

# Towards Understanding the Concept of Change

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## Abstract

Change is one of the most perplexing and slippery concepts that can sometimes appear too well familiar or even mundane to many people to trigger any further interrogation or exemplification. It gets an everyday-language quality. For them, the fact that the winds of change blow everywhere and every time has become too self-evident to be figured out or even discussed. They are used to intuitively know and think about it. They do not seem to think very often about the concept of change itself, the existing social order and structure, the very nature of change, its basic properties and patterns, the types of change and its triggers, and how the different theories or models of change can be systematized and described. This second part will be dealing extensively with such issues.

**Key Words:** change, social order and structure, nature of change, change theories

## 1. 1. Omnipresence of Change

It is axiomatic that all earthly life is characterized by change. The aspect of change is everywhere. Every individual, either as a biological, social, or cultural being, cannot escape change. Change is the basic condition of human life. It can be applied to groups, organizations, societies, cultures, and geographies. Daily life is pregnant with constant changes. Even the state of stability noticeable in some areas of our life is so only because the process of change is too slow to be observed. Relationships change over regular successive spans of time ; new skills and knowledge come into existence whereas some old skills and knowledge go into oblivion. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesos (about 540-480 B.C.), largely known by the epithet “the philosopher of change”, impressively borrowed the image of the constant movement of the river to corroborate the idea of constant change.<sup>1</sup> This metaphor demonstrates that we cannot step twice in the same river because the water we set our feet into is persistently changing although the river as a place and as a name remains the same over the passing time. But despite this succinct correlation drawn between this image and constant change in our life, people still assume that the images of stability, fixity, and unchangeability occupy center stage in our daily activities because they think that stability is actually associated with normality, security, trust, balance, health, and development whereas change is associated with abnormality, insecurity, mistrust, imbalance, disease, and disaster , situations which they like to get rid of through the quick return to the state of stability. People often feel afraid of newness, of the unknown, and of the unfamiliar. They do not like to be taken by

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<sup>1</sup> Heraclitus also illustrates that the processes of life are not entirely without coherence and that these processes are not completely independent of each other. He firmly believes that they follow a special conformity to law – logos – which steers the course of events. He adds that logos has both a “mechanical” and a normative aspect and that every event must stay within the limits of its allotted space. In this connection, it is important to add that the Greeks were attracted by change, its properties, sources, directions, and its relation to the principles of organic growth. Aristotle built his philosophy around the principle of growth. "All is change" is a recurrent theme in Greek thought from beginning to end, and it passed on to Rome and then to all Western intellectual inquiry. These ideas pointedly resonate in Robert A. Nisbet, *Social Change and History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969) 16.

surprise outside of their habitual comfort zone which they have built and entertained joyfully over the past. As things get routinized for them with the passage of time, they feel extremely unable to move even a step forward away from their cozy settlement. These obviously constitute the symptoms of what is commonly known as Neophobia or fear of change. But dwelling in the state of fear of the newness only leads to inertia or stagnation, a situation which certainly stands against the natural developmental course of events in life because to know is to acquire new things. No wonder that “new” and “knew” draw close to each other phonetically and semantically. To get to experience new things is definitely akin to get to know more things. Knowledge grows and sprouts with more new experiences and novel discoveries ; and when people gain new knowledge, they win new challenges into their lives. Likewise, these challenges defy their old perspectives and subsequently make new changes come to fruition, which would surely enable them later to kick the fear of change in their pants. They would see convincingly enough for themselves how change is omnipresent in their lives.<sup>2</sup>

However, to adapt and adjust conveniently to such new changes, people need beforehand to go through a transition process. Initially, it is worth mentioning that change can be described as either a structure or a process. A structure means a definite result, and a process refers to a certain course of events. By definition, a transition is a movement or passage from one position or state to another. It is the intervening connection between two parts on a certain continuum to produce at the end cohesion and integration. It is a bridge between the present and the future. It is a sort of a gestation period immediately after which new changes would see the light. It is a psychological process which would eventually enable people to come to terms with emergent situations. More importantly, this transitional process has been put to a central position in many academic researches, but the pioneering research conducted by William Bridges is often cited in this respect. In fact, Bridges developed a transition model which consists of three distinctive stages.<sup>3</sup> For each stage, there are some particular emotions which are experienced and some particular work which must be done. The first stage is called "endings". This stage describes the ways how people initially react after getting the news of the change. The emotions they expressed generally ranged from shock, denial, anger to frustration. The work that must be done on this stage is to see how to deal with the pangs of pain and loss accompanying the change. The severity of the pains depends on the types of changes occasioned. For instance, changes may involve the loss of a dear parent, a fortune, a job, a status, a relationship, or the prestige or comfort of a certain position. Therefore, successful transition starts with identifying the loss, grieving it, and forgetting about it.

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<sup>2</sup> William Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (USA: Perseus Books Publishing, L.L.C., 1980) 22-23. He outlines the following categories of change. First, losses of relationships like a spouse's death, the loss of an admired hero, or marital separation. Second, changes in home life like getting married, having a child, becoming ill, changing jobs, moving to a new house or remodeling the old one, or experiencing increased or decreased domestic tension. Third, personal changes like experiencing notable success or failure, changing eating habits, sleep-patterns, or sexual activities, starting or stopping school, or changing life-style or appearance markedly. Fourth, work and financial changes like getting fired, retiring, increasing or decreasing in income, taking on new loans or mortgages, or discovering that career advancement is blocked. Last, inner changes like spiritual awakening, deepening social and political awareness, changes in self-image or values, the discovery of a new dream or the abandonment of an old one, or simply one of those nameless shifts which cause us to say, "I'm changing."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 18. Bridges elaborates on his model by saying that there is an ending, then a beginning, with an empty or fallow time in between and he compares this to the order of things in nature. He states that there is leaf-fall, winter, and then the green emerges again from the dry brown wood. Human affairs for him also follow the same pattern. He added that endings are fearful as they break our connection with the setting in which we originally come to know ourselves and resuscitate old memories of hurt and shame. He also stresses that there might be a twisting of the three phases with beginnings first and then endings.

The second stage in this model is called the "neutral zone". On this stage, people come to experience a variety of feelings like stress, confusion, fear, discouragement, uncertainty, and acceptance. The appropriate work they must do is to face this reality and try to find out new ways of dealing with these new situations. It is a phase for reorientation. These creative ways should evidently involve reflection, experimentation, tolerance, patience, strategic planning, and reasonable timing.

The third stage bears the name of "new beginnings". In this phase, the beginnings of the new system or process are getting into force, and parallel reorganization on the part of target people is taking place. Efforts are now being exerted in a new direction to make the new beginnings work effectively. Although people still experience emotions of enthusiasm, anxiety, hope, and impatience, they start to embrace new behaviors and new attitudes. They work to implement the new beginnings of change in their daily activities to gain even small successes and more sense of confidence and hence discard any concomitant frustrating emotions and attitudes. In this regard, Bridges provides four questions people should ask in order to help them make a correct new beginning of a successful transition.<sup>4</sup> First, people need to raise the following question, what is the purpose of the change? In answering this question, they need to fully grasp the reasons and logic for the occurrence of the change. This would surely enable them to get psychologically and mentally ready for the acceptance of the coming change. The second question they need to put is how will the outcome of the change look like? The answer to this question will certainly push them to visualize and experience change in their imaginations in the first place before they come to confront it in real life. The third question that should be also asked is what is the good planning for the change to take place? In reality, there should be a clear and accurate step-by-step planning whereby people can determine the different phases they should undergo to come to terms with the new situation. What contribution should each person make in the process? This last question helps define clearly the role of each person so that they can participate and contribute positively and effectively to the success of the change.

In addition to such fundamental questions which help secure some necessary guiding information, there should be some accompanying emotional support along the way.<sup>5</sup> In fact, during each stage of transition, people should receive some positive emotional support. For instance, during the first stage, they utterly need to hear words of praise and sympathy for what they are undertaking because the situation for them is very delicate as when they have just got the news of the loss of something precious. During the second stage, they need a helpful and encouraging environment where their creativity in dealing with emergent events can be more functional and efficient. During the last stage, it is high time to celebrate the initial successes and reinforce the role model behaviors and attitudes which people can wholeheartedly embrace and follow.

By the end of the third stage of transition, the basic traits of new changes will have then turned full circle. When we look at the nature of these changes, we feel so firmly convinced as not to rush for the description and categorization of the notion of change as something specific and monolithic. In this connection, many researchers have made a greater progress in relation to identifying the varied internal elements of new changes towards their systematic classification. They generally tend to classify these changes into organic changes as particularly opposed to artificial or planned ones brought about by various forms of planned intervention. In this respect, it is of significant importance to cast a glance on some of the specifications of both organic change and planned change to bring the threads of the picture of change together.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 58-60.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 69.

## 1. 2. Organic Change

Many changes can be characterized as organic –biological ageing is a typical such change. Just as biological ageing is substantially symptomatic of organic changes, so too are the overall makeup of ecosystems and the dynamic relationship between different individual species forming such ecosystems. Ecosystems contain not only living organisms such as animals and plants, but also non-living components like water and stones. Common organic change patterns can be easily detected in several particular groups of species like patterns of growth and decay. Indeed, these patterns are either subsumed under the trajectory of evolution or that of succession. Each organism or specie is destined to follow certain precise steps or phases within this trajectory of evolution before they reach the phase of succession. At this stage, they take the place of dying or extinct organisms or species. For instance, because of the negative impact of drought, some plant species, which grow in dry climates, would replace those which are adapted to grow in wet climates. Thus, whilst some species find the situation and conditions suitable to increase in population, others decrease or even disappear. However, at times there may occur some natural disturbances which can upset the normal process of the evolution or succession of the ecosystem, including climate change, enormous earthquakes, as well as storms and fires. These disturbances may engender pernicious changes, for positive changes often take place when the balance of the ecosystem is strictly observed.<sup>6</sup>

Humans may also impact negatively the balance of an ecosystem though their survival depends on the health of the ecosystem.<sup>7</sup> They threaten the survival of several land and ocean ecosystems through their damaging actions which range from pollution, deforestation, overhunting, to urbanization. They affect their way of life, the way they eat and sleep, the way they mate and reproduce, and the way they interact with others. For example, pollution, basically caused by humans, largely contributes to the loss of biodiversity, so essential for the patterns of natural changes to develop, as many plants and animals die from exposure to toxic pollutants such as toxic gases, poisonous pesticides, and other harmful chemicals. In so doing, the inner patterns of natural changes of these organisms slow down or get transfigured. It is all known that all the elements of biodiversity are interdependent. Water, soil, space, air, light, temperature, cold, heat, and other elements depend on each other for their survival. But, if something changes abruptly or there is a swift change, this can cause the damage or even the death of many other dependent organisms. A domino or chain effect is consequently located.

However, to survive such different changes, like those ecological changes in climate (high and low temperature, warming, freezing, and flooding) , and keep the ecosystem healthy and functioning, species need to follow varied adaptations and acclimatizations.<sup>8</sup> For instance, Arctic or Alpine ecosystems have their own cold-adapted systems, and they need to have recourse to adaptation when faced with outside changes characterized with higher degrees of temperature. This illustrates quite well that even the constituent elements of an ecosystem are innately enough qualified to face up to the intruding non-native changes. By and large, the inherent mechanisms they can generally mobilize involve confrontation, adaptation, or containment before they ultimately cede way to new elements to take over in compliance with the rules of natural selection.

Likewise, if we contemplate the world around us at large, we can deduce that most organic changes follow a cyclic process. The changing of the seasons, the transformation of water from liquid to vapor then to liquid again, the changing of the state of the sun and the moon, the

<sup>6</sup> S. E. Jorgensen, "Fundamental Laws in Ecology" in *Ecosystem Ecology*. Sevn Erik Jorgensen (ed.) (Amesterdam: Elsevier B.V., 2009) 33-35.

<sup>7</sup> Conrad M. Arensberg and Arthur H. Niehoff, *Introducing Social Change* (Chicago : Aldine - Atherton, Inc., 1971) 30.

<sup>8</sup> S.E. Jorgensen (ed.), *Ecosystem Ecology* (Amesterdam : Elsevier B.V., 2009) 3.

alternation of day and night, life and death, etc. – all these changes best exemplify the cyclic sequence of events in our world. However, it is mostly important to make it clear that these cyclic natural changes are characterized with both repetition and uniqueness.<sup>9</sup> The character of repetition lies in the repeated sequence of fall, winter, spring, and summer whereas the character of uniqueness resides in the fact that every season is different in time and location. It changes every year and does not replicate itself with the same characteristics. Last year's winter is not necessarily this year's winter. In like manner, the season which takes place in this continent shall not necessarily repeat itself to the letter in that continent. Also, in the world of animals, they tend to go through the same sequence of events and experiences like physical changes of skin and color, mating, and hibernation, yet each individual experience is typically different. More than that, the same individual can experience the same events, but in two different ways. This indicates that the repetition of events does not negate their uniqueness through time and space.

Now if we shift to the lives of human beings, we should bring about the case of the menstrual cycle experienced by women as a lucid demonstration of the cyclic character of some organic changes which take place in the human body. In fact, this natural cycle involves physical, emotional, and mental changes. Its effect also extends to other surrounding people. But if the basic physical changes occur in all women not yet reaching the age of menopause, emotional and mental reactions to these physical changes widely differ. The variations in these reactions are mostly due to the influence of cultural attitudes towards the menses. Indeed, cultural attitudes exercise tremendous impacts on varied personal experiences. In this respect, while some cultures treat the period as an advantageous event which strongly bespeaks female power, other cultures look down on it as a degrading event that brings with it shame and fear. Other cultures just follow the middle ground and view the period as a mere ordinary event. But, in all cases, physical changes always produce certain fits of emotional and mental stress and pressure because the human body is naturally predisposed to resist change. Even with the most organic changes, there are always bouts of simultaneous reactions. But the degrees of the intensity of these reactions depend to a great extent on the individual's attitudes towards them. The woman's body is liable to produce more intense reactions if she herself does not get rid of the negative attitudes surrounding the menses. The more negative views about the menstrual cycle she embraces, the more strongly her body will respond and the more bouts of stress and worry she will experience. What has been said about the impact of the menses on women can also be applied to other organic changes affecting the human body. Overall, the inevitable conclusion we must draw from this is that whatsoever the organic change that affects the human body, the resulting stress tension is exacerbated by the negative attitudes woven about it either by the person affected or through the local culture.

### 1. 3. Planned Change

The other opposite category of change is artificial or planned change. It is a change which is essentially man-made. It is arranged, oriented, calculated, and prepared for in advance by human beings, based on the best available means and methods, with the aim to achieve and introduce improvements. However, at times, in the like manner as when many organic changes unconsciously occur, a skilful changer is the one who is able to effect changes of which people involved are not aware. Change is unquestionably essential to progress. In human life, there always exists the need to update, or introduce new changes to, different old practices in order to enhance the rates of productivity or the levels of performance. However, these planned changes are sometimes faced with a host of impediments that get in the way of their successful implementation. Such restraining

<sup>9</sup> S. Allesina, "Cycling and Cycling Indices" in *Ecosystem Ecology*. Sevn Erik Jorgensen. (ed.) (Amesterdam : Elsevier B.V., 2009) 52-54.

forces are generally embodied either in poorly elaborated plans, less qualified or under-stimulated staff, scarcity of resources, antagonistic environment, or ineffective communication. To avoid or reduce the impact of these crippling hurdles, many managers of change seek to set up an effective framework of action and evaluation, the main principles of which should unequivocally emanate from the available array of change theories.

#### 1. 4. Change Theories

The concept of change has occupied a central position in many theories. The basic objective of these theories was to address how and why changes take place at a certain period of time and in a certain environment. They allow us to understand why change happens (the driving forces of change), the ways it happens (phases, process, and timing), the areas it affects (emotion, cognition, or action), and what will ensue (outcomes and evaluation). In this respect, Kurt Lewin is largely recognized as a pioneering change theorist. He identified three fundamental phases through which change has to advance before it becomes a tangible reality in the actual system. These three phases are classified as "unfreezing", "moving", and "refreezing".<sup>10</sup>

As for the first stage in the process, it refers to the idea of "unfreezing" the status quo or actual situation. It is the act of breaking what has been frozen over the preceding years. More than that, unfreezing comes as a solution to the already existing conflict between individual resistance and collective conformity. It aims at creating an awareness of how the current situation is hindering the desired progress and prosperity. In this connection, unfreezing has to proceed through three complementary steps. First, there should be a close examination of the status quo, followed by a considerable mobilization of a set of driving forces that can work in unison to channel the changeable behavior away from the existing situation. Second, there should be a continuous pressure towards lessening the effect of the restraining forces which impede the easy movement from the existing stability. Third, here comes the task of striking a harmonious combination of the two preceding steps. In addition to these three steps, there should be an inclusion of some assisting activities which may range from motivating people, getting them ready for the emerging change by sensitizing them to the existing problems and suggested solutions, to building trust and acceptance of change. On the whole, the more people know about a change, the more motivated to accept it they become.

The second phase in this process of change is "moving", transitioning, or changing. It is the movement towards the initiation and implementation of change. It is moving the new change towards equilibrium. After people have been subjected to "unfreezing", it is now high time for them to step forward. Therefore, in this phase, the focus is particularly laid on the involvement of people through three major actions. The first action is to convince people to agree that the status quo has become worthless and against their vital interests. The second action is to collaborate to get new, fresh, and convenient information. The last action revolves around involving well-respected influential leaders who themselves are in favor of the new change. Simultaneously, for all these three actions to successfully take place, there must be an effective education, efficient communication, wide support, and ample time. These factors would certainly allow for better understanding of the reasons for the new change and its possible benefits.

The third phase in Lewin's change model is "refreezing". The major goal of this phase is to make changes permanent. The whole idea here is about solidifying and stabilizing the new state after the occurrence of change. But, there is always a doubt that the newly implemented change might be short-lived and thus people could revert back to their old ways of thinking and behaviors.

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<sup>10</sup> For more information see: Esther Cameron and Mike Green, *Making Sense of Change Management: A Complete Guide to the Models, Tools and Techniques of Organizational Change* (USA: Kogan Page Publishers, 2015) 106-108.

Because of this potential regression, the pressing need is to strike the balance between the driving and restraining forces. Indeed, this balance can only be sustained through the steady integration of the new values and patterns and the formal and informal institutionalization of them within the ranks of the target community. This integration must be accompanied along the way by the recognition and praise of individuals' efforts and the offer of positive rewards in order to reinforce and cement the new change, as it is widely accepted that positively reinforced behaviors last longer and spread over. Overall, the process of change, for Lewin, involves the conviction that change is needed, the movement towards the implementation of the new change, and, finally, the solidification of the change as the new norm.<sup>11</sup>

To get substantial insights into Lewin's Change Model, It is needed to project it on the following very recent example. The Moroccan ministry of education has of late decided to implement a new electronic program called "Massar" in its schools all over the country.<sup>12</sup> The main objective behind this is to switch from old hand-written ways of recording students' information and scores to the new electronic format. The corollary goals are to achieve transparency, increase efficiency, reduce the amount of time that it takes to record students' data, and help parents check their children's progress. To effect this change, the ministry initially needs to spend some time unfreezing the convictions of staff, students, and parents that the old way of recording information is more appropriate. It needs to communicate effectively the real benefits of the new electronic program through mass media and regular meetings with the target people. Second, the ministry needs to move into the changing phase by executing the new method of electronic recording. All along this phase, there must be some intensive support and training as the personnel are getting familiar with the new electronic format. Finally, there comes the phase to refreeze and solidify the new implemented change into the system as the new norm. The efforts of the individuals who have contributed to the implementation of the new change should be largely recognized and praised.

As an extension to Lewin's theory, Lippitt et al. (1958) developed a seven-step theory that gives more importance to the role and contribution of the change agent than the process of change itself. The seven steps are listed as follows:

- 1 – Diagnose the problem.
- 2 – Assess the motivation and capacity for change.
- 3 – Assess the resources and motivation of the change agent. This includes the change's agent commitment to change, power, and stamina.
- 4 – Choose progressive change objects. In this step, actions plans are developed and strategies are established.
- 5 – The role of the change agents should be selected and clearly understood by all parties so that expectations are clear. Examples of roles are: cheerleader, facilitator, and expert.
- 6 – Maintain the change. Communication, feedback, and group coordination are essential elements in this step of the change process.
- 7 – Gradually terminate from the helping relationship. The change agent should gradually withdraw from their role over time. This will occur when the change becomes part of the organizational culture.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For more insights into this change model, see Tim Rahschulte, *Understanding How to Change* (USA : ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2008) 33-34.

<sup>12</sup> For more information about Massar, visit the official website of the Moroccan Ministry of Education : <http://www.men.gov.ma/Lists/Pages/videos-massar.aspx> . Last visit : 05 February 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Ronald Lippitt et al., *The Dynamics of Planned Change* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958) 58-59.

As it is clearly illustrated in the above quotation, the right change agent can really effect change by dint of the distinctive characteristics he or she possesses. These characteristics generally encompass strong commitment to change, motivation, capacity, leadership, charisma, communication, teamwork, feedback, and evaluation. After the change has become rooted in the system, and at the completion of all related tasks, the change agent should gradually withdraw from the vested responsibilities. The success of the mission will become more substantiated when the change spreads over to the neighboring organizations and affects gradually the constituent departments.<sup>14</sup> In fact, given that this change theory is project-oriented, it can be successfully transferred to the corporate field of business organization.

The third change theory is that advanced by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983). Originally, the theory was identified and developed to account for the different changes that occur in the patients' health behaviors. Later, the model was extended to cover more different settings and people. In fact, this model was designed to describe the stages that people should go through on their way to change. Actually, there are five stages: "precontemplation", "contemplation", "preparation", "action", and "maintenance".<sup>15</sup> Progression through these stages is rather cyclical, not linear, because there are some people who may revert or relapse to old behaviors, like someone relapsing to smoke a cigarette after a certain period of cessation. Therefore, the cases of backsliding are so common that the practice is regarded as quite normal.

Concerning the first stage, "precontemplation", it is found that during this stage people are either unaware or fail to see their behaviors as a problem.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, they do not want to engage in any change activities, and they convincingly argue that their behavior is utterly correct and normal. This sort of ignorance constitutes a real resistance to change. There are two groups in this stage. The first group of people who have never seen their behaviors as a problem are called "uninformed", and the second group who have seen their behaviors as a problem over the past years but are not now interested in changing are called "under informed".

The second stage in this change model is "contemplation".<sup>17</sup> By contemplation it is meant that people are now showing consciousness of a problem and are contemplating a change way out of it. However, they have not yet committed themselves to the process of changing. It is like when some people decide to give up smoking and are contemplating the effective way to do it. This indicates that they are uncertain or ambivalent about change. They are just sitting on the fence and unable to step forth. Virtually, the more they feel that change is so tough to make, the longer these moments of hesitancy and ambivalence may last. For some people, however, these moments can rather offer them suitable opportunities to fully understand the nature and causes of the problem to be able at the end to walk the right path.

After contemplation, we get to the third stage of "preparation".<sup>18</sup> In this stage, people show readiness to change their old behaviors within two weeks or a month. They have already taken little steps to effect their coveted change. But, these little steps may not crown with success even though they wanted to. Therefore, during this stage, people are in need of counseling, collaboration, moral and social support, and unfailing continuous assistance based on the techniques and ways of problem solving. They also should be accompanied during the whole process of the implementation

<sup>14</sup> Edgar J. Boone et al., *Developing Programs in Adult Education* (USA : Waveland Press, Inc., 2002) 27.

<sup>15</sup> For complete details see: J.O. Prochaska and C.C. DiClemente, "Stages and Processes of Self-Change of Smoking: Toward an Integrated Model of Change." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 51, 1983: 390-395.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia M. Burbank et al., "Applying the Trans theoretical Model" in *Promoting Exercise and Behavior Change in Older Adults*. Patricia M. Burbank and Deborah Riebe (eds.) (New York : Springer Publishing Company, 2002) 186-190.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 190-193.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 193-196.

of their action plans. For instance, after certain individuals failed to make change, there should be a follow-up assessment to find out where they exactly failed, how much support they need to get forward, and if they really possess the real skills and qualifications required for the change to happen. A well-designed plan with definite action goals, sustained by a rigorous follow-up, will surely set up individuals for success.

The "action" stage follows shortly after the preparation one.<sup>19</sup> In this phase, people have started executing the plan developed before. They have changed their old behaviors for at least one day or more. As they are making change and experiencing new behaviors for the first time, different challenges will get in the way of their progress. But, bravely facing these challenges will certainly enable such people to acquire new skills and develop multiple capacities to deal with emerging situations. They will also gain positive feelings of enthusiasm and motivation as necessary moral support for sustaining their novel behaviors along the process of changing.

The fifth stage in this process is "maintenance".<sup>20</sup> The clear difference between this stage and the previous one is about duration, since in this stage new behaviors may last for a time that goes from six months to the lifespan of a person. Measures and actions to reinforce the change and establish it as part and parcel of the individual's daily actions and behaviors should be multiplied to ensure its longevity. During this stage, people would frequently express their confidence and zest about their commitment and perseverance to sustain the change. For example, just a quick comparison between one's past worse situation and one's new better one can stoke the feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem in the person concerned. As a matter of fact, these positive feelings are so important to avoid any future impromptu relapses.

However, given the spiral pattern of this change model, individuals can relapse to the previously existing behaviors.<sup>21</sup> They may either revisit the contemplation, preparation, and action stage, or the maintenance one. But, the most frustrating relapse is the one carried out after a longer stay in the maintenance stage. The persons who relapse will frequently get painful sensations, thus affecting their own entourage, and they may negatively overreact. On the other hand, there are some individuals who can positively seize this opportunity to learn from their failure and brace themselves again, recharging new and fresh energies to advance correctly and smoothly along the remaining stages. They will be able to identify the intervening barriers by raising the questions of why and how they abruptly fell off the wagon. On this basis, the irregularities and imperfections identified will be addressed and corrected, and subsequently a new plan will be adopted to carry on to the following stage. Of course, this kind of reviewing and identification should involve only the stage from where the relapse took place.

Now if we want to subject this change model to appraisal, we can advance two basic non-reductionist remarks. The first one is that there is not necessarily a uniform consistent transition along the five stages because there are sometimes some behavioral situations which are so complex that it is very tough for people to follow the five stages of the model to the letter. More than that, change does not necessarily take place linearly or through stages ; it is rather multifaceted and characterized more with the overlapping of a variety of intervening events than anything else. It is not routinized and prone to objective observation ; it is rather ongoing and well-suited to perspectival observation. Similarly, the scale of time that some people can spend in a certain stage is not necessarily akin to that observed by other people in the same stage. Therefore, speaking of time-limits like two weeks, a month, or six months with regard to the duration of stages only triggers the erroneous impression that people have the same patterns of behavior situations.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 196-201.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 201-203.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 204.

The second remark is about the determination of which stage a particular individual is doing the crossing. Thus, the question that should be asked is who is able to identify the stage? Is it the person concerned or an outside evaluator? The model is supposedly designed to provide an outside evaluator with a set of standardized measures to use them as a yardstick to check the stage in which a particular individual is. However, the authentic identification of the stage relies almost entirely on the concerned person's self-assessment. It is only this person who is deservedly entitled to provide the valid credible information whereby a nonparty can localize the corresponding stage. All in all, despite the existence of such kind of diatribe against this change model, the model is widely used for understanding the status of progress of changing behaviors and accordingly developing adequate interventions.

System theory is the fourth change theory to be cited here. It is another instance of an analytical instrument to make empirical change occurrences comprehensible. In this regard, a concise overview of the distinctive features of system theory will be provided. Given that system theory is broader and can be applied to all levels and properties of change occurrences, some researchers, like Compton and Galaway (1984), prefer to use it as an approach rather than a theory. It can be also used as a meta-theory to examine and explain other theories. What distinctively characterizes the system theory is the concept of system. A system consists of several interacting components which are usually named as "elements".<sup>22</sup> These elements must have a form of reciprocal interaction. Therefore, the elements and their reciprocal interaction constitute the core of system theory. Hall and Fagen use objects instead of elements. They define a system as:

A set of objects and the relationships between the objects and between their attributes. The objects are the constituent parts of the system, the attributes are the features of the parts and the relationships hold the system together.<sup>23</sup>

By way of concrete description, this kind of relationship is often compared to the work of the clock. When the clock is working, each constituent part gets into a reciprocal interaction with the other parts, and they contribute together to the correct functioning of the whole system of the clock. If the clock stops functioning, the parts still remain in their places, but with no reciprocal interaction. They have only a spatial relationship, but this kind of relationship no longer constitutes a system. To make the system concept clearer, Eriksson brings the description of the term "series" into play:

A series is a collection of elements without any real reciprocal relationships, apart from purely spatial ones. People in a ticket queue constitute a series. They do not know each other and do not in any respect function in interplay with each other. If it now transpires that the price of the tickets is twice as much as expected, the people queuing may begin to talk indignantly to each other. They organize themselves to make a joint demand for tickets at the promised price. In this way they no longer act and function as a series, but as a group, where the elements – the individuals – bear defined relationships to each other. They form a system.<sup>24</sup>

Here it can be said that the whole –I mean the system *en masse*– acquires other distinctive characteristics than the individual elements have. This indicates that the whole is not the direct sum of the addition of the individual elements, but it has something specifically different. In addition, if one element of the system is affected, all the other remaining elements will be affected. For

<sup>22</sup> Bengt Eriksson, *Theories of Intervention and Social Change* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003) 18.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 19.

instance, if a member of a family has a problem with health or job, the whole family will be affected. It is like the functioning of the human body *per se* ; if one organ is affected, the rest of the organs is to be affected. Though the system may be able to work without the affected element, the joint result will be totally different. But if the element is altogether excluded, a new system emerges. All this means that the system can be changed by only one or a few of its elements. Likewise, the system of a family, for example, can be subjected to a change process by only one or two members of the family. Of course, this system thinking of change can be applied to all units and organizations of a community, without even excluding a single individual who can be also considered as a system made up of physical, emotive, and cognitive elements. Moreover, a system can be divided into sub-systems. In a family system, children can form by themselves a sub-system. Thus, the question of determining a system becomes more a question of which level of division is adopted.

Still more, there should be some kind of exchange and openness to the outer world for the system to survive longer. This exchange can be in the form of transfer of knowledge and information. Nonetheless, this interaction and exchange should be conducted in a more balanced manner so that no system will be in a position to absorb the other one. In other words, the system should secure a balance between closure and openness. Quite significantly, at times, a system must change or face changes to be able to cope with the surrounding environment. This adaptation mechanism is referred to as “morphostasis” within system theory. But if the adaptation goes beyond its repertoire, it is called “morphogenesis”. When there is a balance between the interior elements, it is called “homeostasis”.<sup>25</sup> In all, this corroborates the idea that change is the fundamental condition of social existence that can be adopted to secure both stability and development.

The fifth change theory is referred to as social cognitive theory (SCT). Originally, this theory started as social learning theory (SLT) in the 1960s by Albert Bandura. In 1986 it evolved into the SCT which continues to emphasize that learning takes place in a social context along a triadic interaction involving person, environment, and behavior.<sup>26</sup> In this interaction, personal, environmental, and behavioral factors influence each other in a reciprocal manner. This kind of influence conflicts with earlier versions of behaviorism which posit a stringent form of environmental determinism. SCT does not overlook the importance of the environment in exercising influence over the behaviors of people, but it also highlights that people can exert influence on the environment itself and on their own behaviors through, for instance, self-reflection and self-efficacy.<sup>27</sup> However, change in human behavior is not the immediate outcome of learning. Learning can take place without inducing any change in the form of the behavior of the person concerned because learning also involves pure knowledge, values, concepts, abstract ideas, and any form of cognition.<sup>28</sup> This separation between learning and behavior change is also a shift away from behavioral theories which strictly define learning as a change in the form of behavior. Overall, there are eight fundamental constructs which need to be considered here to understand well the SCT :

- 1- Reciprocal Determinism: it stands for the dynamic reciprocal relationship between people (with their varied experiences), environment (external context with its barriers and facilitators), and behaviour (response to stimulation).
- 2- Behavioural Capability: it explains how a person can perform a certain behaviour through cognition and skills. A person must know what to do and the correct way to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Albert Bandura, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* (Prentice Hall, 1986) 80-90.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

- do it. Their performed behaviours will also impact the environment in which they live.
- 3- **Observational Learning:** this indicates that people learn through observing others. This is what we call “modeling” of behaviours. The successful outcome of the behaviour change will motivate people to maintain the change onward.
  - 4- **Reinforcements:** this asserts that there are internal or external responses to a person’s behaviour that can promote or demote the maintenance of the changed behaviour. Reinforcements can be self-triggered or initiated by the environment.
  - 5- **Expectations:** this refers to the anticipated outcomes of a person’s behaviour. Before engaging in behaviour changing, people anticipate the results of their actions. These anticipated consequences will surely influence the completion of the change of their behaviours.
  - 6- **Self-efficacy:** this construct is unique to SCT. It stands for the level of a person’s confidence in one’s capabilities to perform and maintain the changed behaviour. For instance, while students with higher self-efficacy feel more confident in their abilities to achieve success, others with lower self-efficacy go about their tasks with crippling hesitancy and poor performances. Self-efficacy is considered as the product of people’s past performances, observation of others in the outer environment, and persistence.
  - 7- **Goal Setting:** goals are related to people’s expectations and their self-efficacy. They reflect their cognitive representations of anticipated expectations. Goals also reflect the confidence they have in changing successfully their behaviours.
  - 8- **Self-regulation:** is the management or control of the process of behaviour changing. Indeed, self-regulation stresses three sub-processes. Self-observation is the process to monitor behaviours and consequences. Self-judgement is to evaluate actions in accordance with goals. Self-reaction comes after evaluation to reward, modify, or halt the changing behaviour.<sup>29</sup>

These key constructs in SCT demonstrate how complex the approach is to change. It is not made linearly and straightforward, but through interrelated and complex processes. It is made through tensions and strains common within circular systems.<sup>30</sup> This complexity is often associated with the recurrence and interplay of first-order and second-order change. When invoking the orders of change, we frequently try to connect them with Argyris’ single- and double-loop learning theory.<sup>31</sup> This is done because single-loop learning involves the retention of, and buildup on, current structures, norms, and objectives. This strategy of retention and buildup is typically akin to the process taking place in first-order change. In contrast, double-loop learning refers to the reformulation of current structures, norms, and objectives with the aim to create novel situations and solutions. Likewise, the strategy of reformulation and innovation is quite similar to the process taking place in second-order change.

Social cognition theory is pointedly marked by its interest in the question of change agency, namely human agency. It examines how humans, especially leaders, can impact the process of change through sensemaking and interpretation. Weick makes a distinction between sensemaking and interpretation by stating that sensemaking is about how people generate that which they

<sup>29</sup> Brian J. Ayotte, *Using the Social Cognitive Theory to Investigate Physical Activity in Middle-aged and Older Married Couples: A Dyadic Perspective* (ProQuest, 2007) 8-13.

<sup>30</sup> Gareth Morgan, *Images of Organization* (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2006) 42-50.

<sup>31</sup> C. Argyris, *Good Communication that Blocks Learning*. Harvard Business Review. Vol. 72, 1994: 20.

subsequently interpret.<sup>32</sup> This means that people construct a sense for a world and then interpret it. Thus, the task, for leaders to shape change, is to meticulously study and understand the worldviews of participants in the change and then accompany them along the way to conceptualize a different adequate reality. People may believe that they have started the process of change, but they need the guidance and expertise of leaders to engage entirely in the successive steps of the process. Espousal of new ideas and conceptions must be followed by practical actions and enactment. Any mismatch between espousal and enactment ultimately leads to the collapse of the desired change. Therefore, the recognition and integration of people's multiple views of reality, together with the different corresponding cultural paradigms, would only intensify the chances of the success of change. In this regard, Bolman and Deal suggest that leaders should consider change through the bureaucratic lens as a structural issue, through the human resource lens as a training issue, through the political lens as a power issue, and through the symbolic lens as an issue of identity and meaning.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the adoption of the strategy of multiple lenses can effectively help draw the strings of the picture together to well implement the changing behavior or situation. Furthermore, the importance accorded to the role of individuals in social cognition leads to the creation of an environment of trust and credibility which would definitely contribute to the satisfactory reframing of identities and worldviews and shifting of paradigms. Change, after all, is about changing cultural paradigms.

Along the advantages offered by social cognition theory to the field of change, there are some shortcomings that need to be pointed out. First, given the intricate structure of the theory, it is sometimes hard to make a clear connection between its constituent principles and concepts.<sup>34</sup> Second, humans may or may not change their behaviors vicariously through observation and modeling. Third, the overemphasis of the theory on learning and mental processes, such as modeling and forming expectations, tends to gloss over or discard other important components in understanding the nature of change, its causes, and its modalities.<sup>35</sup> In most cases, such components are related either to feelings, emotions, values, or to the external aspects of the environment. For instance, some behavior is the outcome of certain emotional responses like jealousy and anger. Jealousy can drive some people to behave strangely. Thus, the greater importance given to mental learning in the process of change, at the expense of these fundamental components, can only create a defective or myopic vision of the process of change as a whole. Finally, the theory ignores the impacts of biological determinants, genetic differences, psychological pathologies, and learning deficiencies.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to SCT, there is the theory of reasoned action and that of planned behavior. In fact, the theory of planned behavior complements the theory of reasoned action, as developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen. Basically, the TPB puts forward that the behavior of an individual is determined by the intention of such an individual to perform that behavior. The intention of an individual is primarily shaped by two major factors. The first factor stipulates that the individual's attitude towards change must be positive. The second factor is related to the impact of the individual's environment which has a bearing on the individual's intention. It is argued that an individual's attitude, closely tied to subjective norms, constitutes the forms of behavioral intention

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<sup>32</sup> Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1995) 13.

<sup>33</sup> L. Deal Bolman, *Reframing Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991) 32-50.

<sup>34</sup> Manoj Sharma and John A. Romas, *Theoretical Foundation of Health Education and Health Promotion* (Ontario: Jones and Bartlett Learning, 2012) 30-44.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

and the ability to exert self-control (behavioral control).<sup>37</sup> In short, the TPB consists of six constructs.

- 1- Attitudes : this indicates the individual's evaluation of the action of performing the behaviour, including the outcomes of the performance .
- 2- Behavioural intention : this refers to the factors that motivate the intention to effect change.
- 3- Subjective norms : this relates to people's approval or disapproval of the behaviour.
- 4- Social norms : these norms are regarded as normative and are used to refer to people's codes of behaviour.
- 5- Perceived power : this relates to the presence of factors that may facilitate or hinder the performance of the behaviour of interest.
- 6- Perceived behavioural control : in fact, it was this construct which made the shift from the TRA to the TPB. It refers to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the desired change.<sup>38</sup>

One arresting limitation of the theory of planned behavior is the assumption that when people intend to act, they will be free to act without any restriction. This does not take into account environmental or economic factors which may impact the behavioral intention and motivation. More than that, there is no clear time interval between intention and action.

Change literature is also enriched by cultural models. Basically, these models assume that change naturally takes place as a consequence of the alterations affecting the human environment.<sup>39</sup> Cultural models posit that change can be planned or unplanned, irrational, dynamic, processual, and can lead to predictable or unpredictable outcomes.<sup>40</sup> They also stress that radical change is so difficult to achieve because it implicates considerable alterations and modifications of deep-seated values and beliefs. The process of cultural change is frequently complex, long-term, and slow. Even more, the focus is laid on the formation of consciousness groups and the continuous stimulation of energies and spirits with the invocation of cultural symbols and belief systems because there is always a need to understand deeply the mainstream culture and its fundamental constituents. For instance, if some cultural symbols or rituals are realigned or altered, change will subsequently occur. Given the tenacity of mainstream culture, some ceremonies or events can be created and developed just to help alter this culture, thus paving the way for change to happen.<sup>41</sup> Among such cultural models which have attracted more interest, paradigm shifting and future-envisioning ones can be cited. In this respect, Adrianna J. Kezar writes the following:

Models of paradigm-shifting and future-envisioning focus on identifying the views or beliefs of organizational participants (through operational presuppositions and scanning the environment), then providing leaders with training on how to lead people to conceptualize a different organizational reality.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For more details, see Icek Ajzen, *Attitudes, Personality, and Behavior* (Berks: McGraw-Hill International, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Martin Hagger and Nikos Chatzisarantis, *The Social Psychology of Exercise and Sport* (UK: McGraw-Hill Education, 2005) 20-21.

<sup>39</sup> Morgan, op.cit.

<sup>40</sup> L. Smirich, "Concepts of Culture and Organizational Analysis." *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 339, September 1983:12.

<sup>41</sup> Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (California: University of California Press, 1991) 50-62.

<sup>42</sup> Adrianna J. Kezar, *Understanding and Facilitating Organizational Change in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001) 47.

Due to the fact that many people tend to resist change simply because of the fear of newness, potential failure of change, and lack of trust, leaders are called on to assist them in surpassing these obstacles. Leaders, or change managers, are supposed to start from strategic perspectives and far-sighted calculations. The nature of their trainings can also qualify them to assist people psychologically and mentally by boosting their morale and facilitating the difficult tasks of change. However, there are some cases where leaders themselves can be obstacles to change, especially when they feel that the desired change will run against their own interests. By these leaders, I mean rulers, presidents, managers, etc. Anyway, the success or failure of top-down or bottom-up processes of change depends, first and foremost, on the degrees of the availability of the culture of resistance.

On the other hand, though cultural models have largely contributed to the development of change literature, some criticisms were leveled at their contribution. One shining example is the criticism directed to Edgar H. Schein's model (1985). In fact, this model is known particularly for the assumption that culture is collectively shared among all members of an organization and that is malleable and prone to manipulation. In this respect, Schein, a former captain in the U.S. Army, divides culture into four categories: macrocultures (nations, occupations that stretch worldwide...), organizational cultures, subcultures, and microcultures (microsystems), and he speaks about different types of organizations: coercive (prisons, military camp...), utilitarian (private companies), and normative (political parties, non-profit bodies...).<sup>43</sup> His model has been criticized for oversimplifying the concept of culture because the process of changing culture is so complex and often lifelong and requires meticulous, slow, and gradual implementation.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, in building up his model, he goes into comparing and contrasting only two companies, Action and Multi, as two principal representative cases. This cannot, by all means, epitomize all the other companies' stories. But, against all odds, his examples of how leadership can create, guide, transmit, and foster the principles of change are unquestionably laudable.

To conclude this section of change theories, there is the need to stress three points. The first one is that there are some outstanding theorists who call for the combination and reconciliation of the insights of different change theories and models in order to better understand the process of change. For them, multidimensional thinking is the right strategy that should be followed for a better approach to change. Each theory or model will correct the weakness, or buttress the strength, of the other one. In this regard, Peter Senge combines evolutionary, teleological, social cognition, and cultural models as an efficient way to understand and create change.<sup>45</sup> Another well-known researcher is Bernard Burnes. In his book *Managing Change*, Burnes recommends the use of various models to approach the different properties of change. He writes that evolutionary models can be used to deal with change from the broadest perspective, life-cycle models should be used to examine the life stages of the organization, social-cognition models can be used to scrutinize individual worldviews, and cultural models should be employed to determine power control in the organization.<sup>46</sup> The second point is that changes of the kind that have been illustrated above can be classified within the framework of changes of the first order because they draw on what have been already tried, that is proven experience, to solve problems. When changes of the first order get into a deadlock, there must be a restructuring of the situation along a completely new perspective which

<sup>43</sup> E.H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1985) 23-32.

<sup>44</sup> Jakob Krause-Jensen, *Flexible Firm* (USA : Berghahn Books, 2010) 61.

<sup>45</sup> Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of The Learning Organization* (USA: Doubleday, 2006) 21-23.

<sup>46</sup> Bernard Burnes, *Managing Change* (Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2004) 12-16.

may entail the change of the system as a whole. This kind of changes are called changes of the second order.<sup>47</sup> The last point is that at times there is a recourse to a fake change as a camouflage to prevent a real indispensable change which may constitute a threat to the interests of some people.

In sum, the idea of socio-cultural dynamics is embedded within three main areas of social change. The first area is about production and is concerned with how goods and services are produced in a certain location. This implies asking who is producing what, where and how, what resources they are using and what are the power relations that exist within the social organization of production.<sup>48</sup> The second area deals with narratives. It is concerned with "the ways in which the economic, political and cultural dimensions of social life are narrated and interpreted -how change is made sense of, by both those experiencing the change and by those observing and commenting on the change."<sup>49</sup> It is an area of discursive analysis and interpretation. The third area is about participation in society. It addresses the forms and features of participation involving the ways "that humans engage with each other individually, with each other through the social institutions they develop and how they engage with the structural arrangements of economic systems, political systems, regimes of welfare and cultural life in general."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Francis Stickland, *The Dynamics of Change* (USA: Routledge, 2002) 49.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 29.

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