some attempts to understand generativity and how generativity helps in creating new ways of action and sustaining change. But empirical evidence of understanding generativity in AI has been lacking. Therefore, my goal is to examine the relationship between Generativity and AI. I do this by first, defining Generativity as a construct in AI. Second, by using a field experimental design to compare two Appreciative Inquiry approaches: Classical AI Discovery Phase and Synergenesis with a deficit based Problem Solving Approach to understand if participants exposed to Synergenesis lead to increased Generativity among them. The research has theoretical as well as practical implications. For the purpose of the current study it is therefore proposed that generativity include inquiring into old ways of working that result in curiosity about the current state, creating new ideas and possibilities for the future, building positive feelings, hope and efficacy among people and generating new ways of working. After review of the above theoretical aspects of generativity, reflection and discussion with experts, the constructs that were thought to be important and that defined and measured the process of generativity in this study were: curiosity, hope, self-efficacy and group potency, and positive and negative affect. Also, innovative, compelling and practical ideas generated as a result of the inquiry were the outcome measure of generativity.

## Hypothesis

*Hypothesis 1a* predicted that the posttest measures for Generativity constructs: Curiosity, Hope, Self-Efficacy, Group Potency and Positive Affect will significantly increase from pretest measures and the posttest measures for Negative Affect will significantly decrease for individuals exposed to both Synergenesis and Appreciative Inquiry.

*Hypothesis 1b* predicted that the posttest measures for Curiosity, Hope, Self-Efficacy, Group Potency and Positive Affect will be significantly different from the pretest measures and the posttest measures for Negative Affect will significantly increase for individuals exposed to Problem Solving.

*Hypothesis 2* predicted that individuals exposed to Synergenesis will exhibit higher levels of Curiosity, Hope, Self-Efficacy, Group Potency and Positive Affect.

*Hypothesis 3* predicted that individuals exposed to Synergenesis and AI will exhibit less Negative Affect than individuals exposed to Problem Solving.

*Hypothesis 4* predicted that Synergenesis is more Generative than AI and Problem Solving.

## Method

Participants in this study consisted of 76 employees from a large Midwest public transit organization. The participants were randomly assigned to the three 3 hour treatments: 1) Synergenesis 2) AI 3) Problem Solving. All participants completed a consent and demographic form before the intervention. The design of the study was a pretest posttest treatment design.

### *Independent Variables:*

Classical AI: A Classical AI interview as described by Cooperrider et al. (2003); Synergenesis: As described by Bushe (2010), Synergenesis is a generative way to conduct discovery during the AI process. Problem Solving: The problem-solving approach, used in organizations since 1930s, is a deficit-based approach, in which problems are identified and then diagnosed, and action steps or solutions are provided.

*Dependent Variables:* Generativity was measured using three methods: 1) Linear combination of all the constructs: Curiosity, Hope, Self-Efficacy,

Group Potency, Positive Affect and Negative Affect which were measured using validated survey measures. 2) Ideas generated from the intervention were rated by SMEs innovation, compelling and practicality. 3) An open-ended question asked to the participants before and after the intervention. The question was “What are your thoughts on having an Employee Recognition Program in the organization? What should it include? The main purpose of this analysis was to understand if there was change in mindset among participants. The analysis was conducted in two ways 1) The frequency of words and sentences per person per group were counted 2) the words were coded for Hope, Positive Comments, Negative Comments, Other Comments and Action Steps.

## Results & Discussion

Synergenesis was the most generative approach of all three approach. Synergenesis is distinct from the Classical AI Intervention, in that the stories are more collaborative and participants are free to add their own thoughts and feelings of the story, resulting in co-creation and making it a more complete story. The idea generation integrates people’s emotions and feelings into the stories resulting into a story that is much larger than the sum of each individual story. AI on the other hand encourages active, open listening and keeps each individual’s story distinct, thus losing the opportunity of synergy and making the story more complete. Lastly, in Synergenesis participants get a chance to empathize more with the stories when they write these stories as their own. This increases the identification with other members in the group. As a final point, Appreciative Inquiry provides a generative way for social and organizational theory as it brings innovation and advances knowledge by closing the gap between theory and practice as proposed by Cooperrider and Srivastva . The study is a small step in the direction of this generative attribute of Appreciative Inquiry as the study examines new theory and constructs of Appreciative Inquiry based on previous academic literature and research and applies it to a natural setting to solve a real organizational issue. Thus the theory informs practice as well the practice updates the existing theory.

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## FEEDBACK TO THE EDITOR

We welcome your feedback and would appreciate your comments below. Selected comments on articles in the *ODC Newsletter* may be published in the next issue, so please indicate if you prefer your comments to be withheld. Please address all correspondence to:

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1. Do you have any comments that you would like to share with the editor (comments on articles from the last issue, comments on this issue, suggestions, etc.)?

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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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## PUBLICATIONS

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

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