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November 2005

Grounded Theory Review, Vol 5 (Issue #1), 55-78

The online version of this article can be found at:

https://groundedtheoryreview.org

Weathering Change: Coping in a context of pervasive organizational change

By Michael A. Raffanti, Ed.D., J.D.

Abstract

This study of organizational change was conducted using classic grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).   Most of the relevant data came from open-ended intensive interviews with educators—classroom teachers, professional developers, learning specialists, administrators, and student teachers. Theoretical sampling was also done in organizational settings such as businesses, nonprofits, and religious institutions. The theory of weathering accounts for how organizational members continually resolve their main concern of survival in the face of pervasive change. *Weathering* is a basic social-psychological process that enables individuals to endure changes in a manner consistent with their personal and professional needs, goals, and values. In the *sizing-up* phase, an individual initially confronts an impending organizational change. In the *filtering* phase, one decides how to cope with the change by processing the information through personal and professional filters. The outcome of filtering determines the behaviors exhibited in the *coping* stage. *Coping* is a set of behaviors that are best characterized as *resisting* and *acquiescing*. The study suggests that leaders consider the complexities of *weathering* behaviors as they seek to implement organizational changes.

Introduction

Relentless calls for reform are etched in the consciousness of American public educators. As debate continues to rage among policy-makers and scholars over high-stakes testing, accountability, and educating an increasingly diverse society, administrators and classroom teachers face the grassroots pressures of improving test scores and student learning.   Despite a wealth of

theoretical and practical writings on school reform, implementing change remains as challenging as ever. As Evans (2000) observed, "Organizational change—not just in schools, but in institutions of all kinds—is riddled with a paradox. We study it in ever greater depth, but we practice it with continuing clumsiness" (p.4). By examining the "human side" of school reform, Evans sought to illuminate the psychosocial factors of organizational change that rational-scientific approaches do not fully consider.

Contemporary scholars of the change process recognize that complex organizational processes are best understood through systems thinking. As Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1998) noted, "Since human organizations are filled with living beings…this process can't be described in neat increments. It occurs in the tangled webs of relationships—the networks—that characterize all living systems". (p. 1) With its focus on discovering patterns of behavior, classic grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978) is an ideal, and underutilized, methodology for understanding, explaining, and predicting the patterns of social behavior that occur in complex organizational contexts. A theory that is grounded in the psycho-social behaviors of actual participants in change contexts affords researchers and leaders a "controllable theoretical foothold" through which to implement sustainable change. A grounded theory truly addresses the complex, human side of change.

Methodology

Grounded theory is a systematic, empirical, and primarily inductive research methodology. The purpose of the methodology is to generate theories directly from data to explain social behavior. The theory that emerges from analysis of the data accounts for how participants in an action context continually resolve their relevant issues and problems (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theorist enters a substantive area of study and begins to collect data, usually through open-ended intensive interviews or participant-observation. Rather than pre-establishing interview subjects or generating a list of questions at the

outset, the researcher follows the data where it leads through theoretical sampling, the continuous collection and comparative analysis of data. (Glaser, 1978)

In constant comparative analysis the researcher open codes the data. That is, one compares incidents, freely and abundantly generating codes in the margins of the notes, transcripts, publications, and other data sources (Glaser, 1998). Open coding generates substantive codes, which summarize empirical data in the substantive area, as opposed to theoretical codes, which conceptualize how the codes interrelate. The core variable is the category that emerges from comparative analysis of data and serves as the foundation for the theory. It recurs frequently, links various data, and allows for maximum variation in accounting for behavior in the action scene. Through coding, memo writing, and theoretical sampling for more data as indicated by the analysis, a relevant grounded theory — linked together by a core variable — emerges.

This study fully embraced openness to all forms of data for analysis. As Glaser (1998, p.8) proclaimed, "A basic tenet of grounded theory, one that particularly grabs its devotees, is that 'all is data.' [The researcher] need only see what incidents come his way as more 'data' to constantly compare, to generate concepts, and to induce the patterns involved." The "grist" for this study included the following:

- Open-ended intensive interviews with over twenty individuals involved in educational reform (classroom teachers, administrators, student teachers, consultants)

- Group interviews with student teachers;

- Participant-observation in a public elementary school;

- Participant-observation in professional development activities;

- Online teacher diaries;

- Videos of teachers engaged in professional development;

- Ethnographic studies of teachers engaged in change processes;

- Personal reflections/journals on change experiences;

- Scholarly literature on organizational change and school reform.

The Theory of Weathering Change

Through constant comparative analysis of data, the theory of *weathering change* emerged. Weathering is a basic social-psychological process that enables individuals to endure changes in a manner consistent with their personal and professional needs, goals, and values. This study discovered that, rather than focusing on implementation of reform measures, teachers in pervasive change environments are most concerned with various forms of survival.

Conditions

There are five factors that combine to create a problematic situation in which weathering behaviors result. First, the receiver of the communication of a change initiative understands it to be imposed. Second, the change communication is perceived as emanating from a person or position of authority. Third, the receiver of the change message believes the imposed change to be accompanied by expectations of accountability for implementation. Fourth, the change message is delivered in a context of pervasive change. Finally, the change produces apprehension. If each of these conditions is present weathering behaviors in an organization become highly likely.

Stage One: Sizing-Up

Sizing-up, the first stage of the *weathering* process, is the initial mental processing of a change initiative. Weathering has begun, meaning that the individual already feels apprehensive about the change. Thus, emotions play an immediate and vital role in *weathering* from the outset. The stage is marked by uncertainty, indecision, and perhaps fears. Such visceral reactions impact one's initial

impressions of the initiative. Although some deliberation occurs, *sizing-up* is primarily reflexive in character.

Sizing-up is not only an internal mechanism; as a meaning-making stage, the social dimensions are of tremendous significance. That is, the meaning that one constructs of a change initiative is derived not only through mental processes, but through social intercourse. People gather information from observing others relate to the same issue. They also gain insight by interacting with other meaning-makers around them. Thus, principles of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) are integral to the *sizing-up* process. Through *weathering*, individuals negotiate the meaning of organizational changes through a process of interpretation and self-communication. In the *sizing-up* phase, people negotiate meanings and choose responses through the behaviors of recording and taking cues.

Recording

Recording behaviors enable people to gather information that is used to size-up and filter change initiatives. While engaged in receiving communications, people are recording data to "play back" during the filtering stage. People record not only content that is presented by the authority imposing the change, but also imprint their emotions and instinctual responses.

Initial impressions "frame" perceptions of the environment in which the change was communicated. According to Goffman's (1974) theory of frame analysis, frames arrange what part of reality one sees based on the context. Whether one experiences an event as a command versus a collegial invitation depends not only upon words, but upon the entire context—location, formality, and other symbols. Frames guide perceptions and therefore help determine how and if a change is to be weathered.

Taking Cues

People encountering change take cues from the social context. In other words, as individuals form their initial impressions of the change being imposed on them, they consider the behaviors of other organizational members.

Taking cues frames perceptions and helps create meaning. The two main types of behavior that color the atmosphere are *nay-saying* and *buying-in. Nay-saying* is an effort to influence the change process by those desiring to voice discontent and "rally the troops." The behavior, when observed, recorded, and sized up by others, has the potential to galvanize opposition or create support for the change, depending upon how people respond to the person nay-saying.

Buying-in communicates an active acceptance of the change initiative as it is presented. *Buying-in* is similar to *nay-saying* in that it is a public behavior. But the individual communicates, through words and actions, enthusiasm rather than discontent. They are part of the *weathering* process because of their social influence. In fact, leaders utilize *buying-in* behaviors of core organizational members in order to sway peers. As one teacher recalled,

> My principal took me aside before a staff meeting where we were to decide about shifting funds to his pet program. He asked me to argue for his cause because he felt that other teachers respected me and would go along.

Reputations and loyalties are relevant factors that weatherers take into account as they record both nay-saying and buying-in.

Stage Two: Filtering

The second stage of the weathering process is *filtering*, which is a means for deliberating how to cope with an imposed organizational change. The individual evaluates the change and possible alternatives for action through both professional and personal filters. *Filtering* takes information recorded during the *sizing-up* phase and compares it with preexisting internal filters or schemas. People weigh options and manipulate as close a fit as possible with both personal and professional considerations. People filter change initiatives based on a benefit analysis, an appraisal of what would be the advantages and disadvantages of various actions with

respect to the change. *Filtering* is done with the head and the heart, and encompasses instincts, emotions, rationalities, and desires. Filtering produces results that are consistent with personal logics.

While initial responses in the *sizing-up* phase are reflexive, *filtering* is a deliberate process that shares significant commonalities with other conceptual models found in organizational theory literature. For example, the concept of mental models sheds light on the construction of filters. Mental models are "deeply engrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (Senge, 1990, p.8). Filters emerged in this study as types of mental models used for a specialized purpose—to endure or weather change.

Filtering is the activity of using filters in a decision-making process. The application of filters is comparable to symbolic interactionist theories of inner dialogue (Blumer 1969). The process of *filtering* is both internal and social; one self-communicates and imaginatively rehearses alternative behaviors before choosing a course of action. *Filtering* is interpretive and comparative. The actor interprets the meaning of the relevant change data (symbolic objects) with reference to his or her own personal and professional filters.

People filter organizational change initiatives according to their professional paradigms. A professional paradigm, as the term is used in this study, refers to prevailing conceptions of what it means to be a member of a profession such as teaching. Although paradigms are established in the social sphere, individuals have their own emphases and modes of interpretation within a paradigm. Thus, one's operational paradigm is a conception of work-related interconnections and his or her place within that framework. For teachers, the professional paradigm is synonymous with a philosophy of teaching—core beliefs about curriculum, instruction, assessment, discipline, and management. In the current atmosphere of high stakes testing, teachers find themselves making such thoughtful analyses and judgments; they must budget their time

based on what they want to accomplish. As one middle school teacher related with respect to curricular changes that require teachers to prioritize test preparation,

> I don't teach to the test. That's what other teachers are doing. They teach students formulas for writing that will help the score well on the WASL. I don't follow that line of reasoning. I focus on making them good writers; research shows they have to write at least 900 words a week to improve. My core belief is that I'm preparing each student for college. They all know that it's my expectation they will go to college. I'm too young to compromise my ideals. I'm too young to give up on my beliefs about teaching.

Educators use *filtering* to determine how they will protect their deeply held beliefs about the profession of teaching.

Organizational members filter change initiatives according to their own career orientations. This concept differs from professional paradigms by focusing instead on issues such as length of service and attitudes toward one's position in the organization. For example, *long-hauling* refers to a career orientation which contemplates remaining with the organization for what the individual considers to be a substantial period of time. *Long-hauling* is a future-looking orientation: "I will be here for the foreseeable future." The consequence of *long-hauling* on the *filtering* process is that it produces a propensity to seriously address changes and how they will impact the work environment. There is a sense of organizational ownership.

Conversely, *short-timing* refers to behaviors and attitudes reflecting the intent to leave the organization soon. The orientation may also reflect an indifference to one's length of stay. *Short-timing* is most often a filter of people nearing retirement or departure due to other reasons. An educator illustrated this point as follows: "[T]he older teachers roll their eyes and start complaining…the older teachers, they're not going to do it [teach the new curriculum]" (Broner 2003, 93). The

significance of *short-timing* in the *filtering* process is its accompanying lack of ownership in organizational affairs. There is also fearlessness toward decisions about imposed change. *Short-timing* brings a sense of personal autonomy to *filtering.*

Careering is a set of behaviors that incorporate a concern for the progression of one's career. *Careering* leads to changes being filtered according to their likely impact on one's career. Factors include career advancement, sense of professional worth, and feelings of belonging to a profession. *Careering* overlaps with aspects of professional paradigm related to respect and how one perceives the role of one's position in an organization. *Jobbing* is the antithesis of careering. The person engaged in *jobbing* filters change initiatives based on how it will impact day-to-day job activities. Of course, *careering* incorporates such considerations as well, but does not emphasize them.

Filtering of organizational changes involves both professional and personal factors. These considerations overlap, as one's professional identity is interwoven with one's personal life. Yet the distinction between professional and personal filters is relevant to the theory of *weathering,* as people discuss their change-related decisions as if the two filters were separate. Personal filters are comprised of two principal categories—personal agendas and emotions. One component of personal filters is the personal agenda. The value one places on financial concerns, social issues, and personal fulfillment impacts workplace decision-making.

Organizational change produces emotional reactions; indeed, apprehension is one of the conditions that give rise to weathering. Despite idealistic notions of professionalism, workplace decisions have emotional properties of various intensities. One's core beliefs about what it means to be an effective teacher are tied to issues of self-identity and fulfillment. When a change is proposed that might interfere with these deeply held notions, or other personal agendas such as financial and familial concerns, emotional responses are inevitable.

Fear is the most prominent emotion comprising personal filters. People fear organizational change for a variety of reasons. Teachers fear changes that highlight inadequacies in skills or training, not wanting to appear incompetent to leaders, peers, parents, or students. Ironically, teachers fear looking too competent, as the norm is egalitarianism. To buck the culture means to incur the wrath of others and to be ostracized.

Organizational members often feel frustrated by change. One of the primary reasons for this emotional response is perceived time constraints. Teachers almost unanimously filter information based on frustrations over time (and corresponding compensation issues). As one educator complained, "We don't have the time structures to be able to do everything that is on the plate…[we]still have only 7.5 hours (in the school day), and you can't jam it all in" (Downie 2003, 138).

People filter change initiatives through feelings of being overwhelmed. Teachers express a general feeling of being overwhelmed by the many changes that are being put forth and feel that they cannot do what is expected. Even one who usually embraces change can become so overwhelmed by changes that he or she will resist. As one educator noted, "This is becoming too much for me. And I used to like change. Go figure."

Stage Three: Coping

The third stage of the *weathering* process is *coping*. In this phase, organizational members respond to changes based on the outcome of *sizing-up* and *filtering*. *Coping* behaviors range from resistance to acquiescence. People may engage in more than one coping behavior with respect to the same change initiative. And, as *weathering* is a recursive process one may repeatedly size-up and filter an initiative. Reinterpreting the situation may lead to a shift in *coping* strategies based on altered circumstances or perceptions. Recycling through the weathering process is common as the organization revisits the initiative, especially with regard to lengthy rollouts and multifaceted

programs. *Coping* is a set of behaviors that fall under two categories: *resisting* and *acquiescing*.

Resisting

Organizational scholars frequently cite resistance as a major issue in their studies. In this study, interviewees almost universally mentioned resistance to change as a relevant factor. In discussing resistance one interview subject noted,

> When I was a new teacher, I constantly rode the crest of the wave…Yahoo! Here we go. I came in with the business mentality of, if you don't change, you die. In teaching there is more of a let's wait attitude. There is a huge elephant saying, "everyday that we go forward, we lose. We have to be careful." I think that everyday we hold back, we lose. These two diametrically opposed forces can balance each other out so that nothing happens.

The statement captures important elements of *resisting*. The behavior is in stark contrast with an eager embrace of change; rather than propelling an initiative forward, resistance slows the rate of change. *Resisting* is not anti-change per se. Although *resisting* includes *sabotaging* behaviors, the concept also incorporates behaviors that include incremental, partial, and careful movements toward change.

Finally, the quote depicts resistance as a force. In fact, the notion of "resistance to change" was introduced into the organizational theory literature by Kurt Lewin (1951), who used the term as a systems concept. As Dent and Goldberg (1999) argued, Lewin's original conception—that resistance is a force impacting all organizational members equally—has grown to be considered a psychological concept. That is, organizational studies tend to portray resistance as a personal, leadership versus staff phenomenon. According to Dent and Goldberg, this popular conception is inconsistent with the dynamics of change. The grounded theory methodology enabled the author to consider the intricacies of behaviors that

participants commonly referred to as resistance.[i] The following paragraphs explain the various types of resisting behavior that emerged in this study.

Sabotaging

Sabotaging is a type of resisting that seeks to hinder the change process so that it will be easier to endure. *Sabotaging* differs from other resisting behaviors in its aggressive stance toward the change initiative and is similar to *nay-saying* during the *sizing-up* stage. The behavior is usually motivated by a sense that the imposed change will negatively impact the individual's personal working environment. Additionally, *sabotaging* may be directed at organizational leadership and structures rather than the change itself. In *sabotaging*, there is an extreme disconnect between the organizational member's perceptions of acceptable change and the leadership's vision. Rather than mere avoidance of the change or waiting it out, *sabotaging* takes the offensive. When *sabotaging,* one attempts to exert influence over an imposed change through behavior calculated to derail or stall implementation of the change.

Sabotaging, in the context of the *weathering* process, is a covert behavior. It is hidden from view of the leadership; working openly against an imposed change risks severe repercussions such as dismissal. Such behavior would run counter to the purpose of *weathering*, which is endurance and survival. On the other hand, *sabotaging* is well-known to colleagues, who often respond with aversion to individuals who engage in the behavior. They are labeled "saboteurs," with a focus on the perceived personality type rather than the behavior.

Hiding Out

Hiding out is primarily an avoidance strategy. While overlapping with some forms of *sabotaging*, the specific intent is different. People *hiding out* do not attempt to influence the change initiative, but only seek to protect themselves. *Hiding out* allows organizational members to fly under the radar and go about their business. That

business might very well include implementing the imposed change. However, *hiding out* enables one to implement changes without being seen, so that frailties and imperfections remain unexposed.

The isolationist culture prevalent in schools (Fullan, 2001) is a breeding ground for *hiding out* behaviors. The two primary reasons teachers cite for *hiding out* are a lack of respect and a lack of time. They grow accustomed to not being trusted to exercise professional judgment. Thus, they do not want to open the door to work with others who seem to display superior knowledge such as specialists or coaches. This is also because of time constraints involved with change. *Hiding out* behaviors create an invisible shield that teachers hope will protect them from unwanted forces of change. Teachers persist in using the same methods and materials for decades. This has become a part of many school cultures so that even those who are not opposed to change will engage in *hiding out* if it suits their interests. One respondent admitted, "If I disagree with a change, I shut the door and do what I need to do." The behavior is reinforced and recurring; teachers can take refuge in this isolationist culture.

Biding Time

Biding time is closely related to *hiding out*. However, while people *hiding out* may be engaged in implementation, *biding time* avoids the change, waiting until it goes away. Consistent with *hiding out*, people choose this behavior when their personal and/or professional needs, goals, and visions do not align with those of the leadership. They wait for a change in the leadership or in organizational priorities. It takes less energy to wait it out than it does to negotiate. Teachers are reinforced in their reliance on the fleeting nature of organizational change, which is a constant in education. Teachers know that more change will always come and feel that it is "lightweight"; they can ignore some of the changes "without the threat of repercussions" (Peligian, 2004, p. 96).

Biding time is a skillful strategy. One develops a knack for knowing when and how to bide time. An experienced

teacher noted that "you become savvy about what is going to be an enduring change and what will just slide by. Some stuff you just 'forget' to do because no one brings it up again." A constant cycle of change creates an atmosphere where *biding time* becomes an important alternative. When one program is replaced, said a veteran teacher,

> We know it will come back again but with a different name… [We] become cynical, and that's not a good role model for younger teachers, who are seeing everything for the first time. But we say, 'Here it is again.'

Changes in leadership elicit *biding time* behaviors. There may be a long line of leaders who are not change oriented, then there is a "shock to the system" when someone joins the organization who expects rapid change. Organizational members know that *biding time* and *hiding out* are both viable options because after leaders depart, changes often fall by the wayside.

Illusioning

Illusioning is a coping strategy that contains elements of both *hiding out* and *biding time*. One illusions in order to keep the truth hidden. But, unlike *hiding out, illusioning* includes an overt act of pretense to create the illusion of compliance. One is able to achieve similar results to *biding time* through *illusioning*, but, through partially complying to create an illusion, one is positioned for success if the initiative takes root.

In the teaching context, such illusions include bulletin board displays of student work to create the appearance that a new curriculum is being used regularly when, in fact, the teacher relies primarily on the replaced curriculum. Another form of *illusioning* is slick "dog and pony shows" during principal observations. Peligian (2004) cited an excellent illustration:

> Nancy resisted by accommodating and partially complying with some of the teaching practices. She displayed the point system from the curriculum on a wall but used it occasionally. When the director

> came into the room, Nancy acted like she was
> following the curriculum but as soon as the director
> left the room, Nancy continued teaching her way.
> (p. 85)

Illusioning also takes place at meetings, where one skillfully chooses words and actions to convey an illusion of compliance. The communications can be characterized as "vaguing out" (Glaser 1998), as people dodge detailed questions with generalities.

Deflecting

Deflecting[ii] is another *coping* behavior that, like *illusioning*, is an active means of protecting oneself from a change initiative. Through *deflecting,* organizational members attempt to redirect actions and communications that would bring attention to their noncompliance with a change initiative. This is accomplished in a variety of ways. Some, when confronted with change talk, bring up trivial details or try to shift the focus to a rehash of past decisions. *Deflecting* has the effect of derailing the communication and also soaks up time so that the real business of change cannot be addressed. This "agenda-controlling"[iii] ploy is common in teacher staff meetings, where the principal has a limited time to address many issues and collective bargaining agreements do not permit meetings to spill over the allotted time. One of the typical *deflecting* behaviors is to bring up scheduling conflicts when trying to arrange a meeting or event that would push an initiative forward.

One teacher, who embraced a particular change, decried the *deflecting* behavior of co-workers: "Everyone bitched about the curriculum. They nitpicked the guide we developed [for a new program]. They scapegoated so they wouldn't have to do it." Such behavior is similar to *illusioning*, in that people pretend to have a particular concern, when the underlying reason is one that they do not want to divulge. They deflect the conversation to areas that stay away from exposing their true beliefs and intentions. Teachers often do not discuss the real reasons

for decisions about a change initiative. They vocalize concerns about an initiative's impact on students, when the subtext is actually, "this is going to make my life difficult."

Bargaining

Bargaining is a *coping* strategy that requires tacit agreements between an organizational member and a leader. For example, there are unspoken agreements between principals and teachers as to changes that can and cannot be ignored. Through *bargaining*, teachers are able to exercise the freedom to do what they want as long as the students are learning. The principal must agree that the ends count more than the means of getting there. *Bargaining* is intricate play-acting through which the leader pretends to be treating all organizational members equally, but in reality has struck bargains with individual members. *Bargaining* is co-illusioning in which both parties protect themselves from the consequences of open disregard for a change directive. In schools, principals turn a blind eye as long as a teacher is willing to put up a show. A veteran teacher noted,

> People close the door and do what they want. They put on a performance when it's time to be evaluated. They have time to prepare and know when it's coming. As a principal told me, 'you play the game when the game is needed, then you do what you need to do the day after.'

Some teachers strike bargains by taking on leadership roles. They resist changes by making themselves indispensable in various ways, currying favor with the upper hierarchy. As one teacher noted, "They establish a name for themselves outside of the classroom, like as a coach or sponsoring a club. They volunteer to fill this need and the principal won't chastise them for not following the new programs." In this way, when a change comes around that the person decides to resist, the person has minimized his or her risk of being reprimanded.

Acquiescing

Organizational members also choose to endure a change initiative by *acquiescing*. This may seem counterintuitive, for the outward behavior of acquiescence resembles one who has embraced change. But, rather than signaling that one is *thriving*, *acquiescing* is merely a sign of resilience in the face of change.[iv] The individual chose to acquiesce, despite feeling the weight of pervasive change and despite defense mechanisms that might have urged resistance. People acquiesce to endure the change (which they might believe to be merely a flavor of the month) or to at least get through the initial negative emotions. Those who acquiesce have determined that their professional and personal filters are best served by following directives. *Acquiescing* is a defensive mechanism, a sort of white flag that leads to implementation without full buy-in.

By the Booking

By the booking is an extreme form of *acquiescing*. One decides to follow the change directive to the letter. In "crossing all the t's and dotting all the i's" one is able to construct an air-tight fortress. Going by the book is playing it safe; one feels under the pressure of pervasive change and copes by doing what is required. *By the booking* is usually accompanied by overt questions such as, "Exactly what do I have to do and when is the deadline?" There are two conflicting motivations for going by the book. The principal reason for *by the booking* is a fear of accountability. However, one may choose this strategy in order to undermine the initiative by following the letter but not the spirit of an initiative.

Some people choose *by the booking* in order to be absolved of the responsibility to exercise professional judgment. Especially when there are gray areas (which some will use to exercise freedom), those going by the book choose the course that is most black and white. Thus, a teacher, rather than attending to hints that it is okay to pace the curriculum as he or she sees fit, will go by the book and follow a pre-determined pacing schedule, even if the teacher disagrees with its utility.

Good Little Soldiering

"I can't do it all. It's impossible. But I try." Such are the sentiments of a respondent who regularly engages in *good little soldiering*. It is a strategy that differs from *by the booking* in two significant ways. First, while *by the booking* has an undercurrent of "resisting-by-doing," *good little soldiering* is a good faith effort to meet leadership expectations. Second, *good little soldiering* embraces professional judgment. That is, although rules-following is highly regarded, there are times when one must exercise judgment in order to meet the spirit of the change initiative. This is what leaders expect. Thus, unlike one engaged in *by the booking*, *good little soldiering* anticipates that one will disregard the minutiae of a directive if it would interfere with the overall vision of the leadership.

Good little soldiering is the only option that some people have for *coping* with the implications of pervasive change. Although one may disagree with the initiative on professional grounds, and although the changes may create personal hardship, one chooses *good little soldiering* out of a sense of organizational duty: "I accept the changes. My job depends on my ability to follow the rules that are set by the state, the district, and the school."

Good little soldiering is closely aligned with *bargaining.* That is, one engaged in *good little soldiering* uses that acquiescence as leverage to later strike a bargain. In that way, one may alternate back and forth between *bargaining* and *good little soldiering*. The account balance of good will is a factor to be filtered along with other factors.

Despite appearances, *good little soldiering* is a *weathering* behavior. As teachers who have tried the behavior indicate, *acquiescing* in spite of apprehension or disagreement with the leadership may eventually build to the point of resistance. Those who are continually in the thick of change efforts can experience burnout as they endure the stresses of pervasive change.

Discussion

The theory of *weathering change* contributes to the ongoing discussion of implementing school change. The

study indicates that even educators who agree with reforms and who value improved student learning find themselves engaged in *weathering* if the environment is laden with change. Thus, even when *coping* strategies includes partial compliance (e.g., *illusioning*), substantial good faith compliance (e.g., *good little soldiering*), or full compliance (e.g., *by the booking*), implementation is not necessarily the central consideration. Rather, "getting through" is often the focus, which displaces both psychic and physical energy away from the business of instituting and sustaining change. Unless leaders and change agents learn to recognize and address *weathering*, this phenomenon will continue to derail reform efforts.

On the other hand, this study does not address *weathering* pejoratively; grounded theory does not label and thereby judge people, but instead names behaviors and links patterns of behavior together to form a coherent explanatory theory*.* The theory then provides a measure of understanding, predictability, and control. *Weathering* behaviors are neither positive nor negative in themselves. But recognition of the underlying patterns can help change agents to formulate interventions that take into account the reality of *weathering*.

This author encourages researchers to utilize the grounded action (Simmons & Gregory, 2003) approach to develop effective interventions to address the underlying problems that give rise to *weathering*. Grounded action, an extension of grounded theory, offers a systematic approach for generating an operational theory directly from the explanatory grounded theory. An operational theory is a set of predictions about outcomes that would arise from implementation of specific action steps. The theory is presented as an action plan which can take a variety of forms, including program designs, policies, and procedures. The explanatory theory must be compared to relevant components of a social or organizational problem in a specific action context so that the intervention emerges as relevant to that particular context.

Future research (whether using grounded action or other approaches) should consider the leverage points that

weathering change provides at various stages of the process. For example, one might analyze measures to diminish *weathering* at the outset of an initiative (and increase *thriving*) in an organization by taking steps to reduce apprehension. To address *sizing-up*, researchers might investigate alternate rituals and structures for communicating change that would promote positive note taking and cue taking by organizational members. With regard to *filtering*, principles of adult learning suggest that interventions might focus on mental models (Senge, 1990) and critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995); in this way, people would be encouraged to revisit their personal and professional filters.

The theory of *weathering change* applies not only to teachers and schools, but to other organizational contexts as well. Although most of the data in the study are from the educational context, this study compared data from other organizational contexts to add variation to the theory, thereby enhancing its applicability, with modification, to other substantive areas. This ability to be generalized outside the initial unit of inquiry is a hallmark of grounded theory, setting the methodology apart from other naturalistic forms of inquiry that are descriptive rather than explanatory. Armed with a theory that explains underlying patterns of behavior, change agents are more likely to develop interventions and programs that are relevant and workable for participants in the action context.

Endnotes

[1] The author considered not using the term "resisting" in the study because of its pre-existing connotations in the literature. However, inasmuch as the term was uttered by many of the participants (in vivo), it was important to reflect this language in the study. The behaviors explained in this section center around what participants considered to be resistance.

[2] Patnode's (2005) grounded theory of shoring-up also identified deflecting as a protective behavior engaged in by politicians to redirect attention and buy time.

[3] Regalado-Rodriguez' (2001) grounded theory study of organizational change identified "agenda-controlling" (96) as a behavior through which individuals attempt to shift the focus of an undertaking.

[4] Although the study found incidents of "thriving" with respect to change, that concept fell outside the scope of the theory of weathering. But inasmuch as people both thrive and weather with respect to organizational change, discovering connections between the two concepts could prove fruitful for understanding the full panoply of change responses.

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