Discourses and Paradigms: Editorial Comments

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As co-editors for this issue on Discourses and Paradigms, we have selected four submissions. In the following, we will each introduce two articles, creating a postmodern collage of storylines and authorship.

When I (Susanne) proposed the topic for this issue, Discourses and Paradigms, I was in the last stages of writing my dissertation in which I analyzed discourses from multi-paradigm perspectives. I experienced a curious ambivalence: sometimes it seemed that social worlds could never be fully understood, no matter how many discourses and paradigms one postulated. At other times, it felt as though nothing new and interesting could ever be said by looking at phenomena through these two particular lenses. The process of guest editing this issue has resolved my ambivalence. We received a number of fascinating articles which interpret the theme in innovative ways. And they invite further exploration.

I would like to begin by providing a link between my study, which prompted this theme issue, and the four articles, which follow. I analyzed educational discourses delivered by professors who were part of a multi-disciplinary teaching team. The students were undergraduates in a program for human and organizational development. I was interested in the paradigmatic assumptions embedded in those discourses based on the idea that the educational process creates the student as subject. Similar to what Walkerdine expressed so well when she wrote about how developmental discourses create the subject "child",

What I mean here is that the "child" is a sign created within discursive practices. This is what Foucault meant by subject. What is important, therefore, is how actual children become "the child," in other words, the relation between the subject and subjectification. All practices are produced through the exchange of signs and are both material and discursive. They are not simply created in language. I am suggesting that the actual practices are created through their embodiment of the truths of child development, the way for example, in… the whole architecture of the school, the seating arrangement, the timetable, and so forth - all embodied the idea of the child developing in a facilitating environment (Walkerdine, 1997: 63).

I was interested in how actual young people become "students" in the educational context of their particular program. Using Burrell & Morgan's (1979) four paradigms as the lens, I found that professors showed distinct preferences in terms of what I called their "home paradigm," but that these preferences showed some variation depending on the topic. I also found that one professor employed what I called "code switches" between paradigms, while another almost consistently stayed within the same paradigm. Finally, I argued that the developmental subject "student" should be exposed to multi-paradigmatic educational discourses, if the goal was to prepare her/

him for participation in a multi-cultural, diverse society.

I think Boje had a similar idea in mind when he founded TAMARA. Walkerdine's subject "child," my subject "student," and Boje's subject "the reader" all too easily get fixed in discourses which are paradigmatically limited, static, and stable. When he writes in his manifesto, "Tamara defines space for dialogs among wandering audiences who chase fragmented storylines from room to room in the mansion of science…" (Boje, 1995), he encourages us to permit him " to rattle our paradigm cages" (Best, personal communication, 1998).

In "The Fetish of Change," Christopher Grey does just that. He undertakes "a polemical critique of the current orthodoxy that the world is changing at an ever faster rate.…". He makes his argument from the position of 'radical skepticism,' which, heading off potential accusations of being merely negative, he convincingly contextualizes as a historical and philosophical position whose progressive contribution is "to envisage a different world" (p. 6). This is necessary, he argues, because the current day change discourse is like a " totem before which we must prostrate ourselves and in the face of which we are powerless" (p. 7). At the same time, much time and money is invested in creating the latest change technologies. While this is done in the name of globalization and re-structuring, it does little to change how people suffer from what the late Pierre Bourdieu calls "the weight of the world" (Bourdieu, 1999, cited in Grey, p. 6).

Grey takes the reader for a wild ride, challenging some "sacred cows" of the organizational change literature, such as uncontested assumptions that reify the phenomenon of resistance to change, as well as the commonly cited cures, i.e. leadership, communication, and consultation. To quote one of the anonymous reviewers: "Simply put, this is the best piece I have had to referee for a long time (I referee for 25 journals). It is clearly written, steeped in the relevant literature, and makes an original and important point for management theorists and practitioners."

And while we are still breathless from reading Grey, Böhm invites us on a walk through the "Consulting Arcade," an adventure which he likens to "walking through Fetish-Land." Böhm compares the world of global capitalism, which the consultant encounters today, to the world of the Paris Arcade one hundred years ago. More than fifty years ago, the German philosopher, Walter Benjamin, had taken those arcades as the catalyst to "composing an *urgeschichte*, or 'primal history,' penetrating the essence of the society and culture of the 19th century … to be called Parisian Arcades: A Dialectical Fairyland" (James Miller, 2000). Böhm, the modern subject, looks at his late 20th century consulting experiences through the lens of Benjamin's 19th century subjects: " the flaneur who has special empathy with the commodity; the collector desperately trying to create a whole out of the empty use value of the dead commodity; the gambler who thrives on the shock of the commodity rush" (Böhm, 2002). Accompanying Boehm on his walk, the reader is simultaneously confronted with a distanced, critical, philosophical commentary, as well as closely wrapped up in auto-ethnographic reflections of a 20th century knowledge worker. A jolting, yet fascinating, experience.

When Susanne offered me (Darin) an opportunity to work with her as a guest co-editor, I was quite pleased to participate. Through my education and research, too, has emerged an awareness, an understanding, and at times, an overwhelming awe at the plurality of perspectives that social scientists and laypersons alike can espouse and hook onto in order to make sense of the world. I remember years ago how one of my courses in contemporary rhetoric utilized Burrell and Morgan's text on sociological paradigms and Kuhn's case for scientific revolution as required readings. This class drove home the point that we can often arrive at conclusions that are equally valid, despite the differing paths we might use. Indeed, how many times have we been at professional conventions and heard opposing viewpoints argued with convincing surety, with aplomb, with gusto, yet without resolution? We truly do put on our rose-colored glasses and view the world in different ways.

But is it possible to gain a unified perspective? Perhaps it is, perhaps not. Graham Symon's treatise on the learning organization paradigm dem-

onstrates that discourses of unitarism can be defined and mapped out, but he shows that it is truly difficult to determine which are regulative against the backdrop of organizational life. Ideologies wax and wane, come and go, and the *zeitgeist* of the moment can impact which resistances will arise and which will continue on. Symon shows that learning organizations can function as post-modernistic in scope, and that resistances will continue to be difficult to manage in their reduction and nullification.

Jim Butler, Fiona Scott, and John Edwards discuss difficulties that arise when the evaluation of change within the organization is undertaken. This paper uses modernist and post-modernist perspectives to color changes within organization data. Butler, et al. note how groups pushing for change expect their members to achieve positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors as they are persuaded to accepting the organizational tenets and become more effective members. In order to evaluate an organization, one must consider epistemological, as well as ontological, issues because they go hand in hand; one cannot be considered without an understanding of the other.

So, without further ado, Susanne and I are pleased to offer the aforementioned articles to readers to use as tools as they wander from room to room, from place to place. It is only by keeping abreast of new perspectives, by organizing ourselves, and by not keeping quiet if we think we have an organization of ideas helpful to others, that we can help to make sense of issues we face in the marketplace of ideas.

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