FROM AMELIORATION TO TRANSFORMATION IN HUMAN SERVICES:

TOWARDS CRITICAL PRACTICE

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the

Graduate School of Vanderbilt University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Community Research and Action

December, 2005

Nashville, Tennessee

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For Hannah. As you grow older, may you encounter a more just and peaceful world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

George Albee, respected psychologist and champion of prevention, is fond of repeating something Harvard epidemiologist John Gordon once said to him: "no mass disorder afflicting humankind has ever been eliminated or brought under control by treating the affected individuals" (quoted in Albee, 1998, p. 373). This is a powerful reminder of how real social change happens: not by treating one person at a time. Gordon's statement is also alarming. The human service sector has traditionally focused on providing services to affected individuals, not on developing communities or fostering activism to change the conditions that generate disadvantage.

What should be the central aim of human service organizations? Is the aim simply to care for affected individuals, or is it to address the social ills that lead to the human problems in the first place? Or can the aim be both? While the limitations of person-centered interventions have been widely documented, a transition towards community-wide and systemic changes has been terribly slow in coming (Albee, 1998; Smedley & Syme, 2000; Stokols *et al*, 2003). So entrenched is the reigning human service paradigm that well documented alternatives, even ones that have been empirically validated, have failed to make a dent in the dominant modus operandi of health, human, and community services (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). For reasons having to do with the power of tradition, habituation, and the status quo, we reinforce a helping industry that is out of step with the dire realities of disadvantaged communities (Ryan, 1976).

One local human service organization has begun to realize, after thirty-five years of working in the community, that treating individuals and families alone, without attempting to impact the social environment cannot make much of a difference. Because of this realization, it has embarked on a journey to explore different ways of serving the community. At present, its workers are engaged in a process of organizational change to recreate themselves and their clients as agents of social change. They strive to create innovative approaches to address harmful community conditions. This organization and its unique process of change can teach the rest of the field a great deal about the role for human service organizations in promoting social change, and in shifting paradigms in human services.

The purpose of this research is to describe this organization's change process in its attempt to become an agent of transformation in the community. I will attempt to outline specific changes at multiple levels of analysis, highlight the salient features of the change process, and identify the generative and restrictive mechanisms of this planned process of organizational transformation.

Staff in this organization are attempting to learn how they can continue to serve the needs of their clients while simultaneously joining with clients and the community in addressing the underlying social conditions that cause or exacerbate problems in individuals, families, and communities. This is an ideal organization to serve as a critical case for testing the theory that human service organizations have a role to play in affecting social change. Furthermore, it helps us understand how organizations can make this type of paradigm shift in the human service domain. Through closely studying this organization, its staff, volunteers and clients, and their process of change, I hope to learn whether and how human service organizations can create and implement a new model.

My Perspective

My interest in this problem stems from my own experience working in the human service arena. For over a decade, I worked in a non-profit human service organization as a crisis shelter volunteer, as a youth development program coordinator, and as a youth and family counselor. Like many in this field, I found myself frustrated by my inability to have any impact whatsoever on the community problems that led people to need my help. My work was almost exclusively aimed at either treating young people and families who were hurting, or bolstering their coping mechanisms and social skills in hopes that they could handle better the ills of society. This approach is what Karen Pittman (2004), director of the Forum for Youth Investment, accurately refers to as helping people "beat the odds" as opposed to attempting to "change the odds" – demanding larger structural and systemic change.

Additionally, rarely was I even able to celebrate genuine success in the above endeavors. Those rare times when I emerged from a family session or prevention group feeling like I helped make something happen, I was immediately hit by the reality of counseling and shelter waiting lists and media portrayals of many more youth and families falling through the cracks. The steady stream of those in need was not being slowed down by my one-to-one interventions. Even worse was the realization that an army of caring individuals like me doing this important ameliorative work could not stem the tide.

The stories I was hearing from young people and families reflected problems that had roots in sources far beyond the individuals or immediate family systems I was treating. C. Wright Mills reflected this idea when he suggested a natural link between private troubles and public issues (1959). As Mills saw it, society, not people's personal failings, is the cause of poverty and other social problems. This framing potentially brings people together by turning

personal problems into public issues. This is similar to women's movement rallying cry "the personal is political", which signifies the powerful relationship between personal reality and structural conditions (Mulvey, 1988).

Even though I basically understood that larger systemic forces were at work creating problems for these people, I had no deep understanding of this phenomenon. One reason for my limited grasp of the structural sources of individual problems may be due to my position of privilege as a white, middle-class, male counseling "professional". I clearly saw my role as one of a trained professional helping the less fortunate cope with the demands of the world. Additionally, there was little in our organizational mission or culture that drove me and other workers to think and act in these ways. Nor did we have any strategies or skills for intervening at this structural level even if we were to envision a different approach. We were supposed to be the innovative and progressive organization in town, yet we worked mainly to change individuals within the system, not to challenge the system itself.

In the years since leaving the practice arena and returning to graduate school to chase this problem, I have come to believe three things about the role of private, non-profit human service organizations: 1) The traditional model of human services does nothing to change the social conditions that cause suffering; 2) There is a role for human service organizations in community development and the promotion of social justice; and 3) Human service organizations will need to be "transformed" in order to fulfill this role. These beliefs guide this inquiry and reveal my hopes for the future of human service practice. I will address each of these propositions in the following section.

Statement of the Problem

The Traditional Model is Insufficient

The traditional model of human services is focused on ameliorative approaches which are insufficient in addressing unjust community and societal conditions that lead to human suffering. This leads some to suggest that human services are largely irrelevant or worse, an impediment to well being, democracy, and social justice (Salamon, 1993). Robert F. Morgan (1983) suggests that like in the field of clinical medicine, treatment by the helping professions may produce negative or iatrogenic effects. One local funding agency executive recently remarked: "we've been pouring millions of dollars into human services for decades and the problems have only gotten worse". Human service organizations are also beginning to worry about their own relevance in the promotion of community wellbeing and worry they may actually be contributing to social problems.

A review of the health and wellness literature reveals that societal level phenomena are critical determinants of health and that individual-level intervention efforts do little to address the larger social and economic forces that influence the well-being of individuals (Marmot & Wilkinson, 1999; Smedley & Syme, 2000; Syme, 2003; Wilkinson, 1996). While it remains important to care for those in need, if the original source of the problem in society is left unchanged, organizations' chances for improving overall health and well-being are minimal.

Most human service organizations try to deal with whatever problem is at hand with ameliorative approaches: by treating the symptoms of social problems rather than the causes. Human service organizations are asked to provide personal services without external support to attend to political or macro-level issues. In addition, they are under increasing pressure to focus

on service efficiency and individual-level outcomes (Hula & Jackson-Elmoore, 2000).

Alternatively, organizations that focus solely on social policy, social action, or larger social change tend to overlook the immediate needs of individuals. Some suggest that this artificial dualism needs to be challenged (Delpeche *et al.*, 2003; Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997). Most likely, a dialectical approach is required as it may be impossible to build humane social change on a foundation of callous disregard for current suffering (Mullaly, 1997; Wineman, 1984).

Whereas most human service organizations work with individuals who are affected by or at risk for problems, evidence suggests that the most effective way to promote well being involves working in a proactive fashion with the entire community (Kaplan, 2000; Smedley & Syme, 2000). Organizations, it appears, can have the biggest impact on the long-term health of their community by both caring for people in need *and* working with the community to change cultural norms, policies, programs, distribution of resources, and power differentials (Bennett, 1987; Maton, 2000; Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003a, 2003b). The challenge for human service organizations is to simultaneously focus on changing the system while also caring for people who are victims of the system. This requires new approaches.

Social Action Role for Human Service Organizations

Although as stated above, there may be evidence that the traditional approach to human services is insufficient in addressing unjust community and societal conditions that lead to human suffering, many would argue that social action is beyond the purview of human service organizations. The traditional view is that the role of human service organizations is to modify the negative aspects of society rather than attempt to change society. This conservative construction of human services frames the role as ameliorating suffering caused by social

problems and facilitating adaptation rather than working towards greater equality, justice, or democratic participation (Gil, 1998; Mullaly, 1997).

A commonly heard refrain in human services is that social action is "not my concern". In discussing these issues with workers in organizations, people frequently suggest to me that other individuals and groups are focused on social action -- human service workers are supposed to care for those with immediate needs. I also often hear that the need for reactive services is simply too great to be able to simultaneously care for those in need while also attending to structural problems. Additionally, there are concerns about the mismatch between social action, community development, and community organizing strategies and counselor and social worker training and skills. These are all valid concerns that constrain innovation in human services.

It is my position that human service organizations and workers are uniquely positioned and motivated to play a role in taking action with community members to address harmful social conditions. Some see the field already moving in the direction of intervening on community-level factors in tandem with individual interventions (Reid & Eddy, 1997). Many examples already exist of human service organizations driving social interventions in the areas of youth violence (Hawkins *et al.*, 1997), child maltreatment (Hay & Jones, 1994), and the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse (Mitchell *et al.*, 1996). Speak to any seasoned human service worker and you will find that by and large, like me, they hold values of social justice and equality. They also believe that power differentials and toxic community conditions are a major source of the suffering that they see in clients that come through their doors. What they lack is an alternative vision and the necessary skills and supports to match their practice with their espoused values.

New Role Requires Organizational Transformation

To make a shift toward blending the ameliorative with the transformative paradigm in the beliefs and practices of human service organizations we need an intentional process of change. Change of this kind requires more than simply refining mission statements or adjusting program delivery – it requires organizational change of the transformational kind. Transformational change requires a major shift in an organization's vision, strategy, and structure (Proehl, 2001).

There are real barriers for human service organizations in going beyond ameliorative approaches. Organizations sometimes lack the needed vision and leadership, or they are so overwhelmed by the intense need for services that they cannot begin to reflect on other possible approaches (Kunreuther, 2002). Additionally, the funding environment constrains their focus to service provision and individual outcomes. At its peak in 1971, less than 1% of foundation grantmaking went to support nonprofit advocacy activity (Salamon, 1993). Human Service organizations' abilities to overcome these barriers to transform social conditions are contingent on contextual factors, internal capacities, and community partnerships (Kunreuther, 2002; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2003).

One of the most powerful forces working against organizations who want to make this transformation is what some have coined "paradigm paralysis" (Proehl, 2001). The traditional paradigm of human services has become so ingrained on our culture that it limits our perspective of what human service could be. Qualitatively different ideas for how human service organizations could approach their work are easily discarded because they do not fit the existing paradigm. Organizations may also be hesitant to make real changes in structures and activities even though they may be thinking about their work in new ways. They may attempt slight

adjustments in their actions instead of implementing needed major changes in their systems and programs.

Individual workers are trained and placed in programs that expect them to follow the traditional path and become what Peter Senge calls "prisoners of the system" (1990). Foundations and other grant making bodies have expectations for individual level outcomes, and social action strategies are deemed too radical for funding or community support. Additionally, even though leaders in the organization may strongly believe that change is needed, they may lack the ability to move the entire organization in this direction due to lack of participatory processes, structural barriers, staff resistance or limited understanding of the need for change.

Given the powerful forces working to maintain the current form of human services, change of this nature will require a sustained, multi-level change process to fully alter the beliefs and practices of a given human service organization. This process may also require attending to external factors such as the role of funding agencies, interagency relationships (Drake *et al.*, 1995), and belief systems within the organization's larger environment (Foster-Fishman *et al.*, 1999; Meyer, 1994).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the change process that this human service organization goes through in attempting to become an agent of transformative change in its community. The case in question is an organization that has made an intentional decision to shift its practices in this direction. Specifically, this study will explore two main research questions in the context of this change effort.

1. What changes can be observed in the values, beliefs, and practices at individual, team,

organizational, and community levels?

2. How does change happen? What are the generative mechanisms and constraining forces in this change process?

Significance of Research

There is a lack of research on the process of transformational or discontinuous change in human service organizations. How do people, groups, and entire agencies learn new ways of thinking and acting and also unlearn old deeply held beliefs and patterns (Nadler *et al.*, 1995)? In order to be able to suggest that human service organizations consider these types of transformative approaches, we need to know how organizations can implement change in a social context that contains many barriers to paradigmatic change. Most of the research on transformational change in organizations has been in the for-profit sector with little research in the non-profit sector.

Critical and community psychologists have long proclaimed the need to redefine social problems in order to avoid constrained solutions (Seidman, 1986). This redefining is mainly focused on moving from "victim-blaming" definitions to locating the source of social problems in unjust systems and societal structures. Following this logic, solutions take the form of social change, not individual reform or adjustment. Community organizations can potentially play a significant role in promoting social change. However, radically different thinking and practice would be needed for human service organizations to realize that potential. This emphasis on the social action role of organizations is consistent with broader trends focused upon mediating structures (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977).

We don't know enough about how human service organizations shift paradigms or the characteristics of organizations that effectively produce social change outcomes. Although attempts have been made to understand characteristics of empowering organizations, these studies have focused on what makes them empowering for their members (Foster-Fishman & Keys, 1997; Gutierrez, 1995; Gutierrez *et al.*, 1995; Maton & Salem, 1995). Less studied, however, are those characteristics of organizations that indicate their abilities to have an impact on policy, oppressive systems, and social change (Kunreuther, 2002; Peterson & Zimmerman, 2003). Understanding how human-service organizations overcome barriers and implement change to begin addressing community conditions that impact social problems will help us know how these organizations can balance ameliorative and transformative approaches.

Action research can be a meaningful way to learn about the process of social change and can inform further action. This orientation can be a way of conceptualizing the active process of learning, in a systematic way, from the experience of attempted progressive social innovation (Kagan & Bruton, 2000).

> "Thoughtful participation by action-oriented critical psychologists, in collaborative work with local leaders, is important for learning about the circumstances we wish to change; and that accumulation of small and documentable changes is one kind of activity that can enable the critical psychologist to test her ideas, and to modify them, in the real contexts in which our constituents live." (Rappaport & Stewart, 1997, p. 310)

Rappaport and Stewart see the importance of working alongside progressive community organizations that are working for social change and documenting and spreading the word about their efforts. This research will contribute to the development of social science and organizational theory and will have practical implications for human service organizations as they begin to find ways to add social interventions to their human service delivery. The collective potential of human service organizations that are connecting the personal with the

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political and joining with communities to take action could make a broad and significant impact on reducing the suffering currently driving people to human service organizations.

Delimitations of Study

It is important at this juncture to be clear about what this study will not attempt to address. The scope of this study is a single organization and its change process over a two-year period. The study occurred at a particular place, at a particular time, under particular circumstances and no attempt should be made to generalize to other human service settings without considering contextual factors. I am also not concerned in this study with evaluating the effectiveness or quality of the organization's innovations or ultimate impact on community indicators.

Although I am very interested in this social system and how it interacts with the external environment, and how different levels of the organization are affected by and contribute to the process of change, I am not interested in making specific claims about individuals and groups. The focus is on process – patterns of interaction between various types of social units – and the operating values, beliefs, and practices held collectively and acted upon by the organization. Clearly, individuals and groups are embedded in the organization and their meaning-making and behavior will contribute to the understanding of the organization.

CHAPTER II

GUIDING THEORIES AND RESEARCH

Conceptual Framework

Several organizational theorists suggest that viewing organizations as cultures is useful

because knowledge is embedded in language, artifacts, and action (Weick & Westley, 1996).

Any organizational exploration, such as the one described in this thesis, requires from the

institution self-examination of values, beliefs, and practices – an examination of their

organizational culture. This examination will make visible their shared assumptions, models,

values, and exemplars, and make possible rethinking and redesigning each one of them (Kuhn,

1970; Weick & Westley, 1996).

In the human service arena, there are potentially two distinctly different models or

paradigms under which organizations operate. I am suggesting that there is a traditional model of

human services that is primarily ameliorative, and a transformative model that goes beyond

amelioration to address root causes. Each contains distinctly different values, beliefs, and

practices. In human services, the move from the traditional approach to the transformative

paradigm requires a process of organizational cultural change. This framework is represented in

figure 1 below, and in more detail in appendix A. While this framework is arguably overly

dualistic -- one can imagine gradients of these diametrically opposed models -- it will help

highlight elements of organizational change and potential areas of synthesis.

The ameliorative model is the dominant one in human service organizations. The

transformative model is an alternative that might be considered a more ideal approach. The latter

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incorporates elements of the ameliorative model, but adds practices and actions that reflect

distinct values and beliefs. These differences manifest themselves especially in what might be

considered "the problem" and "the solution". I offer this conceptual framework as an organizing

structure for this thesis and also as a mechanism for contrasting the status quo of human service

organization with an alternate vision. Early in the project I felt the need to develop this

framework so that I could better understand the various components of a more transformational

approach.

Ameliorative Model		*Transformative Model*
Salient Values *Health, caring, compassion, growth, self determination*	*Organizational* →	Salient Values *Human rights, collaboration, participation, social justice, egalitarianism, interdependence*
Beliefs/Assumptions *Problems are defined as having individual and interpersonal sources; role of HSO's is to modify negative consequences of society*	→	Beliefs/Assumptions *Problems defined as having community & societal sources; role of HSO's is to promote empowerment, equality, solidarity, and community*
Practices *Professional-driven interventions aimed at improving individual and family functioning*	*Change* →	Practices *Collaborative social interventions aimed at systems and structures in the community*

Figure 1: Amelioration to transformation conceptual framework

Values

All human service organizations must clearly define their values, as shared values and

common purpose are the glue that holds organizations together. More importantly, values are

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organizational principles that guide action. The transformative paradigm places equal emphasis on collective values and individual values, whereas the ameliorative approach privileges the latter. Under the ameliorative paradigm, values such as health, caring, compassion, growth, and self-determination are most salient. The ameliorative approach shows more concern for these values than for human diversity, collaboration, egalitarianism, and social justice (Prilleltensky, 1997).

Beliefs

In this domain, the main difference between the two paradigms lies in how one locates the source of suffering, and how one views the role of the human services in addressing suffering. One paradigm implicates individual deficits and missed opportunities as the sources of suffering, while the other emphasizes societal sources (Kidder & Fine, 1986). Most managers and human service workers hold on to the dominant view that attributes responsibility to individuals and families (Seidman & Rappaport, 1986). This is undoubtedly due to the fact that western society privileges individual freedom of choice, self-fulfillment, personal achievement, and emotional growth over the ideals of collective responsibility and social justice (Lakin, 1991).

The beliefs of the ameliorative paradigm lead organizations into a rigid ideology of service. This service orientation implies that social problems such as poverty,

> could be ended by giving people skills, motivation, and access to yet other services (legal aid, health care, job training, education, welfare) as if poverty were caused by poor people's deficits, and not the reverse. One dominant assumption was that the causes of poverty lie mainly within the individual and not in the economic, social, and political structure that supports employment, and racial segregation (Wineman, 1984, p. 95).

Under the ameliorative paradigm, organizations serve clients with the aim of modifying negative aspects of society (Gil, 1998; Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). The role of human services in this mode is a reactive one that deals with ameliorating the individual

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suffering that stems from social problems. Alternatively, the transformative paradigm suggests a role for human service organizations in promoting equality, solidarity, and community (Mullaly, 1997). Under this paradigm, the role of human service organizations is to be an agent or mediator of social change through community building, structural change, and policy advocacy.

Practice

Actions under the ameliorative paradigm are focused mainly on individual, family, and small group interventions. The timing of interventions is usually reactive, with workers alleviating suffering and ameliorating problems after they appear. Interventions are usually professional-driven, and the role of the client is mostly passive. Interventions are centered on improving functioning and facilitating adjustment at the personal and family level. Examples of ameliorative human service practice include counseling and treatment, charitable relief, and secondary or tertiary prevention.

Under the transformative paradigm, action aims to help people not only cope with the stresses of society but also to "develop a critical consciousness concerning social realities, and to organize and act against destructive societal conditions that obstruct fulfillment of their needs" (Gil, 1998 p. 82). The focus of interventions goes beyond the individual and family to address systems in the community affecting personal, interpersonal, and collective wellness. Community members are active collaborators in creating community change and the human service worker serves as enabler and community partner. Social interventions strive for a more just community and seek to improve access to vital services such as health care, childcare, transportation and quality public education.

The transformative paradigm is exemplified by liberation practice in social work in Canada. Liberation practice seeks to strengthen interpersonal alliances with oppressed groups, and to form coalitions to dismantle systemic oppression and exploitation (Carniol, 2000). Other theorists and researchers also characterize the transformative paradigm in action as structural or radical social work and community development (Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997). Other examples of human service practice under the transformative paradigm include creating alternative settings, policy advocacy, community empowerment, consciousness-raising, organizing, and policy change (Gil, 1998).

This conceptual framework will guide the review of literature and inform my analysis of data. In the sections that follow, I will outline the relevant theory base and research literature.

Relevant Theories

The Ameliorative Paradigm in Human Services

The ameliorative model of human services might be classified under order, individual, or institutional reformist perspectives (Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997). This view sees society as "orderly, stable, and persistent, unified by a shared culture, values, and a consensus on its form and institutions" (Mullaly, 1997). Institutions and organizations operating under this perspective are committed to maintaining the status quo and to ensuring that individual behavior conforms to societal interests. Practice is aimed at ameliorating suffering, controlling behavior, facilitating adaptation, and reforming policies and services (Gil, 1998).

Theories that underlie this perspective include Freud's psychoanalytic theory, structural-functional theory associated with Durkheim and Weber (Parsons, 1951), general systems theory,

and ecological theory. The major theories of personality, clinical, and abnormal psychology also fall in this paradigm and advance the individualization of problems (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Although these theories and perspectives consider the individual's immediate environment, or system, they don't implicate the larger structural forces that impinge on human and community well being, nor do they suggest changes in the essential nature of the system.

The current model of human services came into existence in the 1930's after the passage of the Social Security Act. Poverty and other problems were seen to derive from personal causes as opposed to social conditions (Gil, 1998). The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, and the community action programs that were developed as part of the war of poverty, held promise that a more proactive and systemic approach might be instituted in human services. The programs leaned towards political activism, participatory democracy, decentralization, and a redistribution of professional power (Wineman, 1984). However, these programs quickly assimilated the conventional ideology of social services by focusing on personal change rather than social change. Even though some holistic approaches existed in earlier years of human services, with the influx of psychoanalytic theory, the focus narrowed to individual psychological approaches where the task is clearly personal reform. Systems theory and ecological theory, although suggestive of a more holistic approach, maintain that action be directed at individual and environmental influences within the system, but not at the system itself (Mullaly, 1997).

The Transformative Paradigm

The transformative paradigm is closely aligned with critical or radical theories and can be classified under conflict, structural, or post-structural perspectives (Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997). This perspective is identified with Karl Marx and socialism. Conflict theorists believe that social

problems originate in the exploitive and alienating actions of dominant groups. They see public or structural issues as the source of private troubles. Conflict or critical theorists do not accept the status quo. They want a radical reorganization of society towards a just order. Action under this paradigm involves providing care for those in need, and social change efforts to democratize society and transform the systemic roots of injustice and oppression (Gil, 1998; Mullaly, 1997).

Critical Social Theory. The predominant theory base for the transformative paradigm is critical social theory. Critical theory specifically rejects the positivist paradigm and any search for universal laws. Instead, critical theory values an interpretive understanding of reality and introduces politics of liberation (Ife, 2002). Critical theory is motivated by an interest in the emancipation of those who are oppressed, is informed by a critique of domination, and is driven by a goal of liberation (Kelner, 1989). Critical social theory is distinct from traditional social theory in that it is not satisfied with simply explaining social phenomena independent of political realities. Like feminist theory, it draws heavily on the notion that the 'personal is political' and vice versa; it is committed to social critique, empowerment, and social change in ways that can help emancipate marginalized individuals and groups.

Fay (1987) makes the distinction between instrumentalist and educative forms of critical theory and practice. The instrumentalist account is based on Max Weber's view that action is instrumental in "achieving a chosen end on the basis of rational calculation of the best means" (Fay, 1987 p. 86). Critical analysis has instrumental purposes. This modernist and highly rational notion of critical theory and practice is considered useful because it allows people to efficiently get what they want by acting on causal variables. Alternatively, educative forms of critical theory relate critical analysis to ideas of political practice.

Educative critical theory can be attributed to the work and writing of Paulo Freire (1970) and his concept of "conscientization". Freire describes conscientization, or critical consciousness, as learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and taking action against an oppressive reality. In the human service realm, working with clients becomes a dialogical, consciousness-raising relationship leading to action. Critical social theory strives to help people gain a clearer picture of who they are and the social order in which they live (enlightenment), gain motivation and power that enables and supports action (empowerment), and begin to act politically in order to liberate themselves from their own oppression (emancipation, Fay, 1987)

To Fay, for a social theory to be critical and practical as well as useful scientifically, certain conditions have to be met. There needs to be a crisis in the social system that is at least partly caused by the false consciousness of those experiencing it. This false consciousness also needs to be amenable to a process of enlightenment that empowers individuals and groups to attempt to alter their social arrangements to alleviate suffering. Thus, essential to critical social theory is the interpretive, critical, or educative function as well as its transformative potential.

Postmodernism, additionally, could be seen as having a major impact on thinking and action under the transformative paradigm. Postmodernism, as a school of thought, rejects the dominant paradigm based in the traditional sciences as inadequate in dealing with the complex interaction of social phenomena (Ife, 2002). Other movements and schools of thought that characterize this paradigm include the green movement, feminism, community development, postindustrialism, postpositivism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. Most, if not all of these schools of thought maintain that if existing social crises are to be resolved and a sustainable society developed, it will be through social, economic, and political change.

Psychopolitical Validity. Prilleltensky's (2003) concept of Psychopolitical validity also informs the work under the transformative paradigm. Psychopolitical validity refers to

> the extent to which studies and interventions in the community integrate (a) knowledge with respect to the multidisciplinary and multilevel sources, experiences, and consequences of oppression, and (b) effective strategies for promoting psychological and political liberation in the personal, relational, and collective domains (p. 199).

Wellness, under this framework, can only be achieved through the synergy of values in personal, relational, and collective domains. Psychopolitical validity asks that all research and action account for power dynamics at both psychological and political levels. Additionally, it challenges us to include political literacy and social change in all interventions. Human services operating in the transformative paradigm can use psychopolitical validity as a guideline for practice that blends attending to political structures as well as psychological health.

Social interventions. Human service practice in the transformative paradigm requires new strategies for impacting oppressive policies and structures. These new strategies can be found in the form of social interventions. Transformative change and social interventions are solutions that seek to affect the well-being of the population through changes in values, policies, programs, distribution of resources, power differentials and cultural norms (Bennett, 1987; Bennett, 2003; Maton, 2000). Social interventions are important because they can address power differences and their impact on health and well-being (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2003). Human service practice in the transformative paradigm must utilize social intervention strategies to complement their individual, group, and organizational strategies.

Extraorganizational empowerment. Zimmerman's (2000) construction of empowerment at the organizational level of analysis provides a helpful conceptual and evaluative tool for human service organizations attempting to change communities. Zimmerman (2000), Gerschick, Israel, and Checkoway (1990), and Swift and Levin (1987) made the distinction between

empowering organizations (produce empowerment for its members) and empowered organizations (empowered to influence larger system). Peterson and Zimmerman's (2004) extension of this construction introduced the concept of extraorganizational empowerment to specifically characterize the ability to impact broader systems. Influencing policy and practice, creating alternative settings, and deploying organizational resources in the community would be considered outcomes of an empowered organization. Additionally, they describe processes of extraorganizational empowerment such as community actions and dissemination of information. These are the efforts by organizations to influence community. As human service organizations shift practices to begin influencing community systems and conditions, the concept of organizational empowerment may be an important framework for measuring ability to achieve systems change.

Theories of Organizational Transformational

This type of shift in beliefs and practices in human service organizations requires an intentional process of change. Change of this kind requires more than simply refining mission statements or adjusting program delivery – it requires organizational change of the transformational kind. Many organization theorists and change thinkers have professed the distinction between incremental, developmental, evolutionary, or "first-order" change and transformative, discontinuous, revolutionary, or "second-order" change in human systems (Burke, 2002; Gersick, 1991; Kuhn, 1970; Nadler *et al.*, 1995; Watzlawick *et al.*, 1974). These authors would agree that the main difference is that first-order change occurs within a given system that itself remains unchanged; while second-order change alters the system itself. When talking of a paradigmatic organizational change in human services, we are speaking of second-

order change: changes in the system's structure, role relationships, premises, rules, or assumptions governing the system as a whole (Seidman, 1986).

Content of organizational transformation. Changes in philosophy, beliefs, strategies, and structure accompany organizational transformation. This type of transformation requires major shifts in vision and strategy. It suggests changes in patterns of decision-making, accountability, participation, and the way organizations plan, respond, and relate to the external environment (Tushman & Romanelli, 1985). Organizations that undergo deep changes in mission and philosophy exemplify revolutionary change. They experience change in what Gersick (1991) calls "deep structure" and they may never be the same again.

Organizational transformation is a complicated endeavor for human service workers and organizations that have deeply held habits, orientations, assumptions, identities, and routines. According to Edgar Schein (1992), deeply held assumptions are part of organizational culture. These are assumptions that

> have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to external adaptation and internal integration problems (p. 9).

Organizational transformation requires uncovering those underlying assumptions and attending to them as part of the change process. This approach to organizational change assumes that changes in assumptions and beliefs at the individual and organizational level precede changes in practice. However, it is also true that new attempts at transformative practice can also drive changes in how individuals and organizations think about their work.

If transformational change is attempted, then the focus is on purpose, mission, and strategy, followed by attention to transactional levels (Burke, 2002). The fundamental beliefs, assumptions, and theory of the organization must change. The Burke-Litwin model of transformational change (Burke, 2002) suggests attending to factors of external environment,

leadership, mission and strategy, culture, and individual and organizational performance. For non-profit organizations, transformational change is built on organizational values (O'Toole, 1995).

The identity of human service workers and organizations is bound by the assumptions and ideologies of the social context. Organizational transformation of this magnitude in human services not only has to address internal culture, but also has to overcome external constructions of their role in community. These are critical implications, especially as they pertain to expectations and requirements of funding agencies. Paradoxically, for many human service organizations this transformation may be needed in order to remain relevant or simply survive in communities.

At the level of the individual worker, how one views his or her own role as a human service practitioner is important in change efforts. In identity theory, the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role is core (Burke & Tully, 1997; Thoits, 1986). Through their training and on the job experience, many people working in the human service context adopt self-meanings and expectations to accompany that role and then act to represent and preserve that role identity (Thoits & Virshup, 1997). A change in beliefs and practices at the organizational level certainly requires attending to the parallel process of changing role identities of human service workers. Individuals must be able to articulate a narrative thread that connects possibly disparate organizational role experiences into a coherent story about themselves (Weick, 1996).

Process of change. Major theories attend to the process or mode of change. Most theories can be classified as having steps, stages, or phases. Undoubtedly the most influential theory of systems change was proposed by Kurt Lewin (1935), which provided the building blocks for subsequent theories and change models. Lewin suggests that for radical change to happen, it

requires moving through three stages: unfreezing, movement, refreeze. *Unfreezing* is the process of developing a felt need for change in the organization. Existing conditions must be deemed unacceptable and change must be seen as the only solution. *Movement* or change requires a model for a better way to operate and can take the form of new goals, strategies, processes, structures, values, and culture. Lewin is clear that movement will not happen unless unfreezing has happened. Internalizing the changes engaged in during movement requires *refreezing*. New processes and structures must be developed to allow the organization to fully integrate the new changes. Lewin's field theory suggests that there are forces working against each other in any system change. He developed a technique known as force-field analysis to identify these obstacles (resisters) and encouraging forces (drivers). Changing a system requires reducing restraining forces, increasing owned forces and decreasing imposed forces.

Schein (1992) builds on Lewin's three stages. In the *unfreezing* stage, he suggests that there are three elements: disconfirmation of adequacy of existing system, induction of guilt or anxiety, and the creation of psychological safety. He calls the second stage *changing*, and describes it as cognitive restructuring – organizational members see things differently and as a result, act differently. This stage requires identification with a new model and learning from others and others' experiences. The *refreezing* stage is personal and individual as well as interpersonal with the goal of making sure that new behavior fits with others.

Ronald Lippitt (1958), who studied with Lewin, expanded on his theory. His five phases of planned change include unfreezing, establishment of a change relationship (with consultant or internal champion), working toward change (moving), stabilization (refreezing), and termination of relationship with consultant. Michael Beer's (1992) change formula includes dissatisfaction with the status quo, a vision for what can be, and an effective process for change. He suggests

that in order for change to be successful, these three elements must together create a level of need for change that outweighs the potential costs.

Based on models of organizational change by Beckard & Harris (1987), Brager & Holloway (1978), Schaeffer (1987), Kotter (1996), and Galpin (1996), Proehl (2001) developed an eight-step change model that parallel theories described above. The steps include 1) creating a sense of urgency; 2) building a coalition for change; 3) Clarifying the change imperative; 4) Assessing the present; 5) Developing a plan for change; 6) dealing with the human factors; 7) Acting quickly and revising frequently; and 8) Evaluating and celebrating change. Similarly, John Kotter (1996) has developed an Eight-Stage Model of Creating Major Change that includes 1) Establishing a sense of urgency; 2) Creating the guiding coalition; 3) Developing a vision and strategy; 4) Communicating the change vision; 5) Empowering broad-based action; 6) Generating short-term wins; 7) Consolidating gains and producing more change; and 8) Anchoring new approaches in the new culture.

Several theorists prefer to characterize organizational change as transition. They use transition instead of change suggesting that transition is a psychological process that extends over a long period of time. Beckhard and Harris (1987) describe three distinct conditions: future state, present state, and transition state. William Bridges (2003) also suggests a difference between change and transitions, and uses the three phases of endings, neutral zone, and new beginnings. Jick (1990) notes that attempts at closure are difficult, and can be seen as resistance and suggests participation as key as it can mitigate resistance and can make for a better overall change process (Burke, 2002).

Another change model to note is the Transtheoretical Model and Stages of Change developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1984). This is a model for individual change, but can

be useful to the thinking and practice of organizational change. The focus of this model is on attending to the need to adequately prepare individuals for action. The stages include precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. In the early stages, individuals apply cognitive, affective and evaluative processes to move through the stages. In later stages, individuals depend more on commitments, conditioning, environmental controls, and support (Prochaska *et al.*, 1992). Like many of the theories described above, this model highlights the need for consciousness-raising to help individuals consider the need for change.

All of these change models could be referred to as normative-reeducative models (Chin & Benne, 1985). These models accept the premise that individuals are rational, intelligent and conform and are committed to sociocultural norms (Burke, 2002). Change will only occur as the persons involved are brought to change their normative orientations to old patterns and alter attitudes, values, and skills. Porras and Silvers (1991) offer the Planned Process Model as a conceptual model for change that typifies the normative-reeducative frame. Intervention initially affects purpose and mission. These changes affect thought processes or mental sets, and then behavior is changed, which leads to improved organizational performance and individual development. Change is not imposed and the problem is not a technical one. Non-conscious factors may need to be surfaced, and methods and concepts from behavioral sciences may prove useful. Strategies include improving problem-solving capacities of system – double-loop learning (examining guiding assumptions and subjecting to critical scrutiny, Argyris & Schon, 1978), and fostering growth in individuals in the system.

Burke (2002) questions whether cognitive change precedes behavior change. He suggests, "we act, and then attribute meaning to that action" (p. 136). To him, the goal is to promote action that is desired to cause movement, and then attribute meaning to that action.

Argyris and Schon (1978) however, argue that "all deliberate action had a cognitive basis, that it reflected norms, strategies, and assumptions or models of the world which had claims to general validity" (p. 10). This "sequence of change" distinction may have to do with whether or not we are speaking of first or second-order change. Many definitions of second-order or episodic change in organizations often mention the requirement that change needs to occur in the shared cognitive schemata that give meaning to activities (Bartunek, 1993). Most theorists would probably agree that organizational change is messy and mostly non-linear. Organizational change cycles between phases of contemplation, action, and relapse are repeated many times before moving to maintenance and termination (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Van de Ven and Poole (1995) identify four basic theories that explain processes of change in organizations: life-cycle, teleology, dialectics, and evolution. Life-cycle and evolutionary theories are referred to as *prescribed* modes of change as development occurs in entities in a pre-specified direction in a stable and predictable way. Dialectical and teleological theories operate in *constructive* modality where the process is emergent and change generates novel forms that are discontinuous and unpredictable. A prescribed mode tends to generate first-order change whereas a constructive mode generates second-order change. Since this analysis is focused on second-order change, a closer look at the two constructive modes is in order.

Teleological theory holds that organizations proceed toward a goal or desired end state. Development is a sequence of goal formulation, implementation, evaluation, and modification. However, there is no prefigured rule or set sequence of stages in a teleological process. The sequence emerges through intentional and creative social construction among actors in the organization, and there may be many different equally effective paths to a desired end state -- the concept of equifinality. Instead of a prescribed path, this theory focuses on prerequisites or

conditions that need to be in place for the change to occur and for the end state to be realized. One of the conditions is that an individual or group must engage in action to "socially construct and cognitively share a common end state or goal (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 525)."

Dialectical theory assumes that organizations operate in a pluralistic world where there are competing goals, interests, and values. Change occurs when forces opposing the status quo gain sufficient power to engage in conflict and challenge the status quo. Dialectical theory is best described as a process of moving toward a synthesis between a thesis (current state of affairs) and antithesis (alternate state of affairs). The dialectical process requires two or more entities that contradict each other and engage in a struggle that results in a new entity that is different from the previous two – a second-order change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Van de Ven and Poole also stress that change and development in organizations is more complex than any one theory can capture, and that likely there is interplay among the different theoretical concepts in any organizational change event.

One alternative to traditional models of systems change is Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1986; Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Appreciative Inquiry is about nondeficit, or positive change. Proponents of Appreciative Inquiry take issue with the Lewinian notion that people in organizations need to see what is wrong with their current state in order to begin behaving in new ways. It eschews the need to problematize organizational life and instead focuses on health, strength, and innovation. The organizational world is not a problem to be solved, but instead relies on an appreciative stance that potentially leads to more innovative and long-lasting transformation; its foundational premise is this:

> Human systems construct their 'world' in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about, and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated. The single most prolific thing a group can do, if it aims to liberate the human spirit and consciously construct a better future, is to

make the 'positive change core' of any system the common and explicit property of all (Cooperrider, 2002, foreword, p. ix).

Individuals want to be a part of a system that nurtures passion, excitement, and engagement and they want to use new insights to formulate a vision for the type of organization they want to create. Key elements include discovery and valuing the best of what has been, dreaming and envisioning what might be, dialoguing about what can be, and co-constructing what will be.

At the heart of Appreciative Inquiry is social constructionism (Gergen, 1982), which posits that social reality is a product of a broad social agreement, and that altering conceptual practice can be a powerful tool for guiding social change. To Gergen,

> one's actions appear to be vitally linked to the manner in which one understands the world of experience…the symbolic translation of one's experiences virtually transforms their implications and thereby alters the range of one's potential actions (1982, pp. 16-17).

This holds important implications for understanding how altering linguistic practices, idea systems, and introducing theory into conceptual meaning systems of cultures can drive organizational and social innovation and action.

Learning Organization Theory

Learning organization theory can help us understand how organizations develop the capacity to transform. The development of the study of organizational learning owes a debt to Argyris and Schön (1978, 1996) who were influenced by Dewey's (1938) concept of inquiry which links individual and organizational learning, as well as Lewin's (1935) studies of person in environment. The distinct features of learning organizations include greater participation and accountability by a larger percentage of employees; continuous learning at the systems level; knowledge generation and sharing; capacity for systems thinking; and a culture and structure of rapid communication and learning (Senge, 1990; Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Wheatley, 1994).

Essential to the process of organizational learning are the organizational conditions that can either promote or hamper the process. The learning organization can be characterized by having the capability to adapt to changes in its environment and to learn from the lessons of its members and of organizational experience (DiBella & Nevis, 1998). If an organization has the capacity to support critical reflection and respond to these lessons and alter organizational behavior, then this organization can be characterized as a learning organization. Marsick (2000) outlines three interactive foci for enhancing organizational learning in a learning organization: critical reflection, collaboration, and communication.

Mezirow (1991) also suggests that real learning involves a transformation in perspective to a structure that permits a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience. Similarly, Senge (1990) describes how deeply held mental models need to be made explicit and challenged for real learning to occur in organizations. Learning, then, encompasses not just the acquisition of new or different skills or competencies, but also the acquisition of new or different cognitive processes (Agashae & Bratton, 2001).

Several theorists hold a developmental perspective on the learning organization and describe it as being characteristic of organizations at the mature stage in their life cycle (Greiner, 1972; Kimberly & Miles, 1980; Lippitt & Schmidt, 1967; Schein, 1992; Fisher, Rooke, Torbert, 2001). Organizations reach these higher levels of development as a result of their age, experience, industry growth, and leadership. In their study of ten organizational development efforts, Rooke & Torbert (1998) found that organizations prospered and organizational learning became the mode of business when leaders were operating at a more mutual, learning-oriented stage of individual development. Fisher and colleagues (Fisher *et al.*, 2001) also cite impressive evidence from number of studies to show that only ten percent of managers are operating at a

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developmental stage sufficient enough to drive and nurture organizational learning. They have developed stages of organizational development that parallel individual development to tell a story about living systems moving from a less complex to a more complex schema. Paradoxically, it seems, organizations and leaders have to be operating at a stage of development high enough to learn from important experiences – developmental stage determines the type of learning the organization is capable of. From this perspective, organizations are in a continuous state of becoming as they learn to adjust, adapt, and transform from their experiences and changes in the field.

Leadership is essential in the development and maintenance of the learning organization. Agashae and Bratton (2001) suggest that leaders play a crucial role in creating, shaping, and embedding culture in an organization through, among other things, what they pay attention to, how they react to crisis, what actions and behaviors they model and coach, the design of physical space, and how they reward employees. Marsick (1993) worries that a directive leadership style may stifle critical reflection and dialogue. For Schein (1992), leadership is intertwined with culture formation, evolution, transformation, and destruction and leaders need emotional strength, depth of vision, perception and insight, and the ability to successfully involve organizational members in the running of the organization in order to become learning organizations.

Figure 2 summarizes the relevant theory base in transformational change in organizations.

Content of Change	Process of Change		Explanatory theories	Critical factors
	Phases	*Stages or steps*		
Changes in organizational philosophy, values, beliefs, assumptions, strategies, purpose, mission, theories, structure, patterns of decision-making, accountability, participation, planning, relations with external environment.	**Unfreezing, Endings, Present state** discomfirmation of adequacy of existing system, induction of anxiety, psychological safety, establishment of change relationship	*Creating a sense of urgency*	**Teleological Theory** Proceed toward a desired end state. Goal formulation, implementation, evaluation, modification	• Need to develop shared dissatisfaction with status quo • Need to attend to obstacles and promote drivers • Social Construction • Change in cognitions and behavior • Consciousness raising • Participation • Critical reflection • Leadership
		Building a coalition for change		
		Clarifying the change imperative, communicating the vision	**Dialectical Theory** Moving towards a synthesis of two competing models. Forces opposing the status quo gain sufficient power to engage in conflict and challenge status quo.	
		Assessing the present		
	Movement, Changing, Transition state, Neutral Zone Cognitive restructuring, developing new goals, strategies, processes, culture, identification with new model, learning, working toward change	*Developing a plan for change*		
		Dealing with human factors	**Appreciative Inquiry** Focuses on health, strength, and innovation.. Conscious attempt to construct a better future	
		Empowering broad-based action, Acting quickly, revising frequently, generating short term wins, consolidating gains	**Organizational Learning** Capability to adapt to changes in environment and learn from members and organizational experience	
	Refreezing, Future state, New beginnings Internalizing changes, Stabilization	*Evaluating and celebrating change*		
		Anchoring change in new culture		

Figure 2: Summary of relevant theories of transformational change

Relevant Research Base

Many of the theories and models outlined above were born out of and refined in the context of practice and research in action. Case studies and other means were used to generate useful theories to guide action. Problems with organizational change research have been highlighted over the years (Beer & Walton, 1987). Organizational research has been criticized for looking for causation and for providing only a snapshot of organizational transformation with no sense of potential for sustainability. Some are critical of flat research methodologies – quantitative methods – that are not useful in understanding complex causes and tend to get in the way of action. Action science (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985) offers a better choice. It involves users in the study, uses self-corrective learning, and looks at organizations and change over time. In the following sections, I will highlight research that provides insight into the critical process elements of organizational transformation and some studies that directly relate to transformational change in human service organizations.

Critical elements of organizational transformation

Extensive research on organizational transformation has identified critical elements associated with reducing resistance and ensuring successful organizational transformation. These elements include attention to organizational readiness; active participation by staff at all levels; change based in organizational values; and active, visionary, and supportive leadership. Research has also stressed that the focus of change is the system, and not simply individuals in the system.

Readiness. Many researchers relate the concept of readiness to Lewin's (1951) concept of unfreezing. Organizations that are open and ready for change are more likely to be successful than those who have change imposed on them (Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder, 1993).

Creating readiness involves proactive attempts to influence beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior of individuals in organizations so that change can happen. The goal is to change a set of cognitions across a set of employees (Armenakis et al, 1993; Coch & French, 1948). Readiness is created by developing and delivering a clear message for the need for change and communicating how the current reality is different from desired end state (Armenakis et al, 1993; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Schein, 2004). It involves persuasive communication and active participation (Bandura, 1977; Fishbein and Azjen, 1975) to realize that something is not working and is aimed at creating what some refer to as intellectual pain and diffused satisfaction (Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Spector, 1989). Staff needs to experience education and consciousness-raising to undergo alteration of meaning-making structures that facilitates and supports need for change (Chin & Benne, 1985; Isabella, 1990; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Resnick & Patti, 1980). Resistance to change can then be seen merely as a cognitive transition (Chin & Benne, 1985; Isabella, 1990).

Bandura (1982) suggests that it is important to build confidence and bolster efficacy in ability to overcome discrepancy between current reality and desired state. Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) also recommend understanding the difference between individual and organizational readiness. They highlight the importance of opinion leaders and suggest building the readiness in these leaders allows them to act as informal change agents by providing social clues for others in the organization. Change agents can influence readiness by managing external information such as reports and media to bolster the message for change (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Gist, 1987). Change agent characteristics and attributes such as credibility, trustworthiness, sincerity, and expertise also appear to have an impact on how readiness-creating messages will be received (Gist, 1987).

Participation and empowerment. The most consistently offered solution to successful

organizational change is that of diverse participation in the change endeavor. All stakeholders,

affected by whatever new system is proposed, need to be involved in decision-making around the

change work (Bandura, 1977; Coch & French, 1948; Dimock, 1992; Dittrich and Carrell 1979;

Fishbein and Azjen, 1975; Johnson & Johnson, 2000; Resnick & Patti, 1980; Staples, 1990). As

Peter Senge (1999) put it: "activating the self-energizing commitment and energy of people

around changes they deeply care about has been the key to the many successes that have been

achieved" (p. 9). Success is more likely if change agents involve people in analyzing how things

are, setting targets for change, and working out implementation (Dimock, 1992).

Participative decision-making processes and empowerment strategies in organizational

change encourage planning and strategic changes from bottom-up rather than top down (Resnick

& Patti, 1980), increase ownership, commitment, and accountability (Burke, 1982; Dimock,

1992; Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, Fahrbach, 1999; Schein, 2004) and capitalize on creativity

and innovation (Foster-Fishman, Salem, Allen, Fahrbach, 1999; Gaventa, 1990; Shera & Page,

1995; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977; Zander, 1990). Powerlessness in the change process, actual and

perceived, inhibit participation and commitment to change (Bookman & Morgen, 1988;

Gutierrez, 1989; Marti-Costa & Seranno, 1983). Nelson and colleagues (2001) had success

shifting paradigms in community mental health organizations using a highly participatory

approach to change that involved diverse stakeholders in small groups and action-oriented

committees. They also found that these participatory processes help bring resistance and conflict

out into the open so that they can be dealt with more effectively (Nelson, Lord, Ochocka, 2001).

Leadership. Like active participation, appropriate leadership in the change process is

frequently cited as a key ingredient (Burke, 1992; Kotter, 1996; Nelson, Lord, Ochocka, 2001;

O'Toole, 1995; Proehl, 2001). Change is more likely if a successful leader champions, supports, and actively participates in the process (Dimock, 1992; Hage & Finsterbusch, 1987; Schein, 2004; Senge, 1990, Weatley, 1992). Leaders play a role in change through helping establish and communicate the need for change, manage resistance and "pushback" (Burke, 2002), provide clarity of vision and direction (Burke, 2002; O'Toole, 1995), structure change activities and guide strategy (Nadler, Shaw, & Walton, 1995), and continually champion the message of change (Gardner, 1995).

Nadler and colleagues (1995) describe the kind of leaders who are most successful at bringing about change as heroic leaders. Heroic leaders have three primary roles in managing change: 1) envisioning, 2) energizing, and 3) enabling. Effective change leaders are able to step outside their own culture to see the need for change (Schein, 2004), and model the desired change in their own work (Senge, 1999). Nadler, Walton, and Shaw (1995) identified a defining characteristic of change-oriented leaders: a passion for achieving the organizational vision. The executives they interviewed were steadfast in their desire to close the gap between the organization's current state and where they wanted to go. Leadership was a catalyst for the change process in the study by Nelson and colleagues (2001). The executive director had experience with and commitment to a new paradigm and along with the board worked to share power and encourage participation in the change process.

Based in Values. Many suggest that organizational change built on values is a key factor in successful efforts (Berquist, 1993; O'Toole, 1995; Senge, 1990) and stress the need for reeducation of norms and values to drive change (Resnick & Patti, 1980). In their study of paradigm change in Community Mental Health centers, Geoff Nelson and colleagues (Nelson, Lord, Ochocka, 2001) found the values clarification process to be a foundation from which to

plan and implement organizational change. Working from values and principles became a central way of working towards change.

Other considerations. Research suggests several other factors that contribute to successful change efforts. In order to ensure that staff is committed to and supports the change, they need information about the change (Gaventa, 1990; Hage & Finsterbusch, 1987) and the change strategy needs to permeate all levels of the organization (Schneider, Brief, and Guzzo, 1996). There needs to be meaningful interaction between management groups and subsystems (project teams) that involve boundary-spanning roles (Martinko & Tolchinsky, 1982, Katz & Kahn, 1978). Additionally, the team charged with driving the change needs to be a high-functioning group (Dimock, 1992).

Transformational change requires that the social system be the focus of change, not individuals. The aim is to change the norms or standards of the system (Dimock, 1992; Burke, 1994) and interventions should fit the particular structure and culture of the organization (Kouzes and Mico, 1979; Martinko and Tolchinsky, 1982). The use of external consultants to facilitate system change through some form of action research may help move the change process in the desired direction (French & Bell, 1984; Huse & Cummings, 1985; Sashkin & Burke, 1987). As the system changes, staff may need ongoing training and mentoring help shift roles (Nelson, Lord, Ochocka, 2001).

There are also external factors to consider in the organizational change process. Critical changes in the external environment can lend justification to need for change (Pettigrew, 1987). In the human service setting, any organizational change may have ripple effects in the community and may trigger resistance and political conflict (Proehl, 2001). For Nelson, Lord,

and Ochocka, (2001) dealing with external resistance required attending to the education of other groups about the values and practices of the new paradigm.

Transformational Change in Human Service Organizations

There has been very little research on human service organizations' attempts to move towards critical practice. Related research by Nelson and colleagues (2001) with three mental health organizations attempting to shift towards the values of the empowerment-community integration paradigm found changes in (a) values and philosophical foundations, (b) increased consumer participation, (c) a more participatory and inclusive management style, (d) changes in types of services and approaches, and (e) changes in staff roles and practices. They mainly attribute the changes to organizational readiness, effective leadership, and the use of external consultants and teaching tools. They also cite such additional facilitating factors as commitment to change, willingness to respect and involve consumers, a learning climate, the growth of the consumer/survivor movement, and increases in available government funding.

A case study of a rape crisis center by Patricia Martin and colleagues (Martin, DiNitto, Byington, Maxwell, 1992) highlights one social change organization's attempt to partner with mainstream service organizations to pursue a Stop Rape Task Force. They describe how as the rape crisis center altered its relationship with mainstream organizations the rape crisis center developed a new sense of itself and at the same time helped mainstream organizations revise their internal practices and policies and reform their understanding of victim's needs and rights. One of their conclusions is that "social service and social change goals appear to be less incompatible than the early literature on rape crisis centers suggest" (p. 143).

Another research group at the Center for Community Research and Services at the University of Delaware (Delpeche *et al,* 2003) conducted an exploratory study of the nexus between building community and the wellbeing of families. They conducted focus groups and interviews with over 30 family support and community development practitioners from across the country to identify potential strategies for integration. They suggest that fundamental changes are needed in the mission and implementation of practices in each field. They note that both community development and family support organizations are reaching a "conceptual wall" and operate in traditional models that are too limited to have real community impact. The barriers they see are 1) a lack of conceptual models of integrative practice, and 2) practical limitations of funding, staffing, and time.

In discussing the effect of political context on strategic change in service organizations, Debra Minkoff (1999) notes that

> a shift from either advocacy or service provision toward a protest form of organization signals a more direct threat to authorities, with the potential consequence that the group will sacrifice some degree of institutional support and face a greater risk of failure as a result (p. 1673).

This is echoed by Kriesi (1996), who worries that service organizations jeopardize their survival when they try to adopt an advocacy agenda. Grant makers tend to favor organizations with more bureaucratic structures and conservative agendas. Getting stuck in the traditional service model, however, tends to decrease advocacy in community-based movement organizations (Minkoff, 2002). Minkoff concludes that making established organizations more inclusive of social movement practices may be smarter than starting new organizations. Also, if organizations require structural modification to remain viable, they need to convince supporters that the changes are needed and congruent with the original mission. "This may itself require a

significant reconceptualization of what are considered to be the best means available for realizing the organization's objectives" (p. 45).

Summary

Taking a closer look at the theories and research presented here, I identify three dualities that can serve as meta-themes running through the literature. First, there is consistent a tension, or duality between personal agency and social structure. A second duality can be observed with regard to the concepts of first- and second-order change in organizational and community change efforts. The last duality can be observed in the tension between learning and organizing, which can also be framed as a tension between order and disorder in organizational settings. In addition to the some of the either/or tensions, another meta-theme can be observed when reflecting on the tendency of theories to suggest that organizational learning and change happens in an overly linear fashion. The linear nature of most change theories appears to cloud the messy and chaotic nature of learning and change in organizations that potentially happens in many different ways depending on the context and the individuals involved. It may be that focusing primarily on linear, compartmental, rational, or dualistic interpretations creates constraints that limit the ability to adequately conceptualize the dynamic interplay that happens in organizational processes. In reality, these phenomena are less clear in practical settings. I will discuss each of these meta-themes in the final section of this chapter as each theme can inform the case analysis that follows.

Individual power to act for given purposes is the main feature of personal agency (Bandura, 2001). The ameliorative paradigm in human services places much of the emphasis on individual agency while neglecting to attend to structures that oppress or constrain agency. With

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regard to successful organizational learning and change, many theorists put primary emphasis on the capacities of leaders and the contributions of individuals and teams. On the other hand, others name social structures as the targets of change for human service action and as the main factor in successful organizational change. For the most part, social structures represent institutions, authorized systems of rules, resources, social practices, communicative actions, and sanctions designed to relegate human affairs (Giddens, 1984). I join with Giddens (1979, 1984), Prilleltensky (2003), and Bandura (2001) in suggesting that

> personal agency and social structure operate interdependently. Social structures are created by human activity, and sociostructural practices, in turn, impose constraints and provide enabling resources and opportunity structures for personal development and functioning (Bandura, 2001, p. 15).

In community settings, just as systems and structures impact human flourishing, individuals can also act as agents in transforming those settings. In organizations, leaders can inspire workers and motivate change, but without supportive settings and adequate resources, learning and change may not occur. Making sense of complex human, organizational, and community interactions requires an understanding of the mutual dependence of structure and agency in order to navigate this contentious dualism in research and action.

Earlier in the chapter I presented a conceptual framework that made a clear distinction between the ameliorative and transformative paradigms in human services. I acknowledged the risk of presenting the two as dichotomous, yet I would like to elaborate on that risk further. Although to some degree it is helpful to contrast existing patterns of human service with a model that addresses systemic sources of suffering, it is likely that an ideal model involves a dialectical process that results in a blending of the two. This dialectic is also more likely in organizations where a combination of evolutionary progress and dramatic shifts may be all wrapped up together. Continuous and discontinuous theories of organizational change may have to be held

together to understand the dynamic and interdependent cycles of change (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). In complex environments such as communities and organizations, radical change is hard to manage and nearly impossible to accomplish as an intentional goal. It may be the case that coordinated or accumulated small change efforts, or small wins, with tangible outcomes can go a long way towards affecting underlying systems and structures. Small wins, as Weick and Westley (1996) define them, are not merely biting small chunks off of a larger task, but rather take advantage of unique opportunities to move forward and promote learning. They can, in the aggregate, approximate radical change or pave the way for revolution (Weick & Westley, 1996). There may, in fact, be much more to gain from understanding how first- and second-order change processes work together to create and sustain meaningful change in organizations and communities.

In organizational change processes, individuals and entire organizations struggle to maintain their identities and order in the midst of potential chaos. Weick and Westley (Weick & Westley, 1996) suggest that this is a crucial yet tricky dance to maintain. Without experiencing disorder, learning is stifled, the status quo prevails, and organization is maintained. With too much disorder, change processes and those involved risk spiraling out of control. Learning occurs at this juxtaposition where there is a tension between having a need to change and fear of the unknown, and between letting go and holding on to deeply held assumptions and patterns (Kofman & Senge, 1993; Weick & Westley, 1996). Optimal organizational development and learning may take place when the organization is making use of the creative tension between exploring, frame shifting, and innovating on the one hand, and adaptation, habit formation, and evolutionary learning on the other (Weick & Westley, 1996). This may have particular salience in the non-profit, human service context where there is not much available time or adequate

resources to support innovation at the expense of maintenance – an example of where a perceived weakness can be considered an asset if the right balance can be achieved!

Finally, and related to the above dualisms, theories of organizational change tend toward linear models. What results are theories that suggest change happens through a step-by-step process in all cases. Nonlinearity in organizational change processes is more likely than a simple, linear progression. Although I disagree to some extent with Van de Ven and Poole (1995) who suggest that there is a relatively systematic pattern to this chaos, I agree that a more nuanced picture of organizational change is needed so as to understand the conditions under which meaningful change occurs. One answer is to develop and study, through attempts at organizational change, the nonlinear and dynamic patterns in order to better make sense of how, and under what conditions, change processes cycle, wax, and wane. It is my hope that this study can make a contribution to this and the other dilemmas described above.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Rationale

This study is important to undertake for two reasons. First, we do not know enough about second-order change in the human service organization setting. Non-profit human service community organizations face unique challenges when attempting transformational change. Many of their strategies are determined by the theories and beliefs of external funding sources and their organizational development capabilities limited by lack of resources. Second, we know little about this specific type of attempt to move from amelioration to transformation in human service practice. Even if we assume that human service organizations and human service workers understand the limits of reactive service provision, we do not have a clear picture of what critical practice could look like in human service organizations and how to get there. This study can contribute to both the general literature on organizational change in human services and the specific transformation from an ameliorative stance to one that includes transformational approaches.

As momentum builds for a new approach to human services (see Kunreuther, 2002; Rosenman, 2003) it is important to build a database of case studies in this area of change. In order to move from the theoretical to the practical (and back again), we need specific examples of on-the-ground change attempts to fully begin to understand how change of this nature happens as well as the specific drivers of and barriers to change. This project emerged as a grounded

attempt to do things a different way in human services, and it makes sense to study their change process in order to inform further research and action in this important area.

Research Design and Methodology

This project grew organically out of discussions with Island Center staff in February of 2003. The dialog focused on the social sources of wellbeing and the potential role of their organization in changing community conditions and working for social justice. A colleague and I began working regularly with the team to redefine the organizational philosophy and think about alternative practices. Although this was not a research project initially, it became clear that what we were engaged in was action research. In June of 2003, the action research frame was made explicit, and more structured documentation of our efforts was initiated.

My choice of methods is based in my own values and philosophy of science as well as what I consider the best approach to making sense of the phenomena of interest. This led me to base this research in a social constructivist paradigm, and to use a pre-figurative action research orientation, qualitative methods, and case study reporting. The emphasis of the research is on theory development that can inform critical action.

The Constructivist Paradigm

"The major task of a constructivist investigator is to tease out the constructions that various actors in a setting hold and, so far as possible, bring them into conjunction (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 142)." Naturalistic inquiry resides under the constructivist paradigm and holds that it is the meanings that people ascribe to events or the interpretations people make of processes that are of interest in human events. The focus is on the meaning that individuals and

groups make of their experiences in their historical, social, cultural, and political contexts and therefore attends more to language, communication, and the subjective human experience. The naturalist posture is one of relativist ontology, subjective epistemology, and hermeneutic methodology.

Guba (1987) highlights the constructivist or naturalist belief system and contrasts it with a conventional posture. A relativist ontology suggests that we know things through making sense of multiple socially constructed realities and that research findings are the literal creation of the inquiry process. "Truth" lies in sophisticated and informed constructions that can be generally agreed upon by knowledgeable individuals. This is contrasted with the realist stance that believes that there is there is a single, observable reality independent of the observer's interest. "Truth" is in the facts. In the constructivist paradigm, the researcher and the researched are interlocked in meaning-making relationship and the subjectivity of the researcher and the participants are considered legitimate and valuable data. The findings are a creation of the inquiry process. This is in stark contrast to the conventional stance that holds that the researcher can and must remain detached from it. Finally, the constructivist paradigm suggests that knowledge is acquired through an iterative, interpretive process. This process involves a dialectic of iteration, analysis, critique, and reanalysis leading to both an emic and etic understanding of the case. Through immersion in a setting, a researcher can attend to both on the intrinsic cultural distinctions and perspectives that are meaningful to the members as well as his or her own logical analysis of the various perspectives. Constructivist approaches emphasize that all ways of interpreting the world are human constructions framed by language in social interaction (Gergen, 1985).

Prefigurative Action Research

This project began a year-and-a-half ago as an attempt at social innovation -- to move from amelioration to transformation in a human service organization. Members of the organization began to see an alternative vision for the organization and together we embarked on a learning and action endeavor to create something new. An action research orientation is uniquely suited to this endeavor as the primary purpose of action research is "practical knowing embodied in the moment-to-moment action of each researcher/practitioner in the service of human flourishing and the flourishing of the eco-systems of which we are a part (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p. 5)." Prefigurative action research (Kagan & Burton, 2000) follows this tradition by being both critical and action-oriented seeking to learn about the process of social change, in a systematic way, from the experience of attempted progressive social innovation. Characteristics of prefigurative action research include:

- Emphasis on creating and sustaining examples of alternative social arrangements that in addition to the benefits they bring to participants, also provide a vision of a just society;

- The participation of less powerful people;

- Analysis through direct experience, reflection, testing, and confrontation;

- Multiple cycles of reflection, doing, and knowing;

- Simultaneous attention to both agency and structure;

- Creation of a new agenda, and help in the design of social innovation;

- Provision of investigative skills (Kagan & Burton, 2000).

Like traditional action research and participatory action research, community members and researchers are involved in a collaborative, co-learning process that integrates inquiry with

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education and action. However, it differs from traditional action research in that it is concerned with empowerment, participation, learning, and social justice.

Qualitative Methods

This project utilizes qualitative methods in order to best capture the richness and multi-level complexity of organizational change. Qualitative approaches may be particularly useful in understanding these sorts of processes within organizations as the process is more open-ended, exploratory, adventurous, and discovery-oriented (Shinn & Toohey, 2003). Given that so little is known about human service organizations' attempts at shifting paradigms, an inductive approach makes sense. Due to the emergent nature of this project, it was more important to develop a holistic understanding of the process rather than test predetermined hypotheses. Data were obtained through experiencing, enquiring, and examining - participant observation, interviews and focus groups, and reviews of organizational documents and archival data. These data place emphasis on participant's lived experience and assist in understanding the meanings people place on events, processes, and structures connected to the social world (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The design was emergent in that as I learned about the process of change new questions arose that led me to explore new directions and seek new sources of data.

Critiques of Constructivist Approaches

Critiques of a constructivist approach to research come from both ends of the epistemic spectrum. Without a doubt, positivist, realist social science is the dominant approach to research in academia today. In social science research, positivism pursues objective, value-free neutrality, cause and effect relationships, and control of environmental variables. Advocates of a positivist approach to research criticize constructivist approaches mainly due to the lack of objectivity. We

are told that subjectivities are out of place and are to be contained and kept from the inquiry (Kidder & Fine, 1997). Another challenge from realists is that the constructivist's relativist position dismisses the material nature of reality. There is a world to be known with natural laws and cause and effect relationships. Finally, realists criticize the constructivist paradigm as being overly descriptive and lacking explanatory value, which results in an inability to generalize findings. In the management literature, Pfeffer (1993) has gone so far as suggesting that the field of organizational management needs to adopt empirical positivism as a singular paradigm for inquiry in order to achieve the stature and influence of other fields. However, these assumptions are increasingly being called into question by social scientists and theorists (Gergen, 1982; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005; Reason & Torbert, 2001) and renowned qualitative champions of qualitative strategies have even asserted, "positivism is passé" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 24).

From the critical perspective, the relativist stance of constructivism creates an entirely different problem: No one moral position or construction of reality is deemed better than another. The central important critique is that the constructivist approach to qualitative research "lacks a critical perspective, fails to use participatory processes, and has little focus on catalyzing social change" (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005, p 273). Many of these critiques highlighted above are valid and apply to this study. However, through established qualitative strategies, I will attempt to address the question of empirical "rigor". Additionally, some of the concerns of the critical perspective are addressed through engaging participants in reflecting on findings, and by my explicit desire to highlight and promote human service practices that catalyze social change.

Phenomenon of Interest

The phenomenon I am concerned with in this study is organizational change. This includes attending, describing, and explaining both the content of change and the process of change. Examining and describing the *content* of change requires "an empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity" (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 512). This entity may be the culture, strategies or product of the organization, and quite likely all of the above. The *process* of change, on the other hand, is the progression of events that unfold over the duration of an entity's existence (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). In the case of Island Center, their change was deliberate and planned, so this study is specific to this deliberate attempt at change.

This type of planned process of change is what Van de Ven and Poole (1995) describe as fitting the teleological theory of change. Teleological theory posits that an organization envisions an end state and takes action to reach it. There is an intentional attempt to diverge from the current order. Change happens at many levels of analysis and the mode of change is constructed rather than prescribed. Because there may be several ways to go about achieving this goal, I am concerned with developing a process theory for this case that serves as an explanation of how and why this organization changed. This requires special attention to generative mechanisms and inhibiting factors in the change process.

Studying organizational change is a complex endeavor. Because of multiple actors, multiple motors, and the influence of the context of change it can be near impossible to capture the complex nature of this phenomenon. Van de Ven and Poole describe this struggle well:

> Organizational development and change are influenced by diverse units and actors, both inside and outside the organization. The special dispersion of units and actors means that different influences may be acting simultaneously on different parts of the organization, each imparting its own particular momentum to the developmental process. In some

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cases, more than one change motor may influence development and change. Development and change also take time to occur. As time passes, there is opportunity for different motors to come into play, especially given the dispersion of influences. The resulting observed process is multilayered and complex. Attempts to explain this process with a single motor run the risk of oversimplification and selective attention to one aspect of the change process at the expense of others. (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995, p. 526)

I hope that I have been able to capture some of this complexity through my research and analysis. I try to paint an accurate picture of the process of change in a way that honors this complexity. In the end, however, it is up to you, the reader, to make sense of the information provided here through your own experiences and perspectives. I will attempt to provide enough detail about the change to make that possible.

The Setting

The organization highlighted in this study is a non-profit, community-based human service organization that serves teenagers and families in Metro Nashville, Tennessee, and surrounding counties. There are approximately forty staff members working in three main program areas: Crisis and Residential Services, Youth Leadership Development, and Community Counseling Services. The Crisis and Residential Services department offers shelter and counseling for teenagers who are homeless or in crisis at home, and transitional services for older teens aging out of foster care or attempting to leave the streets. The Youth Leadership Development branch focuses on opportunities for young people to be involved in community. They offer leadership development training and support groups of teens as they engage in service, civic participation, and activism. The Counseling team offers counseling and prevention services through individual, family and group sessions, all provided according to a sliding-fee scale, based on ability to pay. All services are offered through one of their four facilities or in partnership with schools or other community organizations.

Island Center has been operating in Nashville for thrity-five years. The agency began in the late 1960's as a community-based counseling program for runaways, homeless teens, and teens experiencing drug and alcohol related problems. It was originally staffed by volunteers and was a drop-in center by day and a crisis line at night. In the early years, Island Center also became a place for people to come for any number of reasons: bad drug trips, abusive or neglectful parents, mental illness, or isolation. Surprisingly, many of those who came in the early days were primarily men coping with the realities of deinstitutionalization. In 1980 the agency changed its mission and narrowed its services to focus only on adolescents and their families. Over the years, the professional counselors, social workers, crisis workers, and volunteers of Island Center have worked with teens and parents, helping them in times of crisis and providing teens with opportunities for leadership and service. Out of this experience the community agency developed a national reputation. Island Center is considered by many in the field of youth development to be one of the nation's most comprehensive and innovative agencies for teens and their families. The organization has a strong commitment to diversity and takes seriously its responsibility to promote staff well-being.

Nashville is the capital of Tennessee and a vital transportation, business and tourism center for North America. The Nashville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), in the state's center, comprises 8 counties and over one million in population. Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County has a population of 569,891 and according to the 2000 Census, the population of Nashville is 67% White, 26% African American, with 5% of the population being identified as Hispanic or Latino. Nashville is a culturally diverse city with the 2nd largest Kurdish population in the US and a growing Hispanic population.

There is no income tax in the state of Tennessee; therefore cities rely on property taxes and the sales tax on food, clothing, and other basic necessities. In this way, based on relative income, Tennessee forces low-income individuals and families to pay over three times as much taxes as high-income individuals and families do. This is because all citizens, regardless of income, pay the same amount of taxes for food or other basic goods. The resulting small tax base in Tennessee leaves many social services strapped for resources. The recent recession has made things worse in the state. Education in Tennessee is severely under funded - Tennessee ranks 45th in the amount of funding per pupil in K-12 schools. TennCare, the state's health care program for low-income families and other uninsured groups is currently facing a budget crisis whereby they are proposing to eliminate nearly 300, 000 individuals from the rolls. While the Nashville-area economy is still relatively strong, with unemployment figures generally below the national average, the disparity in poverty between the core county of Davidson and the surrounding counties risks serious economic consequences for the city.

Nashville has of late been considered near the "tipping point" when it comes to youth development and youth civic engagement. Island Center, in collaboration with other agencies and the Mayor's Office of Children and Youth, recently received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to be a site for the Youth Innovation Fund for Youth-Directed Civic Action. Nashville was selected as a site because of a rich history of youth-led action, dating back to the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the civil rights movement. The foundation also recognized that The Mayor's Office of Children and Youth provides powerful access to effective collaboration with city government and the school district. Because of investment of this type and progressive support from local government officials, Nashville is experiencing a renewed energy for youth empowerment and civic action.

Background on Action Research Relationship

Before beginning Ph.D. study at Vanderbilt, I worked at Island Center for 6 years as a family counselor and youth development worker. A strong and positive tie was maintained over time, and early in 2003, I scheduled a talk at Island Center on "Human and Community Well-being." The presentation focused on the relationship between social conditions and wellbeing and questioned the ability of the traditional model of human services to make community-level change. The presentation and discussion at Island Center met with tremendous resonance. It touched the workers deeply and even moved some longtime staff members to tears. When asked why he thought this discussion touched people so much, the executive director related it to a Frederick Buechner quote about vocation: "The place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need." They were hearing about the kind of work they wanted to do, and needed to do, but for some reason were unable to. Although many workers had entered the human service field to care for individuals and to promote social justice, due to a variety of job pressures, collective-level values had been pushed to the background. Many staff members reported that they wanted to do this type of work, but were simply unable to do it. The need to respond to immediate crises prevented them from being more proactive and limited them to individual-level efforts.

These initial discussions lead to several more meetings to explore how Island Center could bring values of social justice and interdependence to the foreground. The organization, in partnership with a colleague and myself, decided to form a "Transformation team" (T-Team) made up of staff members at various levels of the organization. The T-Team was to drive the

change process, with myself and other colleagues serving as external consultants. This T-Team met regularly in the spring of 2003 and began by clarifying the organization's shared values in the individual, relational, and collective domains. These shared values and desired ends were fashioned into a philosophy statement that now guides the change process as well as organizational decisions. Although we did not know exactly where we were headed, everyone involved knew that the aim was to fashion an organization that attended more to the community conditions that created the need for their services.

Historical Context

This study takes place at a moment in time when nonprofit organizations are under tremendous fiscal stress and operating in survival mode (Salamon & O'Sullivan, 2004). This stress is fueled mostly by rising costs, especially in the area of health insurance premiums. The welfare reform of 1996, the new faith-based initiatives, and the shift of responsibilities to the states and local communities have created new demands on human service organizations (Gronbjerg, 2001). The federal monies that do exist for human service organizations support crisis-oriented programs, or after-the-fact intervention programs. It is also important to note the socially conservative political climate that exists during this period of time in the United States. Current and future federal funding to all social service programs is uncertain. The downturn in the economy, the war in Iraq, a ballooning deficit, and the current administration's insistence on tax cuts pose severe threats to social service funding.

This current fiscal reality has caused many organizations to terminate programs or limit the scope of initiatives. Other belt-tightening efforts include freezing salaries, decreasing benefits, increasing staff hours, postponing hiring, eliminating vacancies, or increasing reliance

on part-time staff (Salamon & O'Sullivan, 2004). To respond to this stress, many organizations

are turning to commercial forms of support including increased fee-for-service activities. The

situation has also led some organizations to innovate in ways that include trying new approaches,

collaboration and partnerships, and merging with or acquiring programs run by other

organizations. This fiscal stress has also driven some organizations to take proactive actions to

avoid cuts in funding.

Additionally, some human service organizations are giving in to the push to adopt a

managerial approach to their service delivery. This requires running their organizations like

corporations and attending primarily to "keeping their numbers up" while demonstrating

significant individual and family outcomes in order to be accountable to funding agencies and

the community. This is especially the case for mental health organizations that have chosen to

operate as managed care providers. It is forcing human service organizations to favor market-like

behavior over quality of care (Gronbjerg, 2001). Nonprofits are finding it necessary to pay more

attention to the requirements of survival than to what makes them unique as an organization

(Salamon & O'Sullivan, 2004). United Way organizations are also facing demands from donors

and corporate leaders that may not be consistent with the interest of organizations or the

community (Gronbjerg *et al.*, 1996).

It is impossible to project exactly what impact the current context has on this change

process, but as Jenkins (1985) suggests, in general, grant makers tend to favor organizations

pursuing more acceptable goals and activities. This may be an issue in this current political

climate, and an even greater threat in the relatively more conservative southern states. Change in

social organizations tends to be more conservative during socially conservative periods in

history. Research has also found that restrictive political environments force organizations to adopt less confrontational modes of action (McCarthy *et al.*, 1991).

Sources of Data

Participant Observation (Field Notes)

I have been a full participant in this change process since March of 2003 and an external member of their Transformation Team (T-Team). On average, the T-Team met two to three times a month for ninety minutes since inception in early 2003. I have also worked with smaller groups and departments on efforts related to the change process. These smaller task forces and departmental meetings met as needed during the change effort, usually around specific tasks or brainstorming sessions. I participated in most of these related meetings, which brought me to the organization sometimes daily, sometimes weekly depending on the task at hand. In addition, I was in constant communication with T-Team members and leadership via email and phone.

My active role in the change process can be generally characterized as a collaborator-consultant. Dimock (1992) identified six possible roles for agents of change: director, expert, consultant, resource, facilitator, and collaborator. My role in this process has spanned the range from consultant to collaborator. I have been a collaborator in that I am interested and invested in the process and have joined with them to plan and implement change in the organization. As a resource, I have linked the organization to literature and theory to support their work and assisted in planning and implementing internal data collection. I have performed the duties of a facilitator by creating agendas for meetings, guiding the group process, and helping the group reflect on their own process. In this role as facilitator, I have also served as a teacher posing critical

questions (Freire, 1973) and as what Jack Mezirow (1997) calls a "provocateur", helping individuals and groups reflect on their beliefs and assumptions and challenging them to create innovative and transformative solutions to dilemmas and tensions that emerge in the process. Finally, have also played the consultant role bringing my knowledge and skills to the endeavor and wielding some influence due to the fact that I have a long history with the organization. All interactions with the organization, including ongoing meetings and interactions with staff, were documented as field notes and prepared for analysis.

Individual interviews

Individual staff members were selected to participate in individual interviews. Maximum variation purposive sampling was used to include managers and directors, front-line staff, volunteers, board members, community members, funders, and clients. These respondents were chosen "serially" or "contingently" based on what was learned from previous respondents. Each interviewee was asked "Who should I talk to that might have a different perspective on this?" I interviewed fifteen people, focusing on changes in values, beliefs, and practices as well as the contributing and inhibiting factors to the change process itself (see interview guides appendices II & III). Attention was also given to the generative nature of the interview itself (i.e. how does the interview discussion generate new insight for the respondent?). Interviews were recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber and myself.

Team focus groups

I held focus groups with all 5 departmental teams at Island Center: Counseling, Shelter, Transitional Living, Youth Leadership Development and Support Services. These focus groups

were conducted as dialogues about the change process. I also paid attention to the generative

nature of the group discussion itself (i.e. how does the discussion generate new insight for the

participants?). Focus groups were recorded and transcribed by a professional transcriber and

myself.

Documents, archival records, and artifacts

Existing documents and documents that were generated during the change process

supported collected data. These included historical documents, emails, memos, meeting agendas

and minutes, reports, grant proposals, strategic planning documents, and newsletters.

Additionally, artifacts and other physical evidence such as symbols, photos, technology, tools

and workspaces were observed and documented.

Approach to Data Analysis

Data analysis was ongoing during data collection, using the constant comparative method

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), and continued after completion of fieldwork.

Tentative hypotheses were developed to inform ongoing collection procedures and strategies.

Data were analyzed and reduced to identify central themes, ideas, beliefs, values, concerns, and

other issues. Initial categories were developed to identify evidence of organizational change at

the individual, team, organizational, and community level as well as generative and restraining

mechanisms. From there, categories were collapsed and working models were developed and

refined. Member checks and peer debriefings were utilized throughout to test working

hypotheses and examine alternative interpretations. The interactive refining process continued

until the final report was completed.

This interactive data collection and data analysis process can be referred to as a hermeneutic dialectic process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). It is interpretive in nature and seeks to compare and contrast divergent views to arrive at a usable synthesis. As suggested by critical researchers Louise Kidder and Michelle Fine (1997) I asserted interpretive authority over the data as an engaged analyst of social relations in order to advance theoretical frameworks around the voices of participants.

Case study reporting

The results of this study are reported here as a holistic single-case study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested that the case study should be the unit of analysis in qualitative, naturalistic inquiry. This form of reporting raises the reader's level of understanding of the phenomenon of interest. The need for case studies arises out of the desire to make sense of and present complex social phenomena (Yin, 2003). Some have argued that the case study is the best method for collecting, organizing, and disseminating information about practices that have produced their intended results (Fishman, 1999). The use here of the case study as a reporting mechanism allows for the reader to become fully immersed in this story of change that happened over an extended period with multiple players. It also allows for me to thoroughly paint this picture from multiple perspectives. It is my hope that the output of research from this single case study can become a theoretical vehicle for the examination of other cases. In that respect, the mode of generalization is "analytic generalization" in which results presented here can be examined in light of previously developed theory and can inform the development of future theory, action, and policy (Yin, 2003).

Trustworthiness

Throughout the study, I utilized established qualitative techniques for safeguarding the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993). Credibility was established by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of sources, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checks. Transferability is strengthened by the thick description of the setting and by the use of purposive sampling. Dependability is assured through the use of overlapping methods and the development of a natural history of the research methodology. Finally, by utilizing triangulation, peer debriefing, and case reporting with examples of raw data, I am able to help safeguard confirmability.

Conclusion

There are myriad ways of inquiring into organizational phenomena. Organizations are complex, have multiple moving parts, and exist in larger historical, economic, political, and cultural contexts. The approach described above, in my mind, attends to the complex nature of the inquiry through adopting a social constructivist paradigm, and by using a pre-figurative action research orientation, qualitative methods, and case study reporting. This approach is empirically rigorous, using established quality criteria, and also includes a critical perspective in that I hope to learn about this social innovation in human services so as to inform this other attempts at social change. Most importantly, the methodology described herein matches closely with my own personal and professional values.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE AND CONTENT OF CHANGE

Narrative of Change

In early 2003, I was consumed with this question: "What would it look like to practice critically in counseling settings?" This question was raised and addressed by Prilleltensky and Nelson in a chapter in their book "Doing Psychology Critically: Making a Difference in Diverse Settings" (2002) and matched my own concern about the limited effect of helping services on complex social problems. I wanted to know how these ideas and concepts would play out in practice in the organizational settings in which counselors and other human service workers find themselves. I decided to request some time with the staff at Island Center to have a dialogue about this question and to hear their thoughts about the possibilities for a different way of approaching human service work. This initial discussion lead to several more meetings to begin to explore how Island Center could bring values of social justice and interdependence to the foreground, and to think and practice more critically. Two years later, a lot has changed at Island Center, and there is an interesting story to tell.

This chapter highlights their two and a half-year story of change and illuminates the changes observed at multiple levels of analysis. I focus on the content of change here, although it is not possible, nor is it desirable to completely separate the content of change from the process by which these changes occurred. I intend to tell the story of change in such a way to give you, the reader, a sense of the how the changes unfolded, the energy and excitement that was

generated during the process, as well as the frustrations and challenges that were experienced. In the final section, I will summarize the specific changes observed.

Reflecting on the process of change, it is clear that their journey has taken them through three distinct phases. Although these phases have been called many things by organizational theorists, I will use Bridges' (2003) terms "endings" "neutral zone" and "new beginnings" to describe the phases that Island Center traveled through as it worked towards its change goal. Figure 3 maps the three phases to the two-year period that this study covers. It is important to note here that the change process is still ongoing at Island Center; however, this case description will only cover the twenty-six month period from March 2003 to May 2005.
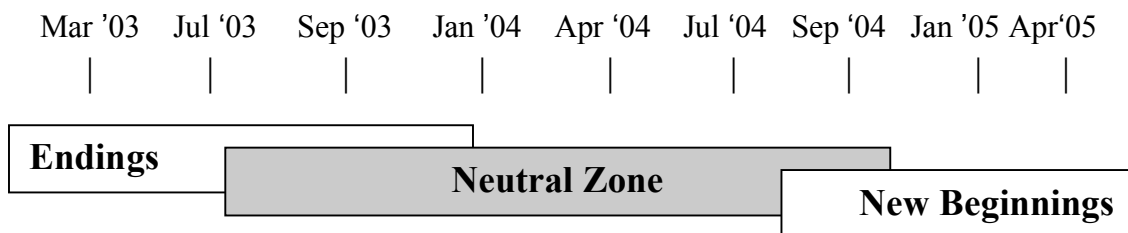
Figure 3: Phases of change timeline

Endings

This first phase of the organizational change process has been referred to by theorists as *unfreezing* (Lewin, 1935; Lippitt, 1958; Schein, 1992) or *endings* (Bridges, 2003) and refers to the process of developing a felt need for change through highlighting problems with the existing model. Existing conditions must be deemed unacceptable and change must be seen as the only solution. Lewin (1935) and Schein (1992) are clear that movement towards an alternate vision

will not happen unless unfreezing has taken place. Elements of unfreezing or ending include

awareness of the inadequacy of existing system, induction of guilt or anxiety, the creation of

psychological safety, creating readiness, and establishing a change team. Many of the theories

described highlight the need for consciousness-raising to help individuals consider the need for

change. At Island Center, many of the elements described above were evident in their endings

phase as they became aware of an alternate vision, formed a change team, explored their culture

and shared purpose, and declared their vision for what they wanted to become.

What we are doing may not be enough

As I mentioned earlier, this change project at Island Center started with a dialogue about

the need to balance the three domains of wellness – individual, relational, and collective. Often

community researchers have to be concerned with entry when beginning projects with

organizations or communities, but for me, entrance was relatively easy due to my long-standing

relationship with the organization. This insider-outsider status allowed me to book time at an

organizational in-service meeting for a colleague and I to explore these ideas with them.

For many years, Island Center was doing great work at the individual and relational

levels. They were highly regarded as one of the most effective organizations in town; they won

awards for their programming and celebrated successes with individuals and families. Staff felt

that they were doing good work, as one worker suggested:

> …you know, people needed what we were providing. It wasn't like people didn't need
> counseling or that kind of thing. People need the services and people here did a good job
> providing the services. There were stories of individual success that made it feel like it
> was good work.

Yet, below the surface, many were feeling frustrated with their inability to make a

difference. There was a feeling that what they were doing may not be enough, and no matter how

good their work was at the individual and relational levels, there would always be an endless

stream of need coming through their doors unless they did things differently. One worker notes:

> I was personally at a place where I was a little burned out. I was working a lot of long hours and not seeing a lot of progress. Or seeing young people who would leave us – they might have some skills that they learned, but they were returning…back into family situations which they had left or become homeless from. Nothing had changed in the family, and certainly nothing had changed in the community. I knew that it was sucking the life out of me watching – if I watched one more young person go straight back into the same situation, or call us in a month after they've left here in the same situation. It was getting really old. I feel like we are doing a lot of good work individually. A lot of nurturing, but we weren't changing any conditions.

This discussion at Island Center came at a very opportune time. Workers in the

organization needed an alternate vision for their efforts and some new language and concepts to

get them started in a new direction. My colleague gave a presentation at this first meeting that

suggested wellbeing is a balance of individual, relational, and collective wellness. Island Center

workers were able to acknowledge how their efforts to date, as well intentioned and skillful as

they were, were simply not going to make a dent in solving the complex social problems that

their clients experience. The discussion that followed the presentation generated a great deal of

energy and excitement about the possibilities for their unique role in addressing issues at the

collective or community level. One of the leaders noted;

> It was the reaction that I was seeing of the people who worked for me. Looking around and seeing twenty-six year employees get moved to the point of tears when they see that it takes what we are doing to another, deeper level. It just touched them; it touched everyone's hearts. What we were talking about is why everyone got into this field in the first place. Unfortunately, they usually lose that because you get so bogged down in the grind of seeing more clients and doing this and that and it gets lost. I use a quote a lot from Frederick Buechner. His definition of vocation is that place where your heart's deep gladness meets the world's deep need. That is what happened in there.

It spoke to people because they knew deep down that there were extra-individual factors

causing or contributing to the problems that people were bringing to Island Center. They mostly

knew that there were conditions in the community that blocked people from realizing their

potential, but they were unable to match this understanding with practices that addressed these

conditions. Another worker noted:

> So I think it really spoke to me because I understood the importance of those systemic
> factors and the tragedy created by inequality and injustice. Yet, you know we never really
> talked about, let alone addressed, these larger issues.

> Two years into the process, when reflecting on this initial disruption caused by this first

dialogue, the director remembered it as opening a Pandora's Box for the agency.

> Some people cried, some people got really scared. We knew at the time that Island Center
> was not doing this kind of proactive work. Most of our agency is geared around services
> that are largely reactive, working with kids in crisis and kids on the streets and we know
> something had to change.

The presentation and subsequent dialogue helped to surface what many in the organization were

already feeling. For others, this was an introduction to the role of power in the lives of the

people they work with. We helped highlight the importance of understanding the community and

societal forces at play and the need to go beyond ameliorative approaches. We also provided the

organization with some new language to help frame what this work might look like. The

disconnect between the targets of their work and the real source of individual problems was

surfaced and made object. This lit a fire in the agency that spread and grew into the beginnings

of an organizational culture change.

This dialogue also converged with efforts by the Board of Directors to make the agency

more effective and more focused in response to changed environment, including very tough

funding environment. The Board of Directors was looking at what is core to Island Center and

was considering moving quickly to eliminate so-called "non-core" programs. The Executive

Director and Board Executive Committee decide to take some time to more deeply consider how

to make needed changes. They planned to complete a planning process, called Vision 2007 by

November 2003.

Who are we?

Forming the change team. The initial discussions led the director to decide that this was important enough and it was suggested that a cross-department team be formed to guide how to move these ideas forward. He asked that each department select a couple of people to participate on this team and that all director-level staff be involved. My colleague and I joined the team as external consultants although no formal agreement was created to define our role. It was decided at one of our first gatherings that the team would be called the "T-Team" for transformation team, acknowledging from the start that we were to be the engine for a radical change process. There was no specific goal for this team other than a desire to move the agency to a place that was more transformational in its actions. When asked recently to reflect back on what this team's initial change goal was, responses ranged from "to help balance our efforts between the personal, relational, and community levels" to "moving the organization towards ways of thinking and practicing that result in more transformational change in the community". This lack of clear change goals and defined roles became barriers in the process as levels of ambiguity rose during the difficult neutral zone phase.

The T-Team took the lead in developing a vision for the organization that was more in line with this emerging philosophy. As the group formed, participants were clear about their desire to build a team environment that enabled open discussion and a space where they could teach each other and grow together. Although none of us were certain where this was headed, we acknowledged early on that this was going to be a difficult and ambiguous process. The team space needed to be a place where we could come together and struggle with issues.

As the T-Team began to do its work, some frustrations began to surface as organizational members experienced the sense that the new structure was "piling on" work on top of their

already full workload and that they did not have time to devote to the process. Additionally, some participants found it very difficult to shift from direct service mode to change team member as captured in this shelter worker's experience:

> I think one of the things when the T-Team first started that I struggled with was being – you're in the shelter for two hours and you're in that mode of being with the kids or answering crisis calls, and to stop and come over for a meeting where you have to kind of take a deep breath and think of other things and how we're going to move toward something for an hour and a half and then go back to that environment is very hard.

It was apparent early on that full participation in the T-Team process was easier for some than for others. Beyond the role switching difficulty, many had very little experience participating in organizational-level processes such as this and needed more support in this new role. Additionally, many of these direct service workers were often unable to attend T-Team meetings because of the unique demands of their residential programs. Over time, this became an internal justice issue that was addressed later in the process. The T-Team met weekly for the first six months of the process and then bi-weekly from that point forward.

Explicating culture. During the first few months of their work, the focus was on clarifying personal and organizational values and on increasing their own awareness of this different way of doing things. The T-Team initially felt a lot of energy around the need to clearly define what they, as an organization, stand for. What is their vision for a "good community" in which young people can develop? Although they had several statements in use, none felt like an accurate portrayal of their values in action. The mission statement read: "To work in partnership with youth, their families, and community to meet, master, and embrace the challenges of adolescence." Another "provocative proposition" phrase that existed on newsprint in one of the meeting rooms prior to the start of this process phrased the answer to the vision question this way: "We live in a community that actively supports and creates opportunities for all youth."

The group decided some internal inquiry was needed to fully elucidate the guiding values of the organization. They developed some informal guiding questions and charged each other with talking to other staff, young people, and parents. They came up with a format for the discussions (Appendix B) and began to hold small group sessions to examine shared values. They were to ask these people about significant interactions or experiences with young people and about their vision for a good society. The hope was that from these stories some clear themes would emerge to assist the organization in explicating their organizational culture and allow them to define their organizational philosophy. From there, they hoped to apply the philosophy to existing practices and to the development of new strategies. A change process based in organizational values was underway.

During these first few months, there was also a desire to learn more about the social determinants of wellbeing and the inherently political nature of human service work. My colleague and I planned a few opportunities to do "teach ins" on various issues to highlight the impact that poverty, lack of health care, inadequate educational systems, low wages, and other systemic problems can have on human thriving. One of our goals was to make visible the dominant culture of human services and how most efforts are ameliorative at best. This also had the effect of forcing the workers to examine their own culture against this backdrop. Through these teach-ins and by using other stories and metaphors we were able to raise the level of self-examination in the organization.

One story that proved to be especially effective is the story of John Snow and the cholera epidemic in London England in the mid 1800's. John Snow was a physician and anesthesiologist, but his unconventional ideas lead him to understand cholera as a waterborne disease. In 1854, as the death toll from cholera was rising, he traced the source of this outbreak to the water pump at

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Broad Street. After convincing the local authorities, they disabled the infamous pump by removing its handle. Immediately, new cases of cholera started to dwindle, and then disappeared. This story, as told very passionately by my colleague, was very effective in helping people understand that you have to get to the source of problems to make a difference. The "Pump Handle" became a powerful metaphor in this process for getting to root causes. The director described the story's impact on his awareness this way:

> The first moment was the pump-handle story. That was such a great illustration of when you get right down to it, what it [changing community conditions] is all about. Now it is not as easy as snapping-off a handle, but that was a great moment for me. I laugh about the cake of wellness, but that was another for me – a clear illustration of what this supposed to look like.

Through different strategies, T-Team members and others in the organization were able to begin to connect what they were doing in their work to the larger social issues in the community and in society. They began to see their culture at Island Center in a new light and begin to construct a new vision. Until this point, talking about politics had been mostly forbidden. Thinking of their work in terms of power, or social justice and equality was not part of the dialogue. Through learning together and critically examining the way they have been doing things, they were able to begin to change their culture. One manager described this development this way:

> I think it has given me permission to think about those issues of justice and equality and figure out ways that we could live that out in my area, which is more satisfying to me. That's more exciting. It raises quandaries about sort of how do we do that? How does everybody get brought along? How do we define what that means, you know, that – or how do we negotiate different people's understandings about it? And I think it's pushed me to think about, well you know what do I think is really important?

For some, this was a new and radical way of thinking about their work. For others, this was more about connecting their values and beliefs to their work. Either way, what was being explicated was the fact that their traditional way of doing things had to change. They could be

the best at what they do and still not change anything. What was needed was a whole new way of thinking about helping and acting in community. What was clear at this stage, however, was that the door had been opened, and there was no going back. The "Jack is out of the Box" is the way director described it. And to many, walking confidently through this door was the only way to go. "Yeah, this is exactly what we should be doing. This is our course. It makes logical sense that we should move in this direction," one worker noted.

Developing shared purpose. The T-Team conducted their inquiry into organizational values and began to bring the statements and stories into the T-Team meetings to dialogue about and make sense of the narratives. It was important for the group to see how the stories reflected values in all three domains: personal, relational, and collective. One T-Team member took the stories and attempted to extract the personal, relational, and collective-level values. She brought her analysis back to the T-Team for reflection and continued sense-making. Figure 4 represents this early categorizing of value statements. The task before them at this point was to create an organizational philosophy that captured these values and stated them in a provocative and meaningful way. There was a sense that this philosophy could potentially guide the work of the organization, and be a tool for assessing current strategies, possible collaborations, and future opportunities. This philosophy could also guide and drive the organizational change process.

Personal	*Relational*	*Collective*
Health, Safety and Security	Interdependence	Equality
Self Determination	Respect for dignity and diversity	Fairness
Participation	Caring and compassion	Justice
Optimism	Harmonious relationships	Sense of Community

Figure 4: Early Value Statement Categories

As we began to create this statement of philosophy, the T-Team discussed several principles that would guide the effort. There was a strong need to properly balance several aspects of the philosophy to avoid an "either-or" mentality. Although we had been talking a lot about moving from amelioration to transformation, we all acknowledged that the goal was mostly about creating a balanced approach that reflected both caring for those in need and changing community conditions at the same time. First, the group wanted to convey the need to balance reactive approaches with preventative ones. Second, they wanted a philosophy that balanced ameliorative and transformative aims. Third, there was a need to reflect their belief in the balance of rights and responsibilities. Lastly, and perhaps most important, was the need to be explicit about the importance of keeping values in balance. For example, balancing self-determination with the value of interdependence. In addition to these principles, feedback from staff also suggested the need to apply these values to their own organizational community. They wanted to make sure that the philosophy applies to internal policies and procedures and to how they treat each other. Overall, we wanted to bring some values that had been previously neglected to the foreground to create an organizational philosophy, based in values, that reflects a more balanced approach to helping.

Who We Are

In July of 2003, the T-Team landed on some wording for the organizational philosophy that touched their hearts. The T-Team had struggled with the difficult process of developing the wording as a group, but my partner suggested a draft and format that re-energized the group to complete the task. After a few modifications, this draft was circulated to staff and youth for suggestions. The feedback was very positive and in a few short weeks, the final version was complete (Figure 5). An outreach worker created a nice design and layout for displaying the

philosophy inside the organization. Smaller copies were also printed on nice paper to distribute

to clients, funding agencies, and other community groups. The creation of this new philosophy

was one of the moments during the change process when tremendous amounts of energy and

excitement were generated. Staff valued the fact that this was their "statement to the world and to

each other" about what they care about. They also appreciated the fact that not only was this

philosophy about their work in the community; it was also to be applied internally as well.

In every act, in every interaction, in every social action, we hold each other accountable to promote

People's dignity, safety, hope and growth
Relationships based on caring, compassion and respect
Societies based on justice, communion and equality

We are all better when these values are in balance

To put these values into action, we will:

Share our power
Be proactive and not just reactive
Transform the conditions that create problems for youth
Encourage youth and families to promote a caring community
Nurture visions that make the impossible, possible

We commit to uphold these values with

Youth and their Families
Our Employees
Our Organization
Our Community

This is a living document. We invite you to discuss it, to critique it, to live it

Figure 5: Island Center Organizational Philosophy

Many related how the creation of this statement really brought the organization together around a single charge. It gave them a common language for thinking about the work in a more substantial way. It felt like a clear statement of who they are and helped to create new standards for what they do and how they do it. Most clearly, the biggest change was in the inclusion of language that focused attention to community- or collective-level matters as well as individual-level concerns. Not only was the outcome valuable to individuals and to the organization, the process was important as well as one worker noted:

> I think this process is helping us think critically about what we're doing and state our hopes and dreams. The final statement is going to challenge us to aim high and try out new ways of doing things and new ways of thinking about things. I also think the statement of philosophy is going to be useful in talking with one another and in holding ourselves and each other accountable.

The philosophy quickly became a tool for talking to people in the community about what Island Center is and does. And, as the executive director suggested, it became important for many other reasons.

> It was important for me because I saw my values all over that thing. But, it was the first time that I really sat down long enough to think – this is what I believe, and this is what I would want carved in my tombstone. It was a powerful process, I think, for all of us because we could all look up and see something on that poster that really connects. For me, it is community. For others it may be equality, but we talk about it all the time. We don't ever have a meeting here where it doesn't come up in some form. …I keep the philosophy statement on my computer and I use the action statements as a litmus test for any opportunity that comes our way. I also stop and read them before I go into meetings, particularly directors meetings.

After the successful rollout of this new philosophy, the T-Team quickly became focused on ways to integrate it into the organizational culture. The team felt a need to "vaccinate" all staff with the philosophy and to find a participatory way to develop ways to manifest it through their practices. Organizational meetings were held to discuss and learn about the new direction and people began to envision ways to put these ideas into action. The immense energy created through the process of developing this statement soon faded as they marked an end to who they

were before and entered a very difficult phase of trying to figure out how to enact the values and principles outlined in their new philosophy. The bar was now set pretty high, and although the new philosophy sounded good in theory, many wondered how they were supposed to "do" the philosophy. This was further complicated by the fact that this whole philosophy development process was done without input or participation from the board of directors. Additionally, the board had recently embarked on a strategic planning process that was not based in the new philosophy. This was a major roadblock that the leader would later regret. For these and other reasons, the organization moved into a long, confusing, and frustrating phase of the change process; a phase adequately and ominously described by Bridges (2003) as "The Neutral Zone".

The Neutral Zone

William Bridges (2003) describes the neutral zone as that place between the old reality and the yet-to-be created new reality. It is that difficult transition period when an organization attempts to move towards what they need to become.

> Painful though it is, the neutral zone is the individual's and the organization's best chance to be creative, to develop into what they need to become, and to renew themselves…That gap between the old and the new is the time when innovation is most possible and when the organization can most easily be revitalized. The neutral zone is thus both a dangerous and opportune place, and it is the very core of the transition process. It is the time when repatterning takes place: old and maladaptive habits are replaced with new ones that are better adapted to the world in which the organization now finds itself. (Bridges, 2003, p.9)

Workers at Island Center have begun to think in new ways, and have created a vision for what they want the organization to become. They are now in this place where they need to put this new vision into action, and yet, they aren't sure exactly how to do this. Lots of questions come into play at this point: What old strategies need to be dropped or adapted? What new initiatives can we create to fulfill the new charge? What policies or structures need to be altered

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or created to support this change? Also evident in this phase at Island Center is continued

individual and organizational learning about the transformative paradigm. A poverty teach-in

held soon after the work on the philosophy helped to raise the awareness of many workers. One

young program coordinator was moved greatly by this presentation.

> It was, actually the poverty presentation. And I brought one of my action team members who lives in the projects with me and…the way that (colleague) presented it, it made me…I don't know what it was, maybe I was into it, paying attention more, I don't know what it was, but he was talking about the difference in the countries and how people have insurance and how people don't have insurance and the effect of poverty. And I've heard many speeches about this before, but I never really…I think it just went in…how does this affect me? And that particular day I just went wait a minute. I have a young person with me that I work with that is living in poverty, he wants to be here every day, he doesn't want to go home. Wants to be involved, wants to volunteer…and I'm listening to (colleague) and I'm here and I was going, this is what I'm doing. I understand what is going on in (young person's) life now. I understand that he is one person and there is a whole…I don't know I just started… he made me understand. And that is what I needed. I need folks to just break it down for me… So it was helpful. And that is when it happened. Shortly after, that is when I decided – I'm going to register to vote. Might have been the next week when I did that.

What Do We Do?

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, at the same time that this change process

was moving forward, the Board of Directors was also planning a process by which they would

decide the organization's direction for the next three years. It took several months for these two

parallel processes to come together. The impact of this will be explored later in this chapter and

the next. While the board was conducting a needs assessment in the community and with staff

and volunteers for Vision 2007, the staff at Island Center was busy attempting to figure out how

to put their new, mostly internally generated philosophy into action. This involved several

months of exploration, dialogue, and attempts at change with not much new in the way of action.

In the months following the development of a new philosophy, the T-Team focused much

of their efforts at attempting to transform their emergency shelter operations. It was argued that

the shelter needed the most work to get in line with the new philosophy, so it made sense to start

there. A new director was hired for the shelter with hopes that he would be able to provide some much-needed leadership. Many meetings were held with shelter staff to get buy-in on the new philosophy and to generate ideas for ways that the shelter thinking and practices could be more transformative. What resulted were mostly ideas for minor adjustments in procedures under the existing mode of practice. After several months of floundering, nothing had changed at the shelter, and instead, what resulted was even more alienation from the rest of the organization. As the year ended, the shelter was still the "elephant in the room" as the T-Team struggled with the idea that radical changes may be necessary to dislodge the culture of this department.

Although there were many examples of workers and teams trying on this new philosophy in exciting ways, there was no clear plan for what needed to happen next. The T-Team met less frequently as 2003 ended and the energy level of the team took a noticeable nosedive. At the same time, data from the strategic planning process was revealing what most in the organization expected: immense need in the community and a call for Island Center to provide more services than they could possibly deliver. The T-Team decided to regroup after the New Year and took a break for the holidays.

The breakfast club. In February of 2004, the executive director, Island Center managers, and the external consulting team started meeting weekly over breakfast to plan the next moves for the change process. This group came to be known as the "Breakfast Club" and the thinking was that a smaller group could better formulate a plan for what needed to happen next. This group was charged with: 1) figuring out how to bring Vision 2007 together with the transformation process, and 2) moving Island Center from philosophy to action.

The Vision 2007 strategic planning process had been distilled to four critical areas that Island Center was to impact: 1) Safety and Growth; 2) The Importance of Connections; 3)

Participation and Empowerment; and 4) Equality and Justice. The Breakfast Club worked to develop a framework for developing strategies in order to have an impact in these four areas. So as to acknowledge the need to balance ameliorative and transformative approaches, we came up with a rubric for planning that we called *Restore, Prevent, Promote.* The idea was to plan strategies that balanced interventions to restore wellbeing, prevention of problems that affect wellbeing, and the promotion of experiences and conditions that enhance wellbeing. The trick was to combine all of these new messages, philosophy, critical areas, and strategic goals into some coherent plan that would help Island Center achieve its mission.

Action planning councils. The leadership at Island Center was eager to stamp out the new plan and get started. The Board was anxious for a plan and there was some weariness over the ongoing dialogue with limited action. There was a push to decide upon actions in this small, top-heavy working group that could be presented to the rest of staff for implementation. Feeling the need for a more participatory strategy however, myself and the other external consultants pushed to bring staff back into the planning process. The group decided on a plan to create three cross-department councils focused on each of the three strategic areas: restore, prevent, promote. Each of the three councils would meet to come up with ideas for programs and practices that would (depending on the council) restore, prevent, or promote in each of the four critical areas. They were also to consider actions at the personal, interpersonal, and collective levels. Council meetings were planned in such a way to facilitate brainstorming of wild ideas, innovative thinking, and ideas for actions in line with the new philosophy.

An all-staff meeting was held in late February of 2004 to kick-off the work of the councils. T-Team members and others shared their stories of how they were trying to put the new philosophy into action. We presented some examples of transformative action from research, and

the leadership charged the staff with brining new ideas into the process. Each of the councils had representation from all departments and all levels of staff from front-line workers to department managers. Energy level seemed high at this meeting and some workers commented on how glad they were that some of this planning was coming out of the "back rooms".

The same week as the council kick-off, a presentation on the new philosophy was made to the board of directors at their annual retreat. Until this point, the board was largely disconnected from the change process. Their strategic planning process was happening without much of a connection to the work of the T-Team. This presentation was an intentional effort to get the board brought in and bought in to the change process.

Leading up to this presentation to the board, the executive director created drafts of a vision and mission statement that repeatedly left out language pertaining to justice and equality. The language of justice and equality came out of the participatory values exploration and the T-Team felt the new language created by the director was watering down this critical area. After some discussion in the T-Team, these documents were re-worded to better represent the spirit of the process. The presentation was well received by the board and they had an in-depth discussion afterwards about this new direction. The T-Team then worked to merge the strategic planning documents that outlined the four critical areas with the philosophy and restore, prevent, promote categories to create Vision 2007. It was hoped that the councils would generate ideas that would provide the on-the-ground strategies needed to begin working on that vision.

Trying It On

As the councils were forming and their work beginning, workers in the organization were starting to experiment with new approaches. People were looking for new opportunities and new strategies were being put in place. Even though there was no clear plan for programming

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changes, as workers started to think about their work differently, they approached their work differently. They started viewing how they work with people in a different way and were having different conversations with youth about issues in the news. Along with this exploration, workers were thinking about their role differently. Here's an example of a case manager describing this shift in her role and how she looks for different development opportunities:

> When I explain it to people, when they say what do you do? Actually the same thing, even though I'm doing things a little bit differently than I did before. So I'm a case manager and I help people learn life skills. And what that means to me is a little bit different than it meant before. So it's a lot less of budgeting and banking than 'hey don't these overdraft charges kind of piss you off, and don't you feel a little bit like you're being taken advantage of? Maybe you should have a checking account, maybe you shouldn't.' Like so the way that I look at life skills is different than it was before… I feel like I look for professional development opportunities in a different way than I've done in the past. So like I'm looking at getting into a training with the peace and justice center, and I'm learning about social change. I'm learning about city government. I've been involved with Tying Nashville Together (TNT). So the people that I meet also have a different idea about how to work with different people than I would have encountered before. So like through TNT I met a man who runs the Truth and Reconciliation Project. We talked about one of the components of that agency called the time/dollar exchange, which I'm really excited about.

Through a combination of individual learning and organizational support, workers are seeing their role in a new light. For some, this is bringing anxiety and frustration. For others, new energy and meaning is being found in their work and they are have found new permission to explore the political elements of their work with youth. Another worker:

> And another thing that's come up is – what this philosophy has done is a lot of these issues – I would never have brought a Michael Moore movie here. I would not have – I'm not even saying 9/11. I'm saying *Bowling for Columbine*; this has been a neat thing that's happened, that I've gotten permission to be a little bit political from this philosophy. Because before it was like your – you can't really talk about your spiritual beliefs. You can say 'some people think blah, blah, blah', but really the more you can stay away from that –because we have a lot of influence over them and we have to be careful about what we share about ourselves with them, like ethically. And so the same sort of held true for what we believed politically. But when I started going to the teach-ins, I'm like okay but if you're talking about poverty and you're talking about the conditions that exist that support that to happen, then it's political. It is.

The executive director and others are now going out in the community and talking about the new philosophy with funding agencies and other organizations. One foundation asked the executive director to come and talk about Island Center's work because of the unique philosophy. They wanted to hear about how they were planning to work in the "third domain" (collective well-being). The new direction has also influenced how the organization is structuring its new larger projects. For example, when funding became available for an AmeriCorps project, leadership took the opportunity to create something based in the new philosophy. Here the executive director describes this project:

> While I can't say that we wouldn't have gone after AmeriCorps funding prior to our philosophy work, I can say that it has definitely affected how we are structuring the program. It's the first new Island initiative to come after our philosophy work, and everything about it is rooted in bringing youth into the third domain and giving them opportunities to understand the privileges and responsibilities associated with citizenship; a big, long leap from the early days.

At this point in the process there were numerous examples of individuals and teams putting the philosophy into action. The youth council's city-wide dinner and dialogue series focused on race and inequality and the MLK Day planning committee's choice of the theme of non-violence are two examples of how staff were working with young people around these issues. Another example from the Transitional Living program involves using a tool called "exploding the issue" with groups of staff or youth to explore root causes of some of the problems young people face. One exploding the issue session with staff had the effect of overwhelming workers with the many layers of problems that young people face, but helped staff see that it is going to take more partnerships and collaborations to make a difference. Another exploding the issue session with youth focused on transportation issues got young people fired up enough to want to find ways to take action. The counseling team re-worked their intake form to be more in line with the philosophy and the youth leadership development team redesigned a

youth volunteer program to be more focused on social action. Many teams were also reworking their job descriptions and using the philosophy to guide their interviews and hiring. Lastly, they recognized that their internal performance review process did not match the philosophy, so they took strides to re-tool that procedure to make it more congruent. These are but a few of the examples of small wins as they were attempting to put their values into action through their work.

Interestingly, at the same time new actions were being taken in the workplace, workers were also trying on the new philosophy in their personal lives. One twenty-nine year old worker, who was quoted earlier, registered and voted for the first time in the 2003 state congressional elections and also worked the polls. Another staffer spoke out against a bill at a state congressional hearing about banning gay marriage. Yet another worker spoke about how she was giving more money away to social change-oriented groups. One worker was inspired to look at many aspect of her life through the filter of the philosophy:

> And so you can't do this work and not have it affect you personally. So for me, I read a book name *Affluenza*, and then learned a lot about the simplicity movement, and so yeah like – that's been the latest I think way that changed for me. Like just sort of opting out of … look I'm not going to buy this pair of shoes because I want a house or I want something – there are some other things that I need more. And so being able to prioritize and live a little bit more simply than I did has been wonderful. So things like that. I also started recycling and I started composting. I wrote a bunch of letters about overdraft fees and how they really wrong, and for whatever reason they're not covered under the truth in lending act which is beyond me. So yeah like I did a lot of letter writing, which I would not have done before. And it came from here first…I feel like some of that's developed from here that I take away.

At this stage of the process, Island Center is engaged in some healthy experimentation at many levels. Each of the three councils met several times to come up with ideas for strategies that were in line with the new philosophy. This council process opened up many questions for staff about where the organization was headed, how roles might change, and speculation on what program areas might be eliminated. In the end, however, each council presented many creative

ideas for action at an all staff gathering in the spring of 2004. The Breakfast Club then compiled these ideas into a "Vision 2007 Strategies" document that was presented to the Board of Directors (Appendix C).

One great outcome of this work was the fact that workers from different programs and different levels were able to work together to help create the organizational vision. Many staff members reported feeling more connected to the agency and people from other teams. They also learned more about ways that they could work together. As an act of full participation and of breaking down department silos it was successful. Unfortunately, the vision and strategies were all over the map and had only limited connection to the four critical areas that were still neither very well defined nor well understood.

A Box of Coat Hangers

After the energy and excitement from the council work and presentations wore off, the organization moved into a long period of wheel spinning. Through the summer of 2004 and into the fall, the T-Team floundered, unable to come up with a plan of action based on work done to date. People were growing weary from all of the meetings and taking little clear action. It was common to hear T-Team members refer to this stage of the process as "like reaching into a box of coat hangers" or "feels like a three-headed monster" or "there are about 20 different languages being spoken". The multiple concepts and languages being used - Vision 2007, four critical areas, and the restore, prevent, promote categories - all mixed up together, overwhelmed and confused staff and the leadership. Although the new philosophy and critical areas of focus were inspiring, without some concrete strategies for action, people felt lost.

Really, What Do We Do?

Counselors in the agency had a particularly hard time understanding how their roles needed to be redefined and how their practice might be different. Even though many were trained in social work, which has a tradition of working at the systems level, the reality was many were practicing in very traditional, one-on-one ways. In June of 2004, the counseling team held a Clinical Forum that they titled "Therapeutic Change that Forges a Path to Social Empowerment and Activism". They invited several people from the community to join them in exploring what this new philosophy means for their clinical work at Island Center. One major theme that came out of this discussion was the idea that counselors may need to raise their own levels of awareness of oppression and around the difference between charity and social justice. To do this, they may need time to reflect on their own political development and experiences with race and class. Another theme that emerged was that their work with clients could be about jointly learning and making connections between private troubles and the structural source of these troubles. There was some agreement that this joint consciousness-raising is in and of itself a healing process. This event helped to reinforce the direction in which the agency was moving and generated ideas for new strategies. Many of the outside guests shared very encouraging thoughts about the change effort.

However, Island Center was still a long way away from having some concrete agency-wide strategies for action and, at the staff level, there was much confusion over how to have an impact at the community level. One director expressed this sentiment this way:

> There is anxiety about new benchmarks. How do we fit? How does it match with what we've been trained to do? I started talking about how we might be doing our primary prevention groups in conjunction with Americorps at the parks and helping perhaps look at community organizing. And that threw people too, because it's like 'I don't know how to do community organizing! I'm trying to learn'. Some people are interested in that and some aren't. I'm not sure what our role will be with those centers. You know with

[another organization] we just did a support group for kids doing community organizing and that might be our role. There was just some anxiety around 'I know how to help my family change, but how am I going to help them feel the need to help change their neighborhood or their community? I don't see how I'm going to be able to do that.' With the shelter I just think it got mixed in with some of the other issues. It just got so overwhelming.

Each of the teams were holding the new philosophy statement, and the critical areas from Vision 2007 and asking themselves what that meant for their day-to-day practice and nobody had any great answers. Another department director described it this way:

And for some it's just like not – you know, how do we manifest that? Because now that we've even embraced those ideas and said, we're going to do it, still it's fairly mysterious. I feel how would we live that out? It's not obvious given what our mission is. In my area we haven't really figured out how to apply all this yet, what's this really going to look like? We just aren't there yet. So I don't think I – in terms of like how this has impacted me and my work, I don't know yet. It really – that really remains to be seen.

One of the front-line workers put it this way:

And part of it is that what I'm hearing and what I'm reading and what I understand about our new philosophy is really exciting, and I'm ready to start doing something differently. And I don't really know how, and that part is frustrating. I don't really know how. And like experimenting on my kids makes me nervous…. I'm also not exactly sure what the parameters are. Like are we talking about – like what are we talking about when we say we want to – are we talking about social change? Are we talking about organizing or are we not even talking about that? Like I'm not really sure what we're talking about.

So there was this general feeling that they weren't there yet. They weren't to the point of putting the philosophy into action, mainly because they were not sure what the actions should be. At the same time, there was a sense that there was not enough guidance from leadership at this stage. Many were wondering what was expected of them, and others just wanted somebody to tell them what to do. There was also some confusion about the difference between the T-Team and the Breakfast Club groups. The Breakfast Club was made up of directors and our consulting team and had essentially replaced the T-Team. Many were wondering why the T-Team was not still meeting and guiding this process. Confusion, ambiguity, and lack of direction reigned.

Fortunately during this time, some innovative experimentation was happening and these success stories helped fuel the continued forward motion. Also, due to the executive director's championing, the local United Way office became really interested in Island Center's change process because their new direction aligned closely with their new strategic plan. Island Center's executive director was beginning to realize that they should not be pursuing community change goals alone; they needed allies. That summer, the United Way raised some funds to allow our consulting team to continue its work at Island Center, and they helped bring three other organizations to the table to engage in a similar process of change. That external affirmation and support was key in keeping this process from losing all momentum. Additionally, in June of 2004 Island Center hired a new shelter director and a resource development person who both joined Breakfast Club and began attending meetings.

The Rush to Outcomes

For many understandable reasons, the executive director was growing impatient with the pace of the change process. The Breakfast Club was bogged down in attempts to define the critical impact areas and many staff were crying out for direction. Additionally, the Board of Directors wanted to see a clear plan. By his own admission, the executive director was tired of the process and ready to finish it up. In late June, he brings this issue to the Breakfast Club and suggests the group focus on developing outcomes tools. He is feeling a crucial need to develop an evaluation plan for the agency and each program area. What seemed like a logical next step if approached correctly turned out to be a major roadblock in the change process.

Over the next two weeks, I worked with the new development director to create a plan for helping each team create logic models for their programs in order to develop solid program theory. Some of the programming was new and needed clearly defined logic models. Other

programming was being altered to fit the philosophy so strategies needed to be re-worked. The idea was that each program would have a theory of change that would feed into an overall agency logic model. This model would be based in the philosophy and point to impact in the four critical areas. Appendix D shows an example of a possible agency grand logic model. Developing strong program theory would then allow for the development of a solid evaluation plan. This was going to take some work, as many of the program areas had yet to define what they hoped to accomplish with their efforts.

On the day of the next Breakfast Club meeting, I found out that the executive director had decided to do things a little differently than the development director and I had agreed. I had planned to lead the meeting with the development director, but now she was going to lead the meeting and mentioned that she was not using any of the materials that we had worked on. She led the meeting focusing on outcomes mainly at the level of the individual young person. This created some resistance from other group members who were hesitant to go back to focusing only on youth development outcomes. The executive director shares with the group that he is feeling pressure to get something on paper so as to move from abstract to concrete. As the process broke down, the discussion focused on the need to come up with meaningful objectives for each program at the individual and community levels. This meeting did not produce any helpful new directions, but this moment of relative conflict did create some urgency and momentum towards better defining program strategies and outcomes. In a conversation with the executive director soon after this meeting, he described his frustration this way:

> We are so pressured to hit certain outcomes and evaluations and measurement. And it is a little scary in that we are talking about a level of change in which there are no tools to measure. So its like we want to do it, yet we also have some funders that want to see what percentage of students have done X, or behaviors that have changed via an old model. So, we are treading new waters here and at times it has felt like we have no map to where we are going so we have to simply trust each other. It's hard. And that is why we ran back to

measuring things at the individual so at least we can satisfy somebody. I was online the other day trying to fill out an application for a big foundation, one of the leading youth development foundations, but their application… I got to question 5 and it wanted to know all about our individual outcomes for youth. It screened us out like that. And yet I know that we are doing amazing work here.

Ten months later, when presenting about their change process to a group of other community organizations, he acknowledged that this premature attempt at forcing outcomes into the process was a big mistake and that he needed to support the process in getting there naturally.

My own notes on this meeting and the general mood of the process reflected a personal concern at the time that the transformation may not happen. I was worried at this point that although there was some great energy for doing things differently, the obstacles may be too great. Funding agencies' need for outcomes at the individual level may limit the organization's ability to get support for community change initiatives and thus stifle innovation in this area. I was also worried that internally, staff might be unable to get beyond traditional approaches and that the leadership might not have the vision, courage, or patience to continue support this transformation process.

Who Are We? (Reprise)

The "wandering in the desert" continued into the fall of 2004. There was a clear sense that Island Center was not what they used to be, however, they still were not sure what they were becoming. Were they still a social service agency or were they becoming a civic action organization or some hybrid of the two? Some counselors were feeling as if the writing was on the wall for clinical work at Island Center. In addition, there was a lot of turnover happening at this stage. Some of this turnover was related to the change process and some not, but regardless, this flux in staffing was adding to the chaos. Department directors were meeting in addition to the Breakfast Club and having trouble connecting their work to the change process. Several long-

term Island Center staffers who were now directors were feeling like they were not doing a good enough job. We were in the depths of the neutral zone and everyone was troubled.

Regrouping. For many months, the leadership of the organization was driving the process without participation by other staff. This has both limited the creativity of the process and alienated those who invested their time earlier in the formative stages. In late September of 2004, the decision was made to discontinue the Breakfast Club meetings and to restart the T-Team. Staff members who were involved in the process earlier were invited to rejoin and the decision was made to make the meetings open to any staff persons who wanted to attend. Also, a new associate director leadership position was created in the agency to help with internal issues and guide the T-Team.

At the first regrouping of the T-Team, I presented a short history of the T-Team and the change process to update individuals who were rejoining the group. We agreed on a T-Team mission statement for this stage of the process and outlined goals, objectives, and principles for participation (Appendix E). Participation was a key issue upon reforming the T-Team. When we formed the Breakfast Club a few months back, the idea was to have more frequent meetings with leadership to generate more movement in the process. We neglected, however, to keep the T-Team going, so this move had the effect of alienating staff, decreasing buy-in, and making the process more secretive. We acknowledged that increasing staff participation in the T-Team at this point was crucial.

Involving community members and organizational partners in the T-Team was another idea that the T-Team discussed. Because of the new partnership with the United Way, it was decided that one staff person from that organization would join the T-Team as an outside voice in the process. There was interest and a spoken commitment to finding ways to involve youth, a

board member, and other community partners in the T-Team but like before, there was not

follow-through on this.

Leadership intervention. The directors were meeting frequently and trying hard to make

sense of where they were and what needed to happen. The creation of and filling the associate

director position and bringing in new leadership at the shelter was just beginning to stabilize the

leadership team. However, the executive director was getting pushed and pulled in all sorts of

directions and needed help. He realized this crucial need for some coaching through this difficult

phase of the process and reached out to a small group of people - a board member, a person

from our consulting team, and an organizational consultant - to help him get some clarity.

> I have scheduled my own intervention. I've listened to so many voices and I've gotten
> lost. And, the staff sees that I'm lost, so now they are feeling lost, because often times
> they model my mood and my confidence and where I'm charging. Now they feel like we
> are not being planful in what are we doing… So I think it is important that I have a forum
> to help counsel me through this. And when I'm scared and concerned about the 4th impact
> area and I don't know how to craft it into something that the organization can understand
> and get behind, I have someone to go to. People are also feeling frustrated that they are
> not doing a good enough job. So we need some clarity of expectations, which is why I've
> called these three people to help me through the woods.

The organization had raised the bar for their work and now staff was having trouble meeting

their own expectations. The executive director's reaching out for help proved important for

moving forward and had the effect of normalizing this stage of the change process.

Naming the phase. At the next T-Team meeting, the executive director shared his

struggle with this part of the process and reflected on his meeting with the small group of

coaches. The organizational consultant who was part of the group attended the meeting. We also

had a larger group of staff attend this meeting called in by the executive director. We spent some

time talking about this phase of the process and the organizational consultant and I attempted to

teach the group a little about the neutral zone. Through discussion about this, we were able to

build a shared understanding that where we were in the process is where we needed to be. We

normalized this ambiguous and difficult phase and alleviated some of the anxiety so as to enable us to move forward. Although he was unable to attend the meeting, the board chair later reflected on his meeting with the executive director. I quote him at length here as I feel he describes well a critical turning point in the change process and the board's role.

> Well I think I began to feel that a phase was – of this whole process was beginning to lose its newness in a way and that another phase, which I thought of as sort of the inevitable next phase, was beginning to emerge, and that that was not being reckoned with. And what was beginning to occur was a certain amount of what could feel sort of like friction or concern or dissatisfaction or discontent around certain individual's way of following through on some things. Communication began to seem like it was a little bit frayed, not everyone was on the same script, and those things were beginning to be sort of talked about as if they had something to do with the individual. And while it might have had 12% to do, it had 88% to do with the destabilizing of the orbit of the place and was bound to happen. And that what needed to happen were some sort of systemic actions that endorsed and recognized and sort of de-catastrophized that. Beginning to feel a little bit of friction around the edges over what's going on here, what's this mean, how do we do this? It was really an attempt to try to take all this energy and put it back on the same bus. But to tell you the truth, the bus that got parked would never be used again. People were kind of walking and carrying their bags. And that was what was really going on. And I felt like what needed to happen was that there needed to be two things, sort of a calm down message sent and that the board had a role in sending that. There were several ways we could do it. One is to approve and endorse the process, sort of let it be known that from the top down there wasn't any complaint. There was nobody with governance responsibility who was feeling like there was some critical problems happening. Instead it was more "of course", kind of thing. And that sort of provided a shell around this thing. At the same time, on the other end of the scale there needed to be a redoubling of effort to do the routine things, to handle matters in as rote and as simply to put the paper clips in the blue box every morning at 8:00 for the sake of doing it, whether there was anything that needed to be there or not. Because there was an absence of ritual that goes with this process and the attendant anxiety, everybody was kind of looking around for a name for it. So that to me was real important to do. I felt like the leadership in the organization had to play a part in that. I felt like leadership on the board needed to play a part in that.

Getting to this shared understanding that it was ok to be struggling at this point was an important turning point for the organization. The board was supportive and provided space for the T-Team and leadership to do what it needed to do to put the philosophy into action.

New Beginnings

Bridges (2003) makes clear that individuals and organizations cannot completely be transformed until they have "come through the wilderness and are ready to make the emotional commitment to do things the new way" (p. 58). "New beginnings" involve new identities for people and for the organization. New beginnings establish the change as real and are based on a clear and appropriate purpose and a clear picture of how things are different (Bridges, 2003). Similarly, Lewin (1935) suggests that refreezing needs to take place around the new identity to internalizing the changes engaged in during the change process. New processes and structures must be developed to allow the organization to fully integrate the new changes.

Island Center has definitely come through the wilderness, but still has their boots on. Through deep struggle around creating a new identity and new practices, they have been able to come out the other end with a new model. Certainly their change process is still in progress, but in the fall of 2004 the energy shifted into high gear as their new role in the community became clearer. By this point in the process, Island Center has been able to clearly state in philosophy, mission, and objectives their new purpose. They have also been able to experience this new purpose in action as they continue to innovate and try on their "new skin". In this section I highlight Island Center's move into the new beginnings phase and describe how they solidify new actions and raise new dilemmas.

What We Do

One of the main sources of discomfort and anxiety had to do with not knowing exactly how to put the new philosophy into action. This ambiguity seemed to stem from a cross between individuals' developing understanding of the new model and the lack of clarity around organizational objectives. Island Center addressed these two barriers by continuing to feed and

structure the learning process for staff and by agreeing on clear definitions for the impact areas, a new mission statement, broad agency outcomes, and specific and measurable program activities and outcomes. With new energy and participation, the T-Team worked hard to put these things in place during the late fall of 2004 and the first few months of 2005.

Defining critical impact areas. One major roadblock that had plagued progress was the lack of clarity around the critical impact areas of safety, participation and empowerment, connections, and justice and equality. The T-Team had trouble being clear on what these meant at individual and community levels of analysis and hence people had no idea how to adjust or build new practices. Through continued and sometimes difficult dialogue and hard work by smaller groups, the T-Team produced an organizational document that clearly laid out their shared understanding of the four impact areas that came out of the strategic planning process. Figure 6 shows the final wording for the four impact area descriptions with clear implications for their work. This process of clarifying their impact areas was another good example of dialogical learning as T-Team members struggled together to create a shared understanding. The final product was the source of much pride for the group.

SAFETY

Youth thrive when they are emotionally and physically secure. When youth are safe, they are able to grow and take risks. Emotional safety means young people and families feel secure, valued, mutually respected, and that they experience understanding and tolerance. Physical safety means that youth have access to food, shelter, clothing, medical care and freedom from violence. <u>Our work is to lead the community and its young people in creating and sustaining an environment that ensures their emotional and physical safety.</u>

SIGNIFICANCE AND CONNECTION

Youth thrive when they experience a sense of significance, belonging, and positive connections in the community. Personal significance is developed by having a positive sense of self, and believing that each person, especially oneself, is an integral part of a community. Positive connections to peers, caring adults, family and the larger community help create a sense of belonging in each youth. <u>Our work is to help youth and families feel significant and to connect with the people, resources and opportunities they need to thrive. Our work also includes helping Nashville value and include youth in decisions impacting their lives.</u>

PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Youth thrive when they are able to make decisions and take direct action to improves their lives. <u>Our work is to empower youth to take action, exercise their rights, and to have the skills necessary to create personal and community change. Our work is also to help create opportunities in the community through which young people can participate and succeed.</u>

JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Youth thrive when they live in communities that value justice and equality. A just community is concerned with the well being of all its members; it celebrates and capitalizes on differences in abilities, values and cultural heritages. A just community encourages all citizens to have empathy for the struggle of others and applies resources toward the resolution of those struggles. <u>Our work is to lead the community and its young people in the development of new generations of informed, active and engaged citizens, who recognize injustice and inequality and who are prepared to lead change in the world.</u>

Figure 6: Island Center Critical Impact Areas

New mission statement. This change process also highlighted the inadequacy of their

current mission statement that read: "To work in partnership with youth, their families, and

community to meet, master, and embrace the challenges of adolescence". Although seen as a

major improvement at the time, this five-year-old statement was now out of sync with their new

philosophy. Leadership in the organization did some drafting of statements on which the T-Team

then made recommendations. The board of directors was also involved in editing and revising.

The trick was to create a statement with language that reflected the new philosophy without simply restating the philosophy. What they landed on was a concise action-oriented statement that reflected their value of youth as agents of change: "To help youth grow, thrive, and create positive change in their lives and in their community". Once approved, the statement was painted on the wall in the main building, and an all-staff meeting was held to celebrate the new mission and handout postcard-sized versions to all staff.

Broad agency outcomes. To help focus the agency, the T-Team also wanted to create outcome statements in each impact area. The hope was that all activities in the organization would point to one or more of these desired ends. Each program area would develop more specific and measurable outcomes, but these would serve as a clear guide for how the work of programs should add up. There was an intentional effort to commit to striving for outcomes at both the individual and community levels. Much like the other pieces that were crafted by the T-Team, this document also was developed with considerable struggle. This was another valuable process by which they were able to construct the agency's unique role in having impact in these four critical areas. It was also valuable in that T-Team members were able to better make the distinction between outcomes, outputs, and activities in order to be clear when using the terminology internally and with funding agencies. The final broad agency outcome document is represented in appendix F.

Program activities and outcomes. In March of 2005, the T-Team formed an evaluation sub-committee to assist managers and their departments in refining program activities and outcomes. With the broad agency outcomes as a guide, the group embarked on an effort to make sure all activities pointed towards the critical impact areas. Additionally, the group was charged with developing an evaluation plan for these programs that could share measurement tools and

strategies. By April, each department had developed a plan that outlined goals, activities, outcomes, and measurement strategies for each impact area. This was an important step in bringing the philosophy and critical impact area focus down to the program level and helped to staff to strengthen program theory. There was some struggle around deciding how to measure some of the community-level objectives understanding that change is more difficult, slower to realize, and hard to attribute to particular efforts. However, the group decided to put some things in place and revisit after six months to see how to adjust.

Continuous learning. Another way in which Island Center was able to keep the forward momentum was to structure various formal and informal learning opportunities for staff around the organization's new direction. Two of the departments got together in late 2004 to learn together about their own personal experiences with social justice. This group developed out of the Clinical Forum held in the fall of 2004 and was driven by one question that was raised: "what do counselors need to experience to do this work?" All members of the counseling team were a part of the group as was the director of youth leadership development and two staff members from that team. Each session, one of the staff members would talk some about their own experience with social justice and tell their story to the group. The group would reflect on each story and draw implications for their work. During the final reflection session in February of 2005, the group agreed that this was an important experience mainly because of the fact that who they are flows directly into the work that they do. As they connected to their own experience with social justice, class, and other issues, they became more aware of how it plays out in the lives of the people they serve. One counselor put it this way:

> It makes me think about how do we work with our youth and families? Raising our own awareness makes us approach the work differently. I view how I work with people in a different way. Having different discussions with youth – news, etc. My group discussions are affected.

Another major outcome of this experience for group members was a deeper connection to the other people with whom they work. Many mentioned that they've worked with others in the group for years but never really knew them until now. There was a sense that this process allowed them to experience a deeper, more personal connection through shared values. An equally important, albeit less discussed outcome of this group was their learning about the importance of time for dialogue and reflection. Although the group experience was to only last for several weeks, they were eager to find ways to institutionalize it so that they could continue their process and others could experience it.

Another example of a structured learning opportunity for staff was the creation of a monthly all-staff gathering called "First Fridays". On the first Friday of each month, staff would come together for an hour and a half for some planned organizational dialogue. These Fridays were a regular part of the organizational structure in years past, but had been discontinued. The First Fridays in the first few months of 2005 were focused on discussion and learning around the four critical impact areas. Members of the T-Team planned these events and gave staff opportunities to connect personally to the impact areas and share stories about their work.

In February of 2005, Island Center helped organize a two-day non-violence workshop for the community featuring prominent civil rights movement leader Bernard Lafayette. People from several community organizations and governmental organizations, as well as local community members were in attendance. One tool that they had been exploring connected to the safety impact area, was Martin Luther King Jr.'s principles of non-violence. Island Center believed that these principles were a language for safety and violence prevention that the community could rally behind and put into practice in neighborhoods, schools, and organizations. The workshop got mixed reviews for its practical value, but attendees all agreed that the principles of non-

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violence were a useful tool. Mainly, attendees valued the opportunity to come together and network with people from other organizations around an issue of shared concern.

More informally, staff members at Island Center report other ways that they are continuing to learn. Several mentioned that they are reading different articles and books now, attending different community meetings and events, looking for different opportunities, and engaging in more reflective work individually and with their teams. At this stage, their attempts at learning are connected to their efforts at putting the philosophy into practice.

Practicing. Throughout the change process, the staff at Island Center has been attempting to find ways to put the philosophy into practice. At this point in the process, however, their efforts were more strategic and more focused with more frequent sharing of success stories. One example of new strategies resulting from the process is the work being done by the crisis services team in the emergency shelter. Since coming under new leadership in the fall of 2005, the shelter staff have been encouraged to and supported in trying out new ideas. Staff members are rallying behind the idea of helping youth feel like change agents instead of merely service recipients, and finding innovative ways to do that in this crisis-oriented setting. At one of the T-Team meetings, shelter staff told stories of recent efforts and shared that they felt the staff members were "infected" with the new philosophy and finding exciting ways to institute into their practice.

One example of their attempts at innovation is how they are approaching group sessions with youth and families. In recent groups, they tried out the idea of using a civil rights video called "The Children's March" to generate discussion and ideas about youth violence. Here is how one counselor described it in an email to other staff:

> Hey guys. [staff member] used *The Children's March* video in our afternoon group today and generated a list of possible causes that meant a lot to the teens (stereotyping, bullying, fighting). The teens were into it (for the most part). We touched briefly on the six principles of non-violence. Tonight, I showed the video to the parents at multiple

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family group, while the teens stayed downstairs laying out a discussion plan about the movie, to share with the parents at seven. I let the parents know that the video was being shown to inspire dialogue and hope. The parents (around fifteen) were very inspired and had a fruitful discussion afterwards. The six principles of non-violence were posted in the room, but we did not discuss them because of time. So, we all came together at seven (all thirty-five of us) and discussed the film and what it meant. I'll just say that not one person talked over another, not one person disrespected another, not one voice was raised, and not an angry or demeaning word was to be heard (chill bumps). Last week, our group (mostly the same folks) were talking over each other, raising voices, etc., but tonight, I felt just a teeny-tiny bit of hope being discussed, and it felt great to have young people and their parents approach me after group to inquire about [volunteer event] because they want to get active (as opposed to, "Now, just what in the world am I doing here in this room with these people?"). I feel we pulled this off, sort of by the seat of our pants and a little blind. I am thrilled to think about fine tuning the principles of non-violence into the video and seeing where our residents and their parents take it. It is so encouraging to me to have a fourteen-year-old African American girl speaking her mind to a roomful of people, and everyone listening. So please help our momentum with thoughts, ideas, suggestions because I know with the next resident in crisis or [crisis] call, etc., a little of the excitement will wear off.

This single story was a source of much excitement in the shelter and across agency staff. What seems like a small change in an approach with a group structure that has been in place for over a decade gave people a concrete example of the philosophy in action and gave staff hope for how this new approach can be successful. This staff member admits that they were partially flying by the seat of their pants. There is a general sense in this team that the changes are still in the beginning stage, but that they are trying things out in order to learn and get better at it. This was a critical shift in the organization as the shelter program, usually lagging behind, is now a source of innovation and energy.

Another example of how the organization is trying things differently comes from the transitional living team. Building on their earlier work with exploding the issue staff on this team has begun building relationships with other local groups to find ways to connect the homeless youth that they work with to relevant community issues. At the same time, they have been helping young people connect their struggles to larger community and social issues. This effort has resulted in young people taking action locally with community organizing groups on state

health care and county school issues. One staff member was able to connect young people with a local community-organizing group where they were able to play significant roles in a delegate assembly with the mayor and other city leaders. This event led to an opportunity for one young person to speak at a metro council meeting about her experience with access to health care as she aged out of foster care. Currently, the Governor is in the process of eliminating several hundred thousand people from the state-sponsored health care rolls. This young person, along with many other concerned citizens, is advocating for local funding for a safety net for those, like her, who will be dramatically affected by the cuts.

Young people are taking on roles as agents of change and as a result, are seeing themselves as such. Here's a message from the executive director describing homeless youth involvement at a recent youth summit:

> Two youth from Transitional Living presented at the Mayor's Youth Summit on the topic of transitioning to adulthood "You're An Adult, Now What?". It was amazing to hear them introduce themselves. They never once had to mention their homelessness or that they were receiving support through Island Center. Their roles as community volunteers, Island Center Board Member, facilitator, trainer and young adults were the roles they referenced to introduce themselves. Not such a big deal until you recognize how much they have had overcome to step into those roles.

Most importantly, the staff at Island Center is finding new ways to connect young people to other organizations and new roles as citizens. Additionally, the organization is developing new relationships and partnerships with local peace groups and community organizing groups that will allow them to join in larger social justice efforts.

There are many other examples of ways in which the organization is putting their values into action. The counseling team is assisting a middle school's student government association in instituting principles of non-violence in order to improve overall school climate. The youth leadership development team is supporting participation of over seventy youth from twenty different schools in several city-wide youth councils. Their youth philanthropy program is

funding youth groups to change conditions in schools. This department is also playing a leadership role as Island Center is increasingly being called upon, formally and informally, to play a pivotal role in the community as it seeks to more effectively engage young people and adults in the various leadership opportunities that are arising all over Nashville. One concrete example is leading monthly meetings of the Nashville Youth Alliance's "Youth Engagement Roundtable." This is an informal gathering of folks in town who are doing youth engagement work. The broad goal is to build community among a group of common concerns.

Another way that Island Center has been attempting to act out the new philosophy is through a new merger with an established and well-regarded local youth organizing organization. Although before this process began it did not seem like a good fit, as this process unfolded, it appeared to be a natural way to move the philosophy forward. It will increase Island Center's ability to effectively engage youth in creating community change while providing them with additional capacity to work with the growing network of Nashville area organizations coming to them for help. This merger and other work being done at Island Center is now attracting the interest of major funding agencies and for the 2005-2006 funding cycle Island Center has seen more new funding sources coming into the agency than the past three years combined. Whereas they were initially anxious about the potential difficulty in finding funding for action under this new philosophy, the reverse appears to be coming true.

Rebalancing

As Island Center goes about the process of institutionalizing new strategies under the new philosophy they are experiencing the need to attend to internal issues that may have been neglected along the way. One of the downsides of their shifting approach is that they are all taking on more work. The new approach brings a lot of opportunities without necessarily new

resources. At one recent First Friday gathering there was a lot of talk about the need to take care of themselves. This discussion developed into a shared concern over justice issues inside of the organization. It was brought to the attention of the group that there are many part-time workers in the organization that are not making a living wage. Several other workers have to work a second job just to get by. At the latest T-Team meeting, the executive director reported that he was working with the operations manager to do a salary audit to hopefully remedy these issues.

In addition to salary issues, others expressed concern that many in the organization are excluded from organizational discussions, decisions, and learning opportunities. For example, residential staff has a harder time getting free to participate in T-team meetings or all-staff meeting such as the First Friday gatherings. This was raised as a fairness issue; one that prevents knowledgeable front-line workers from adding their wisdom and expertise to the change process and at the same time, prevents some staff from gaining from and contributing to the organizational learning process. This is an issue that has come up over and over again, with solutions offered, yet never followed-up on. One worker recently shared the insight that some workers, who do not have the luxury of participating in the learning process, are experiencing what many young people experience: limited voice or power in settings. The voices of those concerned about this issue have been getting louder, and recently leadership agreed to hold a First Friday session devoted to resolving this organizational problem.

At present, Island Center is trying to find their new center, balancing individual development with engaging youth in social action. They are acknowledging the unique possibilities of continuing to blend therapeutic interventions and youth development with youth engagement and youth organizing. As was mentioned above, this unique blend is attracting the attention of influential funding agencies, so they feel like their hard work over the past two years

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is being validated. Although there is certainly more work to do at Island Center to fully solidify the transformation process, the current energy at the organization for this new direction is propelling forward. The doubts that arose during the neutral zone phase have been cast aside as they develop innovative programming and organizational practices that will serve as a model form which other human service organizations can learn. Figure 7 below paints a picture of Island Center's two-and-a-half-year process of change.
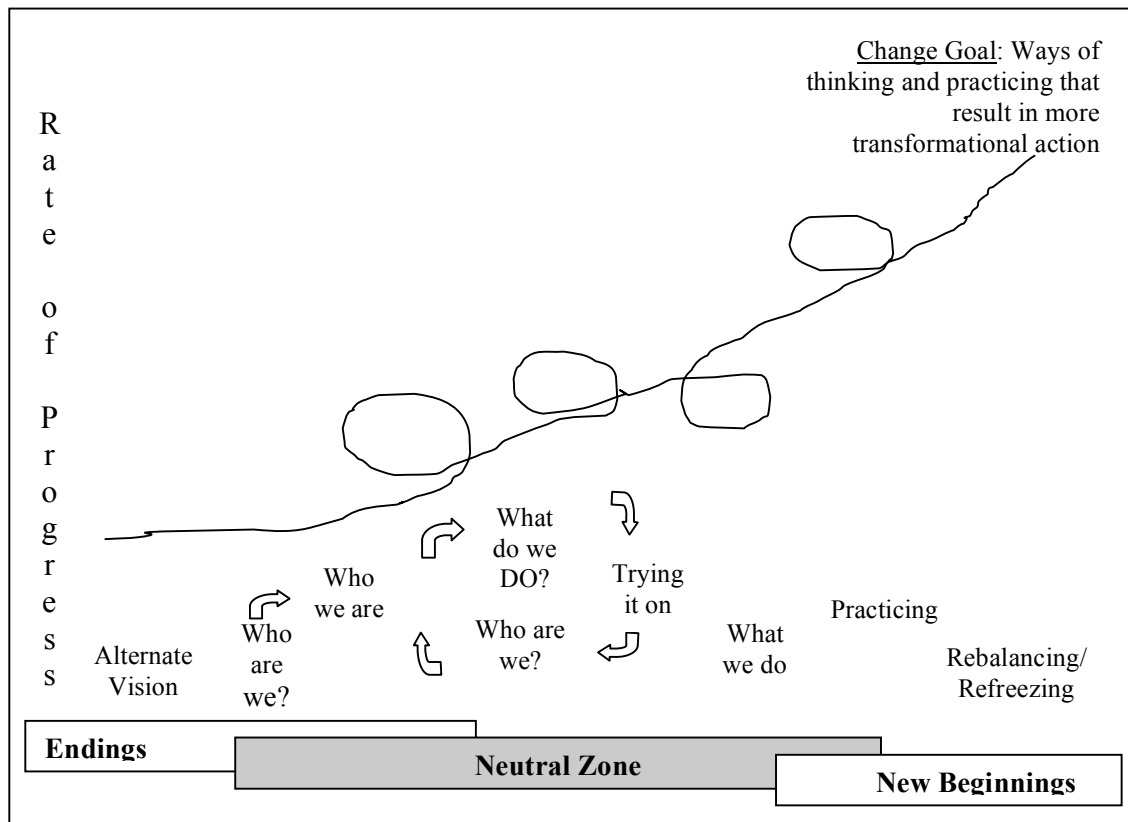
Figure 7: Picture of Change

Content of Change

This two and a half-year, and continuing process at Island Center has contributed to changes at many levels. Through my participation in the process, and through interviews, focus groups, and examination of organizational documents, I have identified changes at the individual, team, organizational, and extra-organizational levels of analysis. In this section I summarize these changes beginning with change at the organizational level. It is important again to remind the reader that it is impossible to attribute these observed changes solely to the organizational change process. Additionally, many of these changes have not been fully frozen in place and could be considered *changing* as opposed to *changed*.

Organizational change

Ultimately, this endeavor was about transforming an organization. In theory, it was about shifting from a predominantly ameliorative stance to a transformative one. As I mentioned in chapter two, this change process required an examination of shared values, beliefs, and practices to make possible organizational transformation. Reflecting back to the conceptual framework I outlined in chapter two (Figure 1) this sections seeks to answer the question: what exactly has been changing in the organization as they are making a shift?

Generally, Island Center has successfully surfaced and made explicit values that had been suppressed and through language and statements made clear beliefs about problems and solutions. This has allowed them to begin aligning internal practices and programming with shared values and clear organizational beliefs. Under this framework, I've specifically identified organizational changes in value-based vision, changes in language and purpose based in shared

beliefs, and changes in internal and external practice. These categories and themes are shown in

Table 1.

: Organizational Change

Values	Beliefs	Practices/Action
Value-Based Philosophy	Shared Purpose	Internal • Culture
	Common Language	• Structures/Policies
		External • Programming • Expanding Network • Youth Partnerships • Bearing Witness

Values

  Shared philosophy. Without a doubt, the single most important change that has happened

at Island Center is the development of their new organizational philosophy. This value-based

document has been a guide for all the change work that they have done and has served as a

vision towards the community change that they care about. Senge (1990) writes that:

> Shared vision is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus and
> energy for learning. While adaptive learning is possible without vision, generative
> learning occurs only when people are striving to accomplish something that matters
> deeply to them (p. 206).

This has been true for Island Center. The creation of an organizational philosophy based in

shared values has connected them in an important undertaking and generated energy, passion,

and commitment. There is a new commitment to balancing individual, relational, and collective-

level values while working towards community-level change. The main difference for the

organization is an explicit concern for justice and equality. This is something that matters deeply

to staff, but had yet to be made explicit in the organization. A staff member talks about the

importance of the shift this way:

> It became a common aim and that you just couldn't talk about programs the way we used
> to unless you were talking about how you were living up to that philosophy statement and
> how we are doing that third domain stuff. It sort of feels like you are in a rut if you are
> not doing it. There was that tipping point where there were enough of us on board where
> this is best practices now and you are not living up to what Island Center is holding. We
> did put it on our performance evaluations – we have goals in a couple of those areas. It
> got promoted so well through the philosophy statement. I think that was key that we
> loved it and we shared it so much. We had really held a new standard around how we
> think about our work. If you are not moving towards it you are really moving back if
> feels like.

Beliefs

Shared purpose. Related to the development of a shared philosophy is the similar

development of a clear organizational purpose. Guided by the new philosophy, and informed by

their strategic planning effort, the organization created some clear language that reflected their

beliefs about problems, solutions, and their unique role in generating community impact. The

four critical impact areas described earlier now serve as an organizational map to a destination to

which all action roads lead. Importantly, this map and destination were not simply decided on by

leaders and handed-down, but instead were the result of input from the board, all staff, youth,

and other community members. This, along with fact that these impact areas were the result of a

lengthy effort to define the terms and develop everyone's understanding of what they meant,

created clarity of purpose. One worker noted the importance of this in this way:

> We now have a whole agency working on similar impact areas, saying that we care about
> justice and equality as an agency, and getting to talk about it out in the world because it is
> valid now.

Common language. Important to both the philosophy and to the impact areas was the

process of developing a common organizational language to talk about their beliefs and their

work in community. This developing language reflects members' shared beliefs and assumptions about the world, the sources of problems, and their organizational role. As the change process developed, Island Center adopted some new language to describe their work and their new direction but also better defined terms they have been using for years. It is common now to hear staff talking about working in the *third domain* or on *root causes* and the need to *explode the issue.* They more commonly discuss the need for *consciousness-raising* or *community organizing* approaches to work against *oppression* towards *liberation*. Although the word *empowerment* has been a part of their organizational discourse for decades, they now have a clearer understanding of what the word means and make a stronger connection to the concept of *power.* They have also become more critical of the youth development language that they historically have used to describe their work, as it does not adequately capture their belief that there are also systemic or structural conditions that block youth development. Language, and the shared understanding thereof, has been very important in this organization's change process and development of a shared vision, purpose, and strategic action.

Internal Practices

     Organizational culture. Although this entire endeavor can be considered a culture change for the organization, there are specific changes that point to a difference in how they do things internally. Generally, this shift could be seen as the development of a learning culture. The organization has opened up more opportunities and supports for participation in organizational dialogues and decision-making, cross-team dialogue and collaboration, and personal and professional development experiences. They are creating structures and spaces for small and large groups to come together to learn from each other and to struggle together in order to learn how to do this work under the new philosophy. One staff member notes:

I do think we are doing a bit more collaboration internally than we had before. I feel like there is more excitement within Island Center across teams to kind of work together, talk about things, and try new things. I know the shelter is working really hard at making some changes and including more of us to talk about those things. And so I think more people are kind of thinking about the philosophy and talking up the impact areas and seeing what needs that we need to do differently, like having conversations about them.

One important new norm that has facilitated open conversation and learning has to do with the permission to discuss the political aspects of the issues they are addressing. Whereas before, any discussion of politics was considered forbidden, there is now an understanding that in order to understand the issues fully, and to do their best work on the problems that community members face, the political domain needs to be part of the conversation.

Another cultural shift in the organization that has occurred as a result of the change process is the "bringing in" of the shelter team. Long a source of fragmentation for the agency, any forward organizational progress has historically left behind or been held back by the shelter department. This has largely been due to the twenty-four hour residential operations and crisis focus of the shelter. However, this gap has also been due to a lack of creative leadership and opportunities to participate fully in organizational discussions and decision-making. The shelter, now under new leadership, has become more connected to the rest of the organization. This has allowed this department to contribute to and benefit from the creativity and energy of the organizational change process. It has also had the effect of making the changes in the shelter program a source of pride for the organization and for people working in that program. One staff member describes this as a major development for the organization:

> …and I was at the Holiday party and I was talking to [staff person] that works over there, you know frontline staff, and she said – I was asking how she was doing and she goes, well I'm going to go to graduate school, and I said, that's cool. You know like next fall she's hoping to go to grad school. And I was asking her how things were going at the shelter, and she told me things I'd already heard like, oh we had a retreat and we're going to try to do things differently. And she goes, I think we'll be the only shelter maybe in the nation who does it this way, just really bragging. She goes; you know right when we're a national model, I'm going to leave and go to graduate school. But it's like when

did you ever hear people at the shelter talking about their work in that way? And ideas that she had and feeling real proud, and it makes sense to her because it's how she would want to be treated essentially. I think that was the meaning of it.

Structures and policies. In order to support the changes that the organization was making, there was a need to put in place structures and policies that reflected the new philosophy. This happened over a period of time as leaders in the organization became aware of places where policies were incongruent with their developing approach. One of the structures that underwent revision was the staff performance review process. The process was redesigned so that the individual work plan segment of the review was tied directly to the action statements of the philosophy. Employees are encouraged to show how their work supports overall agency values.

Changes were also made in the hiring process, to job descriptions, and to community member intake forms. Like the performance evaluations, job descriptions now include language that directly connects to the organizational philosophy. When hiring new staff, there is now more attention paid to how a person's philosophy fits with the organizational philosophy and mission. Staff members are more inclined to talk about the philosophy in interviews to inform interviewees what they might be getting into. Here is one manager's description of this change:

> When bringing newer people on, I know I was really proud to talk about what our agency was striving to do. I do think we are a really good place for people to work, particularly if they care about social justice issues and that's who we want to attract now. And the new folks on the team add a lot for us in that regard that we didn't have before. I think we're hiring more around how people view the world. We care about the clinical, but we're not going to hire somebody who doesn't have that other piece.

As mentioned earlier, the organization is also beginning to attend to staff salary issues that are not in line with the philosophy. This effort to structure staff compensations in a fair manner is very important to individuals in the organization -- a deep need to really walk the talk in their own house.

With community member intake forms, there is an effort to include language that better matches the philosophy. For example, the counseling team is now asking youth questions about whether or not they feel like they're given a fair shot to get what they want in their lives, or if they feel a part of the community. Do they feel like their family has what they need to get ahead in life? Questions like these were added to the intake form to begin to help frame the situation differently.

With clearly defined impact areas, Island Center was also able to begin developing and evaluation strategy that also reflected organizational values. As mentioned earlier, an evaluation strategy is being developed that focuses on both individual and community-level outcomes. Not only are they attending to outcomes that reflect the philosophy, they are also attempting to design an evaluation *process* that also reflects the philosophy and the learning potential inherent in reflecting on program design, fidelity, delivery, and impact.

External Practice

Beyond how they are doing things inside the organization, Island Center is transforming how they act in the community. Programs are being delivered in different ways and new ones have been developed. Youth-adult partnerships look a little different than they did before and new organizational relationships have been developed. Additionally, staff members in the organization have really championed their new approach in the community and developed new alliances.

Programming. Many examples were noted above that demonstrate how Island Center is approaching programs in new ways. The shelter, counseling, and transitional living programs have been using existing structures in different ways in order to explore social issues and how they are related to problems in youth and families. The counseling team is working with a local

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school on school climate and non-violence. The youth development team has been innovating with their programming. Their Americorps civic action program is a great example of how they are moving from engaging youth in the traditional role of passive recipient of programming at Island Center facilities, to a working with youth in a new roles: engaged citizens involved in Island Center-driven programming in their own neighborhoods. These examples of new approaches are driving other program innovations and the organization is busy communicating with new funding agencies and writing new grants to support their work.

Expanding network. One important part of their organizational change has been how they have expanded their organizational network. As this change process unfolded, many people in the organization began to feel overwhelmed by the task of working on community conditions. People realized that there was no way that Island Center was going to make a difference at the community level all by itself. They began looking for ways to align with other groups and organizations that were also working on community change. One example of this was connecting their new philosophy to the developing strategic plan of the local United Way agency. As was mentioned above, this connection started a new local alliance of organizations that together are working towards a more transformative approach. This created a network of organizations thinking and dialoging about how to be more strength-based, preventative, empowering, and focused on changing community conditions. As the president of United Way remarked, "I personally, and our organization needed an ally. We found one, and it couldn't have been better".

Island Center staff members are also developing relationships with organizations that are not human service focused. Their new relationships with a local peace and justice group and a faith-based community-organizing group have allowed them and the young people they work with to connect to groups working on meaningful community issues. Also, by merging with a

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local youth organizing group, a grassroots, neighborhood organization that engages lower-income youth, they are now better able to make a difference in neighborhoods from which they had previously been absent. These are just a few examples of how Island Center is attempting to expand their network in order to better be able to genuinely affect community conditions.

Youth-adult partnerships. Although Island Center had always prided itself on partnering with young people, they have taken these partnerships to a new level. The youth councils that Island Center supports have really begun to drive discussions and action on issues. Whereas before, counselors would respond to speaking requests and interviews, they are now turning much of that over to young people. Young people in charge of the planning for last year's MLK Day had been studying the principles of nonviolence and came up with the theme "Refuse to Hate" that the adults used for the larger event as well. Young people at Island Center have been asked to partner with adult community members in speaking out at hearings and rallies. The partnerships have tilted in the direction of youth to such a degree that one counseling staff member joked that she has really just become the driver for many of these events and speaking engagements.

Bearing witness. It has also been important that Island Center has been intentional about talking about their philosophy and their work out in the community. As they have gotten more and more excited about their new direction, they have been sharing their philosophy with others. One important piece of this has been how they have been educating funding agencies about the need to be more proactive and focused on community change. There is a sense that this dialogue with funding agencies has deepened their relationship with some donors and established some very important new relationships. One local funding agency representative noted that if organizations want to learn about what is cutting edge, they need to take a look at what Island

Center is doing. Island Center staff members are also sharing their new thinking and practice with other organizations and individuals. Due to the fact they already had a reputation in town as a leader in the field, they have been able to have an influence on the community dialogue through modeling a different way of doing things. Because of this role, Island Center is increasingly being called upon, formally and informally, to play a pivotal role in the community as it seeks to more effectively engage young people, as well as the adults responsible, in the various leadership opportunities in Nashville. One staff member is now leading monthly meetings of a "Youth Engagement Roundtable." This is an informal gathering of folks in town who are doing youth engagement work. The broad goal is to build community around a group of common concerns. It is an excellent opportunity for networking, learning from one another, exploring deeper issues around youth engagement, and identifying collaborative opportunities.

Through this process of change, we can see how the organization had changed and is changing in many ways. Their programming is different and how they deliver programs and strategies is different. Their networks are expanding around community change and their partnerships with youth are developing in such a way that young people are leading the way. Lastly, Island Center's voice is being heard in the community. Having taken the time to reflect deeply on their values, mission, and purpose, Island Center is now confidently speaking out in the community and leading efforts that are beyond amelioration.

Many might be most interested in what Island Center is able to accomplish with regard to community impact. Although important, what seems most transformational to me is the development of organizational conditions that support focused dialogue, action, and reflection. With an inspirational vision in place and structures that allow for critical reflection and learning, Island Center now has a firm base from which to innovate, collaborate, and contribute to

community change. Having explicated changes at the organizational level, I turn now to examining how individual workers at Island Center have changed through this process.

Individual change

The individual worker acts as agent in the process of organizational learning and change and organizational learning is critically tied to the individual, and individual learning. Individual learning becomes organizational learning if, under the right conditions, the results of their inquiry and reflection are shared with the members and become embedded in the organization's environment (Argyris & Schon, 1996). System-level learning cannot take place unless the organization is adequately prepared to take in this learning so that it becomes usable knowledge in the service of the agreed vision (Marsick, 2000). To demonstrate this link between organizational learning and change and individual learning and change, let us now examine how individual workers' values, beliefs, and practices have changed. Table 2 outlines the salient categories of change observed at the individual level. Although not all workers at Island Center have experienced change at some in all of the categories below, these themes were consistently raised by individuals involved in the change process.

Table 2: Individual Change

Values	Beliefs	Practices/Action
Values Validation & Concordance	Sociopolitical Development Role • Identity • Meaning & Passion	Personal Actions Internal • Relating to/working with others • Professional Development • Leadership and Supervision External

Values

Workers' values did not necessarily change through this process, yet many felt that this effort helped bring their values into concordance with their practice and with the values of the organization. The new organizational philosophy gives light to individual values and goals not previously tapped. The process of exploring shared values at personal, relational, and collective levels helped to highlight those values that had been neglected in their work and in the organization. As they began to incorporate these neglected values into a new philosophy statement, this explicitly shared understanding of values became an important shift for individual workers and the organization as a whole. As the new statement was being finalized, staff members began to see their personal values around social justice, communion, and equality validated and institutionalized through the shared philosophy. One staff member expressed this validation in this way:

> The statement expresses what I value and it is deeply fulfilling to know that others do as well, and to hear people state them publicly in this way is reaffirming and energizing.

Explicating personal values and having them validated in the organizational context has important implications for action. Workers potentially find more energy and motivation in working towards organizational goals that are congruent with their value system (Kelman, 1958). This is what Katz and Kahn (1978) refer to as motivation based on internalized values and Etzioni (1975) refers to as pure moral involvement.

Beliefs

   Sociopolitical development. One of the main developments at the individual level has to do with workers' sociopolitical awareness. Watts, Williams, and Jagers (2003) describe sociopolitical development as "a process of growth in a person's knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties, and capacity for action in political and social systems" (p. 185). Before this process started, many workers at Island Center had a fairly sophisticated understanding of how oppression and inequality in systems and structures block people's development and wellbeing. But for some reason, maybe having to do with socialization into a human service system that privileges intervention at the level of the individual, this understanding was ill formed and not congruent with their practice.

   What this change process afforded workers were opportunities to learn about their own beliefs and assumptions about problems and solutions. Out of this learning process, they began to develop a deeper, more critical awareness of the problems that affect the people they serve. Through dialogue and critical reflection, they explored their own and others' privilege, as well as the role of power and oppression. One well-respected community leader who participated in the Clinical Forum raised the question: "what needs to happen to counselors to fully experience the importance of this [social justice approach]?" For Island Center workers, what needed to happen was sociopolitical learning. Workers needed opportunities to get in touch with and challenge

their own assumptions in a supportive context. Senge (1990) describes how deeply held mental

models need to be made explicit and challenged for real learning to occur. Learning in this sense,

encompasses not just the acquisition of new or different skills or competencies, but more

importantly, new ways of thinking about problems and solutions.

Below are a few examples of how workers describe their own development in this

process.

> (Executive director) I made the leap here because, the age-old thing, I wanted to make a difference, but in hindsight I didn't really know what that meant. To me, when I first started, it meant helping one child, one family at a time. But this transformation process has sort of given me this whole new vocabulary a whole new way of looking at it. When we first started talking about social justice, it scared me. Because I was brought up to think that was sort of revolutionary – "the peasants with pitchforks" kind of thing. It has been a real education and awakening for me to realize that's what I want it to be about as a leader and as a person.

> (Worker) I don't think I ever looked at life like that…This whole process has been helpful for me to understand what my role is. A literally, shortly after we started doing the T-Team process, I registered to vote. I'll be 30 this year, and I think, I know a lot of it is because I never looked at the world this way. I didn't know how to approach it and this process made me do that…Growing up in Hawaii, it was go to the beach, do your homework, and we were very religious so we did our bible studies. That was our life. Politics was not looked upon; social justice was not looked upon. We never even talked about it as a family. Maybe witnessed stuff as a family but never really discussed it as a family growing up…and here it's making me look at a huge picture of what I can do and what and how I can contribute. Shortly after I registered to vote. I worked the election polls, I researched our president, I mean it was like, I never, I would have never even thought about it. The next thing you know my best friend is registering, she's my age, and she voted this year. My mom voted this year. I mean that is a big deal in our family. And so, that has been the biggest change that has happened to me.

> (Worker) I think I had a handle on it [an understanding of the new philosophy] by the time the councils started their work. We started taking our young people to the teach-ins that [consultant] would have. So there was one on child abuse, there was one on poverty. And I started reading a little bit. Reading just about community psychology and kind of getting an understanding about that conditions in the community – you can't treat a person, an individual without taking into consideration the conditions that exist in the community that brought about circumstances in the first place. So then like those pieces helped me, kind of fit it together.

One of the most important aspects of this individual development piece of the change process is the fact that workers developed an understanding that doing transformative work depends on their own critical consciousness and sociopolitical development. Workers were able to make the connection between their own liberation and the liberation of the young people and families with whom they worked. This is a critical piece. Understanding that to engage in new, more transformative approaches in the community requires attending to the development of workers, helps workers foster an organizational environment that supports curiosity, learning, and critical reflection – a learning organization. As workers at Island Center began to make this connection, they began to look for, and create opportunities for personal development. They also began to think differently about their role as a human service worker.

Role identity and meaning. While not as obvious as the individual changes mentioned above, the change process had implications for worker role identity and how meaningful workers found their efforts to be. Workers at Island Center identify themselves as case managers, counselors, social workers, psychologists, youth development workers, outreach workers, crisis workers, and other social identities. With each identity come certain understandings about what people in those roles do in the organizational context. Before this process, very few workers at Island Center would include in the construction of their identify roles such as activist, organizer, or even advocate. Additionally, few would see popular education or consciousness-raising as part of their job. This is changing at Island Center as workers begin to reconcile their roles with their personal beliefs and values and new organizational goals.

This initially caused some concern among staff as they realized that they might not be equipped for these new roles. Most of their training, professional development experiences, and past on-the-job experiences have not given them the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed

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to be effective in these roles. However, as I mentioned and exemplified in the narrative above, this tension eased some as workers began to reconstruct their roles and find ways to use their skills in new ways. Through trial and error, workers experimented with new strategies and thus began to expand their worker identities.

One unexpected, yet not surprising change that has happened for workers is that many have found new meaning in and energy for their work. As is often the case in the helping professions, people come to this work because they want to help people and make a difference. The realities of the human service setting quickly drain many workers of this passion as they experience the frustrations of one-to-one helping and the endless stream of people in need. Often this leads to a hopeless feeling, burnout, apathy or even a change of career for many workers. One Island Center worker described her experience with burnout in this way:

> I knew that it was sucking the life out of me watching – if I had to watch one more young person go straight back into the same situation, or call us a month after they've left here in the same situation. I just – that was just really getting old. Very rarely was there a young person who would leave and we felt like their situation had changed, where things would be easier for them. So, I mean I feel like we're doing a lot of good work individually. A lot of nurturing, but we weren't changing up any of the conditions that led youth here. So that was becoming overwhelming… And so I just have to – like I have to change my whole idea of like helping or saving.

Working within the organization to approach helping in a different way generated new energy:

> Like I love thinking more about working, being a community member and working in a community context as opposed to I'm an individual working with an individual, and we're not like addressing what are the community factors that are going on. What's the bigger picture here? I love looking at the bigger picture, and I like doing that with the young people here.

Throughout this process, staff members were able to reconnect with why they got into this line of work in the first place. They were able to start to bring their values and beliefs into concordance with their practice. People who have been at the agency for more than a decade, and had lost some of their passion for the work, are finding new energy for the new mission and new

approach. This has generated a great deal of excitement in the agency and a sense that under this new philosophy, people will be able to make a real difference; not just in the lives of a few, but in the community. As overwhelming as trying to have an impact on community conditions can feel, workers at Island Center find that approach more hopeful and meaningful than working under their previous model of helping.

Practices/Action

As I described in the storyline above, workers at Island Center are finding ways to put this new strategy into action in their own lives and in their work at the organization. Again, these examples by no means suggest that all workers at Island Center have altered their personal and professional practices as a result of this process; however, many examples were provided that suggested that individuals are doing things differently.

Personal. When exploring changes in practice with staff members, many shared stories of how this shift at the organization has affected their actions outside of the work environment. From small changes like giving more money to social change-oriented organizations, to bigger changes like voting for the first time at age twenty-nine, workers have been altering their own personal behaviors as a result of the critical dialogue and reflection happening at Island Center. Some of the examples staff shared include: going to the prison to do voter registration; working the election polls; proposing to lead a Sunday school session on social justice and white privilege; speaking at a hearing on gay marriage; writing letters to banks about overdraft charges; reading social justice-related books; and making choices about purchases based on corporate responsibility.

Internal practice. The change process has had an impact on how staff members interact, relate to each other, and collaborate. The participatory process gave staff members a chance to

interact and build relationships with individuals on other teams and with whom they would not

normally be able to interact. This had the effect of connecting people to the organization and

providing new opportunities for staff members to participate in organizational development

activities. One staff member expressed it this way:

> That experience was a time when I have been in this agency for two-and-a-half years. And like the biggest thing that came out of it – one of the biggest things that came out of it for me was just interacting with people from the agency who I have never – like I couldn't even remember people's names after two years because I saw them so infrequently. So that was just really powerful for me. I felt more connected to the agency. Like the agency for me before that was just… And so kind of whatever was going on over there didn't have a lot of impact over here. And so that was very big for me.

As more opportunities for dialogue and reflection were created, people got to know each other in

deeper ways. Staff members are having formal and informal discussions about social justice and

learning about each other's experiences with class, privilege, oppression, and politics among

other things. Staff members are also enjoying the newfound opportunity to bring their political

selves into the work environment allowing them to use that part of themselves to enhance their

work.

The new organizational philosophy has served as a guide for how leaders do their work

internally. Because of the intentional effort to apply the philosophy internally as well as

externally, the statement serves as guiding principles for interactions between individuals and in

groups. Here the executive director describes how he uses the philosophy statement to guide his

work with others in the organization:

> I also stop and read them [philosophy statement action statements] before I go into meetings, particularly directors meetings. I try to use it to remind myself on how I conduct meetings, how I draw participation out. If it is not practiced internally and we are not treating each other that way, then we've got a problem. There have been a couple of times where we had to say look, this is not at all the way we should be handling this situation. Particularly as it related to when I've had problems that may have worked before me. So it is a good management tool.

External practice. Workers at Island Center are the ones putting the philosophy into action. They are doing this by innovating in their settings and in their program activities. They are taking their developing understanding of the need for changes at the community level and trying things out. Although many of the new program strategies are still being developed, workers are finding ways to incorporate the new philosophy into their existing work through approaching some of the existing activities differently. They are engaging consciousness-raising activities with youth and supporting youth when they are ready to take action on issues. Staff members are exploring ways to collaborate with unlikely groups and organizations and building new networks and coalitions for the organization. Through the examples provided in the narrative above, we can see that Island Center workers are changing the way they work with youth, their families, and the community.

Team Change

At the department or team level, identifying the relevant changes becomes a little harder. The difficulty lies in parsing out team-level changes distinct from individual or organizational change. What I tried to capture in this section are changes referenced uniquely to the processes at the team or department level. In many cases, noticeable changes at the team level were simply manifestations of the organizational change process. However, it is important to note how teams are making sense of and implementing strategies associated with the change process. Table three outlines identified changes at the team level.

Table 3: Team/Department Change

Values	Beliefs	Practices/Action
	Framing of problems & solutions Openness to change	Internal • Safe environment for experimentation • Structures for learning External • Experimentation with new strategies • Raised expectations for participation by youth

Beliefs

Framing of problems and solutions. For many workers that I spoke to, the biggest change that was occurring in their teams was one of thinking and talking differently about problems and solutions. Although action strategies were still being explored and developed, there were noticeable differences in how teams were framing the struggles of young people in their discussions and meetings. Many expressed that their teams were talking more about the third domain, or the systems level. As this new framing has become part of the organizational discourse and culture, teams are now viewing their specific charge through this new lens. This is leading teams to explore different strategies and to reflect on these explorations together.

Openness to change. Generally, teams have received the prospect of doing things differently in an open manner. The shelter team, however, has made noticeable strides in their willingness to embrace this change process and explore new approaches. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the shelter team has long been considered a barrier to change in the organization. Because of the difficult nature of the crisis work that they do, and possibly due to a lack of

visionary leadership, they were completely entrenched in a certain way of doing things. As the

organization was building momentum in this change process, the severity of the leadership

problem at the shelter became too clear to ignore. The executive director made the decision to

make some changes in leadership at the shelter and let two key players go. At the same time, he

brought in a new person to lead the shelter and guide changes inline with the rest of the

organization. This was a key move that served to shift the culture of this team and over time

helped to open the door for changes on this team. With new, supportive leadership, the team

could now find ways to see themselves in this new philosophy.

Practices

 Internal practice. Although Island Center has always been a relatively supportive place to

work, this change process created a heightened need for teams to be supportive and safe contexts

in which workers could try out new ideas. Again, this change was most noticeable on the shelter

team. When new leadership was put in place at the shelter, and the team became more open to

change, this team became a safe environment for workers to experiment, innovate, and learn. In

general, all the teams created conditions and new structures for this exploration and learning to

happen. The counseling team, together with the youth leadership team created the staff

development project as a context for continued learning a growth. Here the counseling director

describes this project:

> You know we are doing that staff development project, and each week, each person takes
> an hour and 15 minutes… and it takes a lot of reflecting to get ready for this too. And you
> think through your development and awareness around justice issues and what has
> influenced you, your experiences, and your mentors both positive and negative. We share
> those so that we're talking about equality or prejudice on a real personal level and talking
> about liberation on a personal level too. It has been very connecting for us. We needed it
> as a team because it is kind of a reformed team. We have two more to go and then we are
> going to ask what we have learned from this about how we can help other people
> experience greater awareness around justice issues. So just having each one of us think
> about it in our lives there are narratives that are coming out. New stories to tell about

yourself and explain yourself. We've done genograms and these other things, but it is a way to get to know each other on a really interesting level that kind of jazzes you up to want to be that really important influence for our client. The way we come together for that meeting, we using different…I mean we talk about liberation. We've done all those things, and we've come together. This ties into civic action more – it goes somewhere beyond the personal to the political I guess. It is not just staying in the realm of psychology or family therapy of self-development; it goes towards politics and civic action.

The teams are enhancing their roles as contexts for learning. The Transitional Living team used the "exploding the issue" process as a team, to better understand the larger forces that were forcing kids onto the streets and sending them to their program. This lead to a deeper understanding of the complex, multi-dimensional root causes of the problems that they were trying to address with their individual-focused residential program. It helped them realize that the young people they were working with could not overcome these obstacles all by themselves or even with the help of this program. This led to the creation of community nights in their residential program where they invited all the people that the youth identified as supports to have dinner with the group as a community. The team's learning process helped them consider a different approach to their work.

External practice. As has been said many times already in this chapter, Island Center workers are trying out new strategies in line with the new philosophy. At the team level, each are experimenting with ways to put their new framing of problems and solutions into practice. For example, besides using the *exploding the issue* process as a team, the transitional living team has been using the process with young people in their program. The use of this technique has allowed for a different type of dialogue to happen with youth in their program. With this, there is a feeling that they are now expecting more and different participation from program participants. Here the department director describes this shift:

> I think we keep upping the expectations and it sets a totally – we are expecting more, which they do more when we expect more. Like we're expecting them to participate on a

totally different level, and they are doing it. They might not do it exactly the way we imagined that they would do, but they're participating a little bit more, which is exciting. And we're able to have – like the more we embrace sort of a community, what's going on in the bigger picture, how does that affect you – like we can bring that in to what's going on right here within this group dynamic and actually spend a lot more time doing that and trying to like make a correlation to the outside, bigger world. But it feels like baby steps. It feels good.

Again, an example of how their learning as a team, has led to different approaches and different expectations for participants and the team as a whole.

Extra-organizational change

Although the main goal in this change process is organizational change, it is hoped that ultimately this will lead to changes in the community. It is understood by the organization that this will take time to realize, and that small wins are important in the process. With this in mind, it is important to identify "ripples" of change at the extra-organizational level of analysis. This process is causing ripples in the local private human service system, is beginning to generate new alliances for change, and enhancing the local youth engagement infrastructure.

Human Service System Ripple: Island Center as Organizational "Pace Car"

One important community change that could potentially result from Island Center's hard work is a shift in the local culture of human services. As was described above, the timing of Island Center's change process was synchronous with a dramatic shift in the mission of the national United Way organization. Their new strategic plan highlighted the need to go beyond the focus of funding mostly service provision to work to support initiatives that were working change community conditions. The local United Way was in the process of trying to figure out how to implement their strategic plan when the executive director of Island Center brought their change process to the attention of the President of the local United Way. The transforming Island Center gave the United Way a picture of what it looks like to be an organization that is working

to change community conditions while also attending to immediate needs of community members. The United Way had an organizational ally as they began to shift their priority and Island Center had powerful validation that they were headed in the right direction. Other organizations were brought into the process and with United Way's help Island Center became a model and the organizational pacer for change in human services in the community. Here is one United Way staff person's take on the importance of Island Center's leadership, modeling, and solidarity with them in this process:

> He [Island Center Executive Director] is very well regarded and influential in the community. It's pretty powerful that some key Executive Directors are doing this. Neither would be seen as going out in left field on some crazy scheme. It is strength in numbers and it is very important to us to have agency support. They are influential with their peers and it makes it hard to criticize us if their peers take it on.

Island Center now has experience with what United Way hopes to promote in the community. This experience and subsequent outcomes has practical validity grounded in the words, actions, and reflections of their organizational members. This fact, along with their strong reputation in the community, has power to contribute to changing a local human service system that has been mainly focused on maintaining the status quo.

Alliances Beyond Human Services

Island Center is well regarded in the community at many levels and their new direction is increasing this regard. Even as their attempts at innovation are having an influence on the United Way and on other human service organizations in the community, other groups are also taking notice. Even organizations that are not human service focused are noticing the work that Island Center is doing and coming to join the effort. Here is one Island Center manager describing new attention from the Human Relations Commission and a local church:

> All of a sudden the Metro human relations commission is really interested in us. I mean they're really wanting to partner with us at every turn, even though you think they'd be going to [another organization], but we're the ones leading. Like this MLK day thing

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with youth. And so they're real interested in us and our providing money for – I mean they put money on the table to buy t-shirts for MLK day. They stepped up and did the PR on it. [Local church] an obviously a predominantly African American church, pretty affluent group of folks, but they without being solicited, handed us $500-$600 because they appreciate the work we're doing related to, really to justice issues and bringing young people along in understanding some of that.

This is just a start of what could be major inroads into connecting diverse groups aimed at achieving community change around shared concerns.

Youth Engagement Infrastructure

Another ripple that has been generated by this process is the building of a more cohesive youth engagement infrastructure focused on youth social action. Because of Island Center's leadership in the community, there are now over seventy youth from twenty different schools in several city-wide youth councils. They are leading monthly meetings of the Nashville Youth Alliance's *Youth Engagement Roundtable*, an informal gathering of folks in town who are doing youth engagement work. Their youth philanthropy program is providing funding and opportunities for youth groups in the community to engage in social action not only community service. Their Americorps project is setting the stage for utilizing the Metro Parks community centers as conduits for youth involvement and civic engagement in neighborhood settings. Finally, they have merged forces with another respected youth organizing group to move fully into the realm of engaging youth in leading research and action in the community. Whereas before, young people had opportunities to engage in various charitable community service-oriented activities, Island Center is now helping to create the conditions necessary for youth to be agents of social change. Island Center is helping to shift the perception of the role of youth in the community towards fully engaged and acting citizens.

Conclusion

This process of change at Island Center has had impacts on multiple levels. At the organizational level, they have created a solid value-based philosophy, co-constructed a clear mission and goals, and have developed a common language for describing their work at both individual and community levels. They have also begun to put this new value-based philosophy and mission into action internally as well as in their practice in community. At the individual level, workers are now focused on organizational goals that are congruent with their value system. They are learning, developing their sociopolitical awareness, expanding their role identities, and finding new enthusiasm for and meaning in their work. As they are learning and growing, they are enacting their values and beliefs through personal actions and through new ways of working and practicing. The departments at Island Center are having different discussions and generating new structures for learning while supporting innovation and experimentation. Lastly, their process of change is starting to create ripples in the community.

Although a lot has changed over the last two years, it is important to also highlight what has not changed. Island Center still values their role in caring for those youth and families who are hurting. Therefore, they are still providing shelter, counseling, and other ameliorative services to those in need. However, they may be doing these things a bit differently. This change process has helped them realize that they want to do both: care for those in need and attempt to transform community conditions that cause problems for youth and families. It is this unique blend that they seek to achieve. Most importantly, the organization is embracing change and instituting organizational norms that suggest learning and developing is participatory, ongoing, and necessary.

CHAPTER V

PROCESS OF CHANGE

Process of Change

In the last chapter we saw what changed at Island Center. Next we ask: what are the

unique conditions and generative mechanisms that contributed to change? There are many

complex, dynamic, and interdependent generative mechanisms contributing to organizational

changes at Island Center. There are also many factors that have served to get in the way of

changes or the pace of change. The concept of equifinality reminds us that there are many

possible paths to similar ends and certainly this process could have unfolded in many ways in

this organization. A change process of this type would most certainly unfold in a different

manner in a different organization. In this chapter, I focus on the process of change and will

outline how this particular change process unfolded in this particular organization at this

particular time in history.

The picture that emerges from the change process points to three main components that

contribute to change: 1) Initial conditions, 2) a dynamic learning process, and 3) the

organizational and community context. In each of the three areas, there are optimal levels of

necessary generative ingredients. Not enough of some things and too much of others can block

the process. Depending on the dosage and timing of any specific ingredient, it could be a driver

of change or a barrier to change. Whereas the initial conditions and the context are important

contributors to this change process, it is in the dynamic learning process that the momentum for

change is generated. This mutually interactive generative learning process involved change

agents, in supportive structures, co-constructing a vision through dialogue, action, and reflection. The process of change also benefited from several critical events that served to infuse energy and momentum into the process. Additionally, there were several missteps that slowed the process of change. At the end of this chapter I present a theory of change that boils this process down to its essence and draw out implications for understanding the necessary conditions and drivers for change of this nature in human service organizations.

Initial Conditions

Svyantek and Brown (2000) remind us that it is important to be sensitive to initial conditions when attempting to understand organizations and organizational change. There were unique conditions in place for Island Center before this process started (Table 4). Several ingredients existed that provided a strong foundation and a critical level of readiness for the change process. Salient initial conditions include organizational variables such as the history and reputation of the organization, the organization's health, and the existence of experienced, competent, and creative staff members. Additionally, there were environmental conditions such as the state of human services and human services funding to take into account. Lastly, it is important to stress how important it was that I had an existing relationship with the organization.

Table 4: Initial Conditions

Organizational Conditions	Environmental Conditions	Consultant/researcher
• History and Reputation • Organizational Health • Worker Capacity		Relationship with the Organization

Organizational Conditions

History and reputation. As was outlined in chapter three, Island Center has a long history of working with youth and families in the community. They have long been regarded as the leader in the community with regard to youth and family services and more recently has become the local champion of youth development. Leaders at the United Way remark that they are very effective and have consistently been one of their highest funded organizations. As an organization, their reputation in the community is stellar, and they are considered as the organization that is always pushing the envelope. As an organization, they have won numerous awards for their work and for their innovation. Although there is a risk that past successes could lead to a desire to maintain their current modus operandi (Burke, 2002), Island Center instead embraces their role as innovator and groundbreaker.

Organizational health. Partly due to their past successes, Island Center is an organization that could be considered healthy. They have a strong board that has always been able to raise the funds necessary for Island Center to do its work. They have been successful in consistently receiving federal, state, and local grants as well as generous donations from individuals and groups. Staff has been relatively stable over the years with a large core group of employees with tenure of more than ten years. Wages and benefits are competitive, employees are treated fairly, participation is encouraged and supported, and there is a high level of commitment to the mission of the agency. Their practices have long been based on the view that young people are resources, not merely recipients of services.

Contributing to the organization's health and forward-looking state at the start of this process is the fact their current executive director is new to the agency. He started just a year before this change process started, and with his hiring and subsequent orientation, there was a

sense of renewal at the agency. As part of his own learning process, he instituted the "First

Friday" sessions to make his orientation a re-orientation for the whole agency. Here is a board

member describing this as a critical initial event in the larger change process:

> And so I headed this group in-house to plan his orientation, and we had good plan for the first week or so, that we in fact did. But it was a very interesting thing because as that unfolded it became clear that he also had energy to take a look sort of one floor down from what we were doing. And in an attempt to orient him, we were already trying to look at the sort of the sub-flooring of the agency. And he not only joined there, but he suggested that we extend that orientation and making a kind of re-orientation for everybody there. And I think that was, in my view, a critical first event. It spoke to us a culture of renewal that was tied to sort of the naturally occurring event, which was change of directorship. So he came in, and rather than sort of slipping into the driver's seat and driving the bus, he sort of parked it. Not fully – we continued to do what we did. But I think that was a key piece.

This change of directorship restarted the organizational dialogue and got people thinking again

about the organization's purpose, current reality, and vision for the future. It also put in place a

new director who, having come from the for profit sector, was new to the field and more open to

looking at a new way of doing things.

Worker capacity. An initial condition that had a tremendous effect on the ability of the

organization to do this work has to do with worker capacity. This type of transformation requires

that individuals have a high degree of critical problem solving skills, have a certain level of

comfort with ambiguity, and be able to take a systems perspective. At Island Center, over eighty

percent of the workers have a college degree and more than forty percent have graduate degrees.

All of the members of the T-Team have college degrees and half of the group has graduate-level

education. This high level of education, combined with the fact that many workers have

extensive experience at the organization and in the field of human services, helped create

conditions that allowed for this type of reflective process to happen. This was especially the case

with the T-Team as they were charged with struggling with and co-creating the new philosophy

and other organizational goals and strategies.

Environmental conditions

Pointing back to some of the contextual data presented in chapter three, it is important to note here the initial conditions of the outside world in which the organization practices. Nonprofit organizations in general are under tremendous fiscal stress and doing all they can just to survive. Private donations to human service organizations have been low since the events of September 11th, and most of the federal monies that exist for human service organizations support crisis-oriented programs, or after-the-fact intervention programs. Current and future federal funding to all social service programs is uncertain. The local non-profit climate has some organizations joining forces with others in order to keep the doors open. In spite of these conditions, Nashville of late has been a supportive context for the development of initiatives that foster youth engagement. Also, many organizations and neighborhood groups exist that are focused on changing community conditions and altering social institutions and systems. Moreover, the local United Way office has a new strategic plan that is driving them to look for ways to support initiatives that are focused on changing community conditions. Before this project began, the mix of scarce traditional sources of funding for human services and some progressive trends in Nashville make for unique conditions for fostering innovation and new approaches.

Consultant/Researcher Relationship

It is important not to minimize the significance of my existing relationship with Island Center. Having been a part of this organization for over a decade prior to this project, and having worked directly with many of the managers in the organization, I experienced a high level of trust. I had worked in most of the departments in the organization and played a variety of roles from volunteer, relief staff, and front-line worker to program coordinator. Even after ceasing

employment there, I continued to volunteer with the organization in several different capacities. This prolonged involvement allowed me to initiate this dialogue with them and to skip the usually lengthy period of relationship building. They could be pretty certain that my motives were beneficent and that I understood the realities of the work that they do. The existence of this close relationship created openness at the organization to the ideas that my colleague and I were bringing to the table, and allowed for honest and playful interactions throughout the process.

All of the initial conditions mentioned above served to lay the groundwork for the change process and provided unique contributions to the positive changes that energed. You could say that these initial conditions provided important contributions to a critical level of readiness for change that was then accelerated through a dynamic process of learning.

Dynamic Learning Process

A second critical event in this transformation process was our initial presentation and dialogue with Island Center staff. This event served to insert just enough disruption into their current system to further enhance the readiness of the organization to change. What commenced was a dynamic process of learning aimed at living their organizational values, developing their understanding about problems and solutions, and altering practices. The success of this process in bringing about some level of change at multiple levels of analysis has to do with four critical components: 1) a clear theory or messages, 2) agents of change, 3) enabling structures, and 4) a dialogic process (Table 5). This process is dynamic in that the four components interact and contribute to the process of change. For example, many times in this process, agents in enabling structures, through dialogue and co-construction, developed clear messages. And, as I will show, any one of the components, when present in levels that are out of balance with the others tend to

disrupt the process. There seems to be optimal levels of each of these components and risks or pitfalls when there is too much or too little of one. In each of the four components, I will describe the generative characteristics, the constraining characteristics, and the key critical events.

Table 5: Dynamic Learning Process

Change Messages	Agents of Change	Enabling Structures	Dialogical Process
Alternative Vision	Leadership	T-Team	Dialogues for learning
Value-based	T-Team	Inter-department	and action
Ongoing, socially	"Critical Friends"	structures	Action
constructed	Individual Actors	Larger Forums	Reflection
From words to action		Organizational	
		systems	

Change Messages: Generative Characteristics

Clear initial and ongoing change messages were important contributors to the process. Additionally, how Island Center staff used language in their discourse and creation of these messages helped to move the process toward the change goal. The messages of an alternative vision and the ongoing creation of value-based messages were particularly generative of change in this process.

Alternative vision. One component that was critical from the very beginning was a clear alternative vision. In our very first meeting with Island Center staff, my colleague and I presented some ideas that served as an alternate theory about how well-being is promoted and the role of human services. This alternate vision was clear, created some dissonance, and sent a powerful message about the need for a new approach. The message was essentially that

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wellbeing could only be achieved through a balance of personal, interpersonal, and collective wellbeing (Prilleltensky, In Press). Human service organizations do well at the individual and interpersonal levels, but for a variety of reasons neglect action in the "third domain". This was the beginning of a process by which the organization developed an understanding of the discrepancy between their values and desired goals and what they were currently doing. Through ongoing discussion and exploration, a healthy dissatisfaction with their current approach developed which created a heightened readiness for change.

As I described in chapter four, the delivery of this initial story touched people deeply. The clear, alternative definition of wellness helped the workers realize how their current strategies were out of balance, weighted heavily towards the individual and interpersonal domains. This initial message was also later refined to help bring the board of directors along. Breaking down the wellness presentation to a simple "from A to B" picture (Figure 8) really helped the board understand the need to change. Here the executive director describes effect of this clear message:

> I think they were a little confused. When they got it, was when [consultant] did the pump handle story with the power point slides that talked about the shifts that need to occur in the social service arena. Here is where it has been and where it needs to go. That From-To slide, that at least gave people an 'oh, ok. From clients to engaged citizens – well who doesn't want that?' Just giving them the picture of what it looks like, and it wasn't just the three domains and justice and equality.

The intentional effort to deliver a clear message to a specific audience helped with understanding, with realizing the need for change, and helped to inspire the organization to come together around a process of change. As the process unfolded, we repeatedly delivered the alternative vision message in T-Team discussions and through various presentations, sharing of research, and teach-ins with all staff members. This alternative vision became part of the ongoing internal narrative of the organization.

Changing How we Work

FROM	TO
• Treatment	• Prevention
• One on One	• Community Based
• Charity	• Empowerment
• Clients	• Engaged Citizens

Figure 8: Changing How We Work

Value-based. It was important to the process that the initial messages connected to existing values in the organization. Many commented on how our initial message was very much in line with the core values of people in the organization and in line with the value-base of the organization as a whole. Additionally, it was critical that the process continued by first explicating shared values of the organization in order to fashion a philosophy statement that reflected what they cared about. As was explained in chapter four, this value-based statement set the foundation for the change process, infused passion and meaning into the organization, and gave the organization a clear guiding document that served to ground them in and hold them accountable to their shared values. Since its creation, this statement has been consistently returned to in order to make decisions and get clarity around difficult situations.

Ongoing, socially constructed. Beyond the initial messages delivered by us and created through the value-based philosophy statement, many other messages were developed in the change process. Just as the philosophy statement was a socially constructed document, many other guiding documents were created in this fashion. From the language used to guide the council brainstorming to the critical impact areas and mission statement, Island Center worked in

groups to construct new messages that brought direction and clarity to the change process. The

staff took the alternative vision and socially constructed how that vision is to play out in their

organization. There were moments when staff members were confused about the various

messages flying about, but most of that subsided as the process moved forward. What resulted

were various documents and statements that clearly defined what the organization believes in,

what their purpose is, what changes they hope to affect, and how they plan to measure their

success.

Change Messages: Constraining Characteristics

As I alluded to above, there were times in the process of generating organizational

messages when people felt confused, overwhelmed, and even skeptical. As some excitement was

developing around the new philosophy, and the T-Team was searching for ways to move the

organization from words to action, many different concepts were moving through the agency:

Vision 2007, restore – prevent - promote, critical impact areas, three domains, principles of non-

violence, etc. Many of the messages were rooted in the same values, but too many messages

sometimes had the effect of either taking them off track or paralyzing them. This necessary

process of trying to make sense of who they are and what they were to do also had the effect of

muddying the waters and diluting the focus of the new philosophy.

From words to action. As powerful to the process as the various messages were, they

were sometimes confusing, especially with regard to action. There were many examples of

frustration around getting from the inspirational idea of changing community conditions to actual

changes in practice. Here the executive director talks about the frustration he was seeing around

putting the social justice value in action:

> One of the biggest things I'm seeing is frustration. When we brought in the Justice piece,
> it was like opening Pandora's box. We know it, we want it and are stretching for it, but I

see a lot of frustration in people because they don't know how to factor that into their day-to-day work. When will I know that I've done it? It's like a two-year old that can't say it, but they know that they are close to it. It's been hard. Some people are even questioning whether they are worthy to work here. When I hear ten to fifteen year employees questioning whether they still belong here, something is wrong.

On the one hand, the organization was rallied behind the new direction. On the other hand, understanding what that meant for action was elusive.

This lack of clarity around action and expectations was partly the reason why the executive director pushed the process towards working on program outcomes a little prematurely. Some people were growing weary of the all the dialogue and heavy focus on language without clear plans for how the work would be different. He wanted to infuse some structure into process that might bring clarity around the goals of action. This had the effect of taking a little of the wind out of the sails because there were still questions about the agencies overall goals at this point. People on the T-Team found it hard to construct outcomes for programs without being clear about what the agency as a whole hopes to achieve in the critical impact areas. Focusing the energy towards clearly defining the critical impact areas and Island Center's unique role averted this roadblock. This refocusing along with more time to experiment with new approaches and share success helped to generate more understanding of how to put the new philosophy into action.

Change Messages: Critical Events

In the category of messages, there are five critical events worth highlighting. First, the induction message delivered by my colleague and I had a catalyzing effect on the change process. Second, the development of the philosophy statement gave the organization a value-based document that stamped out a new direction and gave them a point of reference for the change process. Third, presenting the message of the new direction to the board of directors and engaging them in a dialogue about this shift was critical in getting them involved and behind the

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change process. Fourth, clearly defining the four critical impact areas that the organization is focused on helped demarcate their unique role in addressing these community needs through actions at the individual and community levels. Lastly, even though the premature attempt at defining program outcomes was a bit of a roadblock it was critical in that the T-Team used its power to right the direction of the change process and get back to the task of defining the critical impact areas. These four events stand out as critical points in the process with regard to messages.

Agents of Change: Generative Characteristics

Another important factor in the change process was the people involved in driving change within the organization. Overall, it was individuals in group settings generating energy for change. However, on occasion it was the specific actions of an individual that served to drive the process forward. Agents of change in this transformation process include members of the leadership team, members of the T-Team, our consulting team, and other individuals within the agency.

Leadership. The different levels of leadership at Island Center, working together to drive change, were critical to this transformation. From the board of directors, to the executive director and upper management team, their vision and actions held the change process together and created the conditions by which change could occur.

The executive director was a necessary and significant agent of change at Island Center. As is the case in most organizational change processes, his leadership role was important in making change happen. It was clear at his initial orientation to the organization that the executive director was a transformational leader. He was interested in learning from the staff of the organization about where they have been and where they would like to go. As mentioned above,

this set the stage for the change process that began shortly after his inaugural year. As ideas about the new direction began to simmer, he was able to guide this vision because it meant something to him personally. He was able to see his values "all over the philosophy statement" and believed deeply in the need to make changes in the organization to fulfill this new vision. His passion for this change served to endorse the new direction for the rest of the staff.

His ability to be persuasive, influential, share power, give praise and provide opportunities for staff members to learn and participate in the process provided the necessary leadership ingredients for this type of change. Most crucial was his ability to recognize when he needed help. When the process hit a lull in the beginning of the second year, and he was feeling lost, he was self-aware enough to acknowledge such and quickly reached out for help. He called on three respected colleagues to consult with him about this critical juncture and this assistance With their consultation, he was able to get some support for his efforts and some guidance on strategies for pushing through the difficulties of that particular stage of change.

This leader was also able to make some difficult staff changes at vital points in the change process. His awareness that major leadership changes needed to happen at the shelter led him to let go the existing director and he brought in new leadership that better fit with the new direction. Not long after this decision, he also recognized that he needed someone to help manage the change process, so he brought someone in as an associate executive director to fill this roll. These two moves were critical in putting quality people in roles that would eventually move the change process into high gear. Outside of the organization, he was also championing their change process. He was able to connect what they were doing at Island Center to the United Way's new strategic plan and took the initiative to talk to their executive officer about it. This led to some important external endorsement and support that was essential to their success.

Overall, this process was a very difficult animal to manage. Not only did he have to provide leadership to the transformation process, he had to work to keep the doors open by fundraising, dealing with staffing issues and managing all of the other various day-to-day crises of an organization of this type. It would have been very easy to make the decision to halt the process when things got tough, but he was courageous and visionary enough to keep marching on.

The entire upper-management leadership team was an agent of change that drove this process. This group, made up of directors of each department at Island Center and the executive and associate directors, put considerable energy into making this change continue to move forward. As was mentioned in the initial conditions section, people in this group are highly educated and extremely passionate about and committed to the work that they do. It was the hard work of the people in this group in the form of the Breakfast Club that generated energy for the highly participatory cross-department council work. It was this group that struggled together to make sense of how the new direction was to play out in practice in their various departments. Each of them created opportunities for people on their teams to dialogue, learn, and generate ideas for action. Then, they encouragingly supported them in trying out new ways of working. Because of their warm relationships, this group collectively supported each other when the process got difficult and celebrated when they experienced successes. They also were able to keep the executive director on track and hold the line when it was tempting to throw in the towel.

There are two key leaders at Island Center that facilitated movement at a critical time in the process and in strategic organizational places. The executive director brought in a new director for the shelter who shortly after that placement, moved into the associate executive director position. The individual who then was hired to run the shelter was able to generate

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dramatic shifts in the culture of that team over time. As was mentioned earlier, the shelter, for

many reasons, was the most immovable piece of the organization. Her approach to leading that

group was different enough to dislodge the entrenched way of doing things and create the team

anew. With the help of the associate executive director, she led the shelter team through a

process of connecting their work and what they think is important to the organizational

philosophy. What resulted was a new commitment to looking closely at their rules and strategies

to see where they could make changes. When asked what contributed to pulling the shelter into

the organizational change dialogue, one of the shelter workers describes it this way:

> It's Leadership. Because I think [shelter director] very much wants to move the shelter in
> the new direction, kind of where these impact areas are, and not to stay status quo. But
> she's also downstairs. She's getting a good idea of what's realistic instead of – because I
> think at first I think from the outside you always have these ideals. But she's a part of that
> and sees it, so I think it will help create a balance where you don't have someone coming
> in and just saying; okay this is what we're going to do. You have someone experiencing
> that this isn't working the best. It's still where we want to go. We just have to modify.
> She found out in practice, the theory sounds good, in practice not fully developed. And
> [associate executive director] also was a part of being there during this. I think leadership
> that is willing to not just hand down things but experience it with you – and it gets buy-in
> from other staff I think, you know?

These two directors used an approach with shelter staff that created a sense of "we're in this

together" which led to an increased connection to the overall direction of the agency, a

supportive base from which to try new things, and ultimately new actions.

The associate executive director also was instrumental in re-energizing the T-Team after

coming through the difficult neutral zone. The executive director knew he needed someone to

help manage this change process and therefore the associate director took on this role. What this

person was able to do was work with all of the departments to help put the pieces into a whole

picture. Part of the problem with the T-Team was that a lot of ideas and energy were generated in

the meetings that soon dissipated after the meeting was over. The executive director and

department directors were too busy to facilitate marinating the process between meetings, which

made it impossible to focus the ideas into action. The associate director filled this needed role and complemented the process in such a way as to generate some real momentum at a time when real momentum was needed.

T-Team. The T-Team successfully filled the prescribed role of "engine of change". I will describe more fully the importance of this group in the section on enabling structures, but it is also important to think of this group as an agent of change. This collection of individuals, in relationship, generated ideas and vision and helped to diffuse the change process into the organization. Their main aim was to move from intent to action. This group was made up of insiders – directors, managers, and front line staff – and outsiders – our consulting team, which consisted of an academic researcher, several graduate students, and myself. It was important that this group involved a few skilled and experienced members who were outside of the leadership circle. These members were able to bring in the voices of other staff and hold leaders accountable in the change process. Because of their willingness to "speak truth to power", the T-Team was able to avoid groupthink and avoid taking shortcuts. The combination of diverse experiences and mutual trust and respect served to build a cohesive team that worked well together and led change in the organization.

"Critical friends." Over the course of this project, our consulting team has been using the term "critical friends" to describe our role relationship to the organization. We use critical friends to capture the essence of a relationship based on trust and mutual respect, and our ability to critically reflect with the T-Team and the organization about the process and content of change. A critical friend is similar to what Mezirow (1997) calls a "provocateur", and is based on a relationship that Meg Bond (1999) describes as connected disruption. Connected disruption is the process of disrupting organizational culture while staying in relationship to individuals. My

colleague helped to build the relationship by holding breakfast meetings at his house. We often

shared personal stories and experiences and celebrated personal achievements. Because the

relationship was warm, friendly, and playful, we felt comfortable disagreeing with or questioning

directions and decisions. We helped to pace the change in both process and content. We were

able to encourage and challenge the group to go beyond where they might have gone without us.

It is clear that this is a role that was essential to the progress of the change process. We were able

to contribute as agents of change based on the quality of the relationship, but also because of

personal attributes, experiences, and connection to related theory.

From the very beginning, as we delivered the initial presentation, we were intervening in

this system. Staff members felt that the ability of my colleague to persuasively communicate an

alternative vision for the helping professions stimulated energy for change. Through

presentations and T-Team meetings he was able to infuse a mixture of passion, language and

metaphor, and research to get people to look at things in a different way or simply look at

something for the first time. His presentations on poverty and child abuse, as well as various

presentations on the domains of wellness were very persuasive for staff and board members

alike. We found ways to consistently deliver the alternative vision message in different venues

and helped put this vision into a global perspective. Here is how one staff member describes it:

> I mean [colleague], he's really good with that stuff. He's just a pro you know in
> marshalling all those kind of statistics. That was very helpful. And I think you guys, sort
> of patiently in some ways, saying the same things over and over as we struggled along.
> You know being encouraging. I think one of the things that to me has been really
> valuable is that… [colleague] brings is a – he's got this multi-cultural perspective, and so
> he could say it doesn't have to be this way; it's not this way everywhere. You know how
> he would say this is a dreadful country, you know? But you would see that it doesn't have
> to be this way. Some societies, they don't set it up this way. That's always been really
> meaningful to me. So that kind of multi-cultural analysis is really, really helpful.

Just as we were attempting to be persuasive about the content of change, we were also

playing the critical friend role with regard to the process. Island Center had gotten into a pattern

of making all or most of the organizational decisions at the upper management level. There are a few people on that team that hold much of the organizational memory, and it makes sense that this group would have some wisdom about how to go about change. At the same time, their usual way of doing things excluded many in the organization from having a voice in organizational matters. Their reasoning was understandable: people are busy, we don't want to burden them, it will take too long, it'll be too hard to get people together, we can't take people away from the residential programs, etc. In our role as critical friends, we challenged them to find ways to support participation by large members of staff through different means. We were persistent in driving home the message that living their shared values internally was important, and that deep, democratic participation would aid buy-in, enrich learning, create new organizational norms, and generate better, more innovative ideas for action. Also with regard to process, we were able to be influential about the pace. Without attributing too much of the success of the project to our involvement, I do, however, want to stress the importance of the role of the critical friend in this case. Without our involvement, it is clear that the process would have been different, and at difficult times, the process might have stalled. Here is another staff member describing the importance of our role:

> …and you guys here, you wouldn't have really just let it totally die. I just – I just don't know what the leadership for it would have been like. It might have been even weaker than – and I'm not trying to criticize [executive director]. I'm just – he was just all over the place. And – it might have been tougher. And maybe we would have said, oh we've got to stop for a little while.

In our role as critical friends in the change process, we were both supporting and helping to drive the change process.

Other Individuals. Beyond the leadership, members of the T-Team, and the consulting team, there were other individuals who were agents of change. Various individuals at Island Center were able to catalyze change through their actions. As people began to try out new ideas,

have different discussions with youth and each other, connect with new groups, and share these experiences with other staff, these actions served as learning instances for the organization and helped inspire new actions. One staff member in the transitional living program took initiative to try out new ways of working with the young people that participated in the program. In addition, she made efforts to connect to other organizations in the community that could be allies in this new approach. Another staff member in the shelter program explored new ways to run the multiple family group sessions with youth and their families that was more in line with the philosophy. Individuals' actions, when shared with the rest of the organization helped them move from philosophy to concrete action.

Agents of Change: Constraining Characteristics

Agents of change help translate vision, philosophy, and grounded input into action (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004). Sometimes, however, as agents of change attempt to positively influence the change process, they inadvertently block progress. There are a few constraining characteristics in the category of agents of change. For the most part, these barriers are not due to individual attributes or behaviors, but instead, characteristic of structural conditions that block individual agents from acting in ways that benefit the change process. These examples, such as established power structures, will be addressed in the section on enabling structures. In this section, however, I want to address a few examples of how the leadership of the organization as well as our consulting team constrained the change process.

Leadership. There are a few of examples where actions by the executive director constrained progress. Again, these actions are partly due to situational factors, but they are worth highlighting here to provide examples of how good intentions can obstruct forward momentum. One example has to do with not communicating to the board of directors early in the course of

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this change effort. The executive director is the main conduit for information flow to and from the board. Due to the fact that he neglected to get the board bought in early, the board's strategic planning efforts progressed disconnected to the organizational change process. This created some confusing mixed messages in the organization and unneeded stress for the leadership team. The executive director remedied this before too long, and the newfound board support was welcomed.

The executive director also created a diversion when he forced the process into focusing on outcomes prematurely. Again, this was partly in response to pressure from the board and pressures around funding. However, his insistence that the T-Team move to create outcomes for programs before the impact areas were clearly defined only served to confuse T-Team members and slow the momentum of the process. To his credit, he quickly realized that this was premature and supported the decision of the group to hold off on that task.

Both the executive director and the associate executive director showed some resistance to using the language of "Justice and Equality" in organizational statements. Although they were both comfortable with this language in the philosophy statement, when it came time to decide on the impact areas, they were resistant to the use of these terms in one of the major categories. The resistance seemed to stem from their thought that this was not an impact area for Island Center for which outcomes can be measured. At one point, the executive director reworded the Justice and Equality impact area description and softened the language to focus on helping youth develop empathy for the struggle of others. Their hesitation and desire to soften is understood, as this is potentially the most controversial shift in focus for Island Center. I'm guessing that they were both worried about how this impact area would be received by the board and by external

stakeholders. Nevertheless, their attempts to alter the will of the T-Team seemed to constrain the good work of the group.

At one point during the change process, the director's team struggled with their own abilities and efficacy around the new direction. As they were being charged with leading their own departments to develop new strategies, they began to question whether or not they could do it well enough. There was a sense that in the context of their everyday work and limited resources, the demands being placed on them to move from philosophy to action was too much. This only slightly constrained the process, but is worth mentioning in that their continuing ability to be agents of change in this process depended on their own learning and development as well as adequate support. Here are a few management statements that illustrate this point:

> But the management part seemed for me, especially when it felt like it was getting to the crisis point, like a big deal. Just so much going on, too much stretch, and everyone was sort of feeling that.

> [Managers] are feeling frustrated that they are not doing a good enough job. There is a lot of frustration in the agency that we are not doing a good enough job. As people are taking on more programs, and at the end of the day we want those programs to be about social justice in that neighborhood and teaching young people they are saying 'how do I design and develop that and do everything else I am supposed to do at the same time?' So a lot of people have hit the ceiling on what they can do as a manager. And unless we can break through that and give them some training and some new tools, then I don't think they are going to last. They can't do anymore.

The effort required for managers to be agents of this type of transformation while sustaining the ongoing operations of the organization is tremendous.

There are a couple of ways in which we, in our roles as critical friends, made decisions that constrained the change process. Our main mistake was not giving full control of the running of T-Team over to staff soon enough. For a variety of reasons, mostly having to do with us wanting to ease their burden, we called meetings, created agendas, and took responsibility for the T-Team. The leadership team greatly appreciated this assistance and benefited from our

guidance. What this led to at one point, however, was staff mostly not thinking about the change process between meetings. Since we were handling the agendas and planning for the meetings, they were able to just show up and hope to be generative in the meeting. This created a bit of a disconnect between the change process and the ongoing activities of the organization. We were able to remedy this somewhat by being more intentional about assigning between-meeting tasks, but not challenging them to plan for and lead the T-Team meetings sooner was a barrier to the change process. Not only did it limit ownership and integration, it also constrained our ability to play the critical friend role while also having to facilitate the process.

As critical friends, we also could have done a better job supporting, or coaching the executive director and management team. We relied mainly on the T-Team structure to drive the process and neglected to find ways to engage leadership one-on-one or in smaller groups to assist them in handling the demands of this change process. Attending to the personal and professional developmental needs of other change agents in this process could have possibly shortened the duration of the difficult neutral zone phase.

Agents of Change: Critical Events

There are four key events that were critical to the change process with regard to the role of change agents. First, it was critical that the board of directors was eventually brought into the change process. My colleague and the executive director accomplished this through a presentation to the board. My colleague's ability to persuade the board and help them understand the importance of this shift was critical in gaining their support for this effort. A second critical event was when the executive director realized he needed help to more effectively manage the change process. He asked for help in two ways. He first reached out to the board chair, my colleague, and another organizational consultant for advice and guidance. He also created the

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associate executive director position to assist with some of the management tasks that were overwhelming him. These two actions helped to reduce some of the confusion among directors and brought some new leadership to the change process.

Another event that was critical was the support and endorsement by the board chair. This helped to normalize the struggle that the leadership was experiencing and gave them the ok to take the time needed to figure it out. It took some pressure off of staff to know that the board understood that this process was going to take some time. Lastly, hiring the right person to lead the shelter team was a strategic move that infused energy into the shelter program and brought them into the change process so that they organization could move forward as a single unit with shared goals.

Enabling Structures: Generative Characteristics

Whereas change agents have been important in driving the changes at Island Center, they were dependent on the sufficiency and quality of enabling structures. Some of these organizational structures were pre-existing, such as committees, teams, policies, and physical locations. Other structures that were created for and through this change process include the T-Team, various interdepartmental groups, and larger organizational forums. Although the T-Team was the main enabling structure developed to drive the change process, these enabling features can also be seen in other structures that developed over the course of the change process. It was important that there were various structures – The Breakfast Club, councils, the leadership team, First Fridays, the clinical forum, professional development groups, and so on – in which ideas could incubate.

My focus here is on the enabling structures that acted as a holding environment for people to engage in a learning process. These structures serve as the infrastructure for the human

interaction (agents in a particular process) needed in order for change to happen. Some of the enabling structures were more participatory than others for a variety of reasons. When taken together, however, the enabling structures that were created at Island Center to promote this change process facilitated participation by a large number of staff. This membership and wide participation was key as was the presence of clear goals and roles in these structures. In the next sections, I will examine the generative and constraining properties of these core change-enabling structures. I will also point out other organizational systems that either contributed to or constrained the change process.

The T-Team. Without a doubt, the T-Team was the most critical enabling structure in this change process. Having a space for a group to meet on a regular basis, with a particular charge, allowed the collective agents to be an engine of change. The T-Team initially had broad membership from across the agency and this established a norm of participation for this group. Some members who normally would not have a chance to step outside their work were able to contribute to and learn from the T-Team process. Broad participation brought in valuable perspectives and helped diffuse the change message through all departments. The level and diversity of participation waxed and waned over the course of the process, however this structure served as a "core group" that guided change.

Michael and Judie Bopp (2001) outline four critical functions of core groups. The first function is to be an "incubator" in which human capacities can be developed and strengthened. The T-Team was an important incubator for staff development or individual and organizational learning. A second function is as a support system for members as they engage in a process of learning and transformative action. This role was key especially when members felt they were at the limits of their ability to understand their roles and lead change. A third function of core

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groups is to be a platform for action internally and in the community. For the T-Team, I describe

action in two ways. First there is action in the form of discourse and generation of guiding

documents like the philosophy statement and the critical impact areas. There is also action in the

form of changing policies and practices. The T-Team was a key platform for both forms of

action. A final function of core groups is to act as a seed crystal for change. I'll quote the Bopp's

here as their description of this critical function very closely matches how the T-Team

functioned within Island Center.

> The core group needs, first of all, to educate itself and to become inspired to new heights
> of commitment. Through a process of dialogue, healing, and action research, the core
> group gradually becomes like a seed growing in the womb of the community. As the core
> group develops, becoming more influential, more clear in its direction and more able to
> cluster others around it, the entire community development process grows and matures.
> The principal collective actor in the community development process is the core group. It
> is this group that dreams, decides, plans, acts, evaluates and builds an organization to
> formalize and sustain its efforts. (Bopp & Bopp, 2001 p. 123)

The T-Team held the collective actors, insiders and outsiders, together and allowed the group to

play the roles of incubator, support system, platform for action, and seed crystal of change.

One of the characteristics of the T-Team that can be considered both a strength and a

weakness was the fluid nature of this group. At one point, after the philosophy statement had

been developed and the path to action was still unclear, people grew impatient with the T-Team

process and many checked out. We made the decision to pull the leadership together to form a

smaller structure to meet weekly over breakfast at my colleague's house. This was an intentional

move to up the intensity of the change discussions in order to plan for concrete actions. It was in

these Breakfast Club meetings that our relationship with the leaders was strengthened and our

ability to play the critical friend role enhanced. In these meetings, my colleagues and I pushed to

develop ways to get more staff members involved in the change process. As a result of this

urging, the idea of forming cross-department councils was developed. After several months of

Breakfast Club meetings, the T-Team was able to reform with better participation and a stronger sense of direction and clear goals.

Interdepartmental groups. There were three interdepartmental groups that served as enabling structures for the change process. The most critical structure was the interdepartmental councils. The councils were designed in the Breakfast Club with two main goals in mind. First, we wanted as many staff members as possible to be able to come together in order to learn about and become committed to the change process and the new philosophy. This was based in the understanding that we needed to do a better job involving the people who would be most affected by this transformation. Up to this point, the T-Team was not effectively bringing the process to the wider organization. The second goal was to generate some concrete ideas for new or altered programming.

Three councils were formed and they were highly structured. Each group was to brainstorm ideas for programs and actions that promoted change at individual, relational, and collective levels. One council, called the "restore" council was tasked with generating ideas for innovative ways to serve people who are hurting or in crisis. A second council was dubbed the "prevent" council and was charged with generating ideas for activities that took action to keep problems from affecting individuals, families, and the community. The third council, the "promote" council, was to develop ideas for actions that promote wellbeing for individuals, families, and the community. Each council had representatives from our consulting team, from all departments, and all levels of staff from front line workers to upper management. Each meeting of the councils met for several weeks. They were facilitated by a group leader and structured around a learning and brainstorming process that culminated in a presentation of ideas to the entire staff. The councils not only generated some useful ideas for action, the successfully

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helped to diffuse the change message throughout the agency. Individuals were helped by having

the opportunity to dialogue with others across the agency about the direction of this change and

concrete ideas for action. One staff person described it this way:

> I didn't get how this philosophy was ever going to translate into what we would do. Like it was just overwhelming. And so that council process of brainstorming about the really concrete things that we could do helped me see what it could look like and we would do. It made me really excited about the process and made it feel less academic.

Another interdepartmental learning structure that formed during the change process was

the staff development group. This group was unique in that it was not formed by the T-Team as

part of the change process. This group came together fairly organically across two departments

in order to facilitate deeper learning around the new direction. Of particular interest, was the

need to expand their understanding of what this new direction means for counselors. This group

was structured in such a way that each member had a chance to prepare and present their own

story. These stories centered on their own experiences with social justice. Each member would

present his or her story, and a group discussion followed. This group met for several months, and

at the final gathering, they reflected on the experience to draw out lessons learned and ideas for

action. This group was a powerful mechanism for deepening their interpersonal relationships and

enhancing their understanding of how to relate their work to the fight for social justice.

Although not a structure generated by or for this process, the leadership team was also an

instrumental interdepartmental team for the change process. This team was made up of

department directors, the executive director, and the associate director. Most of this group's

focus was on maintaining the organization, but the overlapping membership with the T-Team

afforded them the opportunity to bring the new philosophy to bear on ongoing organizational

matters. This group also provided an important source of mutual support for managers as they

struggled with the difficult task of leading change in the organization.

Larger Forums. A variety of larger forums contributed to the learning and change process. Although these structures were not ongoing, except for the First Friday meetings, the various one-time gatherings created opportunities for staff to learn about and contribute to the change process. These larger forums include teach-ins and presentations, the clinical forum, and First Fridays.

The various teach-ins and presentations served as opportunities for staff to learn. Island Center staff members often have opportunities to gain new skills or knowledge, but these forums served a different purpose. Presentations were given on poverty, child abuse, human rights, and collective wellbeing. These presentations aimed to help raise awareness among staff about the connection between social conditions and individual wellbeing and the need for approaches that go beyond one-to-one care. Although only a few of these teach-ins were held, many staff members attribute their own shift in thinking at least in part to these forums. The opportunity to have their assumptions of the world challenged by a persuasive speaker in a supportive context heightened their awareness of a need for change.

The Clinical Forum was another larger forum that helped to generate change. When it became clear to folks at Island Center that it was more difficult to understand how this new approach might be promoted by clinical staff, a forum was arranged to generate some concrete ideas. Several people from the community were invited to help get some clarity around this issue. A few were experienced counselors, some were community psychologists, and a couple of others were community leaders and neighborhood organizers. These visitors and Island Center staff had a lengthy discussion about how counselors can change their approach in order to contribute to social change. Although many concrete ideas were generated, the main message from this forum was that counselors need to start with themselves. In order to contribute to social

change through counseling, clinicians need to have a deep understanding of how social justice and privilege operate in their own lives and in the lives of others. This insight led to the creation of the staff development group aimed at doing just that.

Finally, the First Friday events were ongoing venues for Island Center staff to reflect together on their work in light of the new philosophy. Usually led by individuals from the T-Team, the events were opportunities to hear about each other's attempts at innovation, make sense of their roles in promoting the philosophy, and hold each other accountable. As I mentioned in other sections of this thesis, this was often a forum in which staff could hold leaders accountable for internal policy change. As much as the organization enjoyed celebrating their work and the new energy around the philosophy, the need to attend to internal justice issues was a recurring theme at these First Friday events. Staff used these opportunities to point out incongruence between what is espoused, and what is happening inside the organization. The executive director heard this repeated message and he established a small group to look closely at how to make these internal adjustments.

These various enabling structures gave agents of change holding environments in which to engage in the collective process of change. One of the most difficult challenges for non-profit human service organizations is finding available time to focus on learning and organizational development. Without such time and space for reflection and learning, organizations stay in reactive mode and innovation suffers. Island Center was able to create these necessary enabling structures and this contributed greatly to individual and organizational development.

Enabling Structures: Constraining Characteristics

The main constraining characteristic of the enabling structures was inequity around ability to participate. Although structures were created to promote the change process, existing

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structures in the organization kept some people from being able to participate. This was most

apparent with residential programs' staff. There developed a sense at Island Center that

participation in change related groups was a luxury mostly afforded to management and non-

residential program staff. Here one director expresses her frustration with the inability to support

participation by her front line staff:

> I think it gets really messy, and especially with my team and thinking that we're residential – it's really hard to plug into conversations, like the T-Team process. That's a luxury, and I know there's been a lot of sort of how do we – like we're asking for everyone's participation, like that's an expectation, at the same time honoring that someone's got to be watching the kids. That's a balance. And then I feel really protective that it's a luxury for them to sort of get away and get this, and they're doing some of the most valuable work and they're not getting the resources and the tools that they need. I do still fear this division that's still happening that front line workers who can't break away to be a part of these conversations, and middle and upper management – really it's residential and non-residential it feels like. And I am a little bit concerned about that.

This barrier to full participation in organizational development conversations limited buy-in and

muffled the wise voices of many front-line workers.

Individual workers and teams deciding not to participate also affected full participation.

Some declined to participate because their personal style did not match with the process heavy

format of many of the meetings. One entire team, however, was missing in many of the enabling

structures. The administrative support team had a difficult time seeing how this new approach

applied to them. A constant refrain from people on that team was "let us know when things are

decided and tell us what you want us to do." The executive director saw this as a missed

opportunity.

> One thing that I wish we had done was to encourage our support team to participate se that everybody really understood this and was part of it. A lot of times the people you really want in those meetings aren't there. We get in there and it is the choir preaching to the choir. We haven't been thoughtful about, you know, these workers… they are going to hate it, but their work is so critical that… its pulling in the people who don't get it but need to.

This team could have been of great assistance in helping to better apply the philosophy to internal practices. Most of the structures, however, were set-up around figuring out how to do external practices differently. At one point, when it was suggested that a small committee, made up of people from the support team, be formed to address internal issues, it appeared as though this problem might be resolved. For some reason, however, this group never got started and the problem of enabling support team participation continued.

A related participation constraint has to do with enabling participation by board members, youth, and other community members and partners. The sole reason why active participation by these groups did not happen is due to the fact that structures were not created to facilitate their participation. The board was able to have a voice in the process through the executive director, but the voices of young people, their families, and other community members were largely absent. I do not know if their participation would have benefited the organizational change process or not, however, it makes sense that creating some mechanism for hearing the voices of those being served would be of value.

One other constraining characteristic that is worth mentioning is the lack of clear roles and expectations on the T-Team. Partly due to the organic genesis of this process, no formal agreement was made between our consulting team and the organization. There was a loose agreement that I would generate agendas and facilitate meetings, but no other roles were defined. Sometimes this led to confusion around roles as people were uncertain of who gets to have a say in decisions, who gets to edit or revise the work of the T-Team, or who is supposed to play what roles. Additionally, because we were acting only as volunteers and not paid consultants, there was reluctance on the part of the organization to demand too much of our time. And because our volunteer time was limited, we were unable to offer as much assistance as we wanted to. At

times, if we were not pushing the process, the energy or focus would drift and momentum would fade until some structure was infused. These constraints suggest a need for clearly articulated roles on the change team as well as some sort of "memorandum of understanding" between our team and the organization.

Enabling Structures: Critical Events

Most of the critical events regarding enabling structures had to do with the creation of a specific structure. For example, the creation of the clinical forum and the staff development group was a critical event in the change process. Additionally, the creation of the council structure was a critical event that enhanced participation and shared understanding. One event, however, stands out as a critical moment in the process of change. At the end of four months of meeting as the Breakfast Club, and after the council process, the T-Team was brought back together with new purpose. At this juncture, the purpose of the T-Team was more clearly spelled out, membership included a diverse group, and roles were clarified. This restructuring of this enabling structure allowed the T-Team to better play the agentive role it was designed to play

Dialogical Process: Generative Characteristics

Agents of change at Island Center, armed with a vision for a new direction, came together in various enabling structures and engaged in a dialogical process that generated change. In this section, I would like to describe and analyze the specific type of process used is this change effort. The picture that emerges from Island Center's change process is a dialogical process that involves dialogue, action, and reflection.

Dialogue. Island Center utilized a cycle of dialogue, action, and reflection to generate learning and change. Most of the generative dialogue around this change process occurred in the T-Team, however the Board of Directors, the various teams, the councils, and forums all utilized

dialogue in two interactive forms: *dialogue for learning and dialogue for action*. Not mutually exclusive, dialogues for learning and dialogues for action were intertwined and fed into each other. Dialogues for learning often led to action and dialogues for action often involved dialogues for learning in order to have a shared understanding about what action is for.

Many of the conversations in the T-Team focused on the question: "How do we understand this?" These were conversations for learning. Through a process of sharing personal beliefs and assumptions, engaging in joint sensemaking, and co-constructing meaning, members of the T-Team, and other groups, learned from each other and contributed to organizational learning. From constructing an organizational philosophy statement to simply agreeing on a definition of empowerment, individual beliefs were supported or challenged and a shared understanding of values, beliefs, and assumptions was developed. The councils were a great example of a structure where dialogues for learning occurred. Even though the main task for the councils was to come up with ideas for action, what happened in the process was the development of a deeper understanding of the new philosophy. One worker describes how this happened for her this way:

> In the beginning, it [the philosophy] was so unformed it was hard to understand if you weren't part of the process. So, I was kind of like taking it as it came. And then I got to participate in the councils, and I understood it better when I was able to participate and talk it out and ask questions and stuff.

Individual development and understanding was enhanced through participating in different types of dialogues in different settings.

Dialogues for understanding also happened at the Board level. Prompted by presentations by the executive director and one of my colleagues, the board used discussion to try to understand the new direction and to develop consensus around it their role in supporting. The board chair described this important dialogue this way:

In that second day of the retreat there was a conversation that went on about two hours that I think captured what at the board level would be a fundamental, I don't know what to call it, sort of debate. There was some conversation about the shelter and how it fits with the new direction. Is it in fact the core? And that conversation unfolded about the provision of the emergency safety through the shelter and how that piece of Island represents Island to the whole community, its impact on our potential to raise funds and have community support. And while there wasn't – nobody drove a stake in the ground and had an argument about it, it was pretty clear that that dialectic was one that was real important for the agency for on down, and made perfect sense. And there was a lot of conversation about trying to be sure that we didn't lose the core while we were doing this wonderful exploring of ways to multiply what we do, and to reach out into the community, to serve the broader population and it's sort of expansion, which is the way it was thought of, but we didn't have a clear picture of it until then.

Even as they moved into dialogues for action, a great deal of time was spent on use of language and defining the terms and concepts they were using. This was most evident in their process of developing the four critical impact areas (See chapter 4). Developing the four critical areas was challenging and involved a great deal of self- and organizational-examination. For example, after deciding that safety was one of the areas of focus, the group spent many T-Team meetings and side meetings developing a definition that reflected their shared understanding of safety. When one person pushed to include spiritual safety as a part of emotional safety, the group deliberated on whether or not that needed to be explicitly stated. In the end, they agreed that emotional safety "means young people and families feel secure, valued, mutually respected, and that they experience understanding and tolerance." One worker describes the importance of this type of process on shared understanding this way:

> I mean that was really important work of even coming up with those four impact areas. That was really significant. But then I think it was people trying to understand and make those four areas meaningful. That was hard, and I think people wanted to understand, and fortunately people around here want to participate in that.

Although using a group process to develop a vision and to come up with language and definitions for the various organizational documents and messages was time consuming and sometimes frustrating, doing it any other way would have robbed individuals of a learning

opportunity. Skipping these processes would have also resulted in less meaningful and less creative outputs.

Dialogues for action centered on the question "What do we do?" As Island Center members worked to better understand this new direction and what it means for them, their dialogues shifted focus to action. These discussions started in the various teams, but really moved deep into the organizations during the council process. While much of the conversations in the councils were important for raising awareness and developing a shared understanding of the new philosophy, the main aim was to generate ideas for action. This process of brainstorming new ideas for programming gave the organization some concrete possibilities, made the new philosophy more tangible for individuals, and brought the organization together around a common purpose.

Action. At the same time that dialogues for learning and action were taking place, individuals were trying out new ways of practicing. The development of a shared philosophy and a common understanding that it was ok to experiment and try out new ideas facilitated innovation in existing practices and the development of new approaches. Examples of these actions have been provided throughout this thesis. This exploration and experimentation was an essential part of the process of change as practices generated by dialogues for learning and action in turn generated new understanding and more focused action. This happened through a process of reflecting on action. Here, a shelter worker describes the importance of being able to try out new ideas:

> I mean, I think the danger is just that I think you're going to make mistakes. I don't think you can avoid making mistakes. I think at the shelter we definitely will. I think everybody will with trying out kind of living and practicing the philosophy. But I think that's also how it gets better is by doing and learning and making mistakes and building on it. So I really just, the dangers are probably what makes it stronger in the long run….the only way we're going to learn what works is to try our ideas out and see.

Reflection. It was important that Island Center took the time to reflect together on practices that they were experimenting with. Although not totally a structured process, holding out new approaches for reflection occurred in several settings including the T-Team, the leadership team, departmental meetings, First Fridays, and through email and internal email newsletters. One aspect of this reflection process was the sharing of empowering experiences. When a staff member tried something new, and experienced some degree of success or positive feedback, this experience was shared and celebrated in a larger group. Sharing experiences that were not so empowering was also important to shared learning. As staff reflected on their new practices and internal processes, dialogues for learning and action continued in order for them to co-construct shared meaning from the actions and inform further action.

This interdependent cycle of dialogue, action, and reflection took place in various enabling structures. It was critical to the process that leadership was committed to allowing for spaces to engage in this time consuming process and that staff was willing to struggle through the learning and action process together. Although at the time it felt to many as if they were spinning their wheels or just doing a lot of talking without action, this cycle of learning and action was essential to individual and organizational learning and development.

Dialogical Process: Constraining Characteristics

This process of dialogue, action, and reflection suffered from some constraining forces that inhibited the generative quality of the process. These constraining characteristics can be classified into the categories of participation, pace, readiness, and communication.

The issue of participation in this dialogical process is essentially a power issue. As I have described previously, some organizational members have more opportunities than others to participate in the learning and decision-making process. While some members and teams,

depending on position power or job demands, have the luxury to spend time in dialogue and reflection, many members are blocked from this experience. Especially in residential programs, many workers were not free to take time away from their job demands to participate in the process. Additionally, even when able to participate, there where some moments when decisions were made or changed by those with more power. One example of this is when the executive director attempted to change the wording of the impact areas outside of the T-Team process.

The pace issue mainly revolves around the delicate balance between process and action. As important as dialogues for learning and action were to the change process, many often felt that the change effort was process heavy. There were often displays of frustration around the pace of change and limited action. Especially in the year after the development of the philosophy statement, small wins were not often enough to satisfy the shared need to experience a sense of forward momentum. The effort to make the process as participatory as possible came at the expense of what some considered efficiency. Engaging in the necessary process of dialogue and exploration came at the expense of participation as people who were uncomfortable with the deliberative process or the slow pace of moving to action, self-removed from the process. To some degree, this frustration has to do with how individuals frame action. To some, action is only changes in practices or strategy, whereas others see the construction of new organizational goals, policies, and processes as action. Some see all the dialogue and processing as getting ready for action, whereas others see the dialogue, meaning making, and processing *as* action.

Related to the pace issue, is the issue of individual readiness of organizational members. I am referring to readiness here as readiness to engage in the dialogical process. Some individuals, for reasons having to do with development, style, or deeply held personal assumptions, have a low tolerance for the type of process needed to generate this type of organizational

transformation. These individuals in some cases were willing to leave the change process to others, while still others unintentionally blocked progress by their lack of engagement with the process. It was critical at Island Center that there were a sufficient number of people willing and capable enough to engage deliberately in this process. However, others simply checked out and awaited instructions.

One other constraint related to the dialogical process is the problem of communication. This constraint could also be considered a problem of inadequate enabling structures or participation. The constraining characteristic is the fact that, for many reasons, learning was not consistently diffused throughout the organization. If participation was constrained, either by choice or power issues, communications systems could remedy this problem. However, there were limited strategies for taking the learning from structures like the T-Team into all levels of the organization.

Dialogical Process: Critical Events

The main critical events related to the dialogical process have to do with efforts to democratize the learning and change efforts. When T-Team members conducted organizational dialogues to explore shared values, and when the councils were created to engage all staff members in the process, the change effort was stimulated. The effort to use the First Friday structure for change-related discussions was also key to enabling the process of change. More recently, the T-Team has recognized that the learning processes that they have been engaged in is a valuable outcome and are taking steps to figure out how to better institutionalize this dialogue, action, reflection process into the organizational culture. This is a critical event that can have positive long-term effect on the sustainability of their new direction.

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Organizational and Community Holding Environments

It is important to return to the contributions of the organizational and community

contexts. I have stated earlier the general contextual arena in which this project was initiated,

however, my focus here is to briefly highlight some characteristics from each of these contexts

that supported or challenged the process of change while it was happening. The key

organizational holding environment characteristic worth noting is organizational maintenance.

The community was a holding environment in that critical external support endorsed the change

process while cultural expectations got in the way.

Organizational Maintenance

While the T-Team was working hard to generate a new vision and move that vision to

action, the organization needed to keep the doors open. I have mentioned throughout this thesis

the importance of active participation in the change process by a large number of organizational

members. I have also described limits to participation as barriers to the process. An important

part of this change process was simply to maintain current operations. One team in particular, the

support team, has been largely removed from the change process either by choice or by

unintended circumstances. However, they were instrumental in providing the organizational

consistency and stability needed in order to balance change process of this sort. Additionally,

the creation of some stability in the shelter program took some strain off of that team and opened

up possibilities for learning and innovation.

It was critical to maintain some sort of balance between maintenance and change.

However, the overwhelming demands of the day-to-day tasks of maintaining the organization

were barriers to the change process. Like many other non-profit human service organizations,

they are serving immense need in the community with scarce resources. This, by and large, left

little time and energy for the demanding dialogue and reflection needed to move the change process. The words of the executive director and a shelter worker say it best.

> [Executive director] Too often team meetings are mostly about the houses that are on fire that day. We still are largely in reactive mode most of the time. What non-profit has the luxury to get out ahead of it? But, everything that the philosophy and the impact area type of work is about is mostly proactive. I think that is where the pinch comes in. As a worker bee, why do I feel constantly in reactive mode when yet I know that our philosophy is proactive? How am I going to turn that around and not have such a disconnect, and then go to those meetings and go – this is what I want to be doing, but when I walk out I have 32 voicemails, that sort of rub.

> [Shelter worker] I think that it's just because some days it's so hectic, just doing the very basics. You know, getting dinner, you know answering the crisis line, doing the intakes for crisis walk-ins. So you have a very chaotic atmosphere already sometimes. So then to add, well on top of all of the things that you do, I need you to also think about you know creating this kind of [new] environment. We've been a little bit more full than usual lately. It's kind of balancing out. We've got some difficult groups, that kind of thing. So in the midst of change happening, at the agency level it's just – it's hard to let [staff] even be able to breath and start to conceptualize. It's just kind of like, I can't hear that right now because I've got two kids who are fixing to fight, a mom on the phone crying, and a Safe Place walk-in. And really that kind of stuff does happen, you know. I mean last week one night we had four Safe Place, and it was a night when the kids went to do service learning. So there's just so much that already goes on to ask kind of mentally – and that wears you out mentally to try to think of something different. And it's hard.

This demonstrates the delicate tension between maintaining stability in the organization so that change can proceed while also recognizing and attending to the huge demands staff members face in merely maintaining the status quo. These demands need to be reduced so that new ideas can be fostered and the change process can move forward.

Community Support and Challenge

It was critical that Island Center received some external validation for the direction they were taking. At a critical juncture in the change process, the United Way showed interest in the work being done at Island Center and offered support. What Island Center was attempting to do matched very closely to the United Way's new strategic plan. With all of the stress of attempting

to transform their culture piled on top of the demands mentioned above, without that support and endorsement, the energy for change may have faded. A manager describes it this way:

> I see the importance of that external validation. I swear if the United Way thing hadn't happened, I don't know what would have happened just because we were under, as an organization, such stress. Because I think it could have all unraveled. It's just if [executive director] hadn't had that encouragement and validation, I don't know. At that point we couldn't quit. Once the United Way thing happened, we couldn't quit. It wasn't an option. We couldn't. And I really don't know what would have – I don't know what would have happened, because we were under a lot of stress here.

The United Way's support of the project along with other community recognition and support helped Island Center know they were on the right track and infused the process with energy.

The ongoing challenge coming from the community level is in the form of a strong cultural current that operates with a slightly different value base. This clash is seen in the day-to-day work with youth and families as well as in the funding and political arenas. As staff members try out new approaches with young people, the strategies risk being so different from what youth normally encounter in other settings that the novelty can backfire or seem too foreign. The shelter staff has struggled with this as they seek new ways to build a community at the residential shelter. The transitional living staff also encountered a similar phenomenon when they used the exploding the issue exercise with youth. When these young people were challenged to explore some of the root causes of their issues, they either became overwhelmed or could not get beyond their own personal responsibility for their struggles. Attempting these innovations in the context of a community or society that doesn't quite jibe with this approach, presents quite a challenge.

In the funding and political arenas, this cultural current also presents a challenge. Most of the sources of funding are mainly interested in change at the individual level. As Island Center is looking to go beyond focusing on individual-level service and change, they are finding themselves somewhat restricted by the demands of grant makers. Even as their own

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organizational culture shifts, available funding constrains their implementation of new

approaches. The larger cultural narrative is also focused on defining problems as having

individual sources and therefore requiring individual solutions. At times, when Island Center

staff members are out in the world, it can seem like their new vision is from another planet. This

struggle with the dominant narrative around social problems and solutions as well as the role of

human services is an ongoing challenge for Island Center as they forge a new path.

Summary

In this chapter I have outlined the salient features of the change process at Island Center.

The three interdependent components, initial conditions, dynamic learning process, and context,

together form the unique conditions that led to the changes that were observed. Each component

presented barriers and ongoing challenges to their effort. Figure 9 puts the pieces together into a

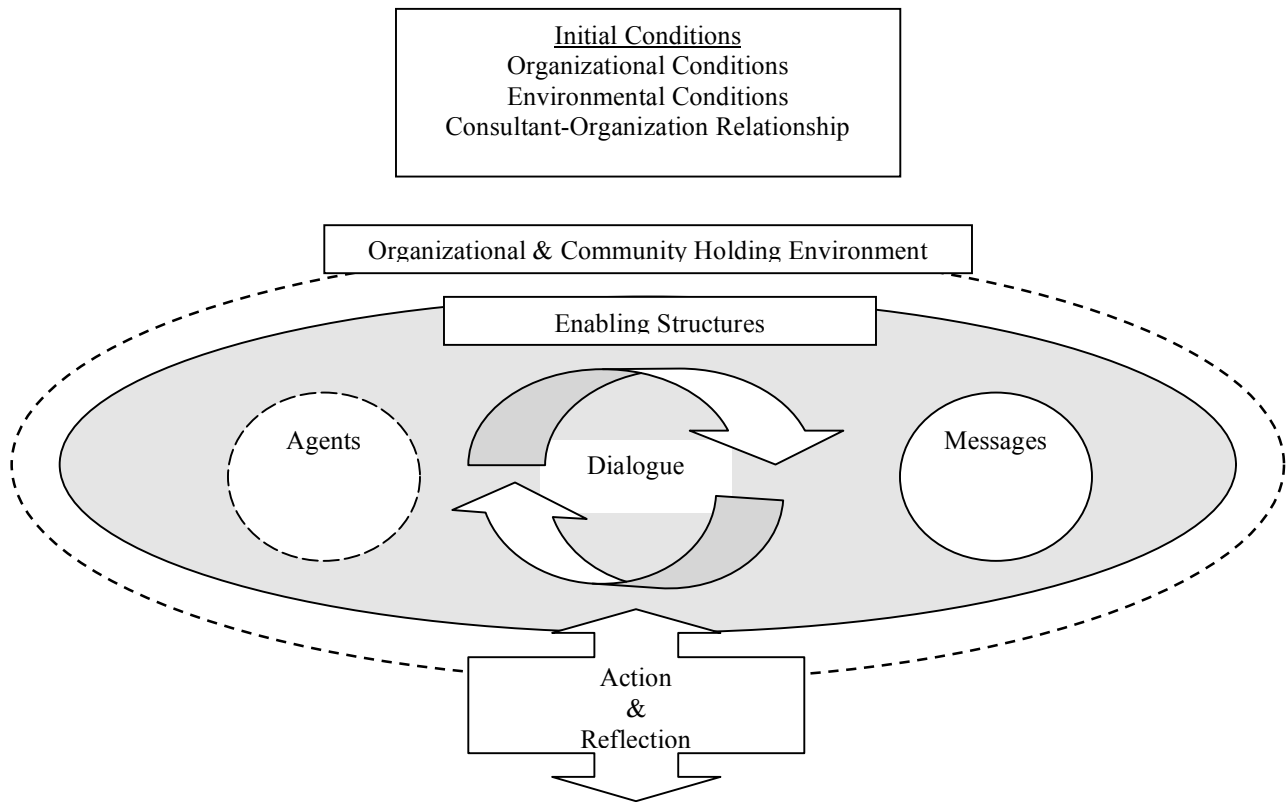whole picture of this process of change.

Figure 9: Process of Change

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR RESARCH AND ACTION

Discussion

In the last two chapters we see that at Island Center, changes can be observed at the individual, team, organization and community levels. Change was generated by a dynamic interaction of a clear change vision, individual agents, enabling structures, and a dialogical process. Additionally, initial organizational conditions and the nature of the organizational and community contexts were factors in the change effort. Table 6 summarizes the changes in values, beliefs, and practices at three levels of analysis and highlights the salient generative and constraining factors. I characterize this change at Island Center as a transformation of organizational culture that is leading to critical practice. Although they have not yet fully instituted practices that aim to organize people to act against destructive societal conditions that obstruct fulfillment of their needs, the conditions are ripe for further movement in this direction. Island Center is changing, developing, and learning and this movement is providing a critical foundation for them to be able to innovate and affect community conditions.

In this chapter I proceed to answer the key research questions and I derive key themes emerging from the study. Next I discuss the contributions of this study to the literature in two fields: organizational change and human service practice. In addition, I distill implications for action, research, and theory. I discuss theoretical and research implications for human service theory and practice and for learning and change in human service organizations. Prior to concluding, I offer some personal reflections and consider limitations of the study.

Research Question #1: What changes can be observed in the values, beliefs, and practices at individual, team, organizational, and community levels?

At the individual level, workers report feeling that this change process helped them to clarify their values and bring collective-level values to the foreground. Members' values were validated by the development of a shared philosophy that included explicit mention of social justice, communion and equality. Through explicating personal and shared values, many individuals also gained a deeper understanding of how systems, structures, policies, and the political context in the community affect the well-being of the youth and families that come to them for services. Workers learned about their own beliefs and assumptions about social problems and solutions and are beginning to develop a more complex and critical awareness of the struggles that their clients face. For many, this was simply a reminder or reconnection to their existing beliefs. For others, dramatic shifts took place in their interpretive scheme. Additionally, as the change dialogue explicated shared values and beliefs and the new organizational philosophy was developed, many workers reported finding new meaning and renewed energy for the work. Workers are approaching their roles and their work differently. They are engaging in consciousness-raising activities with youth and community members, innovating in their program activities, and working to build new networks and coalitions.

At the team level, changes were harder to discern and distinguish from individual and organizational change. Most importantly, teams are engaging in a different discourse about the problems that young people and families face. The teams are supporting individual experimentation and creating new structures for learning. As a team they are experimenting with new strategies and raising the expectations around including young people in developing and implementing these strategies.

At the organizational level, the most important change has been the development of a new organizational philosophy that balances individual, relational, and collective-level values. This new philosophy is based in the shared values of organizational members and serves as a guide for all internal and external action. Guided by their new philosophy the organization has developed a clear, shared purpose. Through dialogue they have clarified where they stand as an organization and developed clear language for their purpose and mission that reflects a deeper commitment to changing community conditions. All individual struggles are now being viewed through individual, relational, and collective domains and political dimensions of issues are not shied away from. Internally, they are developing a culture of learning. They have created opportunities and supports for wider participation in organizational dialogues, cross-team collaboration, and personal and professional development. They have altered internal structures and policies and implemented new programming that better reflects the new philosophy. They are also seeking new sources of funding to support internal learning and new strategies for action.

At the extra-organizational or community level, some changes can also be observed. I have earlier described Island Center's impact at the community level as a new ripple in the human service system. Because of the work that this organization is doing, there is a new dialogue occurring in the human service system in this community. They are helping to shape the discourse in partnership with the local United Way and are the main catalyst behind a new collaborative initiative called New SPECs for Human Services. The SPEC acronym stands for strength-based, primary prevention, empowerment, and changing community conditions. This initiative brings four human service organizations together with the United Way to develop new ways to implement the United Way's new strategic plan that includes attending to community

conditions as well as treating individual problems. Island Center is now modeling the type of

organizational thinking and practice that the United Way espouses in its new mission. In

addition, Island Center is also helping to raise awareness of the need to change community

conditions with local and national foundations.

This change at Island Center was transformational in that they made changes in

philosophy, beliefs, strategies, and structure. They made major shifts in vision and strategy. They

made changes in patterns of decision-making, accountability, participation, and the ways in

which they make sense of the environment and their unique role in it (Tushman & Romanelli,

1985).

Research Question #2: How does change happen? What are the generative mechanisms and constraining forces in this change process?

Summary of Generative Mechanisms

Table 6 also outlines the generative mechanisms and constraining forces at play during

this change process. Overall, I have suggested that this change process at Island Center was

fueled by initial organizational conditions that were conducive to change, a dynamic learning

process, and a supportive organizational and community context. The initial conditions that were

important include organizational conditions such as worker capacity, organizational health, and a

long-standing reputation in the community for doing good work. Additionally, my close

relationship with the organization and the current state of human service funding helped to foster

openness to new ideas and approaches.

Beyond the initial conditions, the critical energy for change came from a dynamic

learning process that included key change messages, agents of change, enabling structures, and a

dialogical process. An alternative vision for human services was presented early on that

stimulated passion and energy for change. This message was then rooted in the shared values of the organization and subjected to ongoing reflection and co-construction. The T-Team, leaders, critical friends and other individuals were key agents of change. Equally as important as the individual actors were the enabling structures that held them as they did their thinking and action. The T-Team group was the key holding environment for generating change. Other structures were also created to bring various organizational groups together to learn and generate ideas for action.

Key to this entire effort was the dialogical process by which they pursued change. They engaged in deep dialogue to understand the alternative vision and how it fits with their values, beliefs and existing practices. This process included understanding how their current approaches fall short and co-constructing a vision for something different. Dialogues for action were ongoing as they developed the four critical impact areas and desired outcomes in each of these areas. As this process was happening they were trying out new approaches and reflecting on these actions to better understand the new direction and inform new action. This cycle of dialogue, action, and reflection took place among agents of change in various enabling structures and typifies an organizational learning process.

The change process was also supported by Island Center's ability to maintain ongoing operations while the change effort moved forward. Because of their general health as an organization, they were able to mix ambiguity, instability, and change within the stability of their ongoing operations. Additionally, the validation that they received from the United Way and other community entities provided some extra support as they explored a new direction.

Summary of Constraining Factors

The primary barrier to the change process is what I call the burden of maintenance. At one point it was mentioned by a staff member that it would be better if they could just shut the doors for a year or so to be able to figure things out. This obviously was not an option. Island Center had to keep the doors open and needed to continue providing services and seeking funding even as they were recreating themselves. They were rebuilding the train as it was speeding down the tracks. There was an expectation, both internally and in the community that Island Center would continue to deliver services as they had in the past. This burden of maintenance created a barrier to participation by some members of the organization, pushed leadership to shortcut the change process at times, and diluted the change message on occasion.

Supporting active and ongoing participation by a wide range of staff members proved difficult. This was especially true for staff of the two residential programs. Their positions and tasks did not afford them as much flexibility as others in the organization enjoy. This affected T-Team participation and the ability to diffuse the change message throughout the organization. Although the T-Team was generally engaged in learning and moving the change process forward, many in the organization were unclear about the new direction and what it meant for their jobs and for action. The change messages were unclear at times and the T-Team had difficulty diffusing the messages throughout the organization.

Lastly, there are also ways in which leadership in the organization constrained progress. As consultants, we also made some missteps that got in the way of the change process. Whereas the executive director stepped in at times and diverted the natural flow of things, we did not challenge the T-Team enough to take full control of the change process and integrate it more into day-to-day practice. Mostly, as consultants we struggled with finding that delicate balance

between support and challenge and the T-Team struggled with the balance between process and

action.

Table 6: Summary of changes towards critical practice

	Levels		
	Individual	**Organizational**	**Extra-organization**
Values	• Brought to foreground values that had been neglected in their work • Values brought into concordance with their practice and with the values of the organization.	• Values of Social Justice and Equality made explicit through shared, value-based philosophy • Philosophy statement guides internal and external action	• Helping bring collective-level values into discussion at United Way and partner organizations
Beliefs	• Sociopolitical Development • Heightened awareness of role of power in clients' lives • Role identity & meaning	• Shared purpose based in shared values • Clear language that reflected their beliefs about problems, solutions, and their unique role in generating community impact • Viewing problems and solutions through individual, relational, and collective domains	• Organizational "pace-car" for shifting understanding of problems and solutions • Helping to shift the perception of the role of youth in the community towards fully engaged and acting citizens
Practices	• Personal political actions • More connected to others in organization • Innovation in their settings and in their program activities • Consciousness-raising activities with youth • Collaboration building new networks and coalitions for the organization	• Developed a culture of learning • Opportunities and supports for in organizational participation, cross-team collaboration, and personal and professional development • Permission to bring "political" into dialogue • Shelter team brought in – organizational alignment • Altered structures & policies, new programming • Expanding network - Sharing new thinking and practice with other organizations • Seeking new sources of funding to support new vision	• New SPECs for Human Services • Youth Engagement Roundtable • United Way change process • Raising awareness with local funding agencies
Generative (+) & Constraining (-) Factors	• Readiness & capacity (+) • Alternate vision (+) • Critical Friends (+) • Dialogue (+) • Enabling structures (+) • Leadership (+/-) • Participation (+/-) • Burdens of maintenance (-)	• Organizational history, health & readiness (+) • Alternate vision (+) • Critical Friends (+) • Leadership (+) • Dialogical praxis (+) • T-Team & other enabling structures (+) • Org. & community holding environment (+/-) • Participation (+/-) • Burdens of maintenance (-)	• Leadership (+) • Organizational agents (+) • Organizational history & reputation (+) • Community readiness (+/-)

Key Themes from the Change Process

When reflecting on the changes observed and the process through which these changes occurred, it becomes clear that existing organizational change theories do not help us fully understand this type of organizational change in human services. However, existing theories about phases of change do seem to be helpful here (Bridges, 2003; Lewin, 1935; Schein, 1992). As I outlined in chapter four, Island Center did progress through three identifiable phases, and naming those during the process proved helpful. However, other theories do not go far enough in helping us understand the uniqueness of this organizational change process. In an attempt to build on existing theories on the content and process of organizational change in human services, I offer three key themes from Island Center's process that help understand the findings: 1) conscious transformational values and beliefs drive critical practice; 2) the reciprocal and generative relationship between agency and structure; and 3) dialogical praxis as a strategy for organizational learning and transformation. I will elaborate on each of these themes, extract from this case a model of change, and describe this study's contribution to the literatures on organizational change and human service practice. I will conclude by offering implications for further research and action.

Conscious Transformational Values and Beliefs Drive Critical Practice

If the ultimate goal of this type of organizational transformation is action that addresses social, economic, and political change, making conscious individual and shared values, beliefs, and assumptions that drive this action is primordial. I'll even go so far as to say that organizational culture change, change in the underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions, precedes coordinated transformational practice.

At the start of this project, there were myriad theories and assumptions among individuals at Island Center and there was no coherent organizational philosophy. As a result, their practices were mostly ameliorative, aimed at maintaining the status quo. Many individuals at Island Center held values and beliefs that matched the transformational paradigm, but the organizational philosophy (or lack thereof) blocked their ability to put those values into action. This is an example of the ideology-practice divide that is common in human services (Delpeche *et al.*, 2003). Other individuals had conscious or unconscious beliefs and assumptions that matched the ameliorative paradigm and felt no urgency to practice in different ways. Rooting this change process in individual and shared values helped to explicate their individual and shared beliefs, develop a deeper understanding of social problems and solutions, and develop an organizational philosophy that reflects their shared values and beliefs.

Previous research has also found that transformational change is based in values (Nelson *et al.*, 2001; O'Toole, 1995). A move from amelioration to transformation in human services requires making salient transformational values and examining all other beliefs and practices through this lens. Island Center did this by asking each other "what do we care about?" Individual responses to this question were fashioned into an organizational statement of values that guided the rest of their change process and their future organizational practices. Surfacing collective-level values such as social justice and equality, and stating to the world and each other that they care about these things made them examine their existing assumptions and practices in light of this shared understanding. This is equivalent to Weick & Westley's (1996) suggestion that like in jazz, good improvisation, innovation, and learning require the minimal structure of a "song" or in this case a philosophy that imposes minimal order. What resulted from their

improvisation were shared values and beliefs consistent with the transformational paradigm and practices that blend the ameliorative and transformative paradigms.

From this transformative value base, Island Center is able to begin practicing more critically and transformatively within the existing constraints of human services (amelioration), and find ways to take action beyond these boundaries (transformation). They are able to both care for those in need and work with community members to transform social conditions. This is the essence of what Prilleltensky (2003) describes as transformative psychopolitical validity. It is the process of enriching needed ameliorative approaches by adding to them sociopolitical development, consciousness raising, and social action. By engaging in a learning process to better understand the societal and political origins of human suffering, Island Center is now poised to contribute to changing community conditions.

Reciprocal and Generative Relationship Between Agency and Structure

This case also highlights the reciprocal and generative relationship between agency and structure in both the process and content of change. Bandura (2001) reminds us that "social structures are created by human activity, and sociostructural practices, in turn, impose constraints and provide enabling resources and opportunity structures for personal development functioning" (p. 15). Transformation of this nature is complex and requires changing individual mindsets (agency) and organizational culture (structure). Change in one may promote change in the other (Feldman *et al.*, 2003). The interdependence of agency and structure is also clear in the process of organizational change: individual agents drive change but need enabling structures and a supportive context in which to interact. The target of change (content) is both agency and structure and change (process) depends on agency and structure. It is risky and nearly

impossible to separate the content and process of change, but let us look at them separately in an attempt to understand the interdependence.

In looking at the *content* of change in this effort, we know that the ultimate organizational change goal is to change organizational practices to be more transformative. At the same time, it is clear that there is a need to develop, change or at least make explicit the values and beliefs of individuals within the organization. Changes in structure and changes in individuals are interactive, reciprocal, and generative. An example of this can be seen in the creation of the new organizational philosophy statement and its impact on individuals. As individual agents explored their values, the collection of individual value statements was fashioned into an organizational statement that served as structure that helped to change and clarify individual mindsets as well make explicit shared interpretive schemes. Individual's changing beliefs and actions were intertwined with changes in organizational interpretive schemes, structures, and practices throughout this change process.

Bartunek (1984) does not separate individual and organizational interpretive schemes in her understanding of this relationship. But this case supports the need to make the distinction between the two. I conceptualize organizational interpretive schemes in the category of structure because organizational narratives, philosophy, and culture provide a foundation and opportunity for individual development and action. The interaction of agency and structure might look something like the picture represented in figure 10. Here, organizational interpretive schemes represent the emerging shared understanding, a collective scheme that may or may not be represented in some formalized statement. The organizational restructuring includes actual changes in policies, organizational forms, and practices. In this model, individual mindset change is intertwined with changes in organizational interpretive schemes and action (changes in

policies, forms, and practice). Changing interpretive schemes influence what actions are taken

and these actions influence individual understanding and organizational interpretive schemes.

Organizational members are more likely to experience transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997)

when the organizational social system supports it. Thus, the targets of change in this type of

effort in human services are both individual mindsets and actions and organizational interpretive

schemes and structures. Second-order change at the organizational level is more likely to happen

if change targets, agency and structure, are attended to.
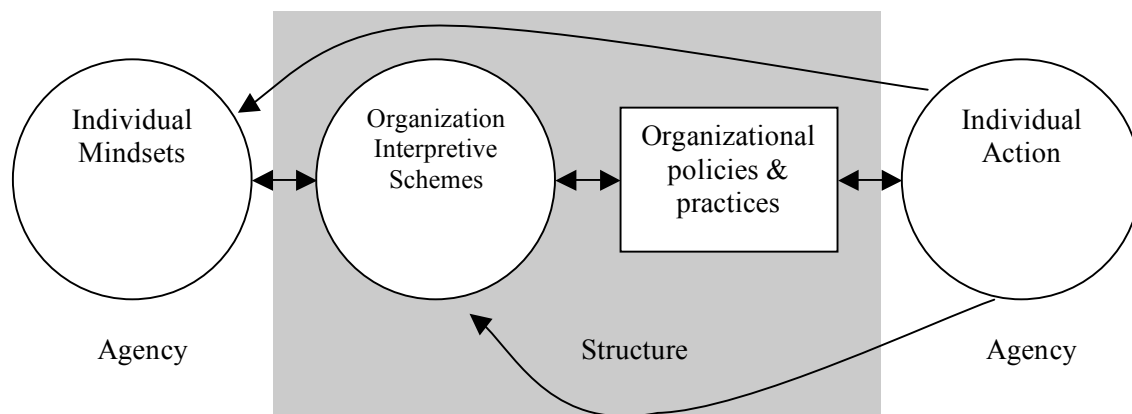
Figure 10: Reciprocal and generative nature of agency and structure in content of change

Similarly, the *process* of change depends on the interdependence of agency and structure.

Structural features are both the medium and outcome of individuals' actions (Giddens, 1979). As

we can see from this case, individuals were agents of change in this effort and the enabling

structures held change agents as the interacted and generated ideas for change. The enabling

structures were the "hardware" that ran the "software" of agents' interactions (Labonte &

Laverack, 2001). This agency-structure interdependence in the process of change is most evident

when reflecting on the T-Team's process at Island Center. Change agents (critical friends, Island Center leadership) designed the T-Team structure to be the engine of change. This structure provided an environment for dialogue, learning, action, and reflection. Without the T-Team holding environment, it is safe to say that individual agents would have missed the opportunity for deep learning and thus had a harder time catalyzing transformational change. The T-Team finds its power in the linking of individuals who have the interest and ability to change things within an enabling structure and organizational context that affords them the opportunity to do so.

If we extend this understanding of the reciprocal, interdependent, and generative relationship between agency and structure beyond the level of the organization, we can see a picture of critical human service practice emerge. Critical practice targets change in both the beliefs and actions of individuals (oppressed and oppressor) and the interpretive schemes, policies and practices of social systems. Ultimately, critical practice in human services has two equally important, reciprocal and generative aims: 1) targeting change in both agency and social structures, and 2) creating structures that enable participatory processes by which community members can participate as agents of social change.

Dialogical Praxis: A Strategy for Organizational and Community Learning and Transformation

At its core, moving from amelioration to transformation requires that a human service organization become a learning organization. However, simply becoming a learning organization is not sufficient for critical practice. Moving towards critical practice demands that an organization create enabling structures that allow for dialogical praxis: dialogue, learning, action, and reflection. The idea of dialogical praxis comes from the work of Paulo Freire (1970, 1973) and is focused on the concept of "conscientization". Conscientization can be described as,

> The raising of consciousness through dialogue linking the personal and the political, in such a way that it opens up possibilities for action as people become more aware of the structures and the discourses that define and perpetuate oppression. (Ife, 2001, p. 151)

Through dialogue, groups gain knowledge and understanding, and build shared theory. From that new understanding they engage in action and reflect on actions to increase understanding. Habermas (Pusey, 1987) describes the process of understanding as a social process, and his theory of communicative action is intrinsically dialogical. Dialogical praxis is the relational activity involving the cycle of dialogue, learning, action, and reflection and is a potential strategy for organizational and community learning and transformation.

Dialogical praxis is a key strategy for *organizational change* in human services. Many organizational theorists have noted the importance of dialogue in organizational learning and change (Addleson, 2000; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001; Isaacs, 1993; Schein, 1993; Senge, 2000). Transformational or second-order change is a constructive form of change as opposed to prescriptive. Whether teleological (moving toward an envisioned end state) or dialectical (creating a synthesis of two opposing models) constructive change processes are inherently relational and require joint knowledge-making through open and reflective dialogue. Organizational learning and second-order change in human services requires that shared understandings of social problems and solutions and of their unique purpose be jointly produced across the organization. This can only happen through an interactive process of open dialogue in enabling structures.

In the case of Island Center, it was essential that the T-Team spent countless hours in dialogue building common ground and mutual trust. The project began with a presentation and dialogue about a strong alternative schema. From there, the T-Team shared their existing assumptions, learned about other approaches, and constructed a shared understanding of their new, unique role in the community. There was a conscious attempt to do some deep thinking and

meaning making through dialogue, communicative action, in advance of changing practices or strategies. This dialogue and learning spilled out into the rest of the organization through the other various enabling structures. As people began to put the new philosophy into action, enacting their new, shared interpretive schemes, these empowering experiences were shared and reflected upon thus generating new understanding. Meaningful dialogue generated interpretive schemes that gave meaning to change plans, influenced what actions were taken and the actions taken influenced the way change plans were understood. Dialogical praxis is a reciprocal and generative process.

Dialogical praxis in organizations can be empowering to members and can promote change. However, as we see from Island Center's experience, there are barriers that can limit the use and benefits of this type of process. First, this type of prolonged exploration and joint sense-making is difficult to make room for in understaffed and outcome-driven settings such as human services. There are real structural barriers to this type of process and it is not the norm in human service organizations to set aside time for dialogue, learning, and reflection: there is too much to be done. Island Center leaders continually felt this tension between dialogue and action. Some of this pressure comes from the fact that funding for human services rarely, if ever, supports organizational development. Second, whoever has the power in organizations depends on who participates in dialogue. Ramirez (Morgan & Ramirez, 1984) indicated that organizations that encourage more participation during such periods of organizational change are more likely to achieve second-order change. Many at Island Center were excluded from regular participation in the dialogue and learning process. Staff members in residential programs were rarely given support to enable participation. Inequities around participation block the process. Third, for individuals to fully participate and engage in this type of learning process, ample support and

scaffolding is required. This support likely means skilled facilitation; at least in the early stages. This process of critical thinking, and metacognition is complex at times and may leave some behind without a sufficient holding environment. Lastly, leaders and other individuals can sabotage the dialogical process with well-intentioned actions. Either through dominating "air time" in group gatherings, moving to action too quickly, or through changing plans and diverting focus, leaders can drain energy from the collective process. Island Center's executive director was inadvertently guilty of this on a few occasions. To be successful in promoting change and learning, dialogical praxis must be exercised in a way that overcomes these potential barriers.

It is important to note that for Island Center, dialogical praxis is a positive outcome of their efforts as well as the process used to get there. It is the medium and the outcome of their actions. Through engaging in dialogical praxis, they came to understand the value in creating spaces for participatory learning, action, and reflection. They are currently in the process of seeking funding to institutionalize cross-agency "learning teams" in order to build-in strategies for continuous learning and innovation. This is potentially the most significant outcome of their two-year effort.

Finally, dialogical praxis can and should be a primary strategy for critical human service practice. Just as their inclusive, interactive process of learning and change was effective inside the organization, so too can it be in the community. It is important for Island Center and other human service organizations to establish similar dialogical processes with each other and with community. Social problems in communities are interconnected, uncertain, ambiguous, and complicated and require solutions that are just as complex. Human service organizations can practice critically with community by acting as part of a joint undertaking that arises out of their shared wisdom, dialogue, and understanding (Ife, 2001).

Extracting a Model of Change

At its best, this case of change can help us understand and inform social change theory. Although changes at Island Center are certainly ongoing and future outcomes uncertain, there are key lessons here that support specific underlying conditions and processes that promote change. These conditions and processes can help inform change in organizations, systems, and communities. At a theoretical level, the change process at Island Center closely resembled normative-reeducative models (Chin & Benne, 1985) and followed a constructive, teleological change path that is similar to a cultural renewal model of social change (Wallace, 1961). Revisiting the general concept of first and second-order change, we see that Island Center's transformation process suggests that change of this nature is a blending of first and second-order change. Change is both episodic and continuous (Weick & Quinn, 1999) and involves and depends on both learning (changing) and organizing (maintaining, Weick & Westley, 1996). This cultural transformation at Island Center required individual learning, small wins in the form of individual actions and organizational adjustments, as well as changing individual worldviews and the organizational paradigm. Although Island Center is transforming in the sense that their underlying culture is changing, it is clear that this is an ongoing dynamic interplay between first and second-order change.

With these understanding in mind, there is a basic model of change suggested here that be extracted for use in other social change efforts. I offer this twist on Wallace's (1961) cultural renewal model of change as a basic model for organizational, social systems, and community change.

Formulating and communicating an alternative vision. This case helps us see the importance of creating an alternate vision. In this case, community psychologists with some

expertise in the field formulated an alternative model of human services and communicated this vision to Island Center. An alternate vision can just as easily come from within an organization or from community members directly affected by the stresses in question. The goal is to create some understanding that there is a need for change.

Organizing. Once the need for change is clear in a small group, some form of organization is required to manage the change team and implement a plan. For Island Center, this was the creation of the T-Team. In communities, this could take any number of forms from a task force to larger coalitions for change. In the early forming stages of this group, skilled facilitation may be necessary to help establish a group process that best serves the goals and objectives.

Dialogical praxis. The most critical piece of the social change puzzle is the cycle of dialogue, learning, action, and reflection. Groups need to engage in dialogue and learning to explore common values, raise existing assumptions and beliefs, and to build shared interpretive schemes. From this base, they begin acting through individual and collective efforts. These experiences are shared with the group in order to engage in joint sense-making and making adjustments to change plans.

Adaptation. As the new vision gets broader exposure and more people are involved in co-constructing the goals, the vision is adapted to fit the new reality. The vision grows and changes because the process of dialogical praxis enhances the understanding of the problem, brings in new and creative ideas for solutions, and develops innovative strategies. This adaptation was clearly important in Island Center's process as they took an alternate vision brought in by outsiders, which eventually they made into their own.

Cultural transformation. If the change effort is able to gain and sustain enough support within the system, changes are sought in all aspects of the culture that block implementation of the new vision. At Island Center, this meant everything from changing the mission statement and impact areas to reworking staff work plans and performance evaluations. This also means attending to individual as well as structural change needs. The aim is to diffuse the change process and new vision deep into the culture of the system.

Routinization & continuous learning. Once the new vision has overtaken the previous model, efforts are focused on institutionalizing it as the new status quo. One important element of this part of the change model is the need to leave intact a structure and process for continuous learning. Although change goals may have been met, it is hoped that a new commitment to the dialogue and learning process remains and that alternate visions are continuously generated and explored.

Although this model does suggest phases similar to theories of Lewin (1935), Schien (1992), and Bridges (2003), I want to be careful not to prescribe these as steps or stages of change. Rather I see these as necessary conditions for a cultural change process in organizations, systems, and communities.

Contributions to the Literature

Organizational Change

I see three contributions here for the literature on organizational change. First, this case study makes a contribution to the literature regarding first and second-order change. As I have mentioned throughout, I have been classifying this change process at Island Center as

transformational, radical, or second-order change. When looking through the lens of this case, however, the first-order, second-order change dichotomy is somewhat inadequate. Initially, in my introductory chapters, I described the move from amelioration to transformation as a second-order change. In practice, however, this change case highlights the insufficiency of this dichotomy and suggests a more nuanced understanding of the process of transformation in organizations. It is true that what occurred at Island Center was a substantive reframing of the rules of the game of human services (Watzlawick, et al, 1974). However, this change was anything but comprehensive or complete within the organizational system. They are not necessarily attempting to do the same things differently or better (first-order change) but neither have they completely transformed the assumptions and practices of the entire organizational system (second-order change).

Their move is more continuous and involves an ongoing interaction between individuals and the organizational system as well as the larger social context. What we see is enough individuals cognitively redefining the game to push for changes in organizational interpretive schemes, culture, and action. Enough organizational members have reframed the game so that the organization can never go back to the same reality (not first-order change), however, the organization still exists in and plays by the rules of the larger human service system and cultural context (not second-order change). This puts them in a place of second-order "changing" inside a larger, dominant culture whose different reality constrains Island Center's ability to completely commit to the transformation in practice. This suggests something in between first and second-order change that captures the reality of a radical change process that is not necessarily abrupt, paradigmatic, or whole.

Whereas second-order change might be a useful classification as an ideal type of fundamental change, in practice it misses the shades of gray between first and second-order change that are significant. Weick (1996) makes a similar argument when he suggests that small wins can pave the way for learning and revolutionary change and in the aggregate approximate radical change. "The chances for learning increase as more small wins are initiated by more people in more places" (p. 455). What this case suggests, when reflected against the current thinking in organizational change, is that an alternative to the first and second-order change dichotomy is a continuum between first and second-order change in which "learning and changing" occur. Fundamental assumptions are challenged, small wins are achieved, and individual and organizational learning builds towards transformational organizational change in thinking and action.

Secondly, this case offers a contribution to the organizational change literature with regard to the targets of change. There is some controversy in the literature about whether the target of change is the system (culture, norms, structures) or individuals within the system (Burke & Schmidt, 1971). As well, theorists do not agree upon whether changing behavior should have priority over changing mental models or vice versa. This case makes clear that in both instances it is not either/or but rather both/and. This change process required that both individual mental models be targeted, as well as organizational interpretive schemes. As I outlined in the section above, this highlights the reciprocal and generative relationship between agency and structure. In organizational settings such as this one, it may be most desirable to attend to both. Individuals, especially leaders and managers, shape organizational philosophy, culture, and policy, and organizational norms shape individual mental models and behavior.

Targeting only the system or the individual ignores the interdependent, generative, and transformative possibilities that can occur when targeting change in both.

This is also the case with the false need to prioritize between targeting behavior and cognition. This case highlights the benefit of attempting change in both domains at the same time. New actions can fuel new understanding, and new understanding can promote new action. At Island Center, much emphasis was placed initially on adequately making sense of things before acting. However, only when they really started trying things out in their practice were they really able to do some individual and collective sense-making around their change goals. Additionally, their action initially took the form of getting together in order to dialogue about a new vision. Action takes many forms and is intertwined with learning. Again, this relationship between behavior or action and cognition or learning, in the case of organizational learning and change, is interdependent, reciprocal, and generative.

Third, this case highlights the usefulness of a transformational change process based in individual and organizational learning. Change of this nature requires attending to structures and processes that facilitate learning. The main enabling structure that Island Center used for learning and change was the T-Team and the process was dialogical praxis. This was critical to the T-Team's process of learning and to the diffusion of the change goals within the organization. Although an alternative vision was brought into the organization from an external source, Island Center engaged in a lengthy process that included a cycle of dialogue, learning, action and reflection in order to better understand how this alternative vision could play out in their context. Although it was easy to agree that values such as social justice and empowerment were important, they used dialogue to build a shared understanding of what these values meant in practice and how that practice differed from what they were currently doing. The T-Team was

the main engine of change and therefore the main context for the dialogical process. One can imagine that, at least with this type of change in human services, that simply applying a prescribed curriculum would not work. Individual workers need to learn, organizational interpretive schemes need to be shaped, and new systems and structures for individual and organizational learning need to be developed. Dialogical praxis is a strategy for learning and change in human service organizations.

Human Service Practice

This case makes a powerful contribution to the literature on the role of non-profit human service organizations in communities. Most importantly, this case highlights the possibilities of a blending of ameliorative and transformative approaches in practice. What the experience at Island Center suggests is that critical practice is based in values, beliefs, and assumptions solidly under the transformative paradigm, however, action or practices can be both ameliorative and transformative. They need not be mutually exclusive. Working only to take care of the needs of those who are hurting or only working to change conditions may be insufficient without the other. Human service organizations can play both roles: a source of care for individuals and an agent of social change.

What seems clear, is that human service organizations, and the members therein, need a critical perspective on the social problems that their clients face. There needs to be a deep understanding of the systemic and structural roots of human suffering and an organizational commitment to both care for those in need and also engage the community in addressing the community conditions that cause suffering. Human service organizations and the systems that support them need to understand that providing only ameliorative services is a "game without end" (Watzlawick, et al, 1967, pp. 232-236). Developing a shared understanding of the social

determinants of the problems they see can lead to innovation in human service practice and exciting collaborations for community change.

Lastly, this case makes a contribution to the human service literature by contextualizing the concept of the learning organization in the non-profit setting. Most of the learning organization literature to date focuses on for-profit settings. Although most theorists would argue for its transferability to the non-profit setting, this case highlights the struggle that even the most high-functioning non-profits have in operating as learning organizations. The main struggle comes in their difficulty with democratizing learning and creating spaces for ongoing learning. Non-profits face many barriers to fostering wide participation in the learning and change process. Most non-profits do not have the resources to dedicate to organizational development. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to open up time for staff to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to organizational learning.

At Island Center, we saw how staff members in residential programs in particular were sometimes left out of the learning dialogues. Those on the front lines whose wisdom is needed for organizational learning and change are often left out. This brings home the importance of enabling structures that support participation and learning for all members of the organization and thus promotes organizational learning. Many leaders in non-profit settings would say that they are way too busy to take time for organizational learning, dialogue, and reflection. They might suggest that organizational learning is a struggle they cannot afford. Island Center's transformation effort suggests that organizational learning is something non-profit human service organizations can ill-afford to ignore.

Action

This organizational change case study has important implications for action and research. This case study shows that there is potential value in the alternate vision for human services presented in this thesis. Introduction of this vision to a larger network of human service organizations and the various supporting funding agencies has potential for generating dialogue about the role of human service organizations in addressing community conditions. Many human service organizations and funding agencies have never asked the question: "why do we do what we do?" They have rarely examined their individual worldviews, shared mental models, and organizational interpretive schemes, which limits their ability to explore new strategies. This is mainly due to a human service system that is stuck on ameliorating problems instead of working to change the conditions that create the problems in the first place. This suggests the possibility of large-scale change in the human service system if enough agents of change are attracted to the vision and work together to build a new model.

This thesis also highlights the need for increased support for capacity-building in non-profit human service organizations. Even a high functioning organization such as Island Center has difficulty opening up enough time for organizational learning and development routines. When they were able to engage in dialogue and learning, individuals developed, shared understandings were created, and innovative action resulted. Social problems in communities are complex and require complex solutions. If human service organizations are to innovate and move from values to action, they need organizational structures that enable them to dialogue, learn, and reflect. This is especially true in the case of an intentional transformational change effort.

Organizational change of this nature require external supports such as skilled facilitation and consultation at the beginning of the process, individual coaching for leaders managing change, and the necessary resources to allow for full participation in the learning and change process. The desired transformative ends depend on input. Transformative change requires an investment of time, energy, and focus.

This case also has implications for action in communities. A similar process that facilitates transformational change in organizations can be used with oppressed or marginalized groups and their supporters. Human service organizations can take the dialogical process into the community to build coalitions for change. The same values, skills, and compassion that human service workers use when working one-on-one with community members can be used to transform rather than ameliorate problems in the community. The same conscientization process that helped Island Center build a new vision and move to action can promote change in the community. Human service workers can facilitate this process. What is key here, however, is that human service organizations start by transforming themselves first.

<div align="center">*Research*</div>

Human Service Theory and Practice

This case also raises important implications for research. One key implication has to do with the role of power in maintaining the status quo in human services. As I mentioned earlier in this thesis, there is a strong cultural current that keeps human services focused on amelioration. The culture mainly understands human problems as having individual sources, funding agencies demand individual change outcomes, communities expect social service organizations to play the role of ameliorator, and inequalities are maintained because of the benefit to people who hold

power. There is a need to study these power dynamics and the ways in which power can be shifted. Without a shift in the balance of power, progressive human service organizations are fighting an uphill battle to say the least. In Island Center's community, the role of the United Way in using its available power to shift the discussion and framing of human service practice is a model for systemic change that needs further study.

Another related area of potential for action research has to do with how human service organizations and their workers understand the role of power in the lives of the community members they serve. For many reasons having to do with training, personal experience, and the larger cultural narrative, human service workers have a limited understanding of social problems and the social conditions that lead to suffering. Action research in this area could expand on this case and the work of Donald Barr (1989) to better explicate individual worker understandings of power and how organizational interpretive schemes in human services frame power. Ideally, action research would be the methodology for understanding this issue while attempting to change individual mental models and organizational interpretive schemes with regard to power, and ultimately change human service training and organizational practices. I can imagine the development of useful research tools and strategies to assess how human service workers and organizations frame and take action on the social problems faced by their service recipients. These tools might be simple survey instruments or more complex organizational developmental interviews similar to those developed to measure individual constructive development (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Loevinger & Wessler, 1970). These tools can assist with better understanding current interpretive schemes in human services and pinpoint intervention strategies.

Research can also contribute to helping clarify those exemplars of critical human service practice – what does it look like in action? What are examples of specific human service

practices that go beyond amelioration to address community conditions and build coalitions for social change? How do organizations balance taking care of those in need and working to influence conditions, policy, and root causes? What are the individual and organizational development strategies needed in order to play both roles? What does a normative theory of human services look like in practice? There are a few exemplars around the world that warrant close study in order to help fully develop normative theory that blends amelioration and transformation. Two possible exemplars are the Dulwich Center for Narrative Therapy in Adelaide, Austrailia and the Just Therapy Team from the New Zealand Family Centre.

Learning and Change in Human Service Organizations

This case also highlights the need form more research on the process of transformational change in human service organizations. Future action research can focus on the role of dialogue and learning in the process of change in the human services setting. To follow the suggestion of Weick and Quinn (1999) future research should focus on organizational "changing" rather than organizational "change". We need to better understand the unique conditions in human service organizations and the external context that support or inhibit continuous learning, change, and critical practice. Internal conditions include individual learning and development, leadership, organizational interpretive schemes, enabling structures, the role of democratic dialogue, and the role of the external change agent, consultant or critical friend. External conditions for investigation include the influence of the dominant cultural narrative, the role of funding agencies and other influential systems, and systems of organizational support.

Specifically, this case suggests the need to learn more about the delicate balance between participation and focus in the change process. As change processes become more participatory, there is a risk that the focus and integrity of the change message might be diluted. What is the

balance between the core change team and participation by the larger organizational community? How can the change message and learning be diffused into the organization, and how can lessons deriving from discussions at the organizational level be fed back to the core team? What is the role of outside agents of change in driving the change process, in educating change partners, and in supporting or coaching the key players inside the organization?

One major question that lingers for me after this process has to do with organizational learning in human services. I have to wonder what could be possible if human service organizations had adequate resources to devote to organizational development, learning, and change. For the most part, Island Center made use of volunteer consultants and very little other resources to engage in a complex change process. Whereas most large corporations invest millions in change endeavors and ongoing learning and development, non-profits are usually not afforded the "luxury of learning". I would like to see a study of the benefits of intentional efforts to build capacity for learning in human service organizations.

Lastly, there is a need to better understand the role of action research or participatory action research in promoting change in human services. This case highlights the potential for action researchers to be agents of change in an organizational transformation process. In this case, we intentionally brought our values into the action research endeavor and played a significant role in co-constructing the vision. Future research can explore the role of a normative theory of human services and who gets to be involved in generating that theory. For instance, what would a more participatory approach to the research component of this case look like? How would a more participative research process have benefited the process and outcomes? If we indeed approach action inquiry as a participatory, normative, knowing-in-practice method as

Reason and Torbert (2001) suggest, how do we create researcher-practitioner relationships to realize these ends? How does our human inquiry,

> forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment-to-moment personal and social action, so that inquiry contributes directly to the flourishing of human persons, their communities, and the ecosystems of which they are part? (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p.4)

This to me seems to be the central question for critical social science action researchers.

Reflections on the Research Process

As I reflect back on this two-year process, I am struck by the fact that this all started with a conversation. I had an idea that some former colleagues should hear some of the things I was learning and thinking about in the course of my graduate study. I was holding up the critical theories I was considering to the practice context of my experience to see how well they fit. I wanted to know if others could see the same practical value in good critical theory. This was never supposed to be a research project, but maybe the best inquiry has unexpected, organic beginnings?

In retrospect, this process was valuable and successful because I was an action researcher with Island Center as an insider. I was an insider due to the fact that I had worked there for years and had close relationships with many members of the staff. I was intimately familiar with the organization and the practice context. Additionally, I joined with them as they embarked on this change journey. I participated in dialogue and sense-making, helped co-create language for their organizational guiding documents, and struggled with them when the going got tough. I believed, and still believe, that Island Center can make this change and be a change agent in the field of human services.

At times I felt frustrated with my own inability to offer them concrete ideas for how to translate the philosophy into action. What does collective-level human service practice look like? What actions should they take at the community level? How do they measure their impact on community conditions? I remember at one point hearing the words of one board member to the leadership team: "Scot and [colleague] got you into this mess, they should help you get out of it!" There were times when I really felt responsible for this turmoil and I did not like it. I felt responsible for creating the initial disruption, for controlling the pace and content of change, and for providing concrete answers as well as a good process. I found myself at times taking too much control over the process for two reasons: 1) I wanted to have control over the direction of change, and 2) I wanted to "save" them from having to worry about it themselves. Both of these actions inhibited the process of change. The change needed to unfold as they wanted it to, and they needed to drive the process.

I also really learned the lesson of the power of good dialogue. Having been trained as a counselor, I guess I always knew that, but this process reminded me that learning and knowledge generation is a social process. This was exemplified by the work I was able to do with the T-Team and also in the process of reflecting and making sense of this case with my colleagues on my research team. Being able to share my experiences at Island Center with them and engage in dialogue and joint sense-making made this an incredible learning process for me.

Lastly I learned that good action research in the social sciences that contributes to human and community development requires relationships. I was lucky in that I had an existing relationship with Island Center and was able to enter as a researcher and join in a process of change. To do this in another organization or community group would require a lengthy process of relationship building. I am already realizing this in another research project that I am involved

with, where I do not enjoy the close existing relationship I have with Island Center. The trusting and playful relationship I enjoyed with staff members at Island Center held us mutually committed to the change effort. This is especially problematic for other graduate students who might be committed to this type of research process but can ill afford to spend the time needed to develop relationships before a research project even begins. I hope I can stay committed to action research, and more specifically participatory forms of research as I continue with my academic career and as institutional barriers and publishing and tenure demands increase.

Limitations

There are a few limitations of this research worth noting. First, this research is a single-case study and generalizing to other cases is risky. Researchers should test some of the principles highlighted here in other settings to see how they hold up. Second, I cast an extremely wide net to get a full picture of this change process. This approach risks only general descriptions of the change case with little specifics about any given piece. I hope that the detailed narrative provided allows the reader to find useful pieces that promote further thinking, research, and action. Third, Island Center is and was an extremely "ready" organization. As I highlighted in chapter three, and in the initial conditions section of chapter five, Island Center's capacity for engaging in this type of endeavor is high. Other organizations may have drastically different starting points that require different objectives and different strategies. Fourth, most of the voices included here are from organizational members involved in the change process in some way, either directly, or indirectly. Other staff members did not have much to say about the process because they were either left out of the change process or the communications surrounding the change. Although their voices are not necessarily included here, the fact that the change process excluded some

was noted. Lastly, my insider status, although beneficial in many ways, can also be considered a problem of bias. I fear that due to my close relationship with this organization and my wish for their success, I may have painted their changes and process in too favorable a light. I hope I was able to be objective enough to at least be clear that their changes are incomplete and the process was anything but perfect. My interpretations, ultimately, are just that and although I make no apologies for my interpretive stance, I understand fully that there may be other interpretations. In the end, I feel that this case study is trustworthy against widely accepted criteria for qualitative inquiry of this nature.

Conclusion

There is a need to transform the role of human services. Treating people one person at a time largely ignores the social determinants of well-being and will never solve complex social problems. Complex, or wicked social problems cannot be bounded, managed, or tamed (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Most human service workers understand this, yet for many reasons, human service practice remains focused on ameliorating suffering by patching up individual wounds. Human service workers and organizations have a tremendous base of wisdom and experience from which to understand and act on harmful community conditions. A critical human service practice is needed that combines micro and macro approaches. The barriers to this shift in human services are immense and require strategies that go beyond human service organizations to human service systems as a whole.

This case study helps us understand how this type of transformation could play out in the organizational setting. In order to move an organizational culture from amelioration to transformation, an intentional, sustained process of change is required. It starts with a vision of a

different approach, involves dedicated agents of change, enabling structures and a participatory, dialogical process of learning and action. It also requires making explicit individual and shared values that inform action. Island Center is changing. Workers are thinking differently, the organization has a clear philosophy, their processes are becoming more democratic and learning-oriented, and they are innovating in exciting ways. They still face incredible barriers to realizing their transformative aims, but if they continue on the course that they have set, they just may be able to set the path for others to follow. Change is in the wind for human service organizations. It is clear by this organizational case study that the path to critical practice in human services starts at home.

I have a vision now for a new normative theory of human services that blends ameliorative and transformative practices. A human services model based in the values of social justice and equality and practices grounded in the understanding that individual and family struggles have both private and public sources. This new normative model can shape change in the human service system and be taught in social work training programs. Human service organizations have been charged by society to take care of the most downtrodden, impoverished, and suffering. Not only have they been asked to provide the safety net and triage for human misery and adversity, they have been asked to do this with insufficient resources. On top of this, funding agencies and communities expect them to battle for these resources by demonstrating measurable outcomes, almost exclusively at the individual level. It is time for a new human service contract with communities, a new era. This new bargain goes something like this: We in human service organizations will continue to help those who fall through the cracks. However, in return, we expect communities to partner with us to also address the social conditions that

contribute to the suffering we have long been only ameliorating by providing services. Unless

equal and adequate resources are provided to do both: no deal.

MAIN FEATURES OF TRADITIONAL AND PROGRESSIVE PARADIGM

Features of Human Services		Traditional Paradigm	Progressive Paradigm adds….
Salient Values (Gil, 1998; Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997; Isaac Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002a)	Values	Health, caring, compassion, growth, self determination	Human diversity, Collaboration, Participation, distributive justice, interdependence, humanism, egalitarianism
Belief/Ideology /Assumptions (Gil, 1998; Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997; Isaac Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002a)	Social Beliefs	Freedom, Individualism, Inequality	Humanitarianism, Community, Equality
	Economic Beliefs	Competitive capitalism with some government intervention, mixed economy	Government Intervention, social priorities, equal distribution of societies resources
	Political Beliefs	Representative Democracy, Pluralism	Participatory democracy in both governmental and non-governmental areas
	Problem definition Source of suffering	Individual and interpersonal sources	Community sources such as prevalence of violence and poverty
	Assumptions	Individuals are responsible for their own well-being	Equality, liberty, solidarity and cooperation shape individual, relational, and community wellness
	View of client	Victim, helpless, recipient	Agent, participant, resource
	View of human growth	Independence	Interdependence
	Preferred actions	Personal reform, Advocacy, limited social reform	Collective and systemic, social justice
	View of H.S./ Social Welfare	An instrument to modify negative aspects of society	An instrument to promote equality, solidarity, and community

Practice/Action (Gil, 1998; Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997; Isaac Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002a)	Focus of intervention	Individual and family	Systems in the community affecting personal, interpersonal, and collective wellness
	Timing of intervention	Reactive	Proactive
	Type of intervention	Expert-driven	Collaborative partnerships, community empowerment
	Target of intervention	Child, adolescent, parent, family	Schools, government policies, and community conditions
	Content of intervention	Skill building, self-help, therapy, cognitive	Advocacy, community empowerment, consciousness-raising, organizing policy change
	Role of those seeking services	Mainly passive recipient of services	Active collaborator in creating community change
	Decision-making processes	Professional driven	Community participation
	Type of caring	Proximal	Distal
	Health promotion	Personal	Public and community
	Desired outcomes	Improved functioning at the personal and family level	Improved access to vital services such as health care, child care, transportation and public education

APPENDIX B

ISLAND CENTER COMMUNITY MEETINGS

May 2003

Goal of Community Meetings

1. Involve staff in examining and adopting a set of values to guide our work and upcoming agency planning process.
2. Provide an opportunity for staff to learn together about how Island Center might move from putting band-aids on problems to transforming consciousness and societal structures.

Outcome/Product from Community Meetings
1. A list of key values we can take into our upcoming agency planning process (may be the same list you took into the meeting or the same list with some additions).
2. A sense of where staff are ready to move/grow and where they have hesitations and/or fears.

Format for Community Meetings

General
   ▪ Take place during week of May 12.
   ▪ Staff invited to choose among 4 or 5 times/places.
   ▪ Desirable to mix participants from across programs.
   ▪ Important for facilitators to deliver consistent message.
   ▪ Listen more than talk.

Prep
"Required Reading" – ask folks to circle words or phrases that stood out or seemed most important to them. Ask that people bring readings to their chosen community meeting.

Meeting Format

*Informal, comfortable.
*Emphasis on hearing from everyone.
*Be FACILITATOR, not expert or chair.
*1 to 1.5 hours—will vary with number attending.
*Assemble small groups. Don't take more than about 8 folks.

I. Thanks and intros to make sure everyone knows one another.
Ask each person to share why they came. Share why you volunteered to do this.

II. Review Process/Give Background (see attached diagram).
State goals of meeting (see above).

III. Initiate conversation on readings: What did you circle? Why?

IV. Initiate conversation on values (longest section of agenda). Review attached info on community psychology values and ask the group to talk about:
- What seems familiar or consistent with how we already work?
- What was surprising?
- Where did you feel energy, either positive or negative?
- Are there important values for Island Center that are left out?

V. Close: State next steps and do quick group go-round: in just a phrase or a single sentence, one hope you have for Island Center as we go forward.

Background Info: How Did We Get Here? Where Are We Going?

Two things converged:

YLD Planning to change PULSE in response to changed environment and weaknesses of program model.	**ED and Board seeking to make agency more effective and more focused** in response to changed environment, including very tough funding environment.
Scot Evans brings a Community Psychologist from Vanderbilt to meet with staff.	Board looking at what is core to Island Center and considering moving quickly to eliminate so-called 'non-core' programs.
Staff invites consultant to meet with her team. YLD team requests to join in. ED also attends.	
ED invites consultant to meet with expanded staff group from all program areas.	ED and Board Executive Committee decide to take some time to more deeply consider how to make needed changes. Plan to complete a planning process by November 2003.

Lots of excitement among staff regarding new ideas. consultants express desire to work with Island Center as we consider new directions as an agency.

We asks small group of staff from all program areas to become a "Transformation Team" to help guide agency change and involve all staff. Team is made up of staff from all levels.

Leader asks T Team to hold "Community Meetings" with as many staff as possible to discuss and adopt community psychology values as they relate to how Island Center works with youth and families.

Hal will take agreed upon values to the Board so they can be used to inform upcoming planning process.

Agency planning to be completed by November 2003.

APPENDIX C

VISION 2007

Goal One: Restore

Island Center will further strengthen the impact of our current intervention programming with an emphasis on proactive strategies designed to engage youth and families in crisis in transforming the conditions creating problems affecting their lives.

Vision Strategies:

- Because civic action has been proven as a powerful tool for reaching and connecting with youth struggling with multiple risk factors, Island Center will offer youth in our residential and counseling programs more purposeful and intensive opportunities for community engagement, conflict management, and leadership development both during and after their residential stay.

- Island Center will strengthen the impact of the Emergency Shelter by improving the stability and continuity of care provided, encouraging a longer period of stay, and offering more opportunities for positive youth development through evening and weekend hours.

- Island Center will form intra-agency teams to better integrate, connect, and coordinate services and opportunities across all program areas for youth and their families. In addition, Island Center will institute an intensive staff training program to ensure consistent service delivery aligned with our statement of philosophy.

Goal Two: Prevent

Island Center will address the causes that lead to disconnection and hopelessness among youth by offering strategic preventative programming designed to connect youth, their families, and the community. Island Center will focus its prevention efforts in partnership with youth, families and key community stakeholders in neighborhoods with multiple risk factors.

Vision Strategies:

- Because we believe that youth have a tremendous influence on other youth, Island Center will pilot bold new mentoring programs between older youth (ages 16 – 21) and younger youth (ages 10 – 14).

- Because we know that parents send the most powerful message to kids through their own behavior, Island Center will create a program area dedicated to promoting parenting skills and family well being.

- Because young people need certain life skills and soft skills to personally thrive and successfully enter the workforce, all program areas will promote skill building through hands on experience and cooperative action. Island Center will link youth with real world opportunities and social networks that will strengthen sense of self and increase motivation to use their enhanced skills.
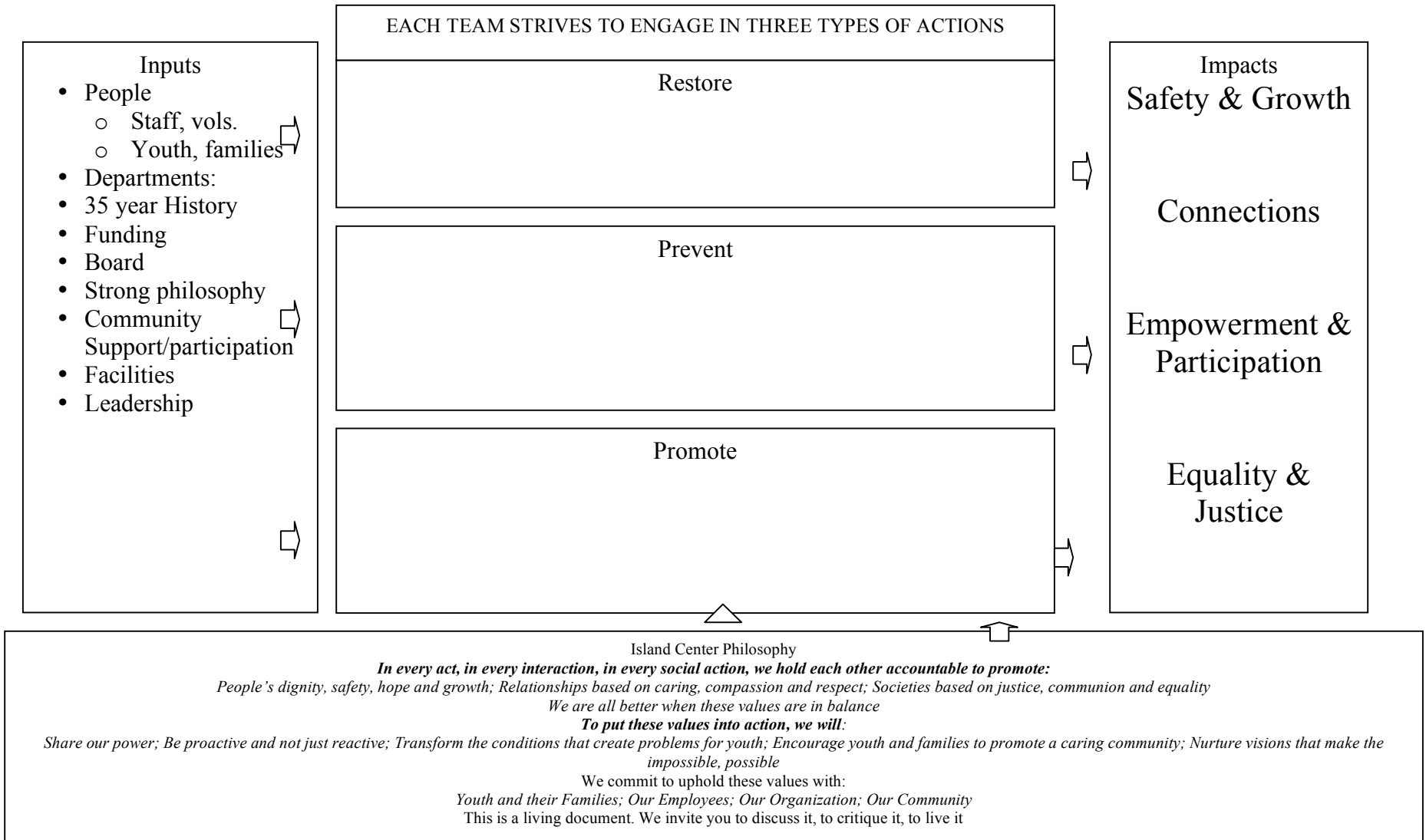
Goal Three: Promote.

Island Center will expand our work to prepare and provide youth with opportunities to develop critical leadership skills, meaningful relationships with others "outside their circle", and social change activities in order to create a more caring and just community for current and future generations.

Vision Strategies:

- Because accessibility for youth is key to all we do, Island Center will enter a formal collaboration with the Department of Parks and Recreation and Community Impact! Nashville to create neighborhood based Community Action Teams in area recreation centers.

- Because the misperceptions of who youth are and how they fit into the world function all too often as self-defeating prophecies, Island Center will work to shift personal and public perception by constantly creating and communicating a positive vision of youth and their community.

- Island Center will track the impact of our work through a new outcomes evaluation system designed to (a) measure positive changes in individual's sense of belonging, generosity, and purpose and (b) at a community level by increased resources and increased social capital achieved in targeted neighborhoods and groups.

- Island Center will solidify the Youth Innovation Fund's place in a city as a vehicle for providing training, support, and funding for youth civic action citywide.

- Island Center will collaborate to stage public events and celebrations for youth that generate greater understanding across cultural and socio-economic levels and mobilize youth around ideals of civic responsibility, hope, and equality.

GRAND LOGIC

	EACH TEAM STRIVES TO ENGAGE IN THREE TYPES OF ACTIONS	

Inputs
• People
   o Staff, vols.
   o Youth, families
• Departments:
• 35 year History
• Funding
• Board
• Strong philosophy
• Community Support/participation
• Facilities
• Leadership
	Restore
	
	Prevent
	
	Promote
		Impacts
		Safety & Growth
		
		Connections
		
		Empowerment & Participation
		
		Equality & Justice

Island Center Philosophy

In every act, in every interaction, in every social action, we hold each other accountable to promote:

People's dignity, safety, hope and growth; Relationships based on caring, compassion and respect; Societies based on justice, communion and equality

We are all better when these values are in balance

To put these values into action, we will:

Share our power; Be proactive and not just reactive; Transform the conditions that create problems for youth; Encourage youth and families to promote a caring community; Nurture visions that make the impossible, possible

We commit to uphold these values with:

Youth and their Families; Our Employees; Our Organization; Our Community

This is a living document. We invite you to discuss it, to critique it, to live it

ISLAND CENTER T-TEAM MISSION/PURPOSE

To actualize in programs, policies, and practices the philosophy of the organization so that Island Center may realize its unique role in addressing four critical areas in the community: Safety & Growth, Connections, Participation & Empowerment, Justice & Equality

Goals

- Integrate agency philosophy into all areas of the agency
    - Strengthen or invent new strategies
- Assist in the development of adequate assessment approaches
- Keep agency in line with philosophy and on track with critical needs
    - Create philosophical "continuity"
- Drive discourse and action toward 3rd domain (community conditions)
- Join with other organizations to enhance and share learnings, and to work collectively on community solutions

Participation

Each department and various levels of staff in the organization shall be represented on this team, as well as board members and volunteers. Meetings will be open for all staff that would like to attend. One representative from United Way will participate. Every attempt will be made to include community members and/or clients in the work of the team.

AGENCY OUTCOMES

SAFETY

Youth thrive when they are emotionally and physically secure. When youth are safe, they are able to grow and take risks. Emotional safety means young people and families feel secure, valued, mutually respected, and that they experience understanding and tolerance. Physical safety means that youth have access to food, shelter, clothing, medical care and freedom from violence. <u>Our work is to lead the community and its young people in creating and sustaining an environment that ensures their emotional and physical safety.</u>

AGENCY WIDE OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES
Individual and family: Youth and Families understand how to create and maintain relationships and environments that are emotionally and physically safe.	**Individual and family:** Provide environments and experiences that are safe for all youth. Ensure that youth and families are engaged in promoting emotional and physical safety in their daily lives.
Community: Island Center increases outreach efforts promoting the importance of emotional and physical safety on positive youth and family development.	**Community:** Educate and motivate youth, families, and the larger community on what they can do to make both their immediate surroundings, and the larger community, emotionally and physically safe for all youth.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CONNECTION

Youth thrive when they experience a sense of significance, belonging, and positive connections in the community. Personal significance is developed by having a positive sense of self, and believing that each person, especially oneself, is an integral part of a community. Positive connections to peers, caring adults, family and the larger community help create a sense of belonging in each youth. <u>Our work is to help youth and families feel significant and to connect with the people, resources and opportunities they need to thrive.</u>
<u>Our work also includes helping Nashville value and include youth in decisions impacting their lives.</u>

AGENCY WIDE OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES
<u>Individual and family:</u> Youth and families identify their strengths, experience higher self esteem, and feel significant. Youth and families strengthen their family bonds and expand their networks of community resources.	**<u>Individual and family:</u>** Providing opportunities for youth and families that are designed to foster ■ Respect, ■ Belonging, ■ Increased communication, ■ Inclusion, ■ Competence, ■ Compassion.
<u>Community:</u> Institutions and settings make youth feel valued and connected to the larger community.	**<u>Community:</u>** Advocating for a community that is youth friendly and welcoming of the gifts young people have to offer. Providing education and outreach to agencies, government, and neighborhood organizations focusing on awareness of and appreciation for youth involvement (youth contributing to services provided, program and policy development and general practice).

PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Youth thrive when they are able to make decisions and take direct action to improves their lives. <u>Our work is to empower youth to take action, exercise their rights, and to have the skills necessary to create personal and community change. Our work is also to help create opportunities in the community through which young people can participate and succeed.</u>

AGENCY WIDE OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES
<u>Individual and family:</u> Youth and families have the capacity to make decisions and take action to improve their lives. Youth experience the pride of being useful to others, and are motivated to use their skills to improve the community.	**<u>Individual and family:</u>** Offer opportunities that build confidence and enables youth to take action, both personally and in the community.
<u>Community:</u> The Nashville community offers opportunities for youth to be engaged citizens.	**<u>Community:</u>** Lead the community to increase opportunities for youth to give back and participate in meaningful ways.

JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Youth thrive when they live in communities that value justice and equality. A just community is concerned with the well being of all its members; it celebrates and capitalizes on differences in abilities, values and cultural heritages. A just community encourages all citizens to have empathy for the struggle of others and applies resources toward the resolution of those struggles. <u>Our work is to lead the community and its young people in the development of new generations of informed, active and engaged citizens, who recognize injustice and inequality and who are prepared to lead change in the world.</u>

AGENCY WIDE OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES
<u>**Individual and family**</u>: Youth and families have increased awareness of the impact injustice, inequality and privilege has on peoples lives. Youth and families will demonstrate caring about the well being of others.	<u>**Individual and family**</u>: Offer opportunities for youth and families to increase caring while heightening their awareness of injustice and inequality.
<u>**Community:**</u> Island shows caring and compassion towards the disadvantaged and promotes justice to enhance their wellbeing.	<u>**Community:**</u> Participate in community wide efforts to educate about the role of injustice in peoples lives.

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