Theories and Models of Organizational Change

WHY ARE MODELS of organizational change necessary or important to understand? They are helpful for assessing change at a macro level—the level at which many institutional leaders view (or should view) their organizations. Models can reveal why change occurs (the driving forces of change); how change will occur (the stages, scale, timing, and process characteristics); and what will occur (the content of change, outcomes, and ways to measure it). In addition, each model of change represents a different ideology with its own assumptions about the nature of human beings and social organizations. For example, can people change easily, or do they have fairly rigid identities? Most models address the question of determinism: Is change beyond the capacity of people to manage and shape? Choosing a model is not an arbitrary choice—it is an ideological one. The assumptions we make about change are also assumptions about the nature of reality and people. It is important to review the multidisciplinary research on change because some of the ideas have not been applied in higher education. Furthermore, each model helps us to understand different aspects of change. This article reviews the six main typologies of organizational change.
Typology of Organizational Change Models

Many different theories/models of organizational change exist throughout the multidisciplinary literature base. The literature referred to in this section will be limited to organizational change models rather than human, biological, or grand change theories (Phillips and Duran, 1992; Salipante and Golden-Biddle, 1995). In this section, six categories of change models are discussed, with each category encompassing many different individual models. Since there is such a proliferation of individual models, these categories serve as an organizing device. This monograph uses some traditional typologies and proposes a few new categories based on the current literature (Dill and Helm, 1988; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

One of the most comprehensive typologies, offered by Van De Ven and Poole, employs the following categories: life cycle, evolutionary, dialectical, and teleological (1995). Two additional categories that have been suggested are social-cognition and cultural approaches to change. Some theorists argue that life-cycle models are a variation of evolutionary models, but there appears to be enough evidence to distinguish between them (Levy and Merry, 1986). For example, life-cycle models emerge from a different disciplinary base (psychology rather than biology), are less deterministic, and focus more on the human elements of change, among other distinctions. Nordvall’s last synthesis (1982) described only eight models within three categories: (1) teleological models such as problem-solving, action research, and organizational development; (2) dialectical models such as political models and social interaction; and (3) evolutionary models such as systems theory and adaptive models. The individual models now number in the hundreds and are difficult to synthesize. Authors are developing change classification schemes within individual categories such as evolutionary or teleological models (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). These two

1 Model and theory are not necessarily interchangeable words, although many scholars use them as such. In fact, theory suggests abstract contemplation or insight, whereas model connotes a set of plans or procedures. Certain disciplines (such as business or psychology) tend to develop models, while other fields (such as the sciences) tend to discuss theories of change. I will use model as the general term within this monograph. Most scholars hold that no theory of change has yet been developed.
categories, in particular, have a proliferation of individual models, requiring more refined categorization (Phillips and Duran, 1992).

Most prevalent in the literature are the teleological (scientific management or planned change) and evolutionary (adaptive change) models. These two approaches have the longest histories and have been embraced by many practitioners and researchers as useful for understanding change. Most current critiques refer to the recurring debate between planned change and adaptive models, as they are commonly referred to in the literature. These models also have the most starkly contrasting assumptions, as will be described in more detail below. Briefly, they represent dichotomies such as materialist/idealistic, social/technical, intentional/deterministic, and subjective/objective, with planned change reflecting the first set of characteristics in these dichotomies and adaptive change reflecting the second set. Two authors note that there is “a comfort in the fact that the two schools criticize each other leading to improvements and achieving a kind of balance” (Czarniawska and Sevon, 1996, p. 14). They further express the concern that the two theoretical perspectives appear to have reached a stalemate that needs to be broken. The “garbage can” model offered by Cohen and March is one theory that emerged as a result of an earlier stalemate between these two models, accepting both contingency and control as shaping the process of change (1991a, 1991b). Social-cognition, dialectical, and cultural models evolved out of efforts to reconcile some of the perceived problematic assumptions of planned change and adaptive change models.

The literature will be discussed using the following framework within each category: (1) major assumptions of this category of models (why change occurs, the process, the outcomes, key metaphor); (2) some examples of each model; (3) key activities or individuals; and (4) benefits and criticisms of the model. The difficulty with any typology is that each of the particular models has unique characteristics that cannot all be reflected within this discussion. However, the similarities among models in different categories are perhaps more significant than the differences. Some teleological models, for instance,
share assumptions with evolutionary models. Some scholars consider strategic choice to be teleological, while others view it as evolutionary; likewise, paradigm-reframing models often overlap with social-cognition models, but some theorists see both as cultural models (Burnes, 1996; Collins, 1998). In effect, paradigm-reframing models share assumptions of both social-cognition and cultural approaches. Examples of models that share the assumptions of more than one category include organization punctuated equilibrium, community ecology, partisan mutual adjustment, and the “garbage can.” The six categories described below, however, have fairly independent assumptions and ideologies that provide insight into understanding organizational change. A summary of all six models is provided in Appendix 1. The end of this article reviews combined models—approaches that utilize assumptions from several different theories. Combined models are particularly helpful because they capture insights from multiple studies of change.

Evolutionary

There are two main types of evolutionary models: social evolutionary models and biological models. Many individual models have developed within this tradition: adaptation, resource dependence, self-organization, contingency and systems theory, strategic choice, punctuated equilibrium, and population ecology. I use the term evolutionary throughout this monograph for simplicity’s sake, but many scholars use the term environmental theories to encompass this set of concerns.

Major assumptions: The earliest ideas, based on biological investigations of change, focused on change as a slow stream of mutations, gradually shaped by environmental influences (Morgan, 1986). These were expanded by social evolutionary theories reflected in disciplines such as political science and sociology. The main assumption underlying all these theories is that change is dependent on circumstances, situational variables, and the environment faced by each organization (Morgan, 1986). Social systems as diversified, interdependent, complex
systems evolve over time naturally (Morgan, 1986). But evolution is basically deterministic, and people have only a minor impact on the nature and direction of the change process (Hrebiniak and Joyce, 1985). These models focus on the inability of organizations to plan for and respond to change, and their tendency to instead “manage” change as it occurs. The emphasis is on a slow process, rather than discrete events or activities (Kieser, 1989). Change happens because the environment demands change for survival. Some later models suggest that adaptation can be proactive and anticipatory (Cameron, 1991). The assumptions in these theories range from managers having no ability to influence adaptability to managers having significant ability to be proactive, anticipating changes in the environment (March, 1994a).

Key concepts include systems, interactivity between the organization and its environment, openness, homeostasis, and evolution (Morgan, 1986). Evolution has already been described herein; the other terms can be clarified as follows. The concept of systems reflects how organizations are perceived as having interdependent and interrelated structures. Changing one part of the structure has implications for other parts. Interactivity is similar to systems in terms of focusing on the connected nature of activities within organizations. Based on the notions of systems and interactivity, change is conceptualized as reaching throughout an organization rather than being isolated. Openness refers to the relationship between the environment and internal transformation, and tends to characterize change as highly dependent on the external environment. Open systems exhibit an interdependence between internal and external environments. The concept of homeostasis refers to self-regulation and the ability to maintain a steady state by constantly seeking equilibrium between the system and environment (Sporn, 1999). Based on the principle of homeostasis, first-order change has been shown to be more common; yet, as was mentioned in article two, gradual change can be associated with occasional second-order change (graduated punctuation models).

Self-producing and self-organizing organisms form a key metaphor for change. Morgan (1986) uses the metaphor of termites for the change process within evolutionary models. Termites constantly rebuild their nest. This model presents a systemic, rational approach of a stimuli-and-response cycle. The process is unplanned and reactive. Processes include developing sensors (struc-
tures to determine necessary change and ability to adapt to new realities); determining organizational fitness; self-organizing; and local adaptation (Morgan, 1986). There is a strong structural emphasis in these models; the outcome of change is usually new organizational structures or organizing principles. Environmental leaders scan the environment to discern new developments and construct new units. Yet processes are inherently less important within evolutionary models than in other models, and change is mostly unplanned—instead it is an adaptive or selection-based process. Over time, it has become commonplace to assume that the environment affects the structure and culture of an organization, but this was a contested issue up until twenty years ago, when these models were being developed.

An example of the contribution of these models might be helpful. Prigogine details how, as organizations become more coherent and their structures more set (mature), they become more unstable and likely to experience second-order change. Managers' natural reaction to the resulting systems fluctuation is to try to restore order or stasis. But Prigogine's research illustrates that fluctuations are important for reestablishing order and that managers should let the open system follow its natural course rather than intervene (Levy and Merry, 1986). Note that these models de-emphasize action and focus on awareness of environmental influences and impacts so that the system can survive and be maintained.

Examples: The earliest examples of evolutionary models are modified theories of natural selection applied to organizational change. Later, unique models developed, such as the resource-dependence model. Within resource-dependence models, leaders make choices to adapt to their environment. The organization and its environment have an interdependent relationship, and the analytical focus is on transactions that occur as part of this relationship. This model differs from natural selection in its focus on leaders as active agents able to respond to and change the environment (Goodman, 1982). Resource-dependence theory presupposes that organizations are not self-sustaining and do need to rely on external resources; organizations are dependent on other organizations, leading to an interorganizational and political view (Sporn, 1999). Mergers are an example of organizational response to outside forces. This approach generated great interest, as it stresses a more interactive evolutionary model under which human agency can affect the change process.
Some models of strategy are also reflected within the evolutionary tradition, focusing on the effect of the environment. For example, in the strategic choice approach, managers can choose which environments they operate within, scanning, predicting changes, and steering the course of the organization (Cameron, 1991). Population-ecology models are also reflected within this tradition, examining how decisions and actions made by groups of organizations affect their survival and success. This model focuses on environmental niches and the relative success of specialist organizations or generalist populations under change forces such as diminished resources or loss of support for certain organizational activities. One notion that has developed from this theory is diversification—that is, the idea that generalist organizations perform better under certain environmental conditions because they have "diverse" customers, products, and services, and thus are less likely to feel the impact of changes in one part of the market. This type of adaptation can only be seen when viewed at the population level; hence the term population ecology.

A recent revival of evolutionary models of change applies chaos theory to change, as popularized by Margaret Wheatley in her book *Leadership and the new science: Discovering order in a chaotic world* (1999). Change is seen as inherent to biological systems; all organizations are constantly changing. The emphasis, as in earlier open-systems models, is on being aware of solutions inherent in the system through feedback loops, resiliency, and self-organizing, allowing structures to emerge within the system. Chaos models suggest that planned change is mostly irrelevant and unhelpful, and that organizations should respond organically to environmental demands.

*Key activities or individuals:* As may already be apparent, the key activities within this model include observation of the external environment, analysis of the organizational system, and creation of structures and new organizing principles to respond to the environment. Individual human agency tends to be de-emphasized within chaos models.

*Benefits and criticisms:* The contribution of these theories should not be underestimated. Illustrating the impact of context and environment on change was a radical approach in the face of scientific management theory, which examined organizations as self-contained entities (Morgan, 1986). It was also novel to describe change as unplanned. Reconceptualizing organizations as systems also
advanced our thinking about change, identifying new reasons for and approaches to change. Many empirical studies illustrate the strength of evolutionary models for certain types of changes (Burnes, 1996; March, 1994a; Phillips and Duran, 1992; Sporn, 1999). Another advantage is the strong empirical research tradition that is not characteristic of many of the other theories.

Several concerns have been raised about chaos models’ ability to explain organizational change, in particular, because they originated in mathematical rather than human-based fields. A substantial criticism is that these theories do not recognize that organizations are social phenomena, and thus they fail to provide needed assumptions about human psychology, the organization of work, and the way organizations fit into society (Collins, 1998). These models reflect little human agency; strategic choices and creativity are mostly unimportant. The models’ overly deterministic nature and overemphasis on the impact of the environment are seen as problematic. A second concern is that it is difficult to directly link environment variables and organizational change, controlling all other variables. Therefore, these theories ignore important indirect and informal variables, and disregard the complexity of organizational life by focusing on a few factors within the external and internal environment, such as resources and size of organization (Burnes, 1996). Environmental turbulence and constraints are overemphasized, and the fact that these forces can be manipulated rather than merely adapted to is rarely mentioned (Burnes, 1996). These are major shortcomings that limit the explanatory power of evolutionary models. Despite these limitations, they are the second most popular category of models within the literature.

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**Teleological**

This category has several different common names, including planned change, scientific management, and rational models. Strategic planning, organizational development, and adaptive learning approaches come under the teleological umbrella. These theories emerged simultaneously with the evolutionary models.
Assumptions: It is assumed that organizations are purposeful and adaptive. Change occurs because leaders, change agents, and others see the necessity of change. The process for change is rational and linear, as in evolutionary models, but individual managers are much more instrumental to the process (Carnall, 1995; Carr, Hard, and Tranant, 1996). Internal organizational features or decisions, rather than the external environment, motivate change. As noted earlier, these models are subjective and reflect intentionality. Key aspects of the change process include planning, assessment, incentives and rewards, stakeholder analysis and engagement, leadership, scanning, strategy, restructuring, and reengineering (Brill and Worth, 1997; Carnall, 1995; Huber and Glick, 1993). At the center of the process is the leader, who aligns goals, sets expectations, models, communicates, engages, and rewards. Strategic choices and human creativity are highlighted (Brill and Worth, 1997). Goal formation, implementation, evaluation, and modification based on experience are an ongoing process. New additions to the repertoire of management tools include collaborative culture definition, large group engagement processes, and individual in-depth interventions (Brill and Worth, 1997). The outcome of the change process is similar to that in evolutionary models: new structures or organizing principles. The metaphor for this model would be the change-master, to use Rosabeth Kanter's image (1983). The leader is the focus; this is a human model with the change agent at the center, using rational scientific management tools. This is the area with by far the most research and models.

Examples: Perhaps the best-known strategy within the teleological tradition is organizational development (Golembiewski, 1989; Goodman, 1982). This extensive body of research and literature dating from the 1950s continues today. Organizational development tends to address first-order change and does not challenge current organizational paradigms. It starts by diagnosing the problems within the organization on an ongoing basis (so it is generative) and searching for solutions (change initiatives). Goals are set for addressing the change, yet there is a heavy cultural emphasis on values, attitudes, and organizational norms. Many group meetings are conducted to help the change initiative develop momentum and to overcome resistance (Carr, Hard, and Trahanant, 1996). The individual factors that inhibit change are a major emphasis; an
analysis of obstacles is typically conducted. Organizations proceed through distinct stages, and it is the leaders' role to effectively manage the transition from one stable state to another (Golembiewski, 1989). Transition is a homogenous, structured, step-by-step process.

Another very popular scientific management approach is continuous quality improvement, or total quality management (TQM), which emerged from studies of how to improve the manufacturing sectors of U.S. businesses struggling to compete with Japanese companies. These models assume that change is prevented because institutions are based on long-standing traditions, practices, and values. Authors within this tradition point out that most organizations pursue quality, but that they have not examined the obstacles that prevent the change necessary to create quality, such as embedded values and structural or cultural hindrances (Freed, Klugman, and Fife, 1997). In order to challenge these barriers to change, a set of principles has been developed for leaders who create a new quality culture. Principles include many typical teleological strategies, such as (1) develop and focus on the vision, mission, and outcomes of the institution; (2) creative and supportive leadership; (3) retrain individuals on an ongoing basis or implement systematic individual development; (4) make data-driven decisions based on facts; (5) ensure collaboration; (6) delegate decision-making; and (7) proactively plan change. Quality experts say that they use “scientific management measurements and techniques” to alter personal philosophies and create a new organizational culture (Freed, Klugman, and Fife, 1997, p. 44). There is an assumed plasticity among people. TQM does adopt assumptions from biological theories in taking a systems approach, but the overall principles reflect the teleological tradition.

Reengineering focuses on modifying aspects of the organizational structure as the key to creating change (Barrow, 1996; Guskin, 1996). The leader's role is to inventory and assess the organizational structures, and to think about ways to structure differently. Mapping processes is a key management technique for helping to reengineer, which entails cross-functional teams meeting for extended periods of time to describe and chart a process from beginning to end. All divisions involved hear the processes of other functional areas and identify ways that processes can be collectively altered. Technology advancements, new products, retrained employees, cost-cutting, and other changes are facili-
tated by leaders who create a technology office, provide a new human resources office, or reduce the number of offices in charge of a particular function.

Key activities or individuals: This model sees change agents and leaders as the focus of the change process. Individuals within the organization receive little attention and are mostly unimportant. More recent teleological models, such as TQM and reengineering, involve individuals throughout the organization in the process of change through the use of teams and an emphasis on collaboration. Even though teleological models are broadening their focus, evolutionary and teleological models place the least emphasis on individuals throughout the organization as active participants. The activities for creating change are organized by the leader who plans, analyzes, and assesses. Activities are extremely important in these models, given the major assumption that management techniques or tools are the critical aspect for ensuring change.

Benefits and criticisms: The benefits of these models are significant. First, strategies for analyzing and categorizing change processes (for example, adaptive or generative) have been developed through these approaches, as described in article two. Second, the key role of leadership and change agents in the change process was identified and made apparent. Third, the role of collaboration and staff development are key concepts that have transformed our understanding of each organizational member's contribution to the change process. The emphasis on the role of people and individual attitudes to the change process was brought to the forefront, especially in research on resistance to change. The ability to, at times, forecast or identify the need for change was an important contribution, helping organizations to survive and prosper in what otherwise would have been difficult times.

There is a great deal of literature critiquing teleological models, probably because they tend to be the dominant model within the literature. But they have been tested, and their relevance for certain types of change has been proven through several studies (Freed, Klugman, and Fife, 1997; Levy and Merry, 1986). The main criticisms relate to the overly rational and linear process of change described within many teleological models (Dufty, 1980). Researchers of second-order change demonstrate a chaotic process and find management models to be lacking needed information on the importance of culture and social cognition. Another major criticism is the overemphasis on

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human creativity, thoughts, and decisions. In contrast, evolutionary studies of change have found that humans can create problems rather than assist in change processes (Levy and Merry, 1986). Furthermore, research has illustrated that organizations are often irrational, events happen spontaneously, environments change without predictability, control is illusory, and leaders' ability to change is more attributed than real.

There is also an assumed plasticity among people. Managers can alter the environment, and people can and will respond. Many of our own personal experiences might suffice to challenge this assumption (Collins, 1998). Studies of change have also illustrated how it tends to be continuous and open-ended (Burnes, 1996). Teleological models assume that organizations exist in a somewhat stable point and that managers can lead it from one set state to another. Others note that planned change models seem unable to address radical or transformation change (Schein, 1985). Teleological theorists within the continuous-improvement and learning-organization traditions feel they have addressed the criticisms that have been raised over time about second-order and continuous change (Senge, 1990).

Another critique is methodological in nature. Very few teleological studies examine change contextually; they ignore the substance of change, the need for change, and the politics of change (Pettigrew, 1985). It is noted that advice offered from generic prescriptions is therefore applied inappropriately, often creating problems.

**Life Cycle**

These models share many assumptions with evolutionary models in terms of adaptation and a systems approach. They differ in being less objective, focusing on the importance of human beings in the change process, and viewing changes that occur within the life cycles of people as well as those of the organizations they create. Life-cycle or developmental models emphasize systematic individual change.

**Assumptions:** Life-cycle models evolved from studies of child development and focus on stages of
organizational growth, maturity, and decline (Levy and Merry, 1986). Some scholars view life-cycle and developmental models as a branch of evolutionary models that focus on human development theories rather than broad biological theories (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Within these models, change is typically seen as part of a stage and is progressive and rational (Miller and Friesen, 1980). Organizations are born, then they grow, mature, go through stages of revival, and eventually decline (Goodman, 1982). Change does not occur because people see the necessity of or even want change; it occurs because it is a natural progression that cannot be stopped or altered (Miller and Friesen, 1980; Morgan, 1986). Developmental models focus on stages that are less predetermined than those in life-cycle models.

Change occurs as individuals within the organization adapt to its life cycle. Management is much more central than in evolutionary models and assists members of the organization to grow through training and motivational techniques (Rajagopalan and Spreitzer, 1996). The environment is ambiguous and threatening within this model. To adjust to this environment, processes include training and development, communication, and other structures that allow growth (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Miller and Friesen, 1980). The outcome within this change process is a new organizational identity. Identity is strongly emphasized in these models as a reason that people resist change (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). Identification with the organization and personalization of work is also referenced. The major metaphor is the teacher or guide. Change is the result of staff development and leaders who bring people along to organizational maturity.

Life-cycle models are related to, but different from, learning models—learning is more adaptive, habitual, and regulated by nature (Burnes, 1996). Theories that focus more on learning and unlearning habits would fit within the life-cycle category. Some recent models of emotional intelligence and adaptability to change also fall within the life-cycle model (Collins, 1998). For example, certain abilities make one more able to or open to change, such as sensitivity to the motivations and perspectives of others (often termed emotional intelligence).

Examples: Greener describes a model of organizational growth through creativity, direction, delegation, coordination, and collaboration. Organizations go through five stages: high growth, greatest efficiency, diseconomies of scale,
crisis, and last, transformation or cessation of functioning (Levy and Merry, 1986). High growth is stage in which an organization is building and there is a great deal of learning and experimenting; it models the youth and adolescence of a human life. Greater efficiency is like early adulthood, when the company has energy, momentum, and employees with high levels of training; it operates with a high profitability margin. Diseconomy of scales happens as the organization grows larger, participants show less commitment, and people become embedded in traditions or history, creating an environment in which the organization's productivity is lowered. If this stage is sustained, the organization often moves into crisis, losing profitability and success. At this point, typically, transformation occurs or the organization eventually stops functioning. Each stage ends in a crisis, which propels the organization into the next stage. Change occurs both within the stage (first order) and at the crisis point (second order). Life-cycle models characterize certain types of changes as typical within particular parts of the life cycle. For example, change in process is typical in the maturation phase, while change in structure is common with the centralization process. These patterns are captured in Kim Cameron's work (1991).

Cameron (1991) tries to integrate the findings of ten life-cycle models into a metamodel. Within his model are four stages: (1) entrepreneurship, (2) collectivity, (3) formalization and control, and (4) elaboration of structure. As in other models, the first stage is a time of little coordination, extensive ideas, and marshaling resources. As the organization passes into the collectivity stage, there is a greater sense of shared mission and strong commitment while innovation continues. However, during the formalization and control stage, rules and stable structures are put in place, innovation is rare, and procedures and efficiency are the foci. As the organization enters the elaboration-of-structure stage, it begins to go through a series of renewals through decentralization, expansion, or other adaptation.

Weick’s social psychology of change theory reflects the life-cycle assumptions (Levy and Merry, 1986). The three stages in the model are enactment, selection, and retention. Organizations constantly cycle through these phases, in which participants select changes and make choices about retention. Retention is based on the life cycle of the organization. These short-term actions contribute to an evolutionary process in which practices, structures, and ideas change. The
distinctive characteristic of this life-cycle model is that change is described as commonplace across different stages—enactment, selection, and retention happen among all employees within all life cycles, but with some distinctions in the process (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995).

The human resource tradition in companies reflects the life-cycle model as well (Bolman and Deal, 1991). Developmental theories examine human motivation, individual and group interaction, retraining, and development as central to organizational processes and change. Although human resource theories enjoy a long tradition, Bolman and Deal popularized this approach to analyzing organizations with their notion of the human resource lens. Seen through the human resource lens, organizational change is difficult for individuals because they have to change their current approach, which is tied to their identity and strengths. In order to help assuage this fear, leaders need to make the change understandable and train people to operate differently.

**Key activities and individuals:** This model differs from both of the earlier models in that it begins to emphasize people throughout the organization as critical to the change process. Change will not occur successfully unless all people are prepared for it. This model shifts emphasis from the leaders or a few internal characteristics to activities throughout the organization. Each individual plays a critical role in adjusting to the life cycle. Activities focus on individual development, overcoming fear of change, training, and development. Leaders analyze the need for training, assess the institutional culture, and monitor the environment and life cycle.

As leaders determine the life cycle or development of the organization, they work with people based on the principles of each stage. Young organizations need creativity and entrepreneurship through marshaling resources and creating an ideology. As the organization evolves to the mature stage, it needs to focus on internal processes and practices rather than external factors. Over time, renewal and expansion occur through managers observing the environment and selectively responding.

**Benefits and criticisms:** The benefit of these models is that they focus on a previously missing aspect of change: the fact that organizations proceed through different phases. Most earlier models treated organizations as differing in type according to sector, size, and so forth, but not in terms of development.
Focusing on change over time has proven to be theoretically sound in many studies. Also, the focus on people throughout the organization is an important shift from focusing on leaders or the environment. Furthermore, the importance of training has proven central to many change efforts, and later models that combined assumptions from several theories adopted principles about training (Senge, 1990). Some recent teleological models, like TQM, include ongoing staff development. However, many propositions of the model have either not held up within studies or are untested, making the contributions of this category of models unknown (Burnes, 1996).

Most of the literature on life-cycle models is conceptual rather than empirical, and their efficacy is not well established. Another concern is the overly deterministic character of these models, as the nature of organizational change and its stages are somewhat predetermined. Some theorists suggest that only birth, youth, and maturity exist, and that organizational decline can be avoided (Lippitt, 1969). Also, some models suggest that managers can speed up, slow down, or even abort certain stages, suggesting more human agency and less determinism. A few studies that have examined life-cycle models have found that organizations did not proceed through the stages in the proposed sequence. Researchers have argued for the importance of the notion of stages, as it allows organizational participants to be responsive to changes and to see them as natural. Developmental models (focused on stages and the necessity of training) appear to have greater empirical support than other models in this category.

The name dialectical refers directly to the Hegelian-Marxian perspective in which a pattern, value, ideal, or norm in an organization is always present with its polar opposite.

Dialectical

Dialectical models (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995) and the political metaphor of change (Morgan, 1986) are similar in their assumptions. The name dialectical refers directly to the Hegelian-Marxian perspective in which a pattern, value, ideal, or norm in an organization is always present with its polar opposite. An example in higher education institutions would be the pattern of communitarianism, with the opposing value
of individualism. These two forces are always influencing each other, and over time change is created through the interaction of opposing forces. Interestingly, Czarniawska and Sevon (1996) characterized the change literature itself as a dialectical pattern in which the planned change and evolutionary models represent opposites, generating the four other typologies of models.

Assumptions: Organizations pass through long periods of evolutionary change (as the dialectical interaction between the polar opposites occurs) and short periods of second-order or revolutionary change, when there is an impasse between the two perspectives (Morgan, 1986). An organization’s polar opposite belief systems eventually clash, resulting in radical change. Conflict is seen as an inherent attribute of human interaction. The outcome of change is a modified organizational ideology or identity. Predominant change processes are bargaining, consciousness-raising, persuasion, influence and power, and social movements (Bolman and Deal, 1991). Leaders are key within any social movement and are a central part of these models, yet collective action is usually the primary focus. Progress and rationality are not necessarily part of this theory of change; dialectical conflict does not necessarily produce a “better” organization.

Political or dialectical models sometimes share assumptions with cultural models. Political models examine how a dominant culture shapes (and reshapes) organizational processes; this culture is referred to as the power culture (Benjamin, 1996). Organizations are perceived as political entities in which dominant coalitions manipulate their power to preserve the status quo and maintain their privilege. Another way that political models overlap with cultural models is in their emphasis on social movements and subgroups or subcultures.

Dialectical models do not assume that everyone is involved; instead they emphasize that inactivity is quite prevalent (Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley, 1977). Few people participate in governance or are strongly interested in change. People who create change can become involved in interest groups, flowing in and out. When resources are plentiful, few people worry about changes or engage in conflict. When resources are constrained and changes are pending (or an inability to create changes exists due to lack of resources), then people mobilize. These models focus on human motivation and needs; intuition is just as important as the facts and figures that are emphasized within other models (Bergquist, 1992; Lindquist, 1978). Social interaction is more
critical than environmental scanning, planning, or assessing the life cycle of the organization. The metaphor is a social movement.

Examples: Early dialectical scholars studied interest groups and social movements within organizations (Levy and Merry, 1986). Later, studies took two general directions, seeing politics as negative (exploitation and dominance) or positive (creating vision and collective goals).

Kotter (1985) provides an analysis of the skills needed to create political change: (1) agenda-setting, (2) networking and forming coalitions, and (3) bargaining and negotiation. Setting an agenda is different than establishing a vision, a typical process within teleological models that is usually leader-derived. Instead, setting an agenda involves listening to people throughout the organization and including their interests; agendas are responsive to stakeholder concerns (Bolman and Deal, 1991). Networking is the next step for creating change. In order to build coalitions, change agents need to identify key people who will facilitate change as well as individuals who will resist the change. One of the primary purposes of networking is developing relationships with key people who can overcome resistance, so that they can be used to influence other people when necessary. Change agents must also develop a power base by succeeding at certain efforts and aligning themselves with other powerful individuals. Once the change agent has an agenda, a network, coalitions, and a power base, then he or she is ready to bargain and negotiate in order to create change. Bolman and Deal (1991) review several bargaining strategies that have been found effective in creating change. Empowerment approaches to change represent an even more positive spin on the political approach to creating change. In these approaches, change agents are encouraged to examine whether the change has mutually beneficial consequences for all involved parties, is moral, and demonstrates caring for employees (Bolman and Deal, 1991). A few studies have illustrated that empowerment models are instrumental in facilitating change (Astin and Leland, 1991; Bensimon and Neumann, 1993).

Marxist theory as applied to organizations has always been prevalent within this tradition. Analyses of the development of collective bargaining and labor unions within organizations tend to use a Marxist perspective. The findings of studies suggest that boards and other organizational leaders create struc-
tures that prevent equitable treatment and serve an elite’s interest (Morgan, 1986; Rhoades, 1998). Change initiatives are usually developed for efficiency and cost-containment purposes that reflect the elite’s interests rather than a shared interest (Morgan, 1986). There is a dialectical tension related to change and whose interests are served. Current studies about gender and ethnic diversity in organizations, and the possibility of changing structures and culture, have been interpreted through the dialectical lens. Several studies examined the need to completely restructure organizations and develop new cultures because the existing structures are embedded with patriarchal values (Calas and Smirich, 1992; Townsend and Twombly, 1998). For example, policies that prevent women’s advancement—such as lack of maternity leave or restrictive criteria for promotion—create change, as the interest group determines needs and discovers conflict. The dominant patriarchal ideology is revealed, and it becomes apparent that change must occur in order to create an environment that is open to women (Calas and Smirich, 1992). These models tend to assume that evolutionary change will not be able to move organizations forward to embrace women, because evolutionary change usually does not diverge markedly from the status quo.

**Key activities and individuals:** Similar to the life-cycle category, this model focuses on individuals throughout the organization as part of the dialectical change process. Conflict is a result of focusing on the views of all, not just positional leaders. Although an elite or dominant ideology often tries to maintain power and authority, tension eventually builds up, leading to change. However, the model also suggests that many people will choose to be inactive in the process. Activities are not a major focus within these models. Bargaining, persuasion, and conflict are inherent aspects of human nature that do not need to be deliberately developed. This model is similar to evolutionary models in its de-emphasis of activities that should be fostered. Inherent conflict will create change; thus, this model has a deterministic nature as well. The perspectives exist and will, whether or not organizations want them to, come into conflict eventually.

**Benefits and criticisms:** A major benefit of these models is their departure from the focus on rationality and linearity. Evolutionary, life-cycle, and teleological models all emphasize that change is rational and progressive, leading toward something better (although not all life-cycle models assume a
progressive stance). Many theorists have pointed to changes that were not for
the good of organizations and have often noted the erratic, political nature of
organizational change (Morgan, 1986). This model provided explanation for
regressive change and highlighted irrationality. The more popular dialectical
models are those that emphasize social movements and leaders’ roles, provid-
ing a strong and hopeful analogy for change. People can compare their
organization’s change efforts to such positive events as the civil rights move-
ment. These theories certainly do not offer a picture of moral superiority, but
in popular adaptation, they are often viewed as doing so.

The deterministic nature of the model is critiqued by scholars as it has been
within other models. The lack of emphasis on the environment is seen as prob-
lematic. For example, the dialectical tension is never related to any forces out-
side itself. Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley (1977) note that their original
political models of higher education organizations underestimated the impact
of environmental influences on political processes and anticipated a stronger
relationship between political processes and environmental issues. This is
an area in need of future research. Also, some theorists wonder whether this
tension and the polar opposite forces could not be managed (teleological) or
if training could help people to exist within this tension-filled environment
(life cycle). A more general criticism is that these models offer little guidance
to organizations or leaders. This may be a product of the models themselves,
or it may be a result of the way they have been applied.

Social Cognition

Social-cognition models have gained popularity in the last twenty years. A vari-
city of models emphasize cognition, from sensemaking to institutionalism to
imaginization (Morgan, 1986; Scott, 1995; Weick, 1995). These models tend
to come from a phenomenological or social-constructivist view of organiza-
tions (hence the term social in combination with cognition), although not all
of them do. The earlier typologies (teleological, evolutionary, life cycle, polit-
ical) emerged from functionalist approaches to viewing organizations. Func-
tionalists hold that there is a single organizational reality that all people
generally perceive similarly.
Assumptions: Prior to the development of cognitive models, the process of learning and development had already been coupled with change through life-cycle models (Argyris, 1982). Cognitive models built on the foundation of life-cycle models by examining in greater detail how learning occurs and even tying the notion of change more directly to learning. Studies of resistance to change illustrated the need for people to learn new approaches and examined how such learning might occur. New phenomena related to cognition and change were discerned, such as knowledge structures, paradigms, schema, cybernetics, sensemaking, cognitive dissonance, cause maps, and interpretation, which are all key concepts within these theories (Bushe and Shani, 1991; March, 1991; Morgan, 1986). Research on how the brain works revealed that knowledge is usually developed by building on past information called knowledge structures or schema, prompting theorists to contemplate how proposals for institutional change could build on prior organizational knowledge (Hedberg, 1981). Learning also occurs as two pieces of conflicting information are brought together, in a phenomenon often labeled cognitive dissonance (Argyris, 1994). Theorists wondered how dissonance helped facilitate change.

The reasons for change in organizations are tied to appropriateness and a reaction to cognitive dissonance (Collins, 1998). There is not necessarily an environmental necessity, a developmental challenge, a leader’s vision, or dialectical or ideological tension. Instead, people simply reach a point of cognitive dissonance at which values and actions clash or something seems outmoded, and they decide to change. Cybernetics is the term used to describe the complex approach to change within social cognition; it is an interactive model, with tensions and strains common within circular systems (Morgan, 1986). Thus, change does not occur linearly or in stages—instead it is a multifaceted, interconnected, overlapping series of processes, obstacles, and individuals. The outcome of change is a new frame of mind or worldview. The metaphor for this approach to change is usually the brain: complex, interrelated systems, mental models, and interpretation.
Social-cognition models examine how leaders shape the change process through framing and interpretation, and how individuals within the organization interpret and make sense of change (Harris, 1996). The environment cannot be objectively determined, but is interpreted by leaders. This is why the environment is seen as a lesser force, because it is socially constructed and multiple (March, 1991). Social-cognition theorists tend to be interested in how employees frame the organization or how worldviews can be shaped and changed through learning. Change can be understood and enacted only through individuals (Harris, 1996; Martin, 1992). These theories reject a shared reality or organizational culture. Part of the difficulty of creating change is realizing that people are interpreting their environment so differently. Within social-cognition models, habits, and organizational identity are examined, relating them to life-cycle theories in which organizational identity and identification are important to understand factors in resistance to change. Facilitating change is sometimes explored as the process of allowing people to let go of the identity attached to past strategies and successes (Morgan, 1986).

_Examples:_ Argyris’ single- and double-loop learning theory reflects the social-cognition perspective and is a key concept in organizational learning and change. *Single-loop learning* refers to retaining existing norms, goals, and structures and improving on current methods (Argyris, 1982, 1994). This is often associated with first-order change and an internal standard of performance such as employees’ views of quality. In contrast, *double-loop learning* refers to the process by which existing norms, goals, and structures are reformulated to create innovative solutions. It is usually associated with second-order change and employs external standards of performance such as state-mandated regulations of quality. In double-loop learning, people or organizations come to terms with problems or mismatches in the governing variables (beliefs) that guide their actions (Hedberg, 1981). The common assumption that people are driven to fix inconsistencies between their thoughts and actions or between their actions and consequences was shown to be invalid. An environment of trust must be created in order to have double-loop learning, as people on their own will not challenge or examine inconsistencies (Argyris, 1982).

In addition, organizational change is seen as a learning process affected by organizational and environmental conditions and by theories of action held
by the organization’s members (March, 1991). Theories of action are the views that people hold, even if they do not act on such views. The important principle for organizational change is that people may describe that they have initiated a change or believe in a change, but may not enact that change. Organizations need to identify the social-cognition approach of employees— their theories of action—and align them with espoused organizational values and change initiatives. Research on misalignment between espoused and enacted theories led to models of paradigm-shifting.

Models of paradigm-shifting and future-envisioning focus on identifying the views or beliefs of organizational participants (through operational presuppositions and scanning the environment), then providing leaders with training on how to lead people to conceptualize a different organizational reality (Levy and Merry, 1986). Some models focus on helping members cope with the loss and death of the old organizational paradigm. Future-envisioning focuses organizational members’ attention on the desired future, rather than on the present situation and organization.

The emphasis on different paradigms or ways of viewing the organization spawned work by researchers such as Cohen and March (1991a, 1991b); Bolman and Deal (1991); Morgan (1986); and Weick (1995), examining organizations through a social-constructivist perspective, in which it is acknowledged that there are multiple views of organizational reality. These theorists suggest that change can be accomplished by leaders who view the organization through different lenses, examining issues through the logic of perspectives. Bolman and Deal (1991) suggest that leaders need to see change as a structural issue though the bureaucratic lens; as a training issue, through the human resource lens; as a power issue, through the political lens; and as an issue of identity and meaning, through the symbolic lens. Leaders create change by helping employees to view the organization through different lenses and by reframing issues so that different people can understand and enact the needed change.

Sensemaking is another example of this category and emerged from the focus on paradigms, cognition, and multiple realities (Weick, 1995). It emphasizes how people interpret their world and reconstruct reality on an ongoing basis. Constructing this reality is an effort to create order and make retrospective sense out of what happens. Sensemaking focuses on how worldviews
are shaped and altered. But there is a strong contextual rationality (the sense made is appropriate to the context) and a focus on intersubjective meaning (individuals' perspectives). Weick distinguishes sensemaking from interpretation; sensemaking is about how people generate that which they interpret (Weick, 1995, p. 13). Change situations may evoke sensemaking by altering the order that people have created. Weick emphasizes the roles of wisdom, acceptance of a high level of ignorance, and learning and resilience within organizations as facilitators of change (Weick, 1993). Learning, humility, resilience, and wisdom help enable individuals to alter their current reality.

Key activities and individuals: These models are similar to dialectical models in their emphasis on individuals throughout the organizations as key to understanding and facilitating change. In fact, these models are broader in scope, paying more attention to each individual as constructing reality uniquely. Dialectical approaches tend to conceptualize people as having group interests and perspectives, rather than individual ones. Change activities focused on within social cognition are learning, schema development, altering beliefs, and aligning the individual's identity/worldview and actions. Leaders assess situations through different lenses, then help reframe worldviews through the use of metaphors or models so that different people can understand the change (Morgan, 1986).

Morgan (1986) presents the example of an organization facing a change initiative through the social-cognition model: leaders would analyze the situation through the political perspective, then the evolutionary perspective, then the life-cycle perspective. These various worldviews provide different evidence about how to approach the change; the process is then aligned with the model that best suits the situation. Leaders also alter shared norms and understandings, help individuals shift paradigms, or create an environment of trust so double-loop learning can occur.

Benefits and Criticisms: One of the major contributions of these theories is a more phenomenological approach to the study of change, vastly expanding the interpersonal and human aspects of change. Individual meaning construction was mostly left out of theories that focused on systems, organizational dialectical tension, the environment, the life cycles of organizations, or scientific management structures. These other perspectives discount the individu-
als that make up the system; change is, after all, about individual learning and sensemaking. The realization that change often fails because individuals simply do not understand or comprehend the change at hand has been helpful, particularly to those within the teleological framework. This provides managers with new tools for creating and leading change.

Also, similar to dialectical models, social-cognition models illustrate that change is not always progressive or positive. For example, institutions that serve an important purpose and evolve to another, less important role are not necessarily progressing. Social-cognition models examine how change occurs (through learning, for example), rather than just identifying variables associated with change, the latter approach being common within evolutionary and teleological models (such variables may include senior management vision, political environment, new institutional structure, or orientation toward effectiveness). This provided needed nuanced data at a more micro level of the organization.

One criticism of social-cognition models has been that they de-emphasize the effects of environment and external forces on change. The systemic view and interconnected nature is sometimes lost when a focus on individuals and their perceptions is adopted. Some models within this perspective have tried to incorporate the environment, examining how individuals interpret the environment or system. Yet the underlying assumption is that there is no such independent system, beyond individuals. Also, some models suggest that individuals are pliable (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Morgan, 1996); this is also noted as a problem within teleological models. Some writers focus on changing people’s realities and worldviews (Nevis, Lancourt, and Vassallo, 1996). Critics claim that these models overemphasize people’s ability to change such fundamental aspects of their identity and reality. A direct criticism from cultural models is that social cognition ignores values, feelings, and emotions for the most part. Its emphasis on thinking, mental processes, and learning tends to exclude other aspects in understanding the nature of change, how it occurs, and why it occurs.

Cultural
Most models of change describe organizations as rational places with norms and rules. The major contribution of cultural models to the change literature
is their emphasis on irrationality (also emphasized in dialectical models), the spirit or unconscious, and the fluidity and complexity of organizations (also noted in social cognition). Cultural models blend the assumptions of the social-cognition and dialectical methods.

**Assumptions:** Change occurs naturally as a response to alterations in the human environment; cultures are always changing (Morgan, 1986). Cultural and dialectical models often overlap with the image of social movements as an analogy for cultural and political change (Morgan, 1986). The change process tends to be long-term and slow. Change within an organization entails alteration of values, beliefs, myths, and rituals (Schein, 1985). There is an emphasis on the symbolic nature of organizations, rather than the structural, human, or cognitive aspects emphasized within earlier theories. History and traditions are important to understand, as they represent the collection of change processes over time. Cultural approaches share many assumptions with social-cognition theories; change can be planned or unplanned, can be regressive or progressive, and can contain intended or unintended outcomes and actions (Smirich, 1983). Change tends to be nonlinear, irrational, unpredictable, ongoing, and dynamic (Smirich, 1983). Some cultural models focus on the leaders' ability to translate the change to individuals throughout the organizations through the use of symbolic actions, language, or metaphors as the key to creating change (Feldman, 1991). If there is an external motivator, it tends to be legitimacy, which is the primary motivator within the cultural model, rather than profit or productivity, which exemplify the teleological and environmental models.

Cultural approaches tend to emphasize phenomenological and social-constructivist approaches to the study of organizations. They also suggest the difficulty of deep change, realizing that radical change involves core modifications that are unlikely to occur without alterations of fundamental beliefs. One only needs to look at the research on cultural change within history, anthropology, or political science to realize that such change is often long-term, nonsequential, and seemingly unmanageable.
Examples: The earliest types of models within this category were paradigm-shifting and future-envisioning. Early models attempted to move away from the static view of organizations provided within teleological models such as organizational development and to examine fluid, dynamic, and complex processes that shape change, such as unconsciousness, energy, spirit, mission, purpose, belief systems, myths, worldview, symbols, and state of being. Some cultural theories purport to create change managers who understand the symbolic nature of organizations; Rosabeth Kanter’s famous book, *The Change Masters* (1983), epitomizes this tradition. Paradigm-shifting originally represented a cultural approach and social-cognition model, but over time, the rational management techniques that became associated with it have made many scholars identify these models as part of the teleological tradition. However, models of changing consciousness and rechanneling energy, which focus on spirit and the symbolic and deeper realities of organizations, remain embedded within the cultural perspective. An example of these approaches is the formation of consciousness groups within organizations. These groups meet and discuss the organizational identity and values, how people fit with or relate to the institutional identity, and ways that the values and identity are expressed, and delve into implicit and explicit values and basic assumptions. The purpose of such discussion is to understand the culture at a deeper level in order to foster change.

Schein (1985) is perhaps one of the best-known theorists of cultural change. Culture is a collective and shared phenomenon; it is reflected at different levels through the organizational mission, through individual beliefs, and subconsciously. Change occurs as various aspects of the organizational culture are altered; for example, if the mission is realigned or new rituals or myths are developed. His perspective on culture is reflected in the symbolic action approach, in which managers create change by modifying organizational member’s shared meaning—in other words, leaders re-create aspects of the symbolic system and culture. For example, leaders interpret events and history for people and create ceremonies and events that alter culture, thereby creating change (Cameron, 1991). Schein believes that certain cultures can be developed that are more open or prone to change.

Dawson illustrates a very different cultural approach in the processual change model. He studied change contextually, over time, examining the inter-
connection of substance, contexts, and politics (Dawson, 1994). The study
developed fifteen principles for change, such as ensuring that change strategies
are culturally sensitive and appreciate the potential tenacity of existing cultures;
the need to fully understand and communicate the substance of change, because
delay and conflict will otherwise emerge; and the fact that transition is unlikely
to be marked by a line of continual improvement from beginning to end.

Interpretive strategy is another example of a cultural model, based on the
assumptions that reality is socially constructed and the organization is a
collection of cooperative social agreements in which individuals strive for the
good of the overall organization (Chaffee, 1983). This approach entails develop-
ning orienting metaphors in order to lead or guide individuals' attitudes, alter-
ing the metaphors and thereby creating change. People are guided by metaphors
that relate to important organizational aspects that have meaning for them, such
as the history of the institution, rituals, or relationships with key individuals.
The language associated with these metaphors reflects how the organization
interacts with the external environment. It is difficult to develop a specific
approach for this strategy, as it depends on the particular context (Chaffee,
1983). Context tends to be critical across all models. Interpretive strategy stresses
that reality is incoherent, attitudinal, and cognitively complex; change must be
organizationwide, not just among top management; and motivation is more crit-
ical than information from environmental scanning or institutional assessment.

Key activities or individuals: Cultural theories, like social-cognition models,
tend to emphasize the collective process of change and the key role of each
individual. The most popular cultural models focus on leaders' ability to shape
organizational culture and on culture as collective or shared. Some cultural
theories focus on all organizational participants as unique in their interpreta-
tion of organizational culture and illustrate the difficulty of creating change
(Martin, 1992). The key activities to create change include modifying the mis-
sion and vision, creating new myths and rituals, leaders performing symbolic
actions, using metaphors, assessing the institutional culture, tapping into
energy, developing enthusiasm, altering motivations of people through spirit-
uality, and communicating values and beliefs.

Benefits and criticisms: The emphasis on context, complexity, and contra-
diction is an important contribution of cultural scholars (Collins, 1998). The
focus on values and beliefs within cultural models had been mostly overlooked by many theories. More recent social-cognition theories have incorporated and broadened their view to include the full range of human behavior, following the lead of cultural theories. Also, this set of theories reemphasized the temporal dimension of change (especially the extremely lengthy process related to second-order change) which was not emphasized in social-cognition and teleological models that had gained popularity over evolutionary and dialectical models in recent years (Collins, 1998). Revealing the relationship between institutional culture and change is also a major contribution. The promise of the emphasis on spirituality and unconscious processes has not really been investigated or illustrated at this point.

Models such as Schein’s (1985), in which culture is seen simplistically as a collective and shared process among all organizational members and one that can be manipulated and managed, have come under serious criticism for oversimplifying the notion of culture. The assumption of plasticity of people, noted as problematic in the section on teleological models, is also voiced about theories of “managing culture” or “creating a culture of change” (Collins, 1998). More complex models of culture have evolved, but have been criticized for other reasons. For example, Burnes (1996) notes that a cultural perspective is often perceived as problematic because change is conceptualized as being so long-term and the layers of culture are so complex. Thus, this perspective is sometimes seen as impractical for application.

Multiple Models

Some researchers suggest using an amalgam of several models or categories, as each sheds light on different aspects of organizational life (Van de Ven and Poole, 1995). The advantage to multiple models is that they combine the insights of various change theories. Several examples of multiple models are presented to illustrate how assumptions from teleological, evolutionary, political, cultural, social-cognition, and life-cycle models can be combined to understand change. For example, Morgan (1986) suggests that a combination of evolutionary, dialectical, and cognitive theories best represents change within organizations. Rajagopalan and Spreitzer (1996) combined cognitive, evolutionary
(rational), and scientific management (learning) theories into a model of strategic change for businesses, exploiting the theoretical synergy of the models. Rajagopalan and Spreitzer argue that the perspectives are not irreconcilable, as others have critiqued. They note, for instance, that scientific management theories correct the weakness of evolutionary theories that exclude managerial actions. Each theory is seen as counteracting a weakness within the other.

One popular example of multiple models is Bolman and Deal’s four frames of organizational change (1991). They note that the different organizational theories also represent unique ways people approach or act in organizations, and that by combining the various theories or lenses, leaders can more accurately assess situations and move toward solutions (Bolman and Deal, 1991). Multidimensional thinking is identified as characterizing the best and most successful managers. The four lenses examined are: human resource, structural, political, and symbolic. For example, through a symbolic lens, leaders can see how change results in a loss of meaning and purpose—people form attachments to symbols and have difficulty letting go. Through a political perspective, change generates conflict; managing change effectively requires the creation of arenas in which issues can be negotiated. Change also alters stable roles and relationships, creating confusion. Attention to structure through the realignment of formal patterns and policies helps to facilitate change. Last, people can feel incompetent, needy, or powerless as a result of change. Psychological support can be provided through training and opportunities for involvement (Bolman and Deal, 1991). It is the leader’s role to provide all these aspects.

Senge’s model of learning organizations (1990) blends evolutionary, social-cognition, cultural, and teleological models, even though it is mostly a reflection of teleological assumptions. Learning organizations characterize managers as using systems, thinking to create change by examining interrelationships that shape system behavior, and acting in tune with larger natural and economic processes (notice the similarity to evolutionary assumptions). He also notes the importance of examining our mental models in order to foster change. Managers are to reflect, clarify, and improve the internal pictures of the world and notice how they shape actions (also described by Bolman and Deal, 1991; Morgan, 1986). A cultural approach is exemplified by the need to
create a culture in which all members develop so that they can achieve their
goals and purposes, ideally aligned with institutional change efforts. Life-cycle
models are reflected, to some degree, through the emphasis on human develop-
ment. Last, the model illustrates teleological assumptions about the manager
as the active force that enacts the core disciplines of a learning organization:
(1) developing your personal mastery (personal vision, holding creative tension,
commitment to truth, and the like); (2) identifying and altering mental models;
(3) creating shared vision; (4) systems thinking; and (5) fostering team learning.
The emphasis on vision, working in teams, and the leader creating a shared
vision for the organization reflects the teleological tradition. This may account
for the popularity of Senge’s model: it responds to the research on change,
incorporating many of the key principles that we know, but takes a teleologi-
cal approach and provides organizations with a rational model that managers
can enact.

Another well-known model is Pettigrew’s open learning system (1985).
The scholar describes environmental assessment and strategy as critical, but
also believes that leaders are central, operational changes need realigning, and
human resources need to be developed for change to be successfully executed
(Burnes, 1996; Pettigrew, 1985). As noted in the beginning of this article, evo-
lutionary and teleological approaches are the most commonly combined
because the two approaches keep critiquing and correcting each other.

Others researchers use the various models as a way to examine different
aspects or levels of the change process. For example, Burnes (1996) notes how
evolutionary or contingency models can be used for examining change at the
broadest level, life-cycle models can be used to determine the life stage of
the organization, cultural models might reveal the intricacies of the organiza-
tions power and interest groups, and social-cognition theories can be used to
analyze individual worldviews. This seems to be a powerful perspective that
few researchers have adopted.

Summary

This article has reviewed the six major categories of change models or theories,
focusing on their assumptions, examples, key activities and individuals, benefits,
and possible weaknesses. The life-cycle, evolutionary, and teleological models have all been critiqued for emphasizing stages (for example, growth or phases of strategy) and linearity. The political and social-cognition theories have been touted for their sophistication in illustrating complexity and in showing the regressive phases of change, ambiguity, struggle, and sometimes irrationality. Yet political and social-cognition models generally ignore the environment or system and have limited ability to predict change. Cultural models embrace a more systematic view and reveal the complications of second order-change, but often provide limited practical advice or tools. Each model appears to suffer from some interpretive weakness and to have some strengths in furthering our understanding. As we move into the application of these models within higher education, it is important to focus on both the strengths and weaknesses of these models. After reviewing these six models of organizational change, I have concluded that the strongest approach is to combine certain assumptions from various approaches. This monograph will examine the application of these theories to higher education. However, first it is important to describe the distinctive features of higher education, which is the focus of the next article. The reason for providing this analysis is to develop an approach to change that is sensitive to higher education's distinctive character in order to apply these theories contextually, as cultural models have suggested is crucial.
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