**SYSTEMIC LEADERSHIP AND RESISTING CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS**

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Excellent work with the annotations Stephanie. The purpose of each is clearly explained, the critiques are well reasoned and the relevance to your research area is explicit. You have conducted meaningful foundation work for not only your next assignment but also your literature review. Thank you!

**Preface**

The following annotated bibliography summarizes eight research studies to help answer the following question: How does a systemic leadership approach reduce resistance to change within a student immersion group engaging with a different culture? In conducting this literature review, the following logic paradigm was employed in developing this question:

1. Immersion programs consist of a student group traveling together to a foreign culture.
2. Immersion groups become their own organization with expected norms and culture based on the group’s members.
3. The leader of the immersion group organization becomes the change manager.
4. The group’s success in productively responding to change integral to the immersion program is due in part to the leader’s ability to help the group navigate that change.
5. Navigating that change includes reducing the group’s resistance to change, including the contextual environments, habits, patterns, and myths.
6. To understand that context, a systemic, holistic-based leadership approach allows for the reduction of resistance and an increase in acceptance and effective engagement with the new culture.

Based on this logic and my overarching research question, this annotated bibliography provides insight into understanding an organization, understanding culture, understanding systems thinking, and examining the role and use of language and myth, social accounts, life stories, and process of change. I intentionally considered authors and articles from multiple countries and contexts, including South Africa, the UK, New Zealand, the United States, Israel, and Finland, and who submitted their publications within the past twenty years.

Bathurst, R. & Monin, N. (2010). Finding myth and motive in language: A narrative of

organizational change. *Journal of Management Inquiry*. 19(3), 262-272.

Bathurst, R. J., & Monin, N. (2010). Finding Myth and Motive in Language: A Narrative of Organizational Change. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *19*(3), 262–272. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492610362917

Bathurst and Monin examine the definition and role of myth in organizational change.

Defining myth as a type of speech, or an “ideology in narrative form,” the authors argue a myth contains a first and second order semiology, that is, the words become symbols and represent a specific interpretation (p. 265). The authors argue that uncovering the embedded myth in an organization’s ideology can allow the second-order semiology to instigate, support, and lead change behavior rather than impede change. This qualitative, primary source study used a phenomenological approach, including interviews and journal records, in addition to secondary sources, to analyze the use of myth and how it changed in an Australian orchestra.

Myths are defined as stories and narratives deeply embedded in the culture such that the myth is normalized as inherent to human understanding; reality is ordered by myths. In organizational change where resistance is persistent, the recognition of our human myth-making and the emotion attached to those myths allows a new narrative – that is, language – to reshape the myth. In this way, group members maintain agency as they choose to redefine the myths underlying their beliefs and assumptions.

In immersion programs, a key challenge is identifying the source behind assumptions, particularly when beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors are in conflict with a new context. This article’s key strength is revealing the historical roots and underlying assumptions behind the narrative we assume. Those narratives can provide a sense of security and structure, and during an immersion program in a vastly different context and culture, the leader must address they unspoken myths to avoid rejection, unease, and fear of the new.

Nkomo, S. & Kriek, D. (2011). Leading organizational change in the ‘new’ South Africa. *Journal*

*of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. 84, 453-470.

Nkomo, S. M., & Kriek, D. (2011). Leading organizational change in the ‘new’ South Africa. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *84*(3), 453–470. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.2011.02020.x

Nkomo and Kriek examine how successful change leadership has occurred in the South African context following apartheid and significant socio-political changes. The authors’ purpose is to demonstrate and illuminate how the source of change leadership can be revealed and understood through the leaders’ life stories, and their reflections on those stories. As a primary source, this two-pronged, qualitative research study used an emic approach combining life history methodology and case research method; sampling was theoretical and consisted of 14 organizations; data collection incorporated two-part, semi-structured interviews.

Key conclusions from this study illuminated four themes used by leaders to facilitate organizational change: embrace change, provide hope, connect change to values and culture, champion diversity. Understanding life stories reveal how leaders perceive, interpret and respond to change based on their attached meaning to their stories. Leaders must address both “hard systems” (processes, structure) and “soft systems” (culture, habits, patterns) to lead successful change while avoiding a fixed plan and allowing strategies for change to emerge.

This study demonstrates how a leader’s life story underlies his/her influence, response, and navigation to organizational change and re-creation as emerging culture, values, structures, people, and processes arise and intersect with the organization/group; in an immersion program, the leader is affecting the same. This systemic understanding of the role of life stories leads to another question not addressed in this study, which is how the knowledge of a leader’s life story may influence the recipients of change. Would students respond differently to organizational change during an immersion program if they understood the leader’s life story?

Oreg, S. (2007). Personality, context, and resistance to organizational change. *European Journal*

*of Work and Organizational Psychology*. 15(1), 73-101.

This study explores how to reduce resistance to change by addressing the change process. Considering both the antecedents and consequences, Oreg’s study argues the importance of identifying resistance as a multi-faceted construct, and defined resistance to change as having affective, behavioral, and cognitive components (p. 76). The primary source research study used a mixed method approach to assess a defense industry organization with about 800 employees. Semi-structured interviews (n-17) were coupled with 177 surveys, a structural equations modeling was used to test antecedents and outcomes simultaneously.

Oreg distinguished the change process from the change outcome. The most significant antecedent variable affecting resistance was trust in management. A lack of confidence in an organization’s leader most strongly correlated with negative attitudes, behaviors, and cognition toward the change. In addition, social influence – whether an individual is surrounded by advocates or critics of the change – has a significant impact on the resistance or acceptance of change. Information, on the other hand, was not correlated with an affective or behavioral reduction in resistance to change.

This study reveals the factors contributing to the resistance of change (outcome), and the characteristics and context necessary to reduce affective, behavioral and cognitive change (process). Understanding that trust in leadership rises as the key factor of successful organizational change speaks to the importance of the immersion group’s leader, who will facilitate the group’s ability to positively respond to and navigate change.

Shaked, H. & Schechter, C. (2016). Sources of systems thinking in school leadership. *Journal of*

*School Leadership*. 26, 468-494.

Shaked and Schechter consider systems thinking as an interdisciplinary, conceptual framework that orientates a perspective toward the whole and the interrelationships therein. The authors first identified the characteristics of a successful systems approach among school leaders, and then examined the sources that facilitate systems-thinking development. This primary source, qualitative study was conducted in Israel including 82 semi-structured interviews and six focus groups with a target audience of pre-service (n=24), novice (n=11), and experienced principals (n=28). This four-staged data analysis was coded and triangulated.

This study revealed four main sources of systems thinking in school leadership: managerial experience; role models; academic study; and natural tendency. These findings similarly correlated with earlier studies that found experiential learning, a supportive environment, interpersonal and communications skills, and positive attitudes help develop a systems-thinking approach. This research emphasized the significance of role modeling, mentoring, and management experience in building a systems thinking approach among leaders. Moreover, a reductionist method of training does not lead to learning a systemic approach, but rather a contextual and holistic learning practice is needed.

Implications of this study highlight how a leader learns a systemic approach and the characteristics necessary to holistically approach a different context, culture, and pattern – the reality of an immersion program. This study mentions the power of indirect influence; a subsequent study exploring this theme, particularly as it pertains to school leaders working in intercultural environments, would strengthen this research.

Suchman, A. (2011). Organizations as machines, organizations as conversations. *Medical Care*.

49(12)1, S43-S48.

This study critiques the view of organizations as mechanical, static entities that impede change and the effectiveness of an organization, and proposes an alternate view that organizations are dynamic, evolving, relational, and composed of thinking individuals.

Suchman argues organizations should be conceived as conversations based on human interaction generating self-organizing patterns of thinking (the organizational identity and knowledge) and relational (organizational culture). This qualitative, primary source study used a phenomenological approach with appreciative storytelling and open-ended interviews to analyze 80 life stories from students and faculty at the Indiana University School of Medicine.

Key findings include recognizing a control-oriented approach to organizations negatively effects change. Organizations are rooted in the principles of complexity dynamics; context cannot be separated from organizational assessments. The inclusion of culture, diversity, and stories must be used to recognize patterns of how knowledge, attitudes and habits are developed and expanded. Organizations are conversations, reflecting patterns of meaning and relating; the role of a leader is to interrupt existing patterns to initiate change. Leaders therefore should integrate appreciative inquiry and encourage not just recognition of difference but also responsiveness to those differences.

This study demonstrates the importance of culture, diversity, and the role of the leader in fostering a group who can identify, reflect, and respond to change and difference. This study also recognizes actors behave and act within an organization, not on an organization. A next question is how research methods reinforce the perspective of an organization as a machine.

Teerikangas, S. & Hawk, D. (2002). Approaching cultural diversity through the lenses of systems

thinking and complexity theory. *International Society for the Systems Sciences*. Shanghai: 46th Annual Meeting.

This article examines the role of and linkages between systems thinking, complexity theory, and culture, and how to manage cultural diversity within a system. The authors argue the complexity of culture requires a systemic approach integrating complexity theory to approach and manage cultural diversity. The concept of a mechanistic worldview, reductionism, and objectification of culture is diminished in favor of a systemic frame equipped to hold complex, interrelated, and dynamic facets of culture, context, conditions, and perspectives. This abstract and article is a secondary source, in which the authors are analyzing and assessing an in-depth literature review.

The authors conclude a holistic and expansionist approach as found in systems and complexity theories reflects the “living nature” of an organization as its members embody and respond to changing cultures, contexts, and chaos. In contrast, from an organizational perspective, a scientific, reductionist approach removes the interrelationships present between team members, management, and context. In practice, as diversity is increasingly accepted, thinking patterns tend to remain mono-cultural and rely on “traditional boundaries and rational thinking” (p. 8), which is complicated by the presence of the formal and informal organization.

The authors’ supposition that the “norm” of an organization is complex, as in complexity theory, but their logic here is weakly ascribed to “intuition” (p. 11). The authors also could have bolstered their argument by a fairer assessment of the scientific method, which has evolved since Newton’s approach just as other theoretical approaches have developed.

Tsoukas, H. & Chia, R. (2002). On organizational becoming: Rethinking organizational change.

*Organization Science*. 13(5), 567-582.

Tsoukas and Chia posit that change is the normal state of organizations. As such, organizations are in a continuous state of evolving and re-organizing in response to new stimuli affecting the organization and its members. This study seeks to demonstrate how the interrelationships of human actors create a pattern, which then becomes an organization, and that this organization inherently will shift again as new patterns emerge. This secondary source research study reviewed and analyzed dozens of ethnographic studies to support its hypothesis.

This study’s finding is an organization is shaped by change and how its actors make sense of a new context in which their organization exists. As the organization is inherently a response to change, the organization is both becoming (a state of constant evolving based on interrelated dynamics) and has become (a momentary static entity). This interrelational web underlying the becoming of the organization arises from human actors engaging in reflection, sensory systems, sharing meanings, and re-thinking generalities. The role of management is to observe what is occurring, perceive differences, craft new relevant patterns, and help interweave the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes to help an organizational change emerge, be responsive, and be perceived as legitimate to its members and others.

A key strength in this study was its logic based on a significant review of literature; to strengthen their conclusions, the authors could conduct primary research. In immersion programs, the continually evolving nature of an organization and the inter-relationships of its members is particularly visible; the leader’s role to support and legitimize these shifts can ensure group cohesiveness and the absorption of new stimuli, senses, and emotions.

Tucker, D., Yeow, P. & Viki, G.T. (2012). Communicating during organizational change using

social accounts: The importance of ideological accounts. *Management Communication Quarterly.* 27(2), 184-209.

Tucker, Yeow and Viki are interested in how effective communication is a tool to engender a positive response to planned organizational change. The authors assess three types of social accounts (causal, ideological, and referential) as communication methods used in sense making and trust building. Social accounts are defined by the authors as the explanations given to individuals and teams on why decisions and actions are taken (p. 185). The purpose of this study is to examine how managerial accounts of change affect an individual’s understanding of the change and trust, thereby testing a hypothesis that the ideological account is most indicative of successful change management. This primary source research study used a quantitative approach, including scales, surveys, questionnaires, and an exploratory factor analysis to examine two case studies.

The authors conclude ideological accounts best improve trust in management in a planned organizational change as such accounts integrate and explain how change is interrelated with the goals and objectives of the organization. Ideological accounts therefore reduce resistance to change as trust is built and individuals and teams are less inclined to imagine explanations behind change, and therefore avoid false rumors and misunderstandings.

Social accounts are part of a holistic strategy to reduce resistance to change and allow organizations to support its members to navigate and adapt to changing contexts and conditions, essential during an immersion program. While the authors examined the perceptions of individuals, they did not explore the practical execution of a social account.

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