ARTICLE

BLENDING AMELIORATIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES IN HUMAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS: A CASE STUDY

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This paper describes the challenges and benefits of an action-research project with a Nashville-based nonprofit human service organization. In our view, outmoded human service organizations are in serious need of innovation to promote psychological and physical wellness, prevention of social problems, empowerment, and social justice. This project aims to develop and evaluate value-based organizational processes and outcomes designed to transform human services. Although the goal of moving human services from ameliorative to transformative approaches is invigorating, our efforts have revealed expected and unexpected barriers to this process of change. Two main barriers are a strong cultural current working against change and irregular pacing of the change efforts. Positive outgrowths of the project include a new organizational philosophy that includes attention to issues of justice and equality, and changing individual and organizational beliefs and practices. Clear messages regarding the changes desired and a highly participatory process have facilitated these initial outcomes. © 2007 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

A number of persisting and stubborn paradoxes beset health, human, and community services. Although it is widely accepted that a strengths-based approach is more humane and engaging than a deficit orientation, many institutions require their workers to embrace a retrograde way of categorizing people (Mullaly, 2002). Although prevention is acknowledged to be better than cure, research indicates that the vast majority of public resources, up to 99% of them, are allocated for treatment and rehabilitation (Nelson, Prilleltensky, Laurendeau, & Powell, 1996). Although the praises of empowerment have been sung for quite a while now, a vast number of community residents feel detached, alienated, and out of control when it comes to receiving services or interacting with health, human, education, and community service workers. Finally, although the limitations of person-centered interventions have been widely documented, a transition toward efforts for community-wide and systemic changes has been terribly slow in coming (Albee, 1998; Smedley & Syme, 2000; Stokols, 2000, 2003). So entrenched is the reigning paradigm that well-documented alternatives, even ones that have been empirically validated, have failed to make a dent in the dominant modus operandi of health, human, and community services (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). For reasons having to do with the power of tradition, habituation, and the status quo, we reinforce a helping industry that is out of step with the dire realities of disadvantaged communities.

In light of the shortcomings of a deficit-oriented and reactive approach that fails to empower people or to change community conditions, we wish to pursue an alternate method we call SPEC. The acronym stands for strength-based approach, prevention, empowerment, and changing community conditions. We claim that these four complementary elements need to be implemented simultaneously in health, human, and community services. But easier said than done! Anyone who has tried to change the dominant paradigm can tell stories of enthusiasm and despair, hope and hopelessness, and above all, false starts. Naively perhaps, our team is engaged in the Sisyphean task of trying to implement the SPEC approach in a number of agencies serving people troubled by class, race, and gender inequities; unemployment; lack of access to health care; mental health problems; family challenges; and other contextual psychosocial issues. We are invested in this process, and we are invested in learning from our own mistakes and small wins. Unless we methodically and rigorously work to understand how changes in helping professions and institutions take place, the proverbial boulder will keep rolling down, crushing workers and community residents alike. In this paper, we introduce the paradigm that guides our work, we present a theoretical framework to explicate changes in helping agencies, and we use a case study to test and elaborate our ideas. The main aim of the paper is to ground our understanding of change processes in an actual case study that is informed by, and has informed, theory building, research, and action.

CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

Ameliorative and Transformative Paradigms

The term *ameliorative* refers to an approach to health, human, and community services that cares for people who have already been afflicted by some psychological, physical, or social ailment. This paradigm is a composite of several values, beliefs, and practices that predominate in helping professions and attendant institutions (Nelson & Prilleltensky,

Table 1. Main Features of Ameliorative and Transformative Paradigms

Features of Human Services		*Ameliorative Paradigm*	*Transformative Paradigm Adds….*
Salient Values		Health, caring, compassion, growth, self-determination	Human diversity, collaboration, participation, social justice, interdependence, humanism, egalitarianism
Belief/Ideology/ Assumptions	Social beliefs	Freedom, individualism, inequality	Humanitarianism, community, equality
	Economic beliefs	Competitive capitalism with some government intervention, mixed economy	Government intervention, social priorities, equal distribution of society's resources
	Political beliefs	Representative democracy, pluralism	Participatory democracy in both governmental and nongovernmental areas
	Problem definition Source of suffering	Individual and interpersonal sources	Community sources, such as prevalence of violence and poverty
	Assumptions	Individuals are responsible for their own well-being	Equality, liberty, solidarity, and cooperation shape individual, relational, and community wellness
	View of client	Victim, helpless, recipient	Agent, participant, resource
	View of human growth	Independence	Interdependence
	Preferred actions	Personal reform, advocacy, limited social reform	Collective and systemic, social justice
	View of H.S./ social welfare	An instrument to modify negative aspects of society	An instrument to promote equality, solidarity, and community
	Ethical considerations	Based mainly on individual ethics	Based on individual and social ethics
Practice/Action	Focus of intervention	Individual and family	Systems in the community affecting personal, interpersonal, and collective wellness
	Timing of intervention	Reactive	Proactive
	Type of intervention	Expert-driven	Collaborative partnerships, community empowerment
	Target of intervention	Child, adolescent, parent, family	Schools, government policies, and community conditions
	Content of intervention	Skill building, self-help, therapy, cognitive	Advocacy, community empowerment, consciousness-raising, organizing policy change
	Role of those seeking services	Mainly passive recipient of services	Active collaborator in creating community change
	Decision making	Professional driven	Community participation
	Type of caring	Proximal	Distal
	Health promotion	Personal	Public and community
	Desired outcomes	Improved functioning at the personal and family level	Improved access to vital services, such as health care, child care, transportation, and public education

2005). Table 1 describes how we are conceptualizing the various components of the ameliorative and transformative paradigms. The table, designed to contrast human service paradigms, was informed by theoretical concepts from critical psychology (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002), critical social theory (Fay, 1987), and radical and structural social work (Gil, 1998; Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997). The table denotes how the transformative paradigm can enrich the ameliorative paradigm by enhancing the scope of the latter. In our view, the transformative paradigm cannot fully replace the ameliorative, but can complement it in significant, powerful, and crucial ways. A shorthand for the transformative paradigm is the SPEC acronym we alluded to earlier, which stands for strength-based approach, prevention, empowerment, and changing community conditions.

Elsewhere, we have documented the rationale for the transformative paradigm (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005). Suffice it to say here that it is backed by considerable theoretical support, but it lacks research to guide its implementation. Parts of it have been tried in different settings, but a comprehensive and intentional process devoted to its adoption by community organizations is still missing.

Organizational Transformation

To make a shift toward blending the ameliorative with the transformative paradigm in the beliefs and practices of human service organizations requires an intentional process of change. Change of this kind requires more than simply refining mission statements or adjusting program delivery—it requires organizational change of the transformational kind. Many organization theorists and change thinkers have professed the distinction between incremental, developmental, evolutionary, or "first-order" change and transformative, discontinuous, revolutionary, or "second-order" change in human systems (Burke, 2002; Gersick, 1991; Kuhn, 1970; Nadler, Shaw, & Walton, 1995; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). These authors would agree that the main difference is that first-order change occurs within a given system that remains, structurally, unchanged, whereas second-order change alters the system itself. More specifically, second-order change or transformative change means that power is being distributed differently. When talking of a paradigmatic organizational change in human services, we are speaking of second-order change: changes in the system's structure, role relationships, premises, rules, or assumptions governing the system as a whole (Seidman, 1986).

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

Organizational transformation is a complicated endeavor for human service workers and organizations that have deeply held habits, orientations, assumptions, identities, and routines. According to Edgar Schein (1985), deeply held assumptions are part of organizational culture. These are assumptions that have "worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to external adaptation and internal integration problems" (p. 9).

Organizational transformation requires uncovering those underlying assumptions and attending to them as part of the change process. Our approach to organizational change

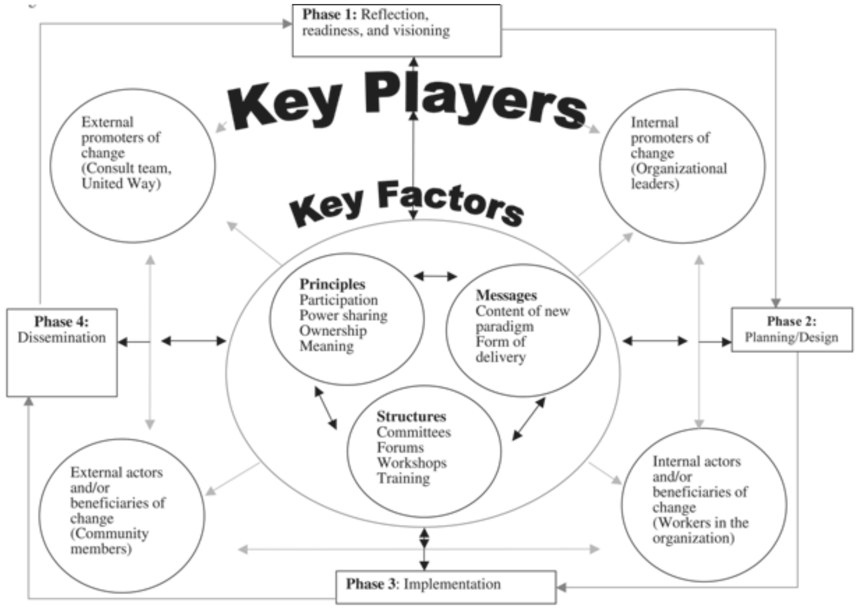
Phase 1: Reflection, readiness, and visioning
Key Players
Key Factors
External promoters of change (Consult team, United Way)
Internal promoters of change (Organizational leaders)
Principles
Participation
Power sharing
Ownership
Meaning
Messages
Content of new paradigm
Form of delivery
Structures
Committees
Forums
Workshops
Training
Phase 4: Dissemination
Phase 2: Planning/Design
External actors and/or beneficiaries of change (Community members)
Internal actors and/or beneficiaries of change (Workers in the organization)
Phase 3: Implementation

Figure 1. Collaborative action model.

assumes that changes in assumptions and beliefs at the individual and organizational level precede changes in practice. However, we also hold that new attempts at transformative practice can also drive changes in how individuals and organizations think about their work.

The identity of human service workers and organizations is bound by the assumptions and ideologies of the social context. Organizational transformation of this magnitude in human services not only has to address internal culture, but also has to overcome external constructions of their role in community. These are critical implications, especially as they pertain to expectations and requirements of funding agencies. The human services funding environment constrains their focus to service provision and individual outcomes. At its peak in 1971, less than 1% of foundation grantmaking went to support nonprofit advocacy activity (Salamon, 1993). Paradoxically, for many human service organizations, this transformation may be needed in order to remain relevant or simply survive in communities.

THEORY OF CHANGE

In an effort to understand how a transformative paradigm may be implemented, we developed a framework consisting of key elements, phases, and players (see Figure 1). The framework, based on theory as well as on our own grounded experience trying to make change, is predicated primarily on models of value-based partnerships (Krogh, 1998; Nelson, Prilleltensky, & MacGillivary, 2001). It may serve as a guide for the implementation of a transformative paradigm in health, human, and community services.

The outer border denotes the four phases of change: (a) visioning, reflection, and readiness; (b) planning and design; (c) implementation; and (d) dissemination. The key players include internal and external agents of change, as well as internal and external beneficiaries of change. Three key elements include message of the change, principles to follow in the process, and structures to enable the intervention. Evaluation and sustainability engulf the entire model, as they are inextricably linked to success. By definition, we want to promote a change that is sustainable and effective.

We maintain that successful efforts at change depend on the synergic interactions of players, phases, and elements. A clear message cannot be sustained in the absence of structures to promote it, and enabling structures without principles and values, such as ownership, respect, equality, and collaboration, lack integrity. None of the key elements can thrive in the absence of respectful relationships among the various players. When all the players dance in synchrony, we believe that changes will last and reflect the message and the values of the intervention.

This framework grew out of our early efforts to make change with our partner organizations, and is continually being applied and reevaluated as the project unfolds. In the following sections, we use it to reflect on one case study in particular and examine what aspects of our case support the framework or challenge it.

THE SETTING

The organization highlighted in this study (hereafter referred to as "Island") is a nonprofit, community-based human service organization that serves teenagers and families in Metro Nashville, Tennessee, and surrounding counties. There are approximately 40 staff members working in three main program areas: Crisis and Residential Services, Youth Leadership Development, and Community Counseling Services. The Crisis and Residential Services department offers shelter and counseling for teenagers who are homeless or in crisis at home, and transitional services for older teens aging out of foster care or attempting to leave the streets. The Youth Leadership Development branch focuses on opportunities for young people to be involved in the community. It offers leadership development training and support groups of teens as they engage in service, civic participation, and activism. The Community Counseling Services team offers counseling and prevention services through individual, family, and group sessions, all provided according to a sliding-fee scale, based on ability to pay. All services are offered through one of Island's four facilities or in partnership with schools or other community organizations.

Island has been operating in Nashville for 35 years. The agency began in the late 1960s as a community-based counseling program for runaways, homeless teens, and teens experiencing drug- and alcohol-related problems. It was originally staffed by volunteers and was a drop-in center by day and a crisis line at night. In the early years, Island also became a place for people to come for any reason: bad drug trips, abusive or neglectful parents, mental illness, or isolation. Surprisingly, many of those who came were primarily men coping with the realities of deinstitutionalization. In 1980, the agency changed its mission and narrowed its services to focus only on adolescents and their families. Over the years, the professional counselors, social workers, crisis workers, and volunteers of Island have worked with teens and parents, helping them in times of crisis and providing teens with opportunities for leadership and service. Out of this experience, the community agency developed a national reputation. Island is considered, by many in the field of youth development, to be the nation's most comprehensive and innovative agency for teens and their families. The organization has a strong commitment to diversity and takes seriously its responsibility to promote staff well-being.

Nashville is the capital of Tennessee and a vital transportation, business, and tourism center for North America. The Nashville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), in the state's center, comprises eight counties and a population over 1 million. Metropolitan Nashville Davidson County has a population of 569,891 and, according to the 2000 Census, the population of Nashville is 67% White, 26% African American, and 5% Hispanic or Latino. There is no income tax in the state of Tennessee; therefore, cities rely on property taxes and the sales tax on food, clothing, and other basic necessities. In this way, based on relative income, Tennessee forces low-income individuals and families to pay over three times as much taxes as high-income individuals and families do. This is because all citizens, regardless of income, pay the same amount of taxes for food or other basic goods. The resulting small tax base in Tennessee leaves many social services strapped for resources. Education in Tennessee is severely underfunded—Tennessee ranks 45th in the amount of funding per pupil in K–12 schools. Although the Nashville-area economy is still relatively strong, with unemployment figures generally below the national average, the disparity in poverty between the core county of Davidson and the surrounding counties risks serious economic consequences for the city.

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

CASE DESCRIPTION

Background on Action Research Relationship

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

These initial discussions led to several more meetings to explore how Island could bring values of social justice and interdependence to the foreground. The organization, in partnership with the authors, decided to form a "Transformation team" (T-team)

OUR PHILOSOPHY

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

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

We are all better when these values are in balance

To put these values into action, we will:

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

We commit to uphold these values with

Youth and their Families
Our Employees
Our Organization
Our Community

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

Figure 2. Island philosophy statement 2003.

made up of staff members at various levels of the organization. The T-team was to drive the change process, with the authors serving as external consultants. This T-team met regularly in the spring of 2003 and began by clarifying the organization's shared values in the individual, relational, and collective domains. These shared values and desired ends were fashioned into a philosophy statement that now guides the change process as well as organizational decisions (Figure 2).

Sources of Preliminary Data

This is an action research project with a naturalistic qualitative design. The primary source of data for this case study comes from participant observation in T-team meetings, department meetings, leadership meetings, organizational planning sessions, and other organizational events and activities. Additionally, individual interviews with staff, organizational documents, and newspaper clippings have been utilized as other sources of data. Furthermore, the consulting team has engaged in regular reflection sessions on this process and the emerging themes from these sessions have been added to the analysis and contributed to theory building.

The authors have been engaged with Island as participant observers and consultants in the change process for over two years. On a regular basis, we have been attending and participating in T-team meetings, board meetings, department meetings, intra-agency planning sessions, and other organizational events and gatherings. Additionally, we have worked with the leadership in one-on-one and group settings to promote the process of change.

PROCESS OF CHANGE

Although this project evolved organically, there were some clear hopes for what would change in the organization through this process. When using the language of a paradigm change, several theorists describe a paradigm as a "taken for granted reality" that encompasses values, beliefs, and practices (Ford, 1975; Gil, 1998; Ife, 2002; Mullaly, 1997; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Tornebohm, 1977). The following sections will describe the shifts in values, beliefs, and practices that we have been witnessing at Island. Furthermore, the changing discourse will be highlighted both as a means and an end for the change process.

Salient Values

Recognizing that meaningful organizational change in human services is built on organizational values (O'Toole, 1995; Proehl, 2001), this is where our work with Island began. The organization embarked on a highly participatory process of clarifying the shared values of the organization. What became clear in this process is that although values such as social justice, egalitarianism, and interdependence were profoundly important to many in the organization, these values had been relegated to the background. Because of the primacy of caring for those in need and responding to crisis, values such as caring, compassion, and personal growth had been most salient. The process of exploring their shared values in light of personal, relational, and collective well-being helped to highlight those values that had been neglected in the organization. As they began to incorporate these neglected values into a new philosophy statement, this explicitly shared understanding of values became an important shift for individual workers and the organization as a whole. As the new statement was being finalized, staff members began to see their personal values around social justice, communion, and equality institutionalized through a shared philosophy. As one manager put it, "The statement expresses what I value and it is deeply fulfilling to know that others do as well, and to hear people state them publicly in this way is reaffirming and energizing."

The development of a new organizational philosophy statement proved commitment and gave staff members a symbol that provided direction and anchored hope in the face of uncertainty and ambiguity. This is crucial, as Peter Senge (1990) has noted, because staff resistance to change is minimized when organizational commitment to that change is high, and perceived as such.

Changing Beliefs and Assumptions

The development of a new organizational philosophy statement that includes previously neglected values led to some intense reflection. As the new philosophy statement was being developed, staff members, teams, and the organization as a whole had to wrestle with deeply held theories regarding the sources of client suffering and the role of human services. Despite the fact that the organization had historically viewed its clients as resources, this new philosophy challenged it to expand this agentive role.

Sources of Suffering. Although many staff members felt that there were larger social forces impinging on their clients' well-being, most held that it was the individual's response to those forces that was the source of suffering. If only clients could simply develop better coping strategies and enhance personal strengths, their suffering would cease. Through ongoing discussions, presentations by the consulting team, and strategic evaluations of existing approaches and results, a shared understanding of harmful systems, policies, and community conditions began to emerge. Many teams in the organization began to use the technique of "exploding the issue" to broaden their understanding of the root causes of the problems they were addressing. This approach challenged staff to go beyond individual sources of hardship to look for economic, cultural, and political sources of suffering and wellness. As the work on the new philosophy continued, this internal reframing of the causes of distress for youth and families spread throughout the agency.

View of Human Services. At the same time this reframing was happening, another important assumption was being challenged: the role of human services and the human service worker. This continues to be perhaps the most disorienting part of the shift for the workers at Island. Initially, the expression of shared values around social justice and well-being was energizing to the workers. It was inspiring and offered hope for many who had become disenfranchised with the difficult and endless work of healing individual wounds. This new direction spoke to staff members' passions and gave them a way to begin to see how they could make a real difference together. However, as work began on implementing the new philosophy, staff quickly realized that this new approach affected their roles, their positions, and the work of the entire agency.

The support for innovation expressed by staff is influenced by the repercussions of the innovation itself on their own work (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993). During this stage, many staff members at Island were asking what the change meant for their jobs. This was especially salient for those who were in clinical or crisis service jobs. They began to ask what does it mean to be a counselor under this new philosophy? Counselors, social workers, and psychologists on staff began to feel their helping identities become less certain in the context of this change. Several workers reported: "It is hard enough for me to get my head around this new approach; how am I supposed to encourage and support youth to take action?" Thinking about the problems their clients face, and possible solutions in a new, more complex way, led many workers to doubt their own competencies and strategies. Although this process was disorienting and even led some people to question their ability to remain in the organization, the process of questioning was a necessary step in this organizational transformation.

Another important shift concerned the role of human service organizations. For many, the view that human service organizations were merely supposed to ameliorate suffering was quite entrenched. Although many intuited that broader change might be necessary in order to promote well-being, they figured that such change was best left to other organizations.

For example, the director of Island came to the organization after years in the business world. He arrived in the human services sector intending to play a role in helping people better handle the pressures of society. Like many others, he was thoroughly attached to the charitable model that focused on the amelioration of suffering. His belief that individual change was the answer came into question as he took part in reflections during the creation of the new philosophy statement.

> It has been a real education and awakening for me to realize this [changing community conditions] is what this is all about, and that's what I want it to be about as a leader and as a person. That has been a big shift for me.

This shift for the leader of the organization was key—without his full support and guidance, other workers would not have been as invested in this change process. With his leadership, the organization began to create a new vision for Island and for human services in general. They began to aim higher than the mere provision of services and started seeing the organization as an instrument to promote community, solidarity, and equality. For Island, this meant much more attention would have to be paid to community sources of suffering and change.

View of Clients. Island has long held the view that youth and families are resources, not merely recipients of services. As the change work continued, however, Island began to expand this already positive view of clients to assert that youth and families can be agents of change in their own lives and in the community. This expansion allowed staff to envision creative ways to partner with young people in the community to address problems that affect their families. Here is how one manager described this shift in perspective:

> I think we've broken through some of the conventional distinctions between staff and clients. I used to believe that it was staff's responsibility to achieve our mission on behalf of those we serve. In our new philosophy, there is not that distinction. Staff, youth, and families are all part of the action that helps create a more vital and caring community.

Changing Discourse

The primary organizational change, thus far, for Island has been a transformation of discourse. Beyond being merely an outcome of the change process, this changing discourse has been the engine of change for theory and action. The question of whether understanding precedes action or action leads to understanding is an ongoing debate. However, it is clear, in our case, that changing discourse facilitates deeper understanding and may be a necessary antecedent for strategic action. It is also clear that how they talk about their work as an organization is important to the clarity of vision. This clear vision guides the action, provides accountability, and galvanizes staff around a single charge. Because of the messages and concepts introduced by the consultants, and the participatory work on the development of a philosophy statement, the organization has a new language for their work in the community. This language has infused internal structures such as team and leadership meetings, staff supervision, and official documents. Additionally, staff has been using this new language to describe their work to external stakeholders and community partners.

One example of the changing discourse has to do with the target of change. Before engaging in this change process, the target of change was often exclusively referred to as young people and families. As this process unfolded, the need to promote community outcomes permeated the discourse and staff began to hold each other accountable to use language that frames problems and solutions in individual *and* social terms. This is further exemplified in their new language around empowerment. Whereas before they would often speak of the need to empower young people to make change, now they are explicit about the organization's unique role in also "leading the community to increase opportunities for youth to give back and participate in meaningful ways." Using language that shifts the target of change from individuals and families to include community and systems is a powerful way for Island to redefine its role in the community. In addition, this shift also entails an acceptance of the political nature of Island's new perspective: Operating in the realm of political action is no longer seen as a "dirty" thing for a human service organization to do.

Practices

Currently, Island is struggling with how to enact this new philosophy through its programs and practices. It is experiencing an internal disconnect between a new ideology and old practices. There is also a tension around the need to both rethink existing programs, some of which have secure funding, and to create new initiatives that may or may not be easily funded. Staff experience particular anxiety when it comes to figuring out how best to measure the outcomes and impact of planned social interventions in order to sell the ideas to funding agencies. They are constantly asking themselves, "Is this good enough?," and resisting old habits of resorting to measuring individual change. At this time, they are in the process of methodically and critically analyzing each existing program in light of the new philosophy to see what programs need to be continued, changed, created, or scrapped. Although they have yet to radically change their external practices, some changes are happening inside and outside of the organization.

One example of a new external practice that reflects a shifting philosophy involves setting up youth civic action teams in Metro Parks community centers. This is a new project that began after receiving support from the federal Americorps program and a local foundation. These civic action teams will be based within Metro Parks community centers, located in five of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. From these neighborhood bases, they plan to engage youth in addressing community issues of concern to them and their peers. The goal is to "help disadvantaged youth act as key agents of change in their own lives, engaging them in activities with the potential to transform the community conditions creating problems in their lives." Although engaging youth in community service opportunities is not new for Island, what is new is the goal of partnering with youth to change community conditions.

Internally, Island has formed a task force to look at all organizational policies and procedures to critically analyze alignment with the new philosophy. For example, one of the new foci is "justice and equality." As they began to design external programming that works toward these goals in the community, it was clear that they also needed to have just policies and practices addressing the treatment of their own workers. They have already revised their staff performance appraisal process to mirror the philosophy and stated impact areas. One internal justice issue that has since come to the fore is the fact that many part-time, relief staff employees are working nearly 40 hours a week at less than a living wage in relation to the Self-Sufficiency Standard. Additionally, some relief staff members are offered health insurance coverage and some are not. One supervisor recently had to help one of her part-time staff members apply for food stamps, even though she was working between 30 and 40 hours a week. It became painfully obvious to staff that they cannot, in good conscience, be out in the community educating about, and advocating for, living wage policies if they are not practicing what they preach.

Changing Internal Norms of Participation. A critical part of the new philosophy statement is the explicit attention to applying SPEC principles (strength-based approach, prevention, empowerment, and changing community conditions) internally as well as externally. We have been careful to remind staff members that changing *how* they do things is as important as changing *what* they do. One of the major process outcomes of this work has been changing internal norms of participation. From the beginning, the T-team included staff from all levels of the organization. The T-team was also charged with interviewing other staff and youth about values to inform the development of a new philosophy. When it came time to develop ideas for new action, cross-team "councils" were formed to support participation, enhance cross-team dialogue and learning, and increase the quality of the ideas. Worried about efficiency and expediency, management frequently challenged this new norm of participation. However, we continued to advocate for expanded participation. This often required creativity around scheduling and staff coverage, but the new process of participation was honored.

Changing Decision-Making Processes. In addition to changing levels of participation, the new philosophy gave the leadership a tool for making organizational decisions. This has been especially apparent with regard to new program opportunities and funding. The director described using the tool this way:

> I'm definitely looking at new opportunities more closely, especially now that we have the four impact areas (safety and growth, belonging, empowerment, equality and justice). Every day something new washes on the shore up here whether it's a new program or a new opportunity to bid on something. It has just given us a filter to use. There is a lot that some youth development organizations would jump on, but we are starting to step over and move on because it doesn't fit. At the end of the day, is it going to advance [the philosophy]? That is an important learning for me. When I first got here, I wanted to do it all.

The philosophy statement has also begun to be critical in personnel decisions and in team and leadership meetings. Staff have ideas for formulating interview questions that are rooted in the philosophy, and other teams are planning on sending the statement to finalists to help interviewees discuss and decide on organizational fit. The director utilizes it when handling difficult management situations and in preparing for leadership meetings.

> I keep the philosophy statement on my computer . . . and read it before I go into meetings, particularly directors' meetings. We get so wrapped up in how we are going to change the world and it has got to start with them first. The pieces about "nurturing the vision that make the impossible possible" and sharing power are valuable. I try to use it to remind myself on how I conduct meetings, how I draw participation out.

Individuals Acting in the Community. One unexpected outcome of this change process has been staff members acting differently as citizens. There has been an increased realization of the need to act politically. One staff member in her late twenties who described herself as apolitical, and who had never voted before, decided to register to vote. Another staff member attended a state committee hearing to speak out on the issue of gay marriage. Both credit the presentations and organizational discussions that were a part of the change process with helping them understand the connection between policies and well-being and the need for advocacy.

Acting Differently Through Existing Programs. Not only is the organization looking at new opportunities differently, it is also implementing existing programs in new ways. The clearest example of this is how youth volunteer and leadership programs are being transformed into avenues for youth organizing and civic action. Traditional leadership opportunities are being refashioned as youth leadership programs for social action. As staff members become more confident and energized by the new philosophy, they are more willing to support young people in strategizing ways to change community conditions. Additionally, the counseling team recently held a clinical forum to generate ideas on how they can practice in ways more aligned with the organizational philosophy.

Spreading the Message. Finally, another unintended, but highly significant, result of the changes at Island is the dissemination of the transformative paradigm message to outside parties. Since the very first moments of this partnership, Island's director has been championing the new approach with other organizations, funding agencies, and city leaders. The staff has taken on roles as educators, teaching young people, parents, and community partners about the need for new ways of making change. This external championing has attracted the attention of the local United Way agency, which has asked the consulting team to expand this effort to three other local human-service organizations. This United Way office has also asked for help internally in learning how best to promote and support transformative approaches. Certainly, this outcome has been beneficial for the work of our team, but it is more important for Island, as it has begun to seek out and create an environment hospitable to its new "face."

SUMMARY OF KEY LESSONS LEARNED

What Worked?

Messages. Since the earliest stages of the relationship between Island's staff and our team, it has been messages of primary prevention and participatory, community change that stir the organization to action. These messages, initially delivered as a series of presentations and discussions, speak to the staff members' experiences and hopes for the work they do. The language of the messages was intentionally crafted with human service workers in mind, aiming to maximize the personal connection (blending real-life stories, metaphors, examples of working programs, and startling statistical data), and minimize any possibility for alienation (by avoiding highly politicized terms such as "social justice" or "activism"; staff members themselves initiated the subsequent use of these words through their understanding of the transformation efforts).

As the relationship developed into a project, the messages around prevention, participation, and community change developed and deepened. They have become a driving force for momentum on the project, and have been used by the agency for the basis of its philosophy statement, as well as for subsequent work in new program development. Even now, nearly two years since the initial presentation by our team, the main message continues to compel action: It is a useful prompt during ebb moments of the project that can guide staff back on track. These messages have also resonated with other human services across Nashville—one particular metaphor has been heard being used several times in different, indirectly related contexts by different people.

Structures. There have been two major peaks of intense, concentrated energy in our project. These peaks involved high levels of participation and input by the entire staff, and appeared to be exemplary moments of transformational change within the organization. Notably, they both involved structured activity in which staff members worked in ways and arrangements they had never tried before. These were new and engaging tasks aimed at eliciting participation. These two moments were the creation of the philosophy statement and the formation of cross-team councils to brainstorm new programming ideas.

The development of a new philosophy statement was a critical component in helping shift beliefs and practices in the organization. As was highlighted in previous sections, this document represented the heart of the organization and served to galvanize staff around shared values and purpose. It has been used as a litmus test for organizational decisions and program quality, and has begun to guide how people work with each other in Island. This statement aims high, and uses phrases such as social justice, equality, and sharing power. It also suggests that people in the organization have a responsibility to hold each other accountable to these aims internally and externally. Most importantly, the *process* of formulating this statement was a valuable learning experience about participation and empowerment for all involved.

The work of the councils began well into the project, after it had been recognized by the T-team that Island's way of working centered on three separate, programmatic arms. The staff within these arms felt isolated and disconnected from the agency as a whole, and rarely worked with people from other arms. This caused some amount of competition, ignorance, and animosity between programs and staff. To address this dynamic, as well as to provide all workers with opportunities to develop creative capacities and to guide the direction of the organization, cross-team (across these separate arms) councils were established. These councils were charged with developing three or four new, viable programming ideas, based on the principles of the philosophy statement, to present to the whole agency.

At the end of the council work, several good ideas were chosen by the entire agency to be expanded and implemented. Other ideas were put away for a later date. Most importantly, hierarchical and programmatic borders had been breached, and workers were able to interact with one another on tasks that were equalizing and innovative, to contribute to the overall mission of the agency.

Barriers and Challenges

Organization. Perhaps the largest, most persistent challenge for this work has been the inertia of the status quo. This is not big news for those engaged in change efforts, to be sure; however, the status quo of Island as a human service organization is itself unique and requires particular considerations.

Through taped reflections with both the executive director and separately with our own team, a portrait of the business as usual at Island has emerged. As mentioned earlier, Island contains three separate programmatic arms, and within these arms, numerous activities and components serve a variety of objectives. This patchwork of programming is, for the most part, driven by the local, state, and national funds available for nonprofit youth treatment and development. Staff and administrators alike at Island find themselves in a constant mode of gear shifting as they work either to obtain funds for their programs or create new programs to obtain additional funds, and then work to satisfy the requirements of their funders throughout the duration of a granting period. At times, this routine has become draining, and has distracted staff from a sustained push to integrate and improve the agency's efforts. Unfortunately, such behavior can be seen as adaptive (though not inevitable), and leadership may feel most comfortable taking their agency through many starts, stops, and direction changes.

In this way, it often seems difficult for the organization to concentrate on only one stream of focus at a time. During this project's period, Island has embarked upon other projects and areas of focus that deflated energy and confused staff understanding about the overall trajectory of the organization. For example, in Vision 2007, a project initiated by Island's board of directors, the community-at-large in Nashville was surveyed about their expectations for, and understanding of, Island and Island's services. The information received was meant to guide subsequent programs and action, and yet what the community reported was in no way visionary—the information was grounded in past and current services, or in other words, business as usual. This exercise gave mixed messages about the intentions of the leadership, as well as the perceived need for change.

Consultation Project. In retrospect, the organizational challenges could possibly have been addressed at the beginning of the current endeavor. However, the very nature of the relationship between Island and the consultation team made such anticipation difficult. The relationship began casually, and never involved payment for services or a formal memorandum of understanding. This arrangement developed partly out of necessity and partly from curiosity and mutual interest. In addition, since few previous attempts to do this type of transformational work with human service organizations exist, it is difficult to anticipate needs and direction. Therefore, the establishment of strict roles, rules, or norms for consultation, evaluation, or research did not appear to fit the relationship. Instead, moments for reflection have been built into the process, so that as challenges or barriers become apparent, adjustments may be designed and implemented.

CONCLUSION

Figure 1 offers a template from which to reflect on our work. Starting with the inner circle, or key factors in organizational change, the strength of our message propelled Island into this transformational adventure. Our persistent message of primary prevention, empowerment, participation, and changing community conditions energized workers and managers alike. Our Community Psychology 101 approach that stresses social interventions over individual treatment seemed more hopeful and persuasive to the agency than the limiting medical model they had been practicing for quite some time.

The second key factor, principles, was also an ally in the process. For the most part, we reinforced participation, ownership, and power sharing in the agency. The collaborative process of creating a new philosophy statement and developing cross-agency councils was quite powerful and rewarding at the same time. Workers who had hitherto not trusted their abilities to make a contribution at this level of the organization were encouraged to participate, and participate they did. Some who were initially reticent and self-abnegating offered meaningful suggestions that were appreciated by all.

The third key factor, enabling structures, was not our strong suit. Our transformative team lacked clear rules and roles. It benefited from spontaneity, creativity, and affinity and it suffered from spontaneity, creativity, and affinity. Our virtue was our vice. In retrospect, we should have instituted early on in our collaboration terms of reference for our partnership. The fact that our team always acted on a volunteer basis inhibited the organization from calling on us more often—they did not want to abuse our goodwill. From our perspective, the fact that we were "guests" in their house, and that we did not have a formal agreement, prevented us from pointing out some possible shortcomings in the way the change process was being handled. In our new collaborations, we are more careful to formalize roles and expectations.

The ring around key factors involves key players. In Island, we were quite successful to include the entire agency at different moments of the ongoing change process, but we were not as successful in recruiting participants from outside the center, for example, board members, clients, or other community members. In our new collaborations, we are more intentional about inclusion of external participants.

Ironically, although our work at Island has not included external participants, it was our work with Island that led to a major initiative with the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville that now includes three other major health and human services in Nashville, excluding the change process we are undertaking with the United Way itself. Island acted as an ambassador on our behalf very effectively.

We cannot underestimate the importance of the trust we developed with Island staff. Our relationships are very strong and have been able to withstand disagreements and frustrations. The bond we developed with staff and management has enabled us to overcome conflict and temporary disorientation.

The outer ring concerning phases of development offers us a mirror on our pace of progress. For some time, our team felt that the dosage of our change process was feeble. Organizational structures cannot be changed through meetings lasting a couple of hours every other week. We came to call this phenomenon drift and dosage. There was drift because other priorities seemed to take precedence over the transformational process, and there was not enough progress because the dosage was low. We came to understand that in the absence of intense and concentrated focus, not much would change in our lifetime. Since this realization, our team is meeting more often, and team members are doing “homework” in between meetings to advance the process. We are now in phases one and two in Figure 1, at the cusp of significant programmatic changes.

The model of change outlined in Figure 1 helps us reflect on enablers and barriers of change. Ironically, as noted earlier, a major outcome of this initiative has been the dissemination of the transformative paradigm to other agencies, even before Island has decided on how to transform itself. An old adage says help is where you can find it; to that we add: Change is where you’re invited.

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