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Modeling the cultural dynamics of resistance and facilitation

OC³ model of organizational change

Interaction effects in the OC³ model of organizational change

1013

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to clarify the role of organizational culture in governing the dynamics of resistance and facilitation of change by explicating the operational mechanisms underlying the Model of Organizational Change in Cultural Context (OC³ Model).

Design/methodology/approach – A conceptual definition of facilitation is introduced that parallels the psychosocial construction of resistance, while departing from traditional views that cast these constructs as polar opposites. Within the context of the OC³ Model, a multifaceted perspective on organizational change is advanced in which facilitation takes place alongside of, rather than in the absence of, resistance.

Findings – Two sources of resistance and facilitation are delineated, both stemming from the degree of cultural alignment of the content (strategic initiatives) and process (implementation strategies) elements of strategic change. The dynamic interplay of these independent sources of resistance and facilitation is explored within the context of the OC³ Model where the consequences of cultural alignment or misalignment are considered with respect to change implementation and linked to established theory and empirical evidence. Four interaction effects emerge from this analysis: augmentation, undermining, prevailing and immunity. A visual model illuminating the countervailing effects of facilitation on resistance is provided, along with illustrative examples derived from multiple ethnographic field studies.

Practical implications – Theoretical and practical implications of these interaction effects for advancing scholarship and leading organizational change are explored.

Originality/value – Articulating this theoretical extension of the OC³ Model provides a valuable corrective to extant theories of change that afford equal importance to all culturally embedded sources of resistance and fail to account for the counter balancing effects of facilitation.

Keywords Change, Resistance, Organizational culture, Leadership, Conceptual model, Facilitation

Paper type Conceptual paper

Scholars and practitioners alike recognize the detrimental effects of resistance on efforts to implement strategic change (Beer and Spector, 1990; Bolognese, 2002; Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Fernandes, 1988; Martin, 1975; O'Connor, 1993). The attention afforded this issue has produced a vast literature identifying sources and clarifying underlying causes of resistance (Brehm, 1966; Ford *et al.*, 2008; Mumby, 2005; Watson, 1967), as well as outlining strategies for preventing and overcoming these dynamics (Coch and French, 1948; Tyler and De Cremer, 2005; van Dijk and van Dick, 2009), or avoiding them entirely by assessing and creating readiness (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993) prior to initiating planned organizational change. Within the scholarly community, resistance has been conceptualized as a naturally occurring phenomenon, rooted in the dynamics of organizational culture (Bate *et al.*, 2000; Jick, 1990; Wilkins and Dyer, 1988). Once organizational culture was identified as a primary source of resistance, strategies for implementing change began to focus on efforts to modify or reframe



organizational values, behavioral norms and cultural artifacts as a means of clearing the way for new priorities, structures, policies and contingencies (Higgins and McAllaster, 2004). Consequently, practitioners' strategies for facilitating change typically include tactics aimed at reshaping one or more aspects of organizational culture in order to minimize the detrimental impact of resistance (Bate *et al.*, 2000; Kegan and Lahey, 2009; Olson, 1990; Schein, 2010; Wilkins and Dyer, 1988).

Relative to the investment in understanding sources and dynamics of resistance, comparatively little attention has been paid to employees' positive responses and contributions to change facilitation (Fugate, 2013; Latta, 2009, 2011; van Dam, 2013). Traditionally, change facilitation has been considered the result of interventions introduced by leaders as antidotes to naturally occurring resistance (Coetsee, 1999; Ulrich, 1998). Thus, while the concept of culturally embedded resistance to change is nearly ubiquitous in the literature, the notion of change facilitation has until recently been largely overlooked. The discussion of facilitation in this paper addresses this omission by shifting the focus away from the agentic behavior of leaders and change agents undertaken to promote organizational change (Burke and Trahan, 2000), onto the unscripted, spontaneous reactions elicited from members of an organization in response to change initiatives (Oreg *et al.*, 2013). Connoting far more than the mere absence of resistance or a general receptivity to, compliance with, or readiness for change, this conceptualization of facilitation represents an active, positive, naturally occurring dimension of organizational life that parallels the concept of resistance in its social construction, as well as its cultural origins (Latta, 2011).

The purpose of this paper is to present a theoretical framework for understanding both resistance to, and facilitation of change as naturally occurring dynamics in organizations, with common roots in organizational culture. This theoretical framework is presented as an extension to the Model of Organizational Change in Cultural Context (OC³ Model) (Latta, 2009), enhancing the model's utility by specifying the underlying mechanisms that account for the bi-directional relationship between organizational culture and the phases of strategic change. Elucidating these theoretical mechanisms is important because specifying "the logic underlying [a] theory or model" is essential to its integrity (Jaccard and Jacoby, 2010, p. 157), and the dynamic interplay of resistance and facilitation has not been previously explicated in any extant theory of organizational change (Burke, 2014).

The OC³ Model provides an ideal platform for presenting this theoretical extension because it uniquely accounts for the bi-directional effects of culture at every stage of change implementation (Latta, 2009) manifest from an ambivalent human response to the content and process of change that is rooted in the multidimensional nature of resistance and facilitation (Piderit, 2000). By disaggregating these constructs into their affective, behavioral and cognitive dimensions, a theoretical framework is presented that illustrates how the interplay of facilitation and resistance within the unique cultural context of individual organizations can be beneficial to change implementation (Latta, 2011). The managerial implications for leaders applying this theoretical framework, in conjunction with the OC³ Model, include an enhanced capacity to predict and combat the potentially detrimental impact of resistance by leveraging the moderating influence of facilitation on change, utilizing the interaction effects delineated in this analysis.

Presentation of this thesis proceeds as follows: an extensive review of the literature pertaining to both resistance and receptivity to change provides the context for introducing a conceptual definition of facilitation that delineates: first, the commonalities

and distinctions between resistance and facilitation, and second, the dynamic interplay of these differential responses to change implementation. Following this conceptual clarification, the OC³ Model (Latta, 2009) is introduced as a theoretical platform for explicating both the cultural conditions that give rise to differential predictions of resistance and facilitation, as well as the contingency factors that account for the complex interaction effects that manifest when resistance and facilitation co-occur in response to change implementation. Four interaction effects predicted by this theoretical extension of the OC³ Model are delineated and substantiated by ethnographic data from organizational field research. These data illustrate how leaders can utilize the proposed theoretical framework, within the context of the OC³ Model, to predict and respond effectively to ensure the success of planned change based on the extent to which their initiatives align with prevailing cultural norms.

Cultural resistance and receptivity to organizational change

An extensive literature on the impact of planned change in organizations reflects the conventional wisdom that resistance is the most common response to strategic initiatives and that the significance of the threat resistance poses is often rooted in organizational culture (Erwin and Garman, 2010). Decades of research attest to the critical importance of cultural norms in shaping and determining the success of planned change initiatives (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999; Alvesson, 2002), a recognition that has become ubiquitous in the literature (Burke, 2014; By, 2005). From this perspective, culture poses a major threat to organizational change, fueling a vast literature on how to reform organizational culture as a prelude to affecting strategic change (Bate *et al.*, 2000; Wilkins and Dyer, 1988; Kotter and Heskett, 1992).

Theorists have adopted a variety of metaphors to denote cultural forms considered more or less conducive to change, including the notion of cultural “strength” (Deal and Kennedy, 2000; Peters and Waterman, 1982), “adaptability” (Denison, 1997); “alignment” (Schein, 2010); “fluidity” (Wilkins and Dyer, 1988); “values-driven” (vs “gratification-driven”) (Harrison, 1995; Sathe and Davidson, 2000); and “constructive” (vs “defensive”) (Cooke and Lafferty, 1987; Cooke and Szumal, 2000). In delineating between cultural leadership aimed at fostering “innovation” as opposed to “maintenance” in organizations, Trice and Beyer (1991) advanced the notion that real change requires cultural reform led by a charismatic or transformational leader. As a result, scholarly discourse on the role of organizational culture in affecting change often devolves into discussions of culture change itself (Higgins and McAllaster, 2004; Hirschhorn, 2000).

Considerably less attention has been paid to how organizational culture may serve to facilitate change. Yet implicit in discussions about reforming organizational culture is the assumption that whatever serves to reduce resistance will inevitably facilitate change. Such views assume that resistance to, and facilitation of, change are opposite poles of a continuum and that a reduction in resistance automatically increases facilitation (Coetsee, 1999; Judson, 1991; Marchant and May, 1993). A more complex view of the nature of change facilitation and its relationship to resistance has begun to emerge from ethnographic research conducted in organizational settings (Latta, 2006, 2009). These studies suggest that resistance and facilitation coexist in organizations throughout the change process, stem from different sources, and operate simultaneously to influence the course and outcomes of change initiatives (Latta, 2009). Closer consideration of these dynamics is essential for clarifying the true nature of resistance and change facilitation (Latta, 2011).

Resistance to change

Resistance to change has been characterized as “a catch-all phrase” (Jick, 1990, p. 412) broad enough to “include almost any unfavorable reaction, opposition, or force that prevents or inhibits change” (Erwin and Garman, 2010, p. 40). Davidson (1994) asserts resistance describes “anything and everything that workers do which managers do not want them to do, and that workers do not do that managers wish them to do” (p. 94). Although “there does not appear to be a universally or even widely accepted operational definition of resistance to change” (Erwin and Garman, 2010, p. 42), researchers generally agree it is “a socially constructed phenomenon” (van Dijk and van Dick, 2009) that manifests as a “tridimensional (negative) attitude toward change” (Oreg, 2006, p. 76). Resistance is constituted of behavioral, interpersonal, emotional and cognitive components (Piderit, 2000) that are “determined by intrapersonal and interpersonal factors and can occur with or without conscious awareness” (Arkowitz, 2002, p. 219). The determinants of resistance have been studied at the individual, group and organizational levels of analysis (Burke *et al.*, 2009), and its roots have been variously located in psychological, sociological and cultural dynamics.

Levels of analysis. At the individual level, resistance has been likened to a grieving process, consisting of a sequence of transitional phases triggered by the perception of loss (Woodward and Bucholz, 1987; cf. Bridges, 1986). When such loss reduces perceived freedom of choice, Brehm (1966) suggests the magnitude of resistance is a dual function of the importance and proportion of choice behavior threatened or eliminated. Other research suggests underlying personality differences may constitute a dispositional inclination to resist change (Oreg, 2003). A variety of personal attributes (Wanberg and Banas, 2000; Vakola *et al.*, 2013) and maladaptive defense mechanisms (Bovey and Hede, 2001a) have been shown to predispose some individuals to resist change, while other factors, such as risk tolerance, predict lower levels of resistance (Judge *et al.*, 1999) and are associated with higher levels of resilience and willingness to adapt in the face of change (Bovey and Hede, 2001a; Wanberg and Banas, 2000). Such factors may influence resistance by differentially affecting self-assessments of ability to adapt to pending change.

At the organizational level, research points to a variety of moderating factors that affect resistance to change including trust (Oreg, 2006), cynicism (Stanley *et al.*, 2005), leadership strategies (Szabla, 2007), influence tactics (Furst and Cable, 2008) and leader-member exchange (LMX) (van Dam *et al.*, 2008). Resistance has been inversely correlated with the quality (Lewis, 2006) and amount (Wanberg and Banas, 2000) of information leaders provide about a pending change, although the quality of employees' relationships with leaders (LMX) may moderate these effects (van Dam *et al.*, 2008). Negative correlations have been reported with levels of participation (Giangreco and Peccei, 2005; Lines, 2004; van Dam *et al.*, 2008), as well as both opportunity and willingness to participate in change implementation (Msweli-Mbanga and Potwana, 2006). Oreg (2006) provides evidence that resistance is linked to the content of an initiative, finding resistance only among individuals who disagreed with the proposed change, regardless of their level of participation or information access (cf. Holt *et al.*, 2003).

Psychological roots of resistance. The psychological roots of resistance have both cognitive and affective dimensions and may result in either “self-protective” or “reactive” resistance (Arkowitz, 2002). Cognitive sources of resistance stem from the meaning employees attach to the perceived consequences of change (Prasad and Prasad, 2000).

Negative evaluations of the consequences of change such as loss of status, pay, comfort or identity (Dent and Goldberg, 1999; Petriglieri, 2011; Pitsakis *et al.*, 2012) precipitate affective responses involving generalized feelings of anxiety, apprehension, anger and fear (Oreg, 2006). These cognitive/affective responses may result in “self-protective” resistance characterized by a lack of commitment intended to preserve the status quo, or “reactive resistance” marked by active opposition and aimed at preserving a sense of personal freedom and control (Arkowitz, 2002). Available evidence does not yet permit accurate predictions regarding whether or how cognitive or affective factors may be translated into behavioral acts of resistance (Piderit, 2000); therefore, researchers are cautioned to resist the urge to “automatically infer that resistance is taking place on the basis of a specific type of action occurring in the workplace” (Prasad and Prasad, 2000, pp. 388-389).

Sociological roots of resistance. Sociological perspectives on resistance focus on the dynamics of social interaction and power differentials in organizations as the determinants of behavioral responses to change. Scholars adopting this perspective emphasize the importance of both “the complex interplay between individual and collective action” and the interpretation of these behaviors by employees in the workplace (Prasad and Prasad, 2000, p. 389). Advancing a perspective grounded in social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), van Dijk and van Dick (2009) analyzed the identity-based motivations underlying both employees’ and change agents’ resistance in the context of change implementation. They posit that threats to work-based identity inherent in the proposed change give rise to employee resistance, which in turn threaten the workplace identities of change agents who respond with counter-resistance tactics aimed at self-enhancement. Employees’ identity-based resistance may be either personal- or principle-oriented, depending upon whether the proposed change is viewed as a threat to the employee’s relationship with the organization, or as hazardous for the organization itself. In either case, change agent’s resistance is viewed as a secondary response to employee’s resistance to change within this holistic “resistance process” (van Dijk and van Dick, 2009, p. 144).

Cultural roots of resistance. The cultural perspective on organizational change adopts an ethnographic approach to examining the determinants of resistance (Latta, 2006). Instead of focusing on the experiences of individuals, the ethnographic lens widens the field of view to capture “the collective experience of change, and the shared values that guide them” (Graetz and Smith, 2010, p. 146). In shifting the focus to the collective, the cultural perspective introduces the notion of shared systems of meaning that serve as tacit determinants of both individual and collective responses to change (Alvesson, 2002). Viewed ethnographically, resistance to change is presumed to operate within these tacit knowledge structures of shared meaning that govern the quest for homeostasis in organizations (Olson, 1990; Watson, 1967). Lack of uniformity and internal conflicts within these tacit cultural meaning systems (Martin, 2002) further complicate the task of anticipating individual and collective responses to specific change initiatives.

Receptivity to change

While the concept of resistance to organizational change is nearly ubiquitous in the literature, the notion of facilitation has been largely overlooked, although scholars have discussed similar constructs relating to change adoption from which facilitation should be differentiated, including “readiness” (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993), “acceptance” (Judson, 1991) and “commitment” (Coetsee, 1999; Meyer and Hamilton, 2013) to change. While all

these constructs are considered harbingers of successful change, only facilitation emerges simultaneously and co-exists with resistance throughout the process of change implementation (Latta, 2009). By contrast, readiness is considered a precondition for affecting change, while both “acceptance” and “commitment” typically emerge as outcomes of implementation.

Readiness for change. Facilitation has previously been implicitly recognized in the context of organizational change in connection with the study of readiness. Change readiness, defined as “the *cognitive* precursor to the *behaviors* of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort” (Armenakis *et al.*, 1993, pp. 681-682, emphases in original), influences employees’ perceptions of the legitimacy of proposed change. Establishing readiness is viewed as a means of inoculating an organization against resistance prior to initiating planned change by establishing the optimal conditions for a multifaceted organizational response that maximizes the possibility a strategic agenda will be embraced and successfully implemented by employees (Armenakis *et al.*, 2007; Armenakis *et al.*, 1993; Bouckenoghe *et al.*, 2009). Implicit in the notion that organizations may be more or less ripe for planned change is a recognition that organizational responses will differ depending upon the conditions in place at the time of introduction. Leaders are advised to avoid or delay change initiatives until after assessing and taking steps to establish conditions of receptivity among employees (Krause, 2008).

Acceptance or commitment to change. Both “acceptance” and “commitment” represent polar opposites of resistance on a continuum that charts a progression of stages from resistance to embracing change. Judson (1991) proposed a spectrum of behavioral responses to change ranging from active resistance to acceptance; that continuum was later extended by Coetsee (1999) to include commitment, a state of engagement characterized by both involvement and shared vision. The resulting resistance-to-commitment continuum represents a progression of responses to change that leaders and change agents have utilized to guide employees from one polarity to the other (Marchant and May, 1993) by means of developmental tools (Ulrich, 1998).

Three assumptions underlying this continuum distinguish it from the facilitation construct. First, the notion that resistance and commitment to change constitute mutually exclusive states at opposite ends of a polarity (Coetsee, 1999) suggests that facilitation emerges only as individuals grow in their acceptance and commitment to change and simultaneously relinquish attitudes, behaviors and emotions associated with resistance. The second assumption is that commitment emerges as individuals adjust to change over time, traversing the stages of the continuum in a prescribed order, at their own pace, although some scholars (Marchant and May, 1993) make allowances for individuals to enter at different points in the process. The third assumption is that as individuals progress from resistance to acceptance and eventual commitment, their thoughts, actions and affect evolve in sync (Judson, 1991). That is resistance and commitment, as well as all the stages of transition in between, are presumed to manifest as coherent states, with individuals exhibiting coordinated emotions, cognitions and behaviors that reflect each stage in serial progression.

Meyer and Hamilton (2013) recently challenged some of these assumptions by linking change commitment to broader theoretical perspectives on organizational commitment. All of these assumptions are further challenged by the notion of change facilitation, which has been found to co-occur with resistance, and accounts for situations in which individuals behaviorally conform to a change initiative while nevertheless thinking it is ill-advised and harbor negative emotions about its perceived consequences; or conversely,

refuse to adopt proposed reforms, despite enthusiastically endorsing prescribed changes and agreeing they are warranted by circumstances (Latta, 2006, 2011). This more nuanced understanding of change facilitation first emerged in the context of ethnographic research where both resistance and facilitation were observed to emerge simultaneously during the implementation of strategic change (Latta, 2006, 2009).

Conceptualizing change facilitation

Facilitation in the context of organizational dynamics refers to active, systemic forces spurring change in the direction targeted by strategic objectives (Latta, 2011). In contrast to the notion of resistance, facilitation serves to accelerate the pace of change implementation and promotes successful outcomes of strategic initiatives. Thus facilitation is not merely expressed support for, acceptance of, or receptivity to proposed change, in that these attitudinal markers do not necessarily imply anything more than passive assent to altered circumstances (Coetsee, 1999). Because facilitation represents an active, positive dimension of organizational life that parallels the concept of resistance in its social construction, it is expected to manifest a similar tripartite structure reflecting cognitive, affective and behavior components (Piderit, 2000; Rashid *et al.*, 2004). Thus, like its counterpart resistance (Szabla, 2007), facilitation is a multidimensional response to change not fully represented by attitudinal constructs alone. Facilitation is also constituted of cognitive and behavioral components. So while expressed support for change may represent a component of facilitation, it is an imperfect indicator of, and an insufficient antidote to, resistance if unaccompanied by behavioral and affective manifestations as well (Arkowitz, 2002; Coetsee, 1999).

Levels of analysis

At the individual level, the notion of a facilitated response to change recognizes the inherent tendency for human beings to be attracted to novelty and innovation (Boden, 1990; Florida, 2002). Research on the nature of approach-avoidance motivation (Elliot and Thrash, 2002) and the processes that govern the spread of innovation (Rogers and Rogers, 2003; Vishwanath and Barnett, 2011) suggests that individuals differ, perhaps innately, in their attraction to the unfamiliar, and that resistance is not necessarily a universally normative response to change. The recognition that humans seek novelty and innovation suggests the possibility that under the right conditions employees will actively embrace change, yet far less research has been invested in determining the antecedents or determinants of positive change orientations (Fugate, 2013) than in documenting the causes and consequences of resistance. The facilitation construct is thus supported by research examining the circumstances under which individuals exhibit curiosity, express creativity, crave intellectual stimulation, thrive on inspiration and strive to exceed expectations (Runco, 2005; Smollan, 2013). Studies of the characteristics and conditions that give rise to entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial initiatives (Kenney and Mujtaba, 2007) have begun to shed light on the theoretical constructs that unleash human capacity to embrace organizational innovation.

Cultural roots of facilitation

Given that resistance is at least partially embedded in the culture of an organization, it is logical to expect facilitation of change to be as well. This view is bolstered by studies documenting the correlates of positive responses to organizational change. Washington and Hacker (2005) found that middle managers who reported greater understanding

(a cognitive response) of a proposed change were more likely to express excitement (an emotional response) about the initiative, although researchers did not determine whether such attitudes translated into behavioral support or were later accompanied by resistance. Bovey and Hede (2001b) documented both supportive and resistant responses to change, finding that individuals varied with respect to the covert versus overt, and active versus passive, character of their behavior. Giangreco and Peccei (2005) similarly distinguished between pro-versus anti-change behaviors that were either overt or passive. Chreim's (2006) grounded theory study of responses to technological change found preliminary evidence for a cultural facilitation effect, noting that individuals embraced change they deemed consistent with their existing capabilities and culture. Similarly, Lines (2004) found a positive correlation between participation and an aggregate construct operationalized to encompass "compatibility with organizational culture" (p. 200).

Dynamic interplay of resistance and facilitation

Gravenhorst (2003) recently called into question the accepted wisdom that change is necessarily an unwelcomed experience that most commonly engenders resistance in organizations, reporting that willingness, rather than resistance, was the overwhelming response to change. More recently, Ford *et al.* (2008) challenged the accepted notion that resistance necessarily has a negative impact on change, advancing the perspective that resistance does not have valence until it is framed by leaders. Others too have suggested the possibility that members of organizations exhibit an ambivalence toward planned change that represents a mix of positive and negative attitudes (Piderit, 2000; Rashid *et al.*, 2004). Focusing attention on the multidimensional nature of employee attitudes toward change, Piderit (2000) observed that "conceptualizing each dimension as a separate continuum allows for the possibility of different reactions along the different dimensions" (p. 425). Just because change that threatens the status quo may trigger defiant attitudes does not necessarily dictate it will precipitate behaviors intended to thwart strategic reforms. Embracing this multidimensional perspective on employees' responses to change, and heeding Piderit's (2000) admonition to begin assessing responses to change along each of these dimensions independently, may enable the research community to move away from its fixation on resistance, revealing more fully the complexity of organizational responses to change.

By drawing attention to the distinctions between attitudinal (cognitive/affective) and behavioral responses, as well as the potential for both positive and negative responses to proposed change, the conceptual definition of facilitation introduced in this paper provides a context for advancing a theoretical model of change that accounts for the interplay of these differential responses. Theoretically, a facilitation response may be purported to occur whenever positive responses to change emerge along one or more of the three psychosocial dimensions, with the magnitude of facilitation dependent upon whether these positive responses manifest along multiple dimensions simultaneously. Resistance may be moderated, or in some instances completely counteracted, by a facilitation response that manifests simultaneously along one or more dimensions, reflecting less than absolute solidarity with a proposed change. The OC³ Model, in which facilitation takes place alongside resistance rather than only or primarily when resistance is absent, was developed to better capture the complexity of these multifaceted responses to organizational change.

Operational mechanisms underlying the OC³ Model

The OC³ Model is a process model of change developed to account for the differential impact of organizational culture at every stage of change implementation

(Latta, 2006, 2009). It provides a framework for considering the independent effects of resistance and facilitation, as well as the interaction of these differential responses to planned change. The model uniquely accounts for the impact of organizational culture on both content and process dimensions of organizational change, and allows predictions regarding the outcome of strategic change, based on the dual effects of resistance and facilitation during implementation (Latta, 2011). Elements of the OC³ Model are presented graphically in Figure 1.

The OC³ Model is comprised of eight stages organized into three conjoined feedback loops involving leadership, change management and organizational behavior. The Leadership Loop concerns the translation of a vision for change into specific change initiatives (the content of change), an activity richly informed by a leader's knowledge of organizational culture. The Change Management Loop involves the translation of these change initiatives into specific implementation strategies (the process of change) that reflect crucial elements of organizational culture. The Organizational Behavior Loop outlines the impact of change implementation on operational processes and cultural norms of the organization.

In the theoretical extension of the OC³ Model outlined below, cultural facilitation or resistance may occur during both the Leadership Loop (in response to the content of a change initiative) and/or the Change Management Loop (in response to the implementation strategies employed to affect change), based upon the consonance of the proposed changes, or their implementation strategies, with existing cultural tenets. The interaction of these independent effects determines the outcome of change predicted in the Organizational Behavior Loop.

Contingency factors determining resistance and facilitation

In accounting for differential responses to organizational change, the proposed extension of the OC³ Model takes into consideration of a number of contingency factors: the content vs the process of change; the cognitive/affective vs the behavioral response to change; and the multidimensional nature of organizational culture.

Content versus Process. The content versus process distinction is deeply embedded in extant theories of organizational change, where "the former refers to antecedents and consequences of strategic change, the *what*, and the latter focuses on the role of managers, or *how* they seem to have implemented strategic change" (Burke, 2014, p. 192, emphases in original). In the OC³ Model, the content of change is reflected in the

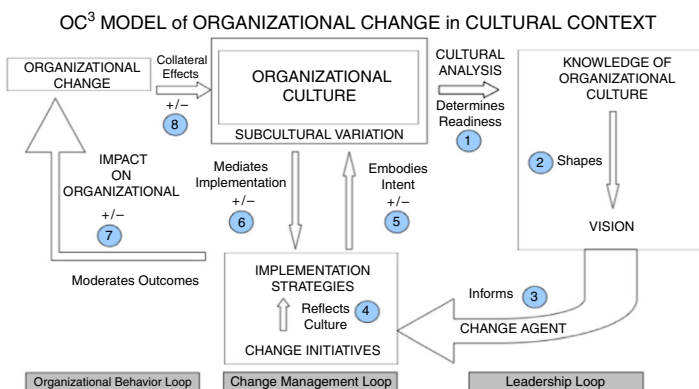


Figure 1.
OC³ Model of
Organizational
Change in
Cultural Context

Leadership Loop, where the vision for change is established and reified in a set of change initiatives. Process elements of change emerge in response to implementation strategies introduced during the Change Management Loop.

Multidimensional nature of culture. Organizational culture consists of both elements (values, beliefs, artifacts, behavioral norms and basic assumptions) and procedural rules that govern how individuals enact shared meaning systems in organizational contexts (Schein, 2010; Schultz, 1995). Cultural systems manifest by means of ethnographic, rather than rational rules, so procedural knowledge is essential to understanding the impact of organizational change (Sackmann, 1991). Knowing the elements of organizational culture is of little value if a working knowledge of the corresponding rules governing operational processes is lacking (Hatch, 2010; Martin, 2002). In the OC³ Model, cultural alignment may occur with respect to either the elemental (content) or operational (procedural) dimensions of organizational culture, or both.

Cognition/affect versus Behavior. The cognitive/affective vs behavioral distinction can be mapped onto the OC³ Model to reflect the tripartite nature of resistance and facilitation responses to change (Szabla, 2007). Much has been made of the primacy of cognitive/affective demands stemming from the content of a change initiative, based on a levels of change perspective (Argyris, 1976; Bartunek and Moch, 1987; Golembiewski *et al.*, 1976). Process models, on the other hand, while not overlooking the importance of establishing vision (Kotter, 1995) or achieving cognitive realignment (Hatch, 2000) generally assert that behavior modification is more likely to precede attitudinal shifts in cementing strategic organization change (Kanter *et al.*, 1992). The proposed theoretical extension of the OC³ Model affords a middle ground in this debate over the primacy of cognitive vs behavioral shifts by specifying the role of culture in shaping the contributions of each: within the proposed conceptual framework the content of change initiatives determine the cognitive/affective demands required, while the implementation strategies subsequently dictate behavioral mandates.

Differential predictions of resistance and facilitation

The proposed theoretical framework explicates the operational mechanisms underlying the OC³ Model, accounting for the dynamic interplay of resistance and facilitation in the context of planned change by revealing the differential responses (facilitation or resistance) to change evoked by the cultural meaning systems in an organization. Differential responses to the content of strategic change initiatives occurs first during the visioning carried out in the Leadership Loop, followed by differential responses to the implementation strategies or processes employed to affect change during the Change Management Loop. Since facilitation or resistance may be triggered by either the content or the processes of change, resistance may occur in response to either the vision or strategy for affecting change. By separating the content and process dimensions of organizational change, and considering the impact of organizational culture on each independently, this extension of the OC³ Model allows for predictions to be based on the interaction of these independent but interrelated organizational change dynamics. The two-by-two matrix presented in Table I represents the possible combinations of cultural facilitation and resistance accounted for by this extension of the OC³ Model. The nature and significance of each differential response to the content and process of change implementation will be considered separately below, before exploring the theoretical implications of their interaction.

Responses to the content of change initiatives. The initial stages of planning organizational change include: first, determining or creating readiness; second, establishing a vision; and third, crafting specific change initiatives. These steps are reflected in the Leadership Loop of the OC³ Model (Stages 1-3) which culminates in a set of change initiatives reflecting, to varying degrees, the tacit knowledge structures of the culture within the organization. Predictions of resistance or facilitation resulting from these initial stages of change are based on the extent to which the content of the change initiatives are aligned or misaligned with elements of organizational culture. The theoretical extension of the OC³ Model outlined above predicts change will be facilitated to the extent core elements of organizational culture are reflected in the content of planned change initiatives. The more consistent the vision for change is with the espoused values and basic beliefs of an organization, the less resistance leaders may expect. Cognitive and affective dimensions of resistance and facilitation are more likely to be implicated at this stage, reflecting the largely conceptual nature of change initiatives, leading to the following proposition pertaining to the Leadership Loop:

- P1.* Change initiatives that are aligned with organizational values and basic assumptions will elicit cognitive/affective facilitation, while initiatives that are misaligned will evoke cognitive/affective resistance.

Recognizing that the content of change initiatives generally reinforce some while reshaping other dimensions of organizational culture, culturally sensitive leaders may gauge the overall impact of a planned change initiative by conducting a matrix analysis reflecting the cultural alignment of proposed changes. Leaders who conduct a cultural audit prior to developing change initiatives may increase the potential for leveraging institutional values and accounting for cherished beliefs in formulating the goals of a change intervention. Predictions of resistance or facilitation based on the preponderance of cultural alignment or misalignment at this stage of change reflect the main effect of content, and are likely to be consistent with predictions derived from content models of change which emphasize the degree of cognitive restructuring required (Argyris, 1976; Golembiewski *et al.*, 1976; Porras and Silvers, 1991).

Responses to the process of change implementation strategies. Once a vision for change has been established, attention shifts from the content of the change initiatives to the implementation strategies that specify the processes by which change will be affected. The processes of change implementation are represented in the OC³ Model by the Change Management Loop where predictions of resistance or facilitation reflect the degree to which implementation strategies are aligned with elements of organizational culture. According to the proposed theoretical extension, behavioral dimensions of

	Resistance and facilitation responses in the OC ³ Model	
	Leadership loop change initiatives (content)	Change management loop implementation strategies (process)
Cultural misalignment	Response to content misalignment: cognitive/affect resistance	Response to process misalignment: behavioral resistance
Cultural alignment	Response to content alignment: cognitive/affect facilitation	Response to process alignment: behavioral facilitation

Table I.
Consequences of cultural alignment or misalignment of change initiatives and strategies

resistance and facilitation are implicated to a greater extent than cognition and affect during implementation. Predictions of facilitation of, or resistance to, change implementation are therefore based upon the alignment of implementation strategies with accepted behavioral norms and practices, leading to the following theoretical proposition respecting the Change Management Loop:

- P2. Implementation strategies that align with cultural norms of conduct in an organization will benefit from behavioral facilitation, while implementation strategies that do not accord with accepted norms of conduct risk generating behavioral resistance.

The independent consideration of process dynamics associated with change management, made possible by specifying the operational mechanisms underlying the Change Management Loop in the OC³ Model, permits predictions about facilitation or resistance based solely upon implementation strategies. The direction of these predictions may either be consistent with or discrepant from predictions of resistance and facilitation based upon the content of the change initiatives in the Leadership Loop. Thus change initiatives that are conceptually consonant with existing cultural values may either be implemented in a way that accords with, or diverges from, behavioral norms, giving rise to behavioral facilitation or resistance, respectively. Similarly, change initiatives that diverge from existing institutional values may nevertheless be implemented in a manner that is consistent with normative organizational behavior giving rise to behavioral facilitation rather than resistance. Consideration of the interaction effects resulting from the differential cognitive/affective and behavioral responses evoked by the alignment or misalignment of the content and process of change implementation becomes imperative.

Interaction of resistance and facilitation

The simultaneous consideration of resistance and facilitation, triggered independently by the content and process dimensions of change in the leadership and change management loops of the OC³ Model, creates an opportunity to explore the interaction effects inherent in determining the outcomes of organizational change that manifest during the Organizational Behavior Loop. The potential for differential responses to both the content and process of change reflected in the model sets up the possibility that resistance and facilitation may co-occur during implementation, thus providing an explanation for the ambivalence to change described by Peiderit (2000). This would occur if the content of change triggers a cognitive/affective response that is not in accord with the behavioral response engendered by the implementation strategies. Because both resistance and facilitation responses are rooted in organizational culture, this would mean that either the content or the process of change was not aligned with the tacit knowledge structures or behavioral norms of the organization.

Differential predictions about facilitation and resistance to change that take into account the independent effects of content and process dynamics during change implementation raise questions about the interaction of these dynamics in relation to the outcomes of strategic change. Four logical combinations are possible, based on the differential predictions of facilitation and resistance to change resulting from the content and processes dimensions of change implementation outlined above. These interactions are presented Table II and described in the following sections.

Facilitation interactions. Under ideal circumstances, both the content of a change initiative (Leadership Loop) and its associated implementation strategies (Change Management Loop) will be consonant with existing organizational culture.

Table II.
Main and interaction
effects of cultural
facilitation and
resistance predicted
by the OC³ Model

	Leadership loop	Change management loop	Organizational behavior loop
	Content effect ^a change initiatives (cultural values)	Process effect ^b implementation strategies (behavioral norms)	Interaction effects ^c content × process (values × norms)
<i>Cultural alignment/ misalignment</i>	<i>Cognitive/affective response</i>	<i>Behavioral response</i>	<i>Combined response</i>
Content alignment × Process alignment	Facilitation (+)	Facilitation (+)	Augmentation effect (+)
Content alignment × Process misalignment	Facilitation (+)	Resistance (-)	Undermining effect (-)
Content misalignment × Process alignment	Resistance (-)	Facilitation (+)	Prevailing effect (+)
Content misalignment × Process misalignment	Resistance (-)	Resistance (-)	Immunity effect (-)

Notes: ^aMain effect of cultural values; ^bMain effect of behavioral norms; ^cInteraction of content and process

This theoretical circumstance outcome is referred to as an augmentation effect. When both the content and the processes of change implementation predict a facilitation response due to the consonance of proposed change with organizational culture, this extension of the OC³ Model predicts the intended outcomes of change will be enhanced:

P3. Augmentation effect: when both the content of a change initiative and the process of change implementation evoke a facilitation response due to consonance with organizational culture, both the progress and intended outcomes of change will be accelerated.

However, when the content of a change initiative (Leadership Loop) is consonant with the tenets of organizational culture but the implementation strategy (Change Management Loop) is not, the OC³ Model predicts an undermining effect of process on planned change. In this case, although the content of the change predicts successful change outcomes, the model predicts the culturally discrepant elements of process will undermine the overall success of change implementation:

P4. Undermining effect: when a resistance response is evoked by processes of change implementation that are not consonant with the behavioral norms of organizational culture the success of a consonant change initiative that evokes a cognitive/affective facilitation response will be undermined, inhibiting both the progress and intended outcomes of change.

This prediction recognizes the cognitive dissonance created whenever organizational reforms dictate behavioral changes that violate cultural values (Schein, 2010) and suggests that change processes cannot be successfully employed to surreptitiously undermine organizational culture.

Resistance interactions. Similarly, when both the content of a change initiative (Leadership Loop) and its implementation strategy (Change Management Loop) are inconsistent with the tenets of organizational culture, the OC³ Model predicts that

cultural resistance will create an insurmountable barrier to change. This double source of resistance to change, rooted in both content and process, creates an immunity effect indicative of the fact that organizational change is unlikely without additional intervention to resolve the underlying sources of cultural resistance (Kegan and Lahey, 2009):

- P5. Immunity effect:* when both the content and the process of change implementation evoke a resistance response due to lack of consonance with organizational culture, the intended outcomes of change will be precluded until the underlying cultural conflicts are resolved.

Successful organizational change in this instance involves both cognitive restructuring (reframing cultural values) and behavioral reform (reshaping behavioral norms).

On the other hand, even if the content of a change (Leadership Loop) is inconsistent with the tenets of organizational culture, the OC³ Model suggests that interaction with an implementation strategy (Change Management Loop) that is consonant with organizational culture will produce a prevailing effect that overcomes culturally embedded resistance, resulting in successful change implementation:

- P6. Prevailing effect:* when a facilitation response is evoked by processes of change implementation that are consonant with the behavioral norms of organizational culture the intended outcomes of change will prevail over initial setbacks resulting from resistance evoked by a change initiative that lacks consonance organizational values.

Figure 2 summarizes the interaction effects delineated above, illustrating how culture serves as the mechanism for determining the emergence of facilitation or resistance at each stage of the change process, and the impact of their interaction on the outcomes of change implementation. Cultural alignment of the content or process of change is represented in the figure as a convex lens that serves to redirect streams of psychosocial activity in an organization, like waves of lights, so they converge at a focal point. This is cultural facilitation, where the focal point represents the stated vision for change. Conversely, cultural misalignment is represented in the figure as a concave lens, which scatters light waves, so they diverge from any point of focus. This depicts cultural resistance to change.

As illustrated in Figure 2, when there is cultural alignment of both the content and the process of change implementation, the diverse streams of cognition, affect and behavior are all brought into focus, facilitating change (augmentation effect). Under these circumstances, change is accelerated and the vision for change is brought into greater focus. If, however, cognition and affect are initially brought into focus through the cultural alignment of the change initiatives (content facilitation), but subsequent behavior is fragmented by the misalignment of implementation strategies (process resistance), the change agenda will be thwarted (undermining effect). This is a common outcome of organizational change efforts (Beer and Eisenstat, 1996). Under such circumstances, individuals may express their desire for the envisioned change and even agree that the change is warranted, but be unwilling to behave in ways consistent with the vision (Beer and Eisenstat, 1996).

On the other hand, if the content of the change initiatives are misaligned with the culture of an organization, they will engender resistance, characterized by divergent cognitive and affective responses to the vision. This resistance will only be intensified behaviorally if the implementation strategies associated with those initiatives are also culturally misaligned (immunity effect). This type of change is most disruptive, and

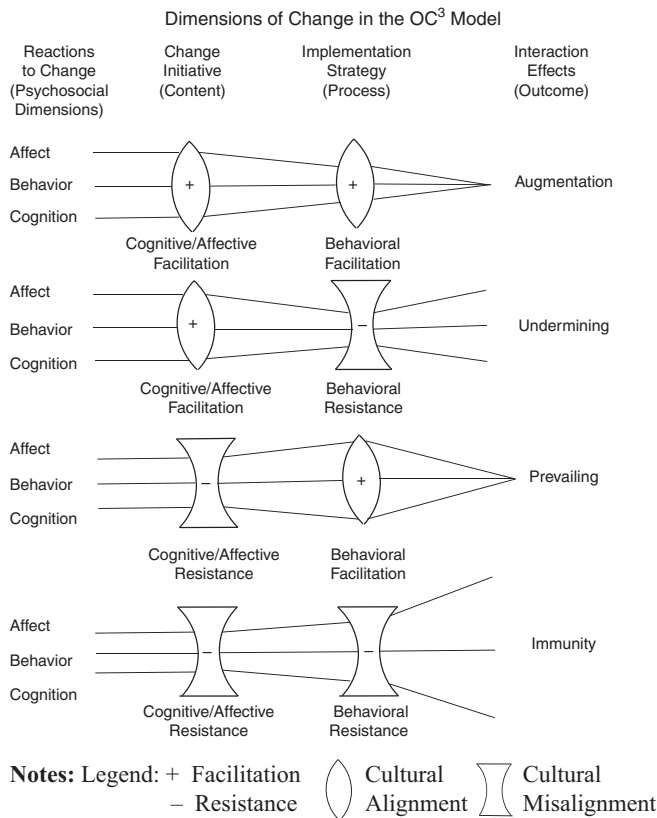


Figure 2.
Interaction of
resistance and
facilitation with
the content and process
of change

affecting change under these circumstances will not be possible unless the underlying cultural commitments of the organization and the envisioned change are examined and brought into better alignment (Kegan and Lahey, 2009). But resistance engendered by misalignment of the content of a change initiative does not necessarily lead to failure of the change agenda, if it is coupled with implementation strategies that are culturally aligned. In this case, the cognitive and affective resistance engendered by culturally misaligned change initiatives may be counteracted by the behavioral facilitation elicited by implementation strategies that align with the norms of cultural conduct (prevailing effect). Although under these circumstances, the change may take longer to reach its focal point, the vision for change should eventually be realized.

Illustrative examples of interaction effects

Each of the interaction effects outlined in the preceding analysis is illustrated below with empirical evidence drawn from multiple ethnographic case studies conducted to test the theoretical mechanisms underlying the OC³ Model.

Positive interaction effects

Augmentation effect (content facilitation x implementation facilitation). The augmentation effect occurs when a change initiative that is culturally consonant with organizational

values in terms of content is accompanied by an implementation strategy that reinforces existing behavioral norms. Augmentation has been illustrated in multiple field studies where aspirational goals that reinforce existing institutional identity were accompanied by behavioral strategies aimed at bolstering or restoring institutional artifacts and rituals that symbolized and celebrated values embodied in the change initiative. In one illustrative example, the content of a strategic plan crafted to capture latent desires of regaining pre-eminence among peer engineering institutions, and bolstering the local economy, was coupled with an implementation strategy that involved resurrecting historical symbols and rituals that reinforced that identity. Members of the organization enthusiastically embraced both the change initiative and the implementation strategy, even though doing so required sacrificing other cherished symbols that did not reflect these aspirational goals. One statement by a senior administrator captured eloquently the synergy created by this confluence of goal and strategy when commenting on one of the resurrected historical artifacts, "we know engines, we study engines, we understand engines, so using a locomotive to symbolize our aspiration of becoming the economic engine of the state makes sense to us!" (Latta, 2006). This statement captures eloquently the augmentation effect predicted by the extended conceptual framework underlying the OC³ Model when both the content and process of strategic change engender a facilitation response due to alignment with organizational culture.

Prevailing effect (content resistance × implementation facilitation). In some cases however, the content of a change initiative calls into question cherished organizational values, beliefs or basic assumptions. In such instances, the conceptual framework underlying the OC³ Model predicts cultural resistance rooted in the content of a change initiative can be overcome by employing implementation strategies that are consistent with, and reinforce, existing behavioral norms. This prediction is also supported by evidence from multiple field studies, as exemplified by efforts to increase interdisciplinary collaboration at a research university with a long history of autonomy among academic units. In this case, the content of the strategic change initiative drew resistance because increased interdisciplinarity was inconsistent with culturally embedded values governing the independence and autonomy of academic units. The initiative was nevertheless successful because an implementation strategy was employed that afforded academic units local control over the proportion of their personnel budgets allocated to these interdisciplinary positions. At the same time, incentives were put in place to encourage cross-unit collaboration in the creation and filling of these new faculty positions. The goals of the change initiative were thus realized despite initial resistance, due to the cultural facilitation engendered by the processes subsequently used to affect change. From a theoretical standpoint, this example illustrates that forces of facilitation generated by culturally consonant implementation strategies (process) can create a prevailing effect on change initiatives that may be initially resisted based solely upon the countercultural implications of their content.

Negative interaction effects

Undermining effect (content facilitation × implementation resistance). One of the most theoretically significant contributions resulting from the proposed extension of the OC³ Model is the explanation it affords for why change initiatives fail even when members of an organization embrace stated aspirational goals. This outcome is predicted when a culturally consonant change initiative is paired with an implementation strategy that fails to accord with tenets of organizational culture. The resulting interaction produces

an undermining effect, as illustrated by an organization that built state-of-the-art research laboratories which employees refused to utilize because they would only be allowed access as long as they continued to bring in outside grant funding. This stipulation was perceived as violating behavior norms of the institution, where researchers had previously been permitted to inhabit laboratory space in perpetuity regardless of fluctuations in external funding. This example illustrates the detrimental effects of combining a culturally consonant change initiative (promoting cutting-edge research) with an implementation strategy that violates long established behavioral norms (conditions governing access to laboratory equipment). This and other empirical evidence from the field support the proposition that culturally inconsistent implementation strategies interact with culturally consonant change initiatives to undermine planned change, as predicted by the extended conceptual framework underlying the OC³ Model.

Immunity effect (content resistance × implementation resistance). The immunity effect occurs when a change initiative that is misaligned with cultural values is combined with an implementation strategy that violates behavioral norms of an organization. The negative effects of this interaction is purported to be insurmountable without targeted efforts to address underlying cultural discrepancies. One illustrative example involved an unsuccessful attempt at collaboration among scientists from different disciplines. Responding to an initiative aimed at increasing interdisciplinary research, a group of statisticians joined forces with an engineering team to work on a grant-funded project. When the group encountered an impasse, the statisticians agreed to develop a novel solution, only to have it subsequently rejected by the engineers who settled instead on a less elegant work-around that relied on existing technology. As predicted by the conceptual framework extending the OC³ Model, the cultural commitments of these scholars from different disciplines (the statisticians' commitment to creating new knowledge and the engineers' to relying on tried and true solutions) resulted in an unsatisfying attempt at collaboration, sending both groups back into their separate silos. The interaction of cultural resistance emanating simultaneously from the content and process of change implementation strategy results in an immunity to change that can only be overcome by acknowledging and modifying competing cultural commitments.

Contributions and implications of the OC³ Model

Leading organizational change is an integral component of effective leadership (Bass and Bass, 2008). Resistance to change constitutes a significant conceptual and practical concern for theorists and practitioners seeking a deeper understanding of factors determining the success of strategic change initiatives (Erwin and Garman, 2010). Conceptualizing facilitation as a counterpart to resistance introduces a perspective

on the nature and dynamics of change leadership that creates new directions for theory and research.

Exhibiting a similar tripartite psychosocial structure, manifesting cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions, both resistance and facilitation are purportedly rooted in organizational culture (Latta, 2006; Oreg, 2003). In capturing the potential for employees to embrace novelty and innovation in organizations (Boden, 1990; Vishwanath and Barnett, 2011), facilitation bears some similarities to other positive organizational responses to change (i.e. readiness, acceptance and commitment). This view of facilitation contrasts

with previous dualistic models that portray positive psychosocial outcomes to be the result of a linear progression from resistance to commitment, resembling the stages of the grief process (Coetsee, 1999; Judson, 1991). Rather than being mutually exclusive states that represent polar opposites, resistance and facilitation appear to co-occur simultaneously, affording an explanation for employees' previously unexplained ambiguity toward proposed change characterized by a lack of congruence among thoughts, actions and emotions (Latta, 2006; Piderit, 2000).

The theoretical framework advanced in this paper asserts that the interaction effects of culturally induced resistance and facilitation responses to change are predictable and manageable. By modeling the differential psychosocial responses to the content and process elements of change independently, this theoretical extension of the OC³ Model permits the separate sources of resistance and facilitation to be isolated, providing a conceptual framework for exploring the interaction of these countervailing responses (Latta, 2009). Four interaction effects emerged from this analysis: augmentation, undermining, prevailing and immunity. These predictions permit change agents to move beyond considering resistance to be an inevitable response to change (Latta, 2011). As Piderit (2000) suggests, it is much more likely that proposed change will evoke a range of ambivalent attitudes. A leader who utilizes these interaction effects to consider the cultural implications of both change initiatives and implementation strategies, from within the theoretical framework of the OC³ Model, will be prepared to leverage cultural sources of facilitation to correct for latent threats to organizational culture before resistance emerges. Figure 2 was designed to provide an accessible tool for leaders of change to utilize with target populations. Pilot tests suggest that incorporating the familiar symbols of convex and concave lenses affords the image an intuitive appeal that renders the complex theoretical concepts underlying this extension of the OC³ Model immediately accessible to practitioners and targets of change.

The overall message for researchers and change agents is that neither the content nor the process of change implementation alone is sufficient to predict successful organizational change when taking into account the influence of organizational culture. Cultural alignment of both the content and process of change portends the greatest amount of facilitation, while misalignment of both predicts levels of resistance unlikely to be resolved without cultural re-engineering. When the content and processes of change are differentially aligned with organizational culture, more favorable outcomes are predicted when the implementation strategies align with the behavioral norms of the organization, despite change initiatives that may violate certain values or basic beliefs. Less favorable outcomes are predicted when strategies for implementing change require employees to embrace behaviors that diverge from cultural norms, regardless of how consistent the vision for change is with cherished institutional values and beliefs. These predictions accord with research showing that attitudes toward change are poor predictors of behavior change (Wanberg and Banas, 2000), and that behavioral change can precipitate changes in beliefs and attitudes (Jimmieson *et al.*, 2004).

In addition to distinguishing organizational responses to the content and process elements of change, the theoretical extension presented in this paper positions the OC³ Model as the first theory of change to identify and account for the positive, amplifying effects of organizational culture on change, and to delineate the cognitive, emotional and behavioral dimensions of this facilitation construct. The theoretical relationships depicted in Tables I and II can be used by researchers to generate causal hypotheses that take into account both the valence and the multidimensional nature of responses to organizational change, based on both content and process elements. An important

implication highlighted by this extension of the OC³ Model, with respect to understanding both resistance to change and its facilitation, is that the source of these organizational responses holds considerable significance for the success of strategic initiatives. According to this view, facilitation and resistance resulting from the content of a change initiative does not have same impact as that engendered by the implementation strategies adopted to affect change. Thus, if the source of resistance is rooted in the content of a change initiative, culturally aligned implementation strategies may provide a necessary corrective for achieving desired outcomes. On the other hand, an implementation strategy that violates tenets of organizational culture may threaten to derail a change initiative that is culturally aligned with respect to its content. If these propositions hold true in empirical trials currently underway, the OC³ Model will provide a valuable corrective to extant theories of change that afford equal importance to all culturally embedded sources of resistance, and fail to account for the counterbalancing effects of facilitation.

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