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Dissolution: OT Track Goes from IABD TO Sc'MOI

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ABSTRACT

In San Antonio in March 2004 David Boje, President-Elect of the International Assembly of Business Disciplines (IABD), was asked to resign by the IABD President. David responded that he would not resign since he is quitting and moving the Organizational Theory (OT) Track to a new organization the Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry (Sc'MOI).

Introduction

When intact groups of people are abruptly dismissed/fired/disbanded/spun off from an organization, how can we understand what they've experienced in such a way so we can:

1. Help them;
2. Understand what happens and generalize to ease other's transition;
3. Make connection to other group processes and theorize about this;
4. Explore issues of trust, coping, loss, cooperation, clarification of values;
5. Explain what happens to the structure and goals and therefore effectiveness of both the organization that was left and the organization that remains.

Questions that may need answering

1. Why was the relationship terminated?
2. Who initiated the termination and how was it communicated?
3. Were there dissenters (individuals against the idea of termination both within the terminated group and in the mother organization)?
4. What were the specific reactions by the participants at various stages in the dissolution event?
5. How did the goals of the terminated group change after termination?
6. Did the termination of this group affect the mother organization's functioning?
7. How is the terminated group functioning as a group now? How

effectively is it meeting its organizational goals? (These are two separate questions.)
8. Have the roles of individuals in the terminated group changed, and, if so, what effect has this had on group functioning?

How can we take this dissolution from IABD and the formation of Sc'MOI to further our knowledge of Organizational Theory? Relative to groups leaving organizations, there are few references. What are some of the reasons organizational membership changes, and what does this change say about relationships between individuals and groups:

Changes affecting the resource fit between organizations exchanging resources provide an impetus for the dissolution of their relationships, whereas the individual and structural attachments that develop between exchange partners counter those pressures for change (Seabright, Levinthal, & Fichman, 1992).

We can borrow from the literature of the job loss due to merger and acquisition to help us understand the dissolution of the OT Track of IABD and the subsequent formation of ScMOI.

Some researchers have made headway in examining the effects of layoffs on coping strategies and subsequent chances of re-employment (Thomson, 1997; Addison & Portugal, 1987; Feather & Davenport, 1981; Leana & Feldman, 1988,

1990, 1991). Most studies, however, have concentrated on the effects of different coping strategies on an individual's probability of re-employment (Feather & Davenport, 1981), physical health (Kessler, Turner, & House, 1988), or psychological well being (Warr, Jackson, & Banks, 1988), rather than on how the coping method is chosen. The few studies that have focused on predictors of coping strategy have produced inconsistent results (Feather & Davenport, 1981; Leana & Feldman, 1990). The results of the studies on the effects of coping strategy show that the type of coping strategy used can have a great impact on the person who has been laid off.

The term coping strategy, borrowed from the literature on stress, refers to attempts made by individuals to eliminate stress-producing factors (stressors) in their environment or to minimize the effects of these factors (Beehr & Newman, 1978). These strategies are commonly divided into two categories: problem-focused and emotion-focused (Edwards, 1988).

Problem-focused coping, also referred to as active coping, involves controlling or managing stress by directly altering the situation. Emotion-focused (or symptom-focused) coping, on the other hand, involves the individual's attempts to regulate emotional responses to, and decrease the effects of, a stressful situation (Edwards, 1988). This second type of coping has been divided into two subcategories: (a) palliative coping, which involves distraction from the situation; and (b) active stress management, which is the use of activities such as counseling or exercise to decrease the effects of the stressful situation on the individual (Leana & Feldman, 1988).

These two generalized types of coping strategies have subsequently been divided into six discrete types of coping behaviors, three problem-focused and three symptom-focused (Leana & Feldman, 1990). The three problem-focused behavior

categories are (a) initiating a job search (job search), (b) seeking education or retraining (retraining), and (c) investigating geographic relocation (relocation). The three symptom-focused categories are (a) applying for financial assistance beyond unemployment (financial assistance), (b) participating in community activities, and (c) seeking social support (Leana & Feldman, 1990).

For the evolving ScMOI we see problem-focused strategies where they sought their new identity and began planning their own conference in 2005. They eschewed the symptom-focused categories except to seek social support from their like-minded colleagues. Scheck and Kinicki (2000) present a model of coping with an organizational acquisition that provides insights into the formation of ScMOI.

Their model is based on integrating Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) cognitive-phenomenological model of coping and Lazarus's (1991, 1993) theory of emotions: Emotions were not specifically modelled in Lazarus and Folkman's original theory of coping. It reveals that we are interested in predicting the choice of coping strategies used by employees as they progress through the transition of coping with an organizational acquisition. The choice of coping strategies used as criteria in the current model is based on Folkman and Lazarus's (1985) factor analytic investigation of coping scales. Their results uncovered two problem-focused strategies: confrontive coping and planful problem solving, and six emotion-focused coping strategies: wishful thinking, distancing, emphasizing the positive, self-blame, tension-reduction, and self-isolation. Both functions of coping are used in most stressful situations and the proportion of each function varies according to the appraisal and subsequent emotions towards the stressful situation (Baum, Fleming, & Singer, 1983).

Confrontive coping and planful

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problem solving marked the evolving ScMOi group. Emotion-focused coping strategies were minimized but planning meetings often took on the aura of a group counseling session. Coping strategies are directly influenced by the negative emotions associated with anger and sadness. In turn, the prediction that emotions are positively impacted by the extent to which employees appraise the current situation as harmful or threatening is based on Lazarus's (1991, 1995) conclusion that meaning underlies all emotions. In other words, emotions are directly influenced by the manner in which an individual appraises a specific person-situation transaction (Lazarus, 1991). Furthermore, Lazarus and his colleagues propose that the appraisals of person-situation transactions are directly influenced by a host of coping resources. They show that we use perceived control and coping efficacy as internal coping resources and social support and environmental conditions as external coping resources.

Emotion And Coping

Differing coping strategies are predicted to be directly influenced by the type of emotions associated with an organizational dissolution. Emotions are defined as "complex, organized, psychophysiological reactions consisting of action impulses, feelings, and somatic reactions" (Folkman & Lazarus, 1991, p. 209). Emotion is believed to be a multidimensional construct (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). For example, a specific person-situation transaction may foster emotions of anger, frustration, guilt or sadness which in turn lead to the use of different coping strategies. According to Davy, Kinicki, Kilroy, and Scheck (1988), employee attitudes and emotional responses tend to become pessimistic after an organizational merger/acquisition. This finding is consistent with the conclusion that people-oriented issues (e.g., attitudes) account for many problems associated with organizational change (Pfeffer, 1998). It therefore seems reasonable for us to model negative emotions associated with anger

and sadness.

According to Lazarus (1991) anger concerns the belief that we have been unfairly slighted, causing painful feelings and a desire for revenge. This particular negative emotion includes a broad range of subdimensions including irritation, resentment, and annoyance (Lazarus, 1991; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987). It is suggested that anger is directly related to various forms of emotion-focused coping. Anger is positively linked to all emotion-focused coping strategies. Lazarus (1991) proposed that negative emotions such as anger are readily transformed through the use of emotion-focused coping strategies. As such, it is suggested that stronger negative emotions are expected to evoke greater use of emotion-focused coping.

I observed also many of these emotions by my OT Track colleagues but they were transitory states. They did not wallow in them.

Because sadness invokes resignation rather than struggle (Lazarus, 1991), we expect sadness to positively influence the use of emotion-focused coping strategies where the individuals attempt to manage the distress evoked from the situation as opposed to dealing directly with the dissolution through problem-focused coping.

Yes, the OT Trackers were sad. They had lost something in which they had an emotional investment. But their sadness did not lead to resignation. Quite the opposite occurred.

Primary Appraisal And Emotion

Primary appraisal is an evaluative process that reflects the degree to which an event is considered to be stressful or a threat to individual well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Specific environmental conditions can be appraised as irrelevant, benign-positive, or stressful. An irrelevant

appraisal indicates nothing is to be lost or gained in a particular encounter while a benign-positive appraisal suggests the encounter does not tax or exceed an individual's resources (Folkman, 1984). Stressful appraisals include harm/loss, threat, and challenge. In harm/loss appraisals some damage has already been done to the individual. Threat concerns the potential for harm/loss and challenge focuses on the potential for gain.

Although the debate continues as to the exact relationship between appraisal and emotion (Reisenzein & Schonpflug, 1992), Lazarus's (1991, 1993) conclusion that appraisal is a necessary causal condition prior to the presence of an emotional response is suggested. This leads to the prediction that emotions mediate the relationship between cognitive appraisal and coping. In support of this hypothesis, Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) conclude that a person only experiences emotion after a particular event has been appraised. The negative appraisal associated with an organizational dissolution thus is likely to be positively related to both anger and sadness. This coincides with prior work of Folkman and Lazarus (1985) who suggest that an event appraised as harmful (i.e., event has already transpired and it is perceived to be detrimental) will evoke negative emotions.

Primary Appraisal And Coping

Scheck and Kinicki (2000) indicate that primary appraisal is predicted to directly affect the problem-focused coping strategies of confrontive coping and planful problem-solving. Appraisals rather than emotions are expected to determine if an individual attempts a proactive strategy to directly change or modify the problem at hand because problem-focused coping is more likely to be engaged when a situation is perceived as amenable to preventive or corrective action (Terry, 1994). Therefore it is suggested that appraisals of harm/loss or threat are negatively related to the use of both problem-focused coping strategies.

The OT Trackers felt harm, loss, threat and challenge. The evolution of ScMOI had begun. Problem-focused trumped emotion-focused coping strategies.

Coping Resources And Primary Appraisal

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) propose that coping resources directly influence primary appraisal. Although there are a myriad of coping resources that could be examined, four have been chosen that have been the focus of previous research (see Kinicki, McKee, & Wade, 1996 for a review of this literature). Scheck and Kinicki (2000) modeled two personal coping resources (i.e., perceived control and coping efficacy) and two situational resources (i.e., social support and environmental conditions). They first consider the personal resources and then discuss expected relationships for the two situational resources.

Perceived control is defined as the extent to which an individual regards his/her life as being under his/her own control in contrast to being fatalistically ruled (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). This definition presents a dispositional approach towards understanding control because it is not tied to any particular situation or condition. Research reveals that the stronger one's perceived generalized control, the less likely an individual is to appraise a specific situation as harmful or threatening (Folkman, 1984; Rotter, 1957; Schank & Abelson, 1977).

Coping efficacy is defined as the degree to which one believes him/herself capable of controlling a specific threatening situation (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Coping efficacy is believed to affect the challenges people undertake and their level of vulnerability to stress. As such, coping efficacy beliefs are instrumental in determining one's appraisal of a specific person-situation transaction. It seems that

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coping efficacy is negatively associated with adverse appraisals such as harm or threat.

The evolving Sc'MOI group perceived their control and displayed their coping efficacy and they eagerly tackled the challenge of forming a new organization.

The social environment provides vital resources an individual can utilize to survive and flourish. Social support is one such resource. It is defined as those individuals and groups one turns to either on a regular basis or in time of need (Cohen & Syme, 1985) for tangible or emotional support. Prior research has found that perceived, not actual, support has a greater impact on such outcomes as life satisfaction and health outcomes (cf. Cohen & Wills, 1985; Helgeson, 1993). Thus, it is posited that perceived social support has both an indirect and direct effect on the choice of coping strategies. Social support indirectly affects coping through its direct effect on primary appraisal. One's social support network assists an individual in evaluating whether a particular situation is stressful (McIntosh, 1991). Social support is believed to promote a view that one can "see through stressful circumstances" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 517) and thus directly influences the meaning one places on a stressful condition (i.e., primary appraisal). The use of social support is posited to negatively impact the appraised stressfulness of a situation.

Social support also is believed to directly influence coping strategies regardless of the appraisal of environmental conditions (Wilcox & Vernberg, 1985) because it is a coping resource that an individual can draw on in coping with the situation at hand (Hobfoll, 1989; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Social support may be used as a problem-oriented resource that allows an individual to actively make use of people within his/her network to help solve potentially stressful conditions. Social support also may be used to directly

influence emotion-focused coping strategies. Individuals and groups within one's network may directly attempt to comfort an individual by telling him/her things aren't as bad as they seem.

The evolving Sc'MOI group was hurt and would not deny it. But, with some help from their friends, they were going to do something about it.

Although little research is available to support the linkage between social support and specific coping strategies, certain relationships seem to exist in dissolution. Social support's impact on problem-focused coping strategies, for example, is based on the prior work of Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, and Gruen, (1986) who found an association between the use of problem-focused coping and various sources of support. These sources of support provide information and advice that may increase a person's ability to confront and solve problems (Thoits, 1986). Similarly, a strong social support network is believed to be an important source of emotional social support (Holahan & Moos, 1987). As such, it is posited that social support impacts various types of emotion-focused coping. A strong social support network should positively influence the use of wishful thinking, emphasizing the positive, and tension reduction because these strategies are beneficial to an individual dealing with an uncontrollable event like dissolution (Terry, 1994). At the same time, a strong social support network should negatively impact the use of distancing, self-blame and self-isolation.

The new ScMOI group was not hiding. They recognized the irresolvable conflict with IABD and were ready to move forward.

The final coping resource, environmental conditions, represent the general conditions found within a given context and seem to directly impact the

appraisal of a situation (Terry, 1994). The greater the degree of perceived instability within a particular setting, the more likely an individual will appraise environmental conditions as harm/loss or threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Because an organizational dissolution creates a high degree of uncertainty for the group (Davy et al., 1988), a positive relationship seems to exist between environmental conditions and primary appraisal.

This is a loss; we feel harmed. We will do something about this threat. The unstable situation provides an extraordinary opportunity to form ScMOI.

From Death To Life

The OT Track of IABD died and was resurrected in ScMOI. It is similar to losing a job and finding a new one. Because Americans are so success-oriented, failure in the form of job loss often represents a loss of identity, death. So those who have lost jobs must go through the stages of grief, just as if they had lost a loved one. These stages of grief, which are shock, fear, anger, shame, and despair, force people to finally accept what has happened and prepare them for the task of rebuilding. Each stage should be used as a stepping-stone between hurt and wholeness. There are many reasons for being fired, including: 1. poor interpersonal skills, 2. wrong fit, 3. lack of commitment, 4. bad luck, 5. self-destructive behavior, 6. scattered focus, 7. "isms" such as sexism, ageism, and racism, and 8. poor management. Those who have lost jobs will be better able to cope if they have supportive friends and can join support groups that help improve self-esteem (Lockwood, 1992). The ScMOI evolutionaries can speculate on the reason for dissolution from IABD but with the support of a feisty and pragmatic group of colleagues they can move on.

A Model For The Evolution Of Sc'MOI

How can we talk about job loss and not include Kubler-Ross and her stages of grief. Henderson-Loney (1996) provides a

different angle by linking Tuckman to Kubler-Ross.

Dealing with profound organizational change can be a painful and disruptive experience for everyone on the team. Using a griefwork approach in the context of the Tuckman team growth model, managers and supervisors can facilitate team building while honoring team process. The psychosocial process of team formation as described by Tuckman, combined with Kubler-Ross's grief model that addresses the emotional issues associated with change, including the growth of a new team, creates a powerful supervisory tool. The 4 stages of the shared model include: 1. denial - forming, 2. resistance - storming, 3. exploration - norming, and 4. commitment - performing (Henderson-Loney, 1996).

This model may provide the pattern for the development of Sc'MOI.

1. Denial-Forming
This cannot be happening to the OT Track. We bring prestige and financial resources to IABD. But it has happened and we need to move on.

2. Resistance-Storming
Do we want to go our separate ways and savor the good times in the OT Track of IABD? Do we want to join another group? Do we want to form our own group?

3. Explanation - Norming
Let's form our own organization - Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry (ScMOI). Who will do what? When and where will we meet? Let's include the cross-cultural management track.

4. Commitment - Performing
We stand alone, not in the shadow of IABD. Basic value conflicts with IABD are behind us. We have a clearer membership appeal. Let's meet in Philadelphia in April under the conference theme of "Manufacturing Identity (ies)".

Afterword

McClurg (2000) reminds us that we need to face the fact that despite our

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hopelessly unrealistic expectations, most relationships don't last. But Havila and Wilkinson (2002) suggest the positive effect of "relationship energy."

Relationship ending is problematic in that, even when [sanctioned interaction] stops, there still seems to exist a kind of "relationship energy" which continues on, especially in the social bonds that have been created. We propose a new principle of the "conservation of relationship energy" which states that it cannot be destroyed and that it can only be transformed and transferred to other relationships, manifesting itself in a variety of ways. "Relationship energy" provides opportunities for the same relationship to be reactivated at a later time, and helps or hinders the formation and continuation of other relationships as this energy travels with people to other organizations and contexts (p. 191).

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