

TITLE: Instigating Bottom-Up Change: Reconstructing Resistance and Possibility

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Biography:

Michael Y. Moon, Ph.D. is an assistant professor in the department of Public Affairs and Administration at California State University, East Bay. He received a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from Columbia University and an M.B.A. from the Yale School of Management. He also holds a Certificate from the Program in Organizational Development and Consultation at the William Alanson White Institute in New York City. Dr. Moon has over 15 years of experience working in management and marketing roles in organizations including Onsale.com, American Express, and Aetna. Dr. Moon's research interests include bottom-up organizational change and professional training in organizational praxis.

Acknowledgements:

I am grateful for a 2007 Faculty Fellowship from the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences, California State University, East Bay in support of my work on this paper.

Structured Abstract

Category: General review

Purpose:

To propose a social constructionist practitioner approach for framing and instigating organization change from a non-executive, non-managerial perspective, extending the reasoning of Jeffrey Ford (1999) that describes organizational change as conversational shifts.

Design/methodology/approach:

Instead of construing conversations as a tool for use in the change process, language and conversations are considered the context in which change occurs. Resistance to change must be understood to understand possibilities for change.

Findings:

This paper provides a starting point for theoreticians and practitioners to articulate and explore potentials of non-manager bottom-up instigated organization change. Through conversation, sensemaking, sensegiving, and self-awareness, the change agent must reconstruct resistance to and possibility for change.

Practical implications:

Non-executive, non-managerial employees may gain a new framework to initiate organizational change. Managers interested in supporting such initiatives amongst their employees may provide

conditions and training that incorporate this framework. Educators can teach organizational change that does not advocate solely the traditional top-down paradigm.

Originality/value:

Expands the organizational change literature with a focused discussion on bottom-up change instigated by non-managerial, low-level employees, from the employee vantage point, using a social constructionist theoretical framework. The intended target audiences are practitioners, educators, trainers, and theoreticians.

Keywords

Bottom-up organization change

Resistance

Social constructionist theory

Conversation

Praxis

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Understanding the possibilities for organization change requires an understanding of organization resistance to change (Weick & Quinn, 1999). From the perspective of a low-level employee interested in instigating bottom-up organization change, resistance can be a defining dynamic of change efforts. By increasing one's understanding of resistance and possibility, the change agent may better identify opportunities for selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993) and initiating (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) bottom-up change. A key concern in this paper is how bottom-up change may be enacted by reconstructing change resistance (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008) and possibility for change through a conversational framework (Ford, 1999).

By using the term, instigate, I acknowledge the subversive potential of bottom-up change. But to instigate something is also to initiate an event and stimulate interest. When instigation involves others, a shared social commitment is inherent to the action or event. The shared movement is based on compelling information or vision that arouses more people than just the instigator into action.

Both resistance to and possibility for change are discussed in this paper as interrelated perspectives for a bottom-up change instigator. Both resistance and possibility are constructions that emerge through a change agent's engagement with the organization. Ford (1999) frames organization change as conversational shifts, and notions of resistance and possibility are often constructed in the organization's conversations.

The next section introduces Ford's approach to organizations as a complex of conversations (Ford, 1999; Ford et al., 2008; Ford, Ford, & McNamara, 2002), whether the more conventional face-to-face type or more figurative discourse spread over space and time. Because organizations are constructed through an elaborate thicket of conversations, the dynamics of organization change can be framed as elements of those conversations. Following the discussion on conversationally constructed organizations, I first discuss resistance, because of its primacy from the bottom-up change instigator's vantage point. Then I move to a discussion about proactively reconstructing possibility for change. In the final section, I discuss implications for practice and research.

Constructing Organizations Through Conversations

Organization leaders and their employees all conduct their work from their socially constructed perspectives. Change initiatives that have broad organizational reach will require a consideration of issues of power and authority. Nevertheless, because of the nondeterministic nature of change in organizations, employee initiated organizational change holds potential that has not yet been fully described in the literature. A central question in this paper is how non-executive, non-managerial employees may use language to shift how their peers and others within their organization understand how work *could be* accomplished in contrast to how *it is* accomplished and whether this may yield behavior change. If individuals are initiating their own projects to change (e.g., improve) how work is accomplished without a specific organization-wide mandate, what are some praxis implications from the individual's perspective? I argue that framing

employee initiated organizational change as change through conversations may provide opportunities that existing power and authority organizational structures do not formally afford.

An aspect of the context of change that provides opportunities for bottom-up change are the daily and background organizational conversations (Ford, 1999). Conversations and their networks of constructed meaning provide a contextual landscape of opportunities for bottom-up change.

Conversations in organizations are the textual and contextual network of dialogues and meanings that people create about the organization and work that occurs through it (Ford & Ford, 1995).

Rather than conversation being a tool for change, change is a process within conversations that exist in the organization (Ford & Ford, 1995).

Conversations take on various forms. They can consist of a single speech act or complex collections of speech acts, such as dialogues, narratives, informal chats, and formal encounters. Conversations can be ‘in-the-moment’ utterances or can span years through a sustained series of linked linguistic events, such as a series of published papers responding to prior publications or the process of revising a decades-old policy. Conversations can be linguistic acts (e.g., verbalizations, typing emails) and they may also be subtexts that serve as ‘background conversations’ (Ford, 1999) to in-the-moment conversations. Background conversations are an implicit, unspoken ‘back drop’ within which explicit conversations occur and on which they rely for grounding and understanding. Background conversations are manifest in our everyday dealings as a taken for granted familiarity or obviousness

that pervades our situation and is presupposed in our every conversation (Ford, 1999, p. 484).

This intertextual backdrop of background conversations provides a sense of continuity among in-the-moment utterances.

Language and networks of conversations make up organizations rather than reside within them or simply describe their objective conditions (Ford, 1999). Ford proposes a conversational perspective on change in organizations in which organizations and conditions within them are comprised of networks of conversations that may be shifted through dialogue (Ford, 1999). The network of background conversations and active daily conversations

are and provide the very texture of organizations. Planning, budgeting, hiring, firing, promoting, managing, rewarding, etc. are all conversations that are interconnected and constitutive of organizations and which are themselves constituted by different [...] realities. Organizations, therefore, are not discursively monolithic, but pluralistic and polyphonic with many conversations occurring simultaneously and sequentially. (Ford, 1999, p. 485)

The organization is a complex of conversations that reflect the multitudes of perspectives and ideas among its employees. These perspectives include the various organizational functions, areas of expertise, and personal concerns.

Change as Conversational Shifts

Individuals within their subgroups of organizations use conversations to shift meanings and, therefore action, based on these changing meanings in organizations. Even beyond using language to persuade others to change their behaviors (Garvin & Roberto, 2005), how individuals understand their organization can also be changed by shifting the background conversations and shared meanings of the organization. That is, how an employee shifts the use of language in their conversations can help shift others' interpretations of the organization. This is what Ford describes as "conversational shifts" (1999, pp. 488-492). In this way nonexecutive employees may enact organizational change.

The form of change enacted through shifting conversations is not a trivial or superficial change. As noted above, conversations take on various forms, ranging from the simplest single speech act to linked linguistic events across various locales and time frames. The conversations of organizational change are typically of the sustained series of linked linguistic events that depend also on a shifting set of background conversations. Catalyzing change in others' constructed realities about how they might think and act in their organizational context can be the most powerful sort of change because it minimizes resistance that can be so common when change efforts are not persuasive (Ford et al., 2002; Garvin & Roberto, 2005).

Resistance to Change as a Construction

The notion of resistance to change is a construction. It is an interpretation of conditions as they appear to an observer of change. Traditionally, resistance has been a change agent-centric concept that blames the 'resisters' and connotes noncompliant, anxious recipients of change (Val

& Fuentes, 2003). Resistance is a dynamic that results from multidimensional sources (Piderit, 2000), involves relationships over time (Ford et al., 2008), and emerges through interactions between people. Resistance is not a phenomenon that exists outside of the human interactions involved in change. As resistance emerges as a characteristic of the ongoing dynamics of change, the change agent begins to understand what is going on through the process of sensemaking (Ford et al., 2008; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Sensemaking is a process of engaging with others to gather information and experience to construct a coherent narrative of a lapse in understanding.

For an individual endeavoring to engage in bottom-up organizational change, resistance and other obstacles are palpable conditions. Faced with daunting obstacles such as a noncommittal supervisor, lack of funds, minimal credibility because of limited positional power, and overall organizational inertia, many individuals with low level power and authority in organizations question the possibility of bringing about change in organizations. However, bottom-up change happens all the time. Julian Orr (1996) writes about Xerox copy machine technicians who created social networks amongst themselves to enhance their solitary attempts to repair copy machines. Their bottom-up activities brought about significant changes in how future Xerox technicians would collaborate in the field. Morrison and Phelps (1999) have studied the ways in which employees take on 'extrarole' efforts to initiate change. A vital question for anyone hoping to bring about bottom-up change is "What is the nature of resistance and other obstacles that are likely to decrease my likelihood of success?"

Resistance to bottom-up change poses a unique set of additional challenges for the instigator, as compared to top-down change. Because of the structural constraints for bottom-up change instigators, obstacles as well as resistance to change must be considered. When conceptualized from a bottom-up perspective, change is not simply faced with the issue of attitude (e.g., resistance; Piderit, 2000) but also of access to networks and resources. Through power and authority, top-down change initiatives tend to have direct access to channels of communication and resources that a bottom-up effort will not.

Access need not be broad access. A common notion of knowledge management is that effective information delivery is not about scale but about targeting those who need the information. Top-down change management has the luxury of access to those who are deemed to need information. Bottom-up change instigators often do not have such access because of their relatively minor positional power and limited authority to disseminate information and directives throughout the organization. Access is also an aspect of organizational culture. How others make themselves available to coworkers is also sanctioned within the cultural milieu of the organization. It is not solely a matter of power and authority.

Therefore, taking into account the organization context of change, such as power, authority, culture, and accessible resources — while obviously important for top-down change — is vital for bottom-up instigated change. In particular, we must reconsider the notion of resistance to change to reasonably discuss bottom-up instigated change.

Reconstructing Resistance

Again, the notion of resistance to change is a construction. How one perceives resistance depends on one's role in relation to the change and one's proclivities for applying the designation of 'resistance'. Although literature reviews of resistance to change have yielded rich and compelling perspectives on the concept (Ford et al., 2008; Ford et al., 2002; Piderit, 2000; Val & Fuentes, 2003), its definition and methods of detection are not uniform in the literature. The nature of resistance is deeply situational and emerges through the socially constructed meanings of organizational conversations (Ford et al., 2002) about change and its place in the organization. The notion of resistance to change resists precise generalizations about its conditions and characteristics. When it comes to identifying inertia or resistance, interuser reliability may not be high, particularly when understanding its underlying causes.

Therefore, the bottom-up instigator of change is caught in a bind because identifying sources and causes of resistance is vital to successful change yet a diverse range of models and viewpoints on resistance are available from which to choose. Val and Fuentes (2003) conducted a literature review on resistance and developed a list of sources of resistance (or inertia) to change (see Table 1). The sources emerge from the formulation and implementation stages of change, and they consist of the following five areas: 1) Distorted perception, interpretation barriers and vague strategic priorities, 2) Low motivation, 3) Lack of a creative response, 4) Political and cultural deadlocks, and 4) Other sources such as leadership inaction, collection action problems, capabilities gaps, and cynicism. Certainly, all of these areas could factor into detracting from bottom-up change.

TABLE 1: SOURCES OF RESISTANCE OR INERTIA (Val & Fuentes, 2003, p. 150)

<i>Inertia in the formulation stage</i> Distorted perception, interpretation barriers and vague strategic priorities	Myopia Denial Perpetuation of ideas Implicit assumptions Communication barriers Organization silence Direct costs of change Cannibalization costs Cross subsidy comforts Past failures Different interests among employees and management Fast and complex environmental changes Resignation Inadequate strategic vision
<i>Inertia in the implementation stage</i> Political and cultural deadlocks	Implementation climate and relation between change values and organization values Department politics Incommensurable beliefs Deep rooted values Forgetfulness of the social dimension of changes
Other sources	Leadership inaction Embedded routines Collective action problems Capabilities gap Cynicism

As a socially constructed notion, resistance may infuse organizational conversations. In some cases, resistance can also be part of the subtext of background conversations that a change agent may not be aware of. That is, the social networks that serve as the context to change are not always transparent or revealed to the change agent. People in organizations speak about things and they also speak around them, either in elliptical ways or in collusion with some social

defense such as an organizational ritual (Hirschhorn, 1990). It is notable that social defenses are likely powerful in the face of change because of the anxiety that change typically elicits in organizations. So, resistance is not always readily observable to change agents, whether for the top-down manager or bottom-up instigator.

The practical result is that resistance must be reconstructed to be understood. Resistance is not a phenomenon that exists to be discovered. As a construction, it is perceived, interpreted, and reconstructed from the observer's vantage point. Members of the organization undergoing change have constructed their grounds for resisting change (e.g., Val & Fuentes, 2003), but these perspectives vary because of the fluid and heterogeneous processes of organizing (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Through reconstruction, the change agent gathers information and interprets it in real-time, attempting to make sense of resistance or potential resistance. The change agent may or may not have access to all conversations and background conversations relating to resistance; he or she constructs a picture based on the information available to them. By seeking to understand resistance in this way, the change agent engages in a sensemaking process as described by Weick and his colleagues (Weick et al., 2005). Instead of taking a rational decision making approach to resistance, the sensemaking process is focused on developing plausible answers to the question, "What is going on here?" As Weick and colleagues put it, "Sensemaking is not about truth and getting it right. Instead, it is about continued redrafting of an emerging story so that it becomes more comprehensive, incorporates more of the observed data, and is more resilient in the face of criticism" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 415).

Ford and colleagues (Ford et al., 2008) use the idea of reconstructing resistance — with what they call sensemaking — to facilitate change agents’ reflexive understanding of participation in resistance dynamics (c.f., Argyris, 1991). They point out that resistance to change is a dynamic among three elements: 1) the change recipients’ behaviors and communications, 2) inclusion of what the authors call “‘agent sensemaking’ including agents’ interpretations of and meanings given to actual or anticipated recipient actions as well as the actions agents take as a function of their own interpretations and meanings” (p. 370), and 3) the “‘agent-recipient relationship’ that provides the context in which the first two elements occur and that shapes, and is shaped by, agent-recipient interactions” (p. 371).

Sensemaking allows a process by which the reflexive change agent may negotiate their understanding of a specific situation. According to Karl Weick and colleagues (Weick et al., 2005), sensemaking involves:

the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing. Viewed as a significant process of organizing, sensemaking unfolds as a sequence in which people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively, while enacting more or less order into those ongoing circumstances (p. 409).

Establishing plausibility in making sense of conditions that no longer conform with expected practice is a key objective of sensemaking. This contrasts with models of rational decision making because problem solving for the purpose of moving toward general long-term goals is not solely dependent on accurately perceiving situations and problems (Weick et al., 2005).

Sensemaking allows individuals to resume their work by constructing plausible solutions that return the workflow back to better understood and less uncertain terrain. Any errant actions resulting from the sensemaking process will be addressed after conditions are stabilized.

As a change agent attempts to make sense of disruptions or confusion in the planned change process, he or she engages in dialogue with organization members about possible reasons for the interruption (Rouleau, 2005; Weick et al., 2005). According to Weick and his colleagues, “the image of sensemaking as activity that talks events and organizations into existence suggests that patterns of organizing are located in the actions and conversations that occur on behalf of the presumed organization and in the texts of those activities that are preserved in social structures” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 413). The process of sensemaking is also a method for shifting conversations (Ford, 1999) and, therefore, changing the organization and its constructed existence. In other words, “sensemaking and organization constitute each other” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 410).

Inherent in the sensemaking process is sensegiving (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Rouleau, 2005). Sensegiving is “concerned with [an individual’s] attempts to influence the outcome, to communicate their thoughts about the change to others, and to gain their support” (Rouleau, 2005, p. 1415). Sensemaking and sensegiving imply each other and are two sides of the same coin. Both involve discourse and action in the continuous pursuit of making meaning within organizations.

Notably, the sensemaking process also affects the identities of the change agent and organization members. The sensemaking process involves the change agent's evolving identity in his or her role as change agent. Identity and sensemaking rely on sensegiving and the image one conveys.

As Weick and his colleagues put it:

From the perspective of sensemaking, who we think we are (identity) as organizational actors shapes what we enact and how we interpret, which affects what outsiders think we are (image) and how they treat us, which stabilizes or destabilizes our identity. Who we are lies importantly in the hands of others, which means our categories for sensemaking lies in their hands. If their images of us change, our identities may be destabilized and our receptiveness to new meanings increase. Sensemaking, filtered through issues of identity, is shaped by the recipe 'how can I know who we are becoming until I see what they say and do with our actions?' (p. 416)

It is difficult to separate the change agent's sense of identity from the process of sensemaking (c.f., Smith & Berg, 1987). To some extent, we see ourselves in our work. And our work often takes on manifestations of our inner dynamics (Hirschhorn, 1990; Sullivan, 2002). The change agent's sense of role identity also emerges on a practical and skills level (Hartley, Benington, & Binns, 1997).

Ford and his colleagues' (Ford et al., 2008) notion of reconstructing resistance touches upon the change agent's own motivations and personal contributions to the sensemaking of resistance.

However, they do not explore the implications for organizational identity as Weick and his colleagues integrate it with the sensemaking process. In fact, for the bottom-up change instigator,

personal self-awareness and reflexivity are particularly critical for establishing and maintaining credibility and minimizing the dynamic of resistance. The resources and channels of activity available to top-down change agents are more extensive than for the bottom-up change instigator. The base of operations for the individual seeking to instigate change is typically one's common sense and judgment (Moon, 2008) as well as any additional organizational information and change-supporting evidence at his or her disposal (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001). This means that precious few opportunities to make the case for bottom-up change exist. The greater understanding that the bottom-up change instigator has of his or her personal and professional rationales, interests, and actions, the better the change instigator is positioned to take advantage of any opportunities for success that may arise.

Therefore, the observer's personal self-awareness and reflexivity must also be taken into account in reconstructing resistance. Self-awareness is the intrapersonal conscious processing of one's emotions, thoughts, behaviors, motives, and desires. It can involve retrospective or in-the-moment awareness, and has been described to facilitate one's personal and professional growth (Bennis, 1994; Epstein, 1999; Goleman, 1995).

Reflexivity has been defined in many different ways (Holland, 1999). Holland (1999) proposes several levels of reflexivity in his review of the social sciences literatures for denotations of the term. The first level maintains one's focus within the boundaries of a discipline and considers "the person producing the theory [as being] included within the subject matter he attempts to understand" (p. 465). Holland calls this level of reflexivity "reflexivity one" (p. 465). Higher levels of reflexivity involve broader transdisciplinary critiques of one's discipline including

postmodern extra-disciplinary analysis. 'Reflexivity one' is the sense of the term that Ford and his colleagues (Ford et al., 2008) advocate the change agent use in conjunction with their sensemaking of resistance and the sense of the term used in this paper.

Reflexivity differs from self-awareness. Reflexivity places the individual's frame of analysis on his or her effect on others who are the subject of that individual's observations. In contrast, self-awareness places the frame of analysis primarily on the individual's intrapersonal processes and conditions. A dialectical relationship exists between self-awareness and reflexivity. Self-awareness allows for reflexivity and understanding of one's effect on others. In turn, the reflexive frame of analysis brings additional understanding for one's self-awareness of how one influences and is influenced by others through such processes as projective identification (Sullivan, 2002) and other interpersonal dynamics (e.g., Argyris, 1991).

When change agents sustain their self-awareness of emotions, frames of reference, and other aspects of intra- and interpersonal relations, they make themselves available to reflexivity and intersubjective dialogue with others. The idea that in order for one to help others, one must know oneself is presented in the works of Buber ("Ich-Du" vs. "Ich-Es"; 1971), Bennis (1994), Goleman (1995), and Hirschhorn (1990). To expand one's capacity to be with others and understand their perspectives requires one's own capacity to think critically about one's existence and motivations (self-awareness) and about one's own effects on interpersonal dynamics (reflexivity) (Moon, 2008). The organizational consulting literature on psychological transference and countertransference (e.g., Sullivan, 2002) addresses this concept.

Self-awareness about how the change instigator takes on the role is also critical (Dutton et al., 2001; Hartley et al., 1997). Awareness of how one's proposed changes fit the political and organizational context is an important aspect of issue selling by middle managers to their superiors (Dutton et al., 2001). They also found timing to be an important consideration among change agents. Presumably, these are pertinent to even lower-level employees' proposals for change. Hartley and her colleagues (Hartley et al., 1997) report that internal change agents in public organizations in Britain became increasingly aware of their need for "greater self consciousness about process" (p. 67) and other aspects of how they took up their change role. Awareness of one's situational conditions — such as politics, willingness of coworkers to commit, timing, and how their role as change instigator fits their context — is a crucial aspect of the change instigator's sensemaking and reconstruction of resistance and of possibility for change.

To summarize, when reconstructing resistance, the bottom-up instigator of change must acknowledge and account for the areas of concern that Ford and his colleagues list. In addition, other considerations are crucial, such as sensemaking with self-awareness about one's approach and process towards change instigation. The next two sections address reconstructing possibilities for bottom-up change.

Possibility for Change as a Construction

When reconstructing resistance, possibility for bottom-up change may arise. As with resistance, possibility is a construction. When initiating activities for instigating change, possibilities for change and its implications are motivating factors. The idea of 'taking charge' through extrarole

efforts to instigate change (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) involves the consideration of possibilities for such change. As the change instigator reconstructs resistance, the initial notions of possibility must also be reconstructed to accommodate the dynamics of resistance. Again, understanding the possibilities for organization change requires an understanding of organization resistance to change (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

In this sense, both resistance and possibility are processes, not static states. As resistance happens in ‘real time’ through the change instigator’s dialogue and engagement with others in the organization, an understanding of the contours of possibilities for change emerges, such as who is and who is not available to do what in support of the change. Organizations are emergent properties of conditions that are changing, on individual and group levels. As Tsoukas and Chia (2002) put it:

Organization is an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action, to channel it towards certain ends, to give it a particular shape, through generalizing and institutionalizing particular meanings and rules. At the same time, organization is a pattern that is constituted, shaped, emerging from change. (p. 570)

Resistance to and possibility for change are reconstructed through processes of sensemaking as part of and in response to this ‘intrinsic flux of human action’.

Reconstructing Possibility

Self-awareness, reflexivity, sensemaking, and sensegiving are all parts of the continuous diagnostic process that characterizes the reconstruction of possibility. Diagnosis is making sense of “how the organization is currently functioning, and it provides information necessary to

design change interventions” (Cummings & Worley, 2005, p. 83). As the change instigator plans, prepares, and engages in dialogue and data collection, making sense of the organizational context and one’s place in it is a central concern.

By possibility, I mean the available directions that instigated change may take. From different vantage points within the organization, individuals will have different perspectives on what is possible. But, as with resistance, the change instigator will not be aware of all possibilities. These possibilities, as constructions, may not all be opportunities for action. Conversational exchanges will allow the change instigator to develop insights on resistance to change, and they will also allow some inklings for how to reconstruct possibility based on perspectives of what is possible. The relatively limited resources available to the change instigator will probably require him or her to cull together input and available resources from others in an opportunistic manner. The process of reconstructing possibility also includes developing mental models and other communication tools, such as metaphors (Hill & Levenhagen, 1995), that may help the change instigator articulate and organize the change effort.

It is generally recognized that persuasion and creating opportunities for change require a thorough understanding of the organization (Bellman, 1992; Cummings & Worley, 2005; Fisher & Sharp, 1998). The process of reconstructing resistance enhances this understanding. For example, Dutton and colleagues (Dutton et al., 2001) point out the importance of knowledge about the political and organization norms, whether sources of resistance or not, so that proposed changes fit with the context. Their list of knowledge items are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2: CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE IMPORTANT TO ISSUE SELLING (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill & Lawrence, 2001, p. 727)

Type of Knowledge	Questions
Relational	<p>Who will be affected by the issue? Who has experience with the issue? Who cares about the issue? What groups can help with advocating for the issue? What groups might object to this issue? Does this issue threaten anyone or any group? Who has decision authority relevant to the issue? Who has power to promote or to hinder this issue? When will people be ready to hear about this issue?</p>
Normative	<p>What kinds of data do people use? In particular, what kinds of data do important people use? How are data normally presented? How are arguments made against an issue? What kinds of protocols are followed? What kinds of meetings or social gatherings are considered legitimate decision forums? How much time does it usually take to sell an issue? Have similar issues been sold (or failed) before?</p>
Strategic	<p>What are the organization's goals? How does the organization plan to achieve these goals? What are the critical strategic issues for top management? What is our broader competitive context?</p>

Dutton and colleagues (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001) propose an approach to issue selling that a bottom-up change instigator may use to approach change. They propose three categories of ‘moves’ that the seller may make to optimize the chances of selling one’s ideas. The three categories of moves are packaging, involvement, and process-related moves. Packaging involves considerations about how to present the logic of the issue and whether to bundle it with other larger issues in the organization, such as profitability or key stakeholders. Involvement includes decisions about who in the organization to involve and what the nature of their involvement should be. Process-related moves include considerations about formality of the proposal, preparation, and timing of the moves. The additional information from the process of reconstructing and understanding resistance provides the change agent a more balanced consideration of the packaging, involvement and process issues of instigating change. Dutton and her colleagues (Dutton et al., 2001) found that middle managers used these moves to sell issues within their organizations. Such a framework may aid the change instigator in organizing for reconstructing possibilities for change.

In contrast to Dutton’s bottom-up issue selling approach, Ford (Ford & Ford, 1995) proposes a conversational approach to change from a managerial perspective. The managerialist approach begins with an “initiative” move prior to “understanding” the parameters of the proposed change. This is unlikely to be useful for bottom-up change because issue selling and persuasion must precede “initiative” moves (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001). Therefore, because bottom-up change requires a different use of conversation than those used by managers to initiate change, this approach is not applicable.

Whelan-Berry, Gordon and Hinings (2003) differentiate among organization, group, and individual levels of change. Because organization-level change does not make sense without considering group and individual level change, they use these levels as frames of analysis for understanding and assessing change processes. For a bottom-up change instigator, this approach could be used to analyze the conversational arenas in which the proposed change would be in play. For example, whether a change initiative would impact only one individual, a work team, a department, or the entire organization will be a critical area of consideration. The conversations for work team-level change would involve a narrower scope of considerations than would a department-level change that would involve gaining buy-in among senior executives. The conversational shifts and efforts at persuasion on a work team-level could involve some of the compositional elements discussed in the work team literatures (Gersick, 1988; Katzenbach & Smith, 1992). Higher level instigations would involve much more involved efforts at buy-in and issue selling. Whatever the level and approach, the possibilities for change will emerge through the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving as well as through maintaining self-awareness about one's role within the organizational context. This emerging understanding of bottom-up instigated change is how possibilities are reconstructed over time.

The reconstruction of resistance to and possibility for change are accomplished through organization conversations. By engaging in dialogue through sensemaking with others about change, the change instigator may discover opportunities for shifting these conversations. Dutton's (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton et al., 2001) framework for issue selling and its moves may provide guidance for strategizing the conversations about change. The change

conversations for bottom-up instigated change is different from top-down managed change as are the parameters by which such conversations can be initiated in the organization.

Implications for Research and Practice

As with all change, the approach to instigating change will largely depend on the resources, power, and authority the change agent has at one's disposal. Abundant resources, power and authority will allow the sorts of change management that is typically described in the change literature (e.g., Cummings & Worley, 2005). Recent trends in organization development (Marshak & Grant, 2008) and change through social networks and epidemics (e.g., Gladwell, 2000; Shirky, 2008) provide updated notions of how change occurs in organizations and communities. New uses of technology to create networks based on interests include the idea that obstacles to bottom-up access diminish because widespread use of the internet and electronic communication enables change via a distributed network of agents. Many of these new trends are based on discourse and alternatives to top-down managed change. Certain conditions must be present for bottom-up change to occur. An important question for research is what conditions may bottom-up change instigators use to their advantage?

Morrison and Phelps (1999) conducted a study about contextual supports for extrarole change initiation. They found that employees believed they were able to take charge when they felt responsibility for their work, had a sense of self-efficacy, and perceived openness among top management towards their change initiations. It is not known to what extent such a set of attributes would affect the processes of reconstructing resistance to and possibility for change. It

is likely that openness to asking questions (Gratton & Ghoshal, 2002) would facilitate dialogue and exploration for bottom-up change. This is a possible area of future research.

Finally, what sorts of conversations would be particularly useful for a bottom-up change instigator? Ford and Ford (1995) provide a conversational framework for managers seeking to implement change, but it is not clear what such a framework might look like for bottom-up change. The relationship between such a conversational framework and sensemaking, sensegiving, and self-awareness is also not clear.

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