

# Handbook of Organizational Change and Innovation

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*Edited by*

Marshall Scott Poole

Andrew H. Van de Ven

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## Preface

This handbook had its beginnings in the 1980s and 1990s, a time of ferment in research on organizational change and innovation. Breaking the mold of traditional stage theories, researchers posited theories of change and development incorporating new explanations based on evolutionary processes, dialectics, institutional economics, structuration theory, and complexity theory, among others. This blossoming of theory was stimulated in large part by concurrent major social changes. Organizations were growing larger in vertical and virtual connections, merging and acquiring others with colliding cultures, reducing employment and relying on more temporary workers, hiring more technical/professional workers, interfacing in more competitive international and global economies, and adopting highly distributed and flexible work and information technologies. The net result was that organizations were becoming more pluralistic and interdependent. These changes reverberated throughout nested hierarchies of organizations. They both affected and were affected by changes in the identities, jobs, and careers of individuals; the use and development of work and project teams; organizational innovation, transformation, and restructurings; and evolution of industries, populations, and more encompassing systems.

This multiplicity of theories and issues offered new chords for researchers to strike, but could also descend into cacophony due to the sheer variety and complexity of ideas. The objective of this handbook is to harmonize new trends in organizational change and innovation research. The various chapters organize and integrate theories and research on organizational change and innovation at different levels of analysis. The handbook presents a “state of the art” view of theory that we hope will serve as a springboard for further advances in this area.

The idea for this handbook can be traced to our experiences in the Minnesota Innovation Research Program (MIRP). This project began in 1983 with the objective of developing a process theory of innovation in organizations and society. Fourteen research teams, involving more than 30 faculty and doctoral students at the University of Minnesota, conducted longitudinal studies that tracked a variety of new technologies, products, services, and programs as they developed from concept to implementation in their natural field settings. Initial findings were published in *Research on the Management of Innovation: The Minnesota Studies*, edited by Andrew Van de Ven, Harold Angle, and Marshall Scott Poole (1989; and reissued by Oxford University Press, 2000).

By documenting the historical and real-time events in the development of a wide variety of innovations, this volume provided a broad comparative look at how innovations emerged and developed over time. A second study, *The Innovation Journey* by Andrew H. Van de Ven, Douglas E. Polley, Raghu Garud, and Sankaran Venkatraman (Oxford, 1999), developed an in-depth analysis of three new product innovations from the original set.

The MIRP studies highlighted the need for theories of change processes and for methodologies specifically adapted to developing and testing process theories of organizational change and innovation. Workshops to address these needs eventuated in the publication of *Organizational Change and Innovation Processes: Theory and Methods for Research* by Marshall Scott Poole, Andrew H. Van de Ven, Kevin Dooley, and Michael E. Holmes (Oxford University Press, 2000).

As we worked on these projects, we were struck by the variety of theory and research on organizational change and innovation. The literature was vast and spread across a number of disciplines. A number of useful and powerful theories had evolved, but they had often developed in relative isolation. It was difficult to see the bigger picture that showed relationships among theories and possibilities for integration. We identified leading scholars who had worked in developing theoretical traditions and charged them to develop broad, theoretically driven reviews that encompass the best of previous research and break new ground on their subject. Several presented their initial thoughts at the 1999 Academy of Management Conference in Chicago as part of an all-Academy symposium on the conference theme, "Change and Development Journeys into a Pluralistic World." We continued to work with author teams for the next several years, and the result was this handbook.

Each chapter of this handbook sums up and assesses the state of knowledge in its area and builds on this foundation to advance a new view. The chapters advance our thinking by developing integrative theories, by establishing connections among theories from different fields and research traditions, and by introducing new lines of inquiry. In our work with these authors we have been constantly impressed by their ability to combine careful scholarship with creativity. We thank them for undertaking the diffi-

cult task of bringing order to the extensive range of theory and research they synthesized.

The result is a book that we hope will serve as a springboard for another two decades of research on organizational change and innovation. The great Elizabethan Francis Bacon wrote, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." We think that this handbook offers something for those who just wish to taste and swallow. But we believe and hope that it proves to be a book that is chewed and digested by many students of organizational change and development.

We are indebted to a number of people and organizations who supported this work. The Office of Naval Research supported the Minnesota Innovation Research Project with a grant from 1983 to 1986. The Decision, Risk and Management Science program of the National Science Foundation, and in particular its director Arie Lewin, provided encouragement and support for the first conference that introduced these methods. The second and third conferences were sponsored by the Consortium of Centers for Organizational Research and the Strategic Management Research Center of the University of Minnesota.

Herbert Addison of Oxford University Press helped us envision this handbook and provided valuable guidance in the early years of this project. In his distinguished career as Oxford's executive editor of business books, Herb has made major contributions to management and organization science. His able successor, Martha Cooley, was a source of encouragement and faith in the project, and though she moved on to other pursuits, her imprint on this book is lasting. Frank Fusco and John Rauschenberg of Oxford University Press steered this project through its final stages, and we are grateful for their steady hand. Thanks also to Lisa Stallings for her help in managing the manuscript through to production. Julie Trupke of the University of Minnesota contributed to the editing of several chapters, adding considerably to their readability, and performed yeoperson's work in obtaining permissions. We also thank Clarissa Martinez of Texas A&M University, who checked and rechecked references with precision and patience.

We dedicate this book to our parents Edward and Helen Poole, and Arnold and Josephine Van de Ven.

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