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Pre-Bureaucratic and Post-Bureaucratic Stages of Organization Development

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Abstract. A nine-stage theory of organizational development, analogous to *Erikson*'s (1959) theory of individual development, is introduced in order to provide a new perspective on the problems of creating new organizations, changing bureaucratic organizations, and envisioning qualitatively different kinds of organizing. Illustrations of the stages derive mainly from alternative educational settings.

Background

As those familiar with it know, the field or organization development has had virtually nothing whatsoever to do with the question of how organizations develop through qualitatively distinct stages. Instead, the field of organization development at present concerns what ought to happen, how to make it happen, and what actually happens when a behavioral scientist intervenes in an organization.

Meanwhile, the body of organization theory that concerns growth has focused almost exclusively on changes that occur as size and age change (*Starbuck*, 1965; *Miller*, 1972). But obviously changes in size and age do not necessarily generate changes in quality. In the same way, individuals may increase the amount of information they have as they grow older and also change their behavior as they encounter new environments, *without* any change in the structure of their thinking and moral decision-making (*Kohlberg*, 1969; *Perry*, 1968).

Katz and Kahn (1966) have suggested a three-stage theory of qualitative change, paralleling *Parsons* (1960) distinctions among technical, managerial, and institutional subsystems. According to this theory, organizations begin simply as

cooperative production structures, then develop a managerial authority structure and maintenance system in order to enhance stability and reliability, and finally develop boundary systems to facilitate exchange with other institutions. Appealing as this theory may be in its movement from the simple to the complex, *Katz and Kahn* (1966) provide no empirical evidence that organizations actually follow such a path of development. Indeed federal programs often seem to follow just the reverse course: the initial policies creating them resulting from inter-institutional politics, followed by the creation of a management process at the federal level, followed by the provision of funds to local groups which provide technical services.

Two other more extensive conceptual schemes which articulate historical stages through which organizations may develop (*Greiner*, 1972; *Lippitt and Schmidt*, 1967)[1] will be compared to the theory to be advanced here at a later point in the article.

By contrast to the rarity of qualitative stage theories in the organizational literature, there are a great number of empirically tested stage theories of group development (e.g., *Bennis*, 1964; *Gibb*, 1964; *Mills*, 1964; *Mann*, 1966; *Schutz*, 1967; *Tuckman*, 1965), and some of the best known theoreticians in the behavioral sciences have focused on stage theories of individual development (*Erikson*, 1959; *Freud*, 1938; *Kohlberg*, 1969; *Piaget*, 1971).

A significant problem in developing a theory of qualitatively distinct stages of organization development is that the particular organizational form called bureaucracy is empirically so prevalent today that it is virtually synonymous with the term organization itself. Indeed, *Etzioni* (1961) could say on the first page of the introduction to his book on complex organizations that 'in this volume *organization* stands for "complex bureaucratic organization"'. Since *Weber*, we have tended to assume that bureaucratic organization is an advanced and rational form of organizing. The theory to be articulated here will, by contrast, place bureaucracy as a middle stage of organization development representing a lower form of rationality than three qualitatively distinct later stages.

This paper presents a new theory of qualitative stages of organization development, compares it to two existing schemes, shows how it applies to specific organizational settings, and indicates how it can be used by organization members or interventionists to determine appropriate policies and change objectives. The paper offers empirical evidence for the stages, but the data is based on case studies rather than experiments. In some instances, the case studies concern organizations which have used this stage theory to improve their functioning.
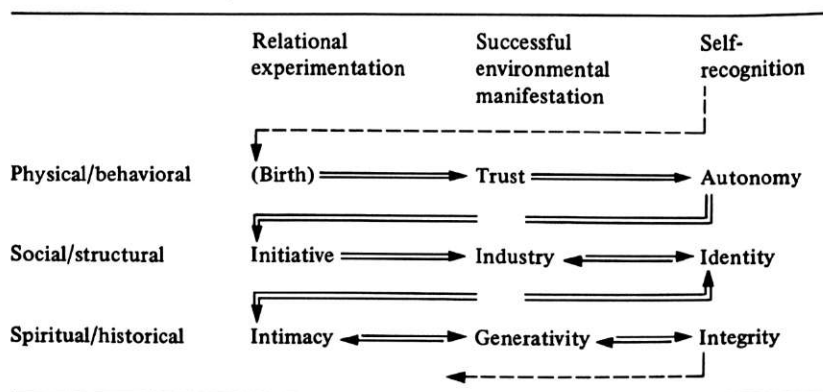
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1 A third scheme (*Zurcher*, 1969) is at such a low level of generalization and applies so specifically to 'poverty program neighborhood action committees' that I will not review it here.

The theory originally derived from the author's efforts to make sense of a 2-year experience during which he founded and directed an Upward Bound program. The program involved recruiting some 25 staff members each winter, working with them through the spring to prepare for a 7-week residential summer session with some 80 low-achieving, inner-city high-school students from backgrounds of poverty.

The author attempted insofar as possible to impose no assumptions initially on either the staff or the students, but rather to work collaboratively with all members of the program in whatever directions we defined together. In a certain sense, then, we began in the 'state of nature'. Perhaps because of this explicit non-design the program seemed to pass through noticeably different phases as time passed. In retrospect, the program as a whole, the small core staff group, each of the staff preparation periods, and each of the summer sessions seemed to have developed through distinct stages – described in detail in *Torbert* (1973).

Searching for a way to characterize the stages in a sufficiently abstract way to capture the underlying similarities among these various occasions, the author studied various developmental theories and eventually fitted *Erikson*'s theory of individual development into the following model, creating organizational analogies to each Eriksonian stage:

Model of *Erikson*'s Stages[2]

	Relational experimentation	Successful environmental manifestation	Self-recognition
Physical/behavioral	(Birth) ⟹	Trust ⟹	Autonomy
Social/structural	Initiative ⟹	Industry ⟸⟹	Identity
Spiritual/historical	Intimacy ⟸⟹	Generativity ⟸⟹	Integrity

2 The rationale for this fitting is explicated in *Torbert* (1973). Several suggestions must suffice here: (1) of the two axes, the horizontal represents a kind of dialectical movement from thesis to synthesis to antithesis and the vertical represents a phenomenological movement from the ontic or outward level of reality toward the ontological (*Heidegger*, 1962); (2) in the 'autonomy' stage a child gains a sense of *physical* distinctness from his surroundings, no longer chewing on toes and toys indiscriminately; through successful reso-

The Stage Theory of Organization Development

The organizational analogies to *Erikson*'s categories were named as follows:

Stages of Organization Development

	Relational experimentation	Successful environmental manifestation	Self-recognition
Behavioral	Shared fantasies ⟹	Investments ⟹	Determinations
Structural	Experiments ⟹	Predefined productivity ⟸	Openly chosen structure
Spiritual	Foundational community ⟸	Liberating symbols and disciplines	?
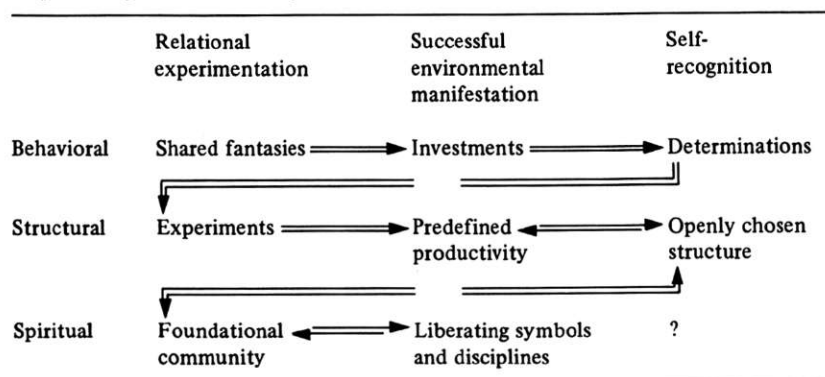
Examination of 137 distinct incidents in the Upward Bound program yielded the following list of descriptive characteristics for each of these eight stages:

lution of the 'identity' stage the adolescent gains a sense of *structural* (cognitive-emotional) distinctness from social role requirements, determining a particular role for himself; 'integrity' implies a sense of *spiritual* worth, a sense of the intrinsic meaningfulness of one's life-history appreciated as a whole; (3) the double-lined arrows in the model indicate the extra pressure on development toward the 'industry' stage in a competitive, achievement-oriented society such as ours; (4) the two-way arrows after 'industry' indicate the conflict between individual growth and social or organizational requirements that occurs in pre-structured bureaucratic systems not open to continual redefinition; (5) the broken arrows between levels of the model indicate the relative likelihood of trauma and interruptions in development at those points: the discontinuities involved at the birth and death of individuals are self-evident; the possible interruptions between 'autonomy' and 'initiative' and between 'identity' and 'intimacy' are less evident; family and culture usually support an individual's 'initiatives' to enter the structural realms of language and social role, so it is only when these supports are absent (*Bettelheim,* 1959; *Davis,* 1947; *Turnbull,* 1962, 1972) or when the child is blocked from receiving them, as in the case of *Helen Keller,* that the discontinuity becomes obvious; by contrast, the interruption between the structural and spiritual levels of development is so common that it tends to go unnoticed; only when we compare our habitual ways of living as adults to stories of search for spiritual rebirth (*Castaneda,* 1969, 1971, 1972; *Herrigel,* 1953; *Katzantzakis,* 1965; *Lilly,* 1972; *Ouspensky,* 1949; *Reymond,* 1971) do we wonder whether we may not have 'stopped growing too soon'.

Characteristics of the Stages of Organization Development

I. Fantasies
   (a) Dreams, fantasies about future, initial visions;
   (b) informal conversations with friends, work associates;
   (c) diffuse collaboration – discussing or working with others on occasional, related projects to explore shared interests;
   (d) episodic exploration of varied parts of the social environment to see how they relate to fantasies, where opportunities exist, what potential consequences of action would be.

II. Investments
   (a) Organizers make definite commitment of enterprise;
   (b) 'parent' institutions make financial, structural, spiritual commitments to nurture;
   (c) early relationship-building among potential leaders, members, clients, advisors;
   (d) leadership style negotiated;
   (e) issues arise about the validity, reliability, and depth of the various personal and institutional commitments.

III. Determinations
   (a) Specific goals, clients, staff, members determined (hiring, admissions);
   (b) recognizable physical territory delineated;
   (c) first common tasks and time commitments;
   (d) psychological contracts between parties and organization defined implicitly or explicitly;
   (e) persistence-unity exhibited in face of perceived privation or threat.

IV. Experiments
   Alternative legal, governing, administrative, physical, production, communication, planning, scheduling, celebratory, and/or interpersonal structures-processes practiced (modeled, role-played), tested in operation, and reformed.

V. Predefined productivity
   (a) Focus on doing the predefined task;
   (b) viability of product = single criterion of success;
   (c) standards and structures taken for granted (often formalized, institutionalized);
   (d) roles stabilized, job descriptions written;
   (e) effort to quantify results based on defined standards;
   (f) reality conceived of as dichotomous and competitive: sucess–failure, leader–follower, legitimate–illegitimate, work–play, reasonable–emotional.

VI. Openly chosen structure[3]
   (a) Shared continual reflection about larger (wider, deeper, more long-term, more abstract) purposes of the organization;

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3 The reader should recall that few organizations achieve the final three stages. Therefore, some of the following characteristics may seem unfamiliar. The characteristics of 'Openly chosen structure' will be illustrated further in this paper.

(b) development of open interpersonal process, with disclosure, support, and confrontation on value-stylistic-emotional issues;

(c) evaluation of effects of own behavior on others in organization and formative research on effects of organization on environment ('social accounting'); i.e., determining whether abstract purposes are being realized in practice;

(d) direct facing and resolution of paradoxes: freedom versus control, expert versus participatory decision-making, etc.;

(e) creative, trans-conventional solutions to conflicts;

(f) organizational his-story becomes my-story[4];

(g) deliberately chosen structure with commitment to it, over time, the structure unique in the experience of the participants or among 'similar' organizations;

(h) primary emphasis on horizontal rather than vertical role differentiation;

(i) development of symmetrical rather than subordinate relation with 'parent' organization;

(j) gaining of distinctive public repute based on the quality of collective action within the organization.

(Crisis of transition to spiritual ground)

VII. Foundational community

(a) Regular, personal, shared research on relations among spiritual, theoretical, and behavioral qualities of experience;

(b) transcendence of pre-existing cultural categories and appreciation of the continuous interplay of opposites: action—research, sex—politics, past—future, symbolic—diabolic, etc.;

(c) organization survives a challenge or crisis during which its existing structure fails; shared purpose (spirit) revealed as sustaining;

(d) new experiences of time: interplay of creative timeliness, timeless re-enactments of archetypal patterns, and time-bound personal needs and situational requirements; spirit as illuminating and meaning the past and future; history as myth (where myth means ultimate truth).

VIII. Liberating disciplines

(a) Lowering of membership boundary between organization and environment; inclusive rather than exclusive, given commitment by aspirants to self-transformation;

(b) tasks deliberately ironic to elucidate hidden relationships among task, process, and purpose; incomprehensible (unpleasant, undoable) without reference to their expression of and inspiration from organizational processes and purposes;

(c) commitment by 'leaders' to premeditated structural evolution over time;

(d) 'leaders' use all authority granted to exercise psychosocial jiu-jitsu, leading to increased sense of their authority among other members;

(e) openness (vulnerability) of 'leaders' to challenge regarding their authenticity.

IX. (Uncharted in author's experience)

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4 I am indebted to *Judy Putzel* for this formulation. It refers to the process whereby members come to identify with the unique history of this particular organization.

Of these stages 'predefined productivity' is probably the most familiar to us because what we call bureaucracy — the predominant organizational form in contemporary society — is one example of it. When the author first studied *Erikson*'s description of the 'industry' stage in children, he was struck by the analogy to bureaucratic organizational structures. At the industry stage, youth compete to win, striving toward superior competence, taking the rules of the game for granted as natural and just.[5] Bureaucracy models itself after such a game, creating a fixed set of rules as to goals, roles, authority, and communications patterns for particular jobs, within which the job-holder is presumed to work more efficiently as he questions the structure less. Job-holders who have not developed past the industry stage probably appreciate and perform well in such a structure, but at the same time the structure itself will tend to inhibit them from further personal development.

Meanwhile, to the degree that a person has developed or is motivated to develop beyond the industry stage, he will tend to be frustrated by bureaucratic structures and will withdraw his energies from them or try to change them, thus disturbing their equilibrium from within (*Argyris, 1957*). Also, to the degree that the external environment is turbulent and changing, it will exert pressures on bureaucratic structures to adapt, thus disturbing their equilibrium from without (*Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967*). But the bureaucratic system cannot respond creatively to these disequilibria. It is open only at the behavioral level and not at the structural level. That is, it can take in new inputs, plant, or personnel and produce some product or service for the environment and it can expand its present structure, but it has no built-in process for restructuring the quality of its goals and roles. It does not possess the 'ultrastability' necessary to sacrifice a given structure without chaos (*Cadwallader, 1968*). Consequently, it tends to ignore disequilibria, or to respond inappropriately, or to undergo a traumatic crisis, or, the most recent popular tactic, to develop a leadership which attempts to leapfrog over crises by conglomerating organizations.

The tendency of bureaucratic organizations toward structural closedness can be illustrated by observing in a microscopic way how people characteristically work and make decisions together. A decision-making process that reflects structural closedness would be one which does not explicitly acknowledge and experiment with alternative possible ways of structuring problems, nor with the alternative value systems that alternative structures presuppose, and which does not confront openly and resolve the emotional commitments and reactions of vari-

5 See also *Piaget* (1962). *Piaget* also suggests that at a more advanced stage of development youth intuit the 'spirit' of a game and will identify certain roles as incongruent with this spirit. This corresponds to the possibility organizations can develop in post-bureaucratic stages, according to the present theory, to determine what structures best effect their 'spirit' or ultimate purpose.

ous participants to such alternatives. (Implicit in this argument is the view that people's emotions come into play increasingly as decisions more explicitly concern core issues rather than mere questions of utility.) A decision-making process reflecting structural closedness would also create a climate encouraging conformity to the implicit values of the operative but unexamined structure.

Argyris (1969) has found that precisely such a climate — one in which experimenting and statements of feeling almost never occur, and in which conformity is encouraged more than individuality — exists in every organizational group he has studied in business, consulting, government, research and development laboratories, and university settings.

The bureaucratic mode emerges as a pathological expression of the 'predefined productivity' stage of organization development. For the games to which a youth is introduced at the 'industry' stage of personal development are not *necessarily* closed at the structural level as is bureaucracy, even if the youth initially chooses to take their structure for granted. For example, a youth can learn judo by copying and working with someone already proficient, treating the whole exercise as merely concerning an outward skill. But the rhetoric and practice of judo is not *confined* to this level and does not confine the learner to it. It carries the question of how to remain balanced while in motion to each level — the physical, the emotional or intellectual, and the spiritual. When the learner wishes to raise such questions, they will not contradict the structure of the game. Instead, encouraged to pursue his questioning, the learner may come to a different sense, appreciation, and understanding of the structure of judo. As one stage of growth, leading from and to other stages, there is nothing pathological about learning to play games well according to predefined structures that one (for the time) takes for granted. In a mature culture, such games will be fully and truly educational. They will help to open the individual to the next stage of growth as he masters the given stage.

In an analogous way, an organization can be so structured as to make goal reconsideration and redefinition of roles and role relations a matter of regular, consensual negotiation, as in Israeli kibbutzim (*Fine,* 1973). But we can predict that such structural redefinition will be more likely to heighten organizational effectiveness if the organization has a prior history of successful operation in a given structural mode. Only under this condition will organization members have a common reference point for decisions about what tends to work and what does not, and for discussions about what unintended consequences occur even when a given structure appears superficially to work well. Such an organization would be different in quality from a bureaucracy, tending to exhibit the ten characteristics of 'Openly chosen structure'. One difference in quality, for example, would be the nature of control. In bureaucracy control is hierarchical. In an 'Openly chosen structure' the underlying form of control is collaborative even if the operating structure at any given time is hierarchical.

The Stage of Intimacy or Foundational Community

According to this theory of organization development, organizational and individual development become not merely analogous but actually synonymous at the adult, spiritual, or historical level. The three terms 'adult', 'spiritual', and 'historical' refer, respectively, to the individual, the metaphysical and the social spheres of reality. *Erikson* calls intimacy, generativity, and integrity 'adult' stages of individual development. The term 'historical' refers to the fact that when organizations operate as 'foundational communities' for their members and transcend existing cultural categories in the process of doing so, they tend to have a historically significant impact on their culture. An example would be the organization around *Gandhi* which eventuated in India's independence and in a lowering of caste barriers (*Erikson,* 1969). The term 'spiritual' refers to a quality of experience which, according to the phenomenology of *Husserl* (1962), underlies all structures and objects of attention although it may not be appropriated as such by a given person or organization. A more complete sense of this quality of experience is developed in *Torbert* (1972). As persons enter the adult, spiritual or historical level of development by struggling toward genuine intimacy, they are simultaneously creating a foundational community among themselves.

Through one another, each comes to stand outside himself (ecstasy: ek-stasis: outstanding). Together, intimates engage in spiritual, social and physical intercourse, eventually developing (or rediscovering) new values, new myths, new resolutions of cultural polarities, new languages (as hinted at by the special names with which couples often rechristen one another), and, of course, new persons.

Already the language of the essay has changed from a descriptive, analytical tone to a more evocative, poetic tone in trying to articulate the stage of intimacy or foundational community. This change is inevitable because the stage itself involves transcendence of pre-existing language and knowledge-structures. Thus, some of its characteristics may be evoked by language, but they cannot be 'captured' by it. Normal science, which takes a given model of reality for granted (*Kuhn,* 1962), cannot chart this realm with any adequacy. Only extraordinary science (to use another of *Kuhn*'s terms), which explicates the relations among a new model of reality, a whole set of theories, and data, matches the complexity, subtlety, and comprehensiveness of the experience of genuine intimacy or foundational community.

Obviously, intimacy and foundational community imply something more than new epistemologies. They imply coming to terms with that most primitive and mysterious psychosocial medium: sex, charisma. *Erikson* (1959) focuses on sex in the following excerpt on intimacy, and his language makes it clear he is not speaking of 'mere' sex which anyone can 'have', but rather of an extra-ordinary and mysterious relationship which transcends cultural categories and polarities:

Orgastic potency ... means not the discharge of sex products in the sense of *Kinsey*'s 'outlets' but heterosexual mutuality, with full genital sensitivity and with overall discharge of tension from the body. This is a rather concrete way of saying something about a process which we really do not understand. But the idea clearly is that the experience of the climactic mutuality of orgasm provides a supreme example of the mutual regulation of complicated patterns and in some way appeases the potential rages caused by the daily evidence of the oppositeness of male and female, of fact and fancy, of love and hate, of work and play. Satisfactory sex relations make sex less obsessive and sadistic control superfluous. But here the prescription of psychiatry faces overwhelming inner prejudices and situational limitations in parts of the population whose sense of identity is based on the complete subordination of sexuality and, indeed, sensuality to a life of toil, duty, and worship. Here only gradual frank discussion can clarify the respective dangers of traditional rigidity and abrupt or merely superficial change.

Persons transcend themselves in genuine intimacy, re-finding themselves in community, seeing themselves anew and gradually in essence through their fundamental encounters with one another, reconstituting their world views and values, and exploring the concrete realization of new possibilities. The persons who develop intimacy discover-create a shared spirit permeating their different and changing ways of structuring the world. They commit themselves to the subtle stability of the spirit as an ultimate source of individuality and community. Such persons gradually cease to identify particular behaviors and structures as 'themselves'. Instead, they come to recognize their everyday lives, together and apart, as particular symbols of cosmic intent. Increasingly, as they learn to remain centered and dispersed in the shared spirit of each act and situation, *they* organize their lives, rather than collusively permitting themselves to be confined (organized) by preexisting cultural categories. Before this, they may appear organized and indeed be organized, but they do not organize. All this: in theory.

In practice, in this society, the bureaucratic organization of schools, jobs, churches, and entertainments militates against genuine intimacy and the experience of 'foundational community'. Indeed, bureaucratic assumptions about how to organize so permeate our society that organizations, like children, are often rushed through the early stages of development, resulting in uncreative fantasies, untrustworthy investments, unclear determinations, and insufficient experiments. To the degree that the social and spiritual investments of an organization's 'parents' are untrustworthy the new organization will be inhibited from becoming truly new, will instead feel constrained and manipulated by its 'parents', and will focus upon financial ('survival') issues to the exclusion of social and spiritual ('growth') issues, thus recreating an impoverished environment for its members. Significantly, our legal structure and economic theory focus entirely on individual ownership (even corporate stocks are owned and exercised by individuals) and not at all on collective ownership (*Stein*, 1974). So 'founda-

tional community' becomes difficult to achieve for social reasons as well as for personal reasons.

If the overarching institutions of a society are not permeated by shared spirit, but rather by the competitive ethos of bureaucracy, then new organizations will tend to view their survival as constantly in jeopardy, even if they, their clientele, and objective measures all agree that they are meeting real needs. In the case of a governmental program, the legislative body may suddenly cut off funds for reasons unconnected with the program's effectiveness. In the case of a school, a new program may be opposed by some constituencies without ever assessing its effectiveness because it is different from ('and therefore competitive with') the existing program. In the case of an industrial plant, its conglomerate parent may sell it (and potentially disrupt its management) whether or not it makes a profit.

Under such conditions, money and all the financial considerations which surround it − the amniotic fluid of non-traditional societies; the expression of appropriate mutuality among and within organizations − becomes viewed as an entity in the external environment upon which the organization is dependent. Attention devoted to the competent crafting of valued social programs or goods cannot be counted on to attract the necessary money as would be the case in a rational economy. Many of the organization's decisions may be discussed and made in what are purportedly purely financial terms, in terms of whether the proposed product or service or job, candidate or administrative reorganization, will make or save money, rather than in terms of the social costs or benefits of the proposed decision. At the same time a great deal of 'politicking' will occur in an effort to 'psych out' and possibly covertly influence 'the powers that be'. Instead of direct confrontation among varying needs and priorities, the 'infant' and 'parent' organizations strive to manipulate one another. Such conditions indicate the pathological resolution of the 'investments' stage of organizational development.

Comparison to Existing Organizational Stage Schemes

The notion that bureaucracy represents only one stage of organization, but one that mutes earlier stages and impedes later stages, is confirmed in an indirect and impressionistic way when we compare the stage-theory presented here to two other schemes of organizational stages. In both other cases, the stages identified cluster around the middle stage ('predefined productivity') of the theory presented here, with less attention to and less differentiation among the earlier and later stages suggested by the present theory. This clustering may result from the fact that the organizations observed by these theorists gave less evidence of the early and late stages.

Lippitt and Schmidt (1967) discerned the following 'non-financial crises in developing organizations':

	Concern	Issue	Needed knowledge base
1.	Creation	Risk	Leader's short-range objective
2.	Survival	Sacrifice	Community of objectives
3.	Stability	Organization	Leader's long-range plans
4.	Repute	Evaluation	Executive team planning
5.	Uniqueness	Change	Executive team helps sub-units set own objectives
6.	Contribution	Share	Management understanding of larger objectives of organization and society

Greiner (1972) has distinguished five stages of historical development in business organizations, which he describes as phases of alternating evolution and revolution:

Phase	Evolutionary management style	Revolutionary management problem
I.	Creativity	Leadership
II.	Direction	Autonomy
III.	Delegation	Control
IV.	Coordination	Red tape
V.	Collaboration	?

Greiner's (1972) theory is narrower than the *Lippitt and Schmidt* (1967) theory in three ways. First, it depicts conditions of internal management exclusively, whereas the second and the last three categories in the *Lippitt and Schmidt* theory point to the relationship between the organization as a whole and its environment. Second, the *Greiner* theory focuses almost exclusively on control issues (only 'Creativity' hints at other possible issues). It describes an oscillation between forces for centralization and forces for decentralization, whereas each of the *Lippitt and Schmidt* categories refers to a distinct issue. Third, the *Greiner* theory restricts itself vigorously to categories which are empirically observable today, whereas the last three categories of the *Lippitt and Schmidt* theory venture toward an ideal.

For all these reasons, we would expect less overlap between the stage-theory presented here and *Greiner*'s (1972) categories than between this stage-theory

and *Lippitt and Schmidt*'s (1967) categories. The following table suggests a rough sense of the relationships among the schemes:

Torbert (1973)	*Lippitt and Schmidt* (1967)	*Greiner* (1972)
1. Shared fantasies	1. ⎤ Creation	1. ⎤ Creativity
2. Investments	2. ⎦	2. ⎤
3. Determinations	3. ⎤ Survival	3. ⎥ Direction
4. Experiments	4. ⎦	4. ⎥ Delegation
5. Predefined productivity	5. ⎤ Stability	5. ⎦ Coordination
6. Openly chosen structure	6. ⎦ Repute	6. Collaboration
7. Foundational community	7. ⎤ Uniqueness	7.
8. Liberating disciplines	8. ⎦ Contribution	8.
9. ?	9.	9.

The first four stages of the present theory are lumped into one stage in *Greiner*'s (1972) scheme ('Creativity') and two stages in *Lippitt and Schmidt*'s (1967) scheme ('Creation' and 'Survival'). The last three stages of the present theory are only hinted at in *Greiner*'s scheme and are lumped into one stage in *Lippitt and Schmidt*'s scheme ('Contribution'). Thus, I would argue that both of these other schemes are considerably captivated by the bureaucratic reality they strive to illuminate. Nevertheless, in general, the sequence of categories in the three schemes appears mutually consistent.

Applying the Stage-Theory to Free Schools

One way to develop a more general sense of the applicability of this theory to organizational settings is to see how it helps us to analyze 'free schools' as they have developed over the past 8 years or so. This analysis will also permit us to discuss the stage of 'Openly chosen structure' in more detail. This stage will be of most consequence to the many persons who work in bureaucracies but sense that an alternative way of organizing ought to be possible and would be preferable. According to this stage theory, the ten characteristics of 'Openly chosen structure' are mutually reinforcing. If an organization attempted to modify its bureaucratic structure along the lines of only one or two of the characteristics of 'Openly chosen structure', such innovations would tend not to survive.

Free schools serve as interesting illustrations of an effort to transcend the bureaucratic stage of organizing because a fundamental motivation in the creation of free schools seems to have been a reaction against the coercive, confining,

conformity-producing bureaucratic structures of conventional education (*Graubard,* 1972). At the same time, the utopian cast of the phrase 'free school', as contrasted to more paradoxical phrases such as 'open structure' or 'liberating discipline' suggests that organizers loyal to such a concept are still caught in dichotomous thinking (characteristic 'f' of 'predefined structure'), are still caught in the most intimate and insidious aspect of the structure they would like to reject totally. 'Openly chosen structure' requires paradoxical thinking rather than dichotomous thinking. Persons who habitually dichotomize such terms as 'spontaneity' and 'discipline' or 'freedom' and 'structure' will tend to oppose all efforts to develop structures as contrary to the ideal of freedom. Likewise, they may oppose attention to practical, concrete effects of their behavior (characteristic 'c' of 'Openly chosen structure'), in the interest of attending to abstract issues of social justice which conventional schools all too frequently ignore (*Lawler,* 1972). But these two concerns need not be conceived of as opposed to one another. Similarly, members of free schools, assessing reality through dichotomizing conceptual structures, may oppose all *unilateral* initiatives in the name of *participative* decision-making, thus actually stifling creativity. These are characteristic postures in which our staff at Upward Bound sometimes found ourselves and which the author has repeatedly heard in characterizations of free schools.

The effect of such dichotomous thinking is to paralyse an organization between the stages of 'Predefined productivity' and 'Openly chosen structure', negating the former, unable to affirm the latter. Often the paralyzing conflicts themselves result in two polarized factions which might be named the 'collaborative idealists' and the 'task-oriented realists' (*Lawler,* 1972; *Hamilton,* 1973).

Dichotomous thinking also saps all creativity from conversations about the larger purposes of the organization, and these discussions tend to become defenses of preconceived ideologies rather than explorations toward illuminating integrative ideas. Furthermore, dichotomous thinking leads to a fault-finding orientation ('It's your fault', 'No, it's your fault') rather than to appreciation of the systemic quality or relationships. Such fault-finding may operate under the guise of interpersonal openness and gradually poison the atmosphere.

Gaskin (1973) has written an encouraging account of how a parent-run community school gradually began to overcome this paralyzing fault-finding orientation, when the parent-chairwoman of the Executive Committee and the principal of the school both began to use a consultant to look at how they could improve the congruence and effectiveness of their own behavior. Until that time, the staff, the administration, and the parent policy-making committees had all tended to blame the other two groups for the school's problems. Since that time, each group has begun to do formative research on its own effectiveness, has begun to take more initiatives and follow them through to implementation, and has begun to hold workshops to develop needed skills.

Another aspect of the historical-stage theory which helps to analyze free schools is its emphasis on the early stages of organizational development. *Cooper* (1973) offers brief case studies of the development of seven free schools and impressionistically applies the *Erikson* (1959) theory to them (referring back to an earlier outline of my theory, *Torbert* 1972). Four of the seven schools disbanded in the first few years (one before opening). In all cases where significant 'unresolvable' issues cropped up later in a school's development, *Cooper* finds that it leap-frogged over the 'Investments', 'Determinations', or 'Experiments' stages on the basis of sudden unilateral actions by a leader.

The usefulness of fully negotiating the early stages of organizational development is exemplified by *Lawler*'s (1972) fascinating account of starting an alternative school with working-class teenagers. The process began by informal Sunday night meetings at his home, where an atmosphere developed in which the students felt free to talk about their lives, their problems, and their desires ('Shared fantasies'). Over six months, their concern moved from more concrete, short-term problems and solutions (e.g., boredom — camping trip together) to more abstract, long-term problems and solutions (e.g., alienation from school and from own future prospects — trip to Philadelphia to see alternative schools — discussion of developing own school). Together *Lawler* and the students gained moral and financial support from parents, the mayor, and the city council for a summer program ('Investments', 'Determinations', 'Experiments').

At this point, the organizing process entered a year-long period of hiatus, paralysis, and breakdown. *Lawler* left the area for the summer after the program had been staffed. In the fall enthusiasm was still high, and a storefront was opened. Now, however, a distinct staff group had emerged and met regularly, and although *Lawler* had returned, he now found his mode of operation opposed by the majority. His practical, political approach of having persons with a common commitment work together on the basis of individual initiative to achieve definite results was shackled by the predominant view in favor of formal, collaborative decision-making and of opening the storefront to any who wished to use it. Gradually, action declined in favor of conversation, and persons from the community who had not participated in creating the organization began to use the storefront irresponsibly, causing noise that disturbed the neighborhood and bringing in drugs and liquor. Finally, in the spring, the police raided the storefront after neighborhood complaints and closed it. This crisis completed the demoralization of the preceding months and could easily have killed the whole enterprise (unsuccessful resolution of 'Predefined productivity' and 'Openly chosen structure' stages).

Instead, working informally with the titular head of the staff and with the originally committed students, *Lawler* reopened the storefront and within 6 weeks restored its credibility within the community and gained funding and accreditation to open as an alternative high school. The crisis seemed to rekindle

Lawler's assertiveness and to convince the rest of the staff that some action was needed. This startling emergence of the phoenix from the ashes seems largely attributable to the residue of shared spirit from careful attention to the first four stages of development in the first year of organizing and to *Lawler*'s leadership style which was more congruent in practice, if not in rhetoric, with the post-bureaucratic stages of organizing.

Using the Stage-Theory to Promote Change and Stability

Two examples of situations in which the author introduced the stage-theory can suggest how the theory can help persons and organizations to move along the path of greater self-direction and fuller collaboration.

The first was a 9-week Applied Behavioral Science Internship program in which the author participated, offered by the National Training Laboratories at Bethel, Maine, during the summer of 1970. There were 26 interns from various professional and social action fields ranging from theology to community action, most of whom were PhD's. About three staff members were associated with us at any one time, rotating each week or so, except for one coordinator, who stayed with us throughout. The weekend after the third week the interns offered two community development programs for different communities in New England, an exercise arranged by the staff of the program. After this 'Predefined productivity', a severe depression seemed to fall over the program, with many members questioning its validity. The weekend programs could have no more than marginal impact upon the respective communities and clearly did not represent a deep or sustained commitment by the interns to each community. Hence, they served as easy targets for complaints against the hit-and-run quality of the professional consulting model to which we had apprenticed ourselves ('reflection about purposes' characteristic of 'Openly chosen structure'). At the same time, various individual interns had received disconfirming feedback about their behavior from clients, peers, or staff and were devoting their energies to digesting that ('data on effects of own behavior' characteristic of 'Openly chosen structure').

After a formal meeting had dissolved in tired inertia, an informal group of about half the interns spontaneously met together and decided to use the following day, which was to be devoted to modeling systems, to create models of the past, present, and future of the program. The following morning the author described his stage-theory of organization development to the sub-group with which he worked and found agreement that it described accurately the significant events and sequences of the first 3 weeks, as well as the present crisis of purpose ('organizational his-story becomes my-story'). The group developed a specific structure which it thought would help the interns complete the transition to the 'Openly chosen structure' stage, as well as a structure for living out

that stage itself. During the afternoon, when the various sub-groups shared their modeling efforts, this group's model and suggested structure were enthusiastically accepted as the next step for the program (although there had been no expectation that the modeling exercises would necessarily lead to such action). The agreement was easy and unanimous (thus achieving a 'deliberately chosen structure') — the only decision of that summer to which those two adjectives can be applied.

The transitional structure involved meetings of small groups to diagnose each individual's deepest personal/professional developmental aims and needs, as well as his or her foremost resources. The resulting lists were to be posted around the main meeting room, and from then on the following 'stable' structure would occur. Each morning persons (including staff members) with needs or resources they wished attended to immediately would stand close to their lists, while others moved to the middle of the room; the persons close to their lists would specify what they needed or had to offer, while the others shopped among these choices for an activity that used their resources or responded to a need, thus forming groups for the day (and meeting the 'horizontal role differentiation' characteristic of 'Openly chosen structure').

The result was a structure which expressed the particularity not only of this organization but also of each individual within it. Paradoxically, the physical movements highlighted freedom of choice and commitment to others at the same time, overcoming the commonly experienced dichotomy between 'doing one's own thing' and concern for others (thus achieving 'creative resolution of a paradox').

A deeper paradox, unintended, unnoticed, and unresolved at the time but highlighted by later events in the program, was the emphasis of this particular structure on individual development rather than on some common need of the program as a whole. In this sense we had not developed one particular structure for the program, but rather a framework which legitimized constantly shifting structures. Thus, it represented a partial regression to the 'Experiments' stage of organization development.

After a week of relatively satisfactory operation in our 'Openly chosen structure' and still well before the end of the program, intern conversation began to turn increasingly to apparently unproductive wrangles about the history of the program. Everyone implicitly assumed that his view of history was objective, at least with respect to himself. An atmosphere of complaint rather than of creative synthesis existed in these conversations. There had been much talk of the interns as a 'learning community', and now the question arose whether we really were a community and whether that had been an appropriate aim in the first place. There was no sense that our present actions could make us into a community if we chose, thereby transmuting our shared history into the history of a community.

At the same time, some persons wished to change from the rotating structure to more stable groups that could provide more intense personal growth experiences for persons. Once again, even though a form very much like what I have called 'Foundational community' was being proposed, there was little sense of creative struggle toward a common future and more sense of wrangling over personal preferences.

The author's model of historical stages still hung on the wall of the large meeting room, but it did not seem to occur to others that the various-felt dissatisfactions might be symptoms of transition to another stage or that, if looked at together, they might form a pattern revealing the quality of the next stage. The author did not reintroduce the model, partly because he was preoccupied by other matters, partly because he was not in the mood to take the responsibility of influencing others, and partly because he was interested to see whether anyone else would remember it. No one did, and the program limped to a somewhat desultory end.

Of course, as the name itself implies, the transition to 'Foundational community' represents the most serious possible commitment persons can make to one another (indeed, a more serious commitment than persons whose thought and action fits the 'Predefined productivity' mode can possibly make), so it is hardly something to experiment toward for a few weeks at a time. Had we explicitly considered whether we wished to become a foundational community for one another, sharing our aspirations, our work, and our love across the thousands of miles that would soon separate us, we might well have decided that we did *not* wish to do so. But such a decision would have left an active taste in our mouths, a taste of choosing our own death, rather than the passive taste that seemed to be the common experience.

The second example is of using this stage theory to help an organization concerns a small organization of about ten persons funded to run drug education groups for public school staffs from various districts. This group invited the author to consult with them about how to research their own effectiveness both as group leaders and within their own staff. At the first meeting, the two members representing the staff informed the author — before he could set the same condition himself — that he would have to meet the whole staff before a decision could be reached about our working together. At the full staff meeting a relaxed atmosphere prevailed, and members raised anxieties and concerns straightforwardly, without misplaced efforts to avoid discomforting the author. Thereafter, tapes and meeting observations revealed: (1) that dual group leaders already criticized one another's behavior thoughtfully; (2) that the staff operated collaboratively with horizontal role differentiations (e.g., a researcher, an administrator); (3) that a strong commitment to organizational tasks existed, such that, for example, one member willingly took another's pet to the veterinarian in an emergency so that the other could meet a regular task appointment;

(4) that the openness was more than superficial. For example, the group decided together that one member should leave the organization because he was not good at leading groups. This was done in direct conversation with that member and with his agreement. In short, the organization showed itself to be functioning in a stable manner at the 'Openly chosen structure' stage of organizational structure without any intervention on the author's part.

Later in the year, when the members of the organization were experiencing a particularly painful period of self-examination, trying to determine whether they should be trying to do the kind of job they were doing, with murmurs about disbanding and finding other work, the author shared the historical-stage theory with the group, suggesting that they were at the crisis between 'Openly chosen structure' and 'Foundational community'. The theory provoked excited conversation. The members felt that the characteristics of 'Openly chosen structure' described them very well. It was as though they had needed such a concept to confirm their felt identity — to give them the confidence to continue to face the many uncertainties they were experiencing. The notion of shared purpose underlying structure seemed to legitimize the possibility of changing their short-term goals and pattern of operation without having to leave the organization. They also confirmed that they were beginning to experience 'the interplay of opposites' (characteristic 'b' of 'Foundational community') having just the day before discussed at length whether to take a camping trip together and, if so, what the expectations about sexual sharing would be.

There was a sense of caution in the group about committing itself to 'Foundational community'. The author strongly reinforced this caution, noting that he himself did not know exactly what its characteristics meant and portended, and that spiritual research usually requires guidance if it is to exceed mere fantasy. To explore beyond the conventions of 'Predefined productivity' and especially to approach the interplay of body and spirit characteristic of 'Foundational community' is to accept challenge and risk. To urge such a risk on others may serve only to increase the risk. Each person and each organization must consult his (her) (its) own yearnings and purposes to find whether caution requires this sort of risk.

As time went by, the group completed the tasks it had contracted for that year, at the same time significantly reconceived its goals for the following year, and won grants to do its newly-defined job.

Further Discussion of 'Openly Chosen Structure'

The stage-theory focuses attention on the early stages of organization development in the case of new organizations. It emphasizes that the way a series of very real issues are resolved will then affect the organization's effectiveness in

the 'Predefined productivity' stage as well as its likelihood of developing to still higher stages of functioning.

But, in the case of already-existing organizations, most of which must reach 'Predefined productivity' if they are to survive at all, the stage-theory focuses attention on the requirements for transition to the 'Openly chosen structure' stage. Some of the activities characteristic of 'Openly chosen structure' have been defined and encouraged by various organization development techniques in the past 20 years and are therefore likely to seem familiar to applied behavioral scientists. Thus, the notions of 'open interpersonal process' (characteristic 'b'), of 'formative research' (characteristic 'c'), and of 'horizontal role differentiation' (characteristic 'h') are all familiar concepts, even if it is still rare to find organizations which rely on these methods of operation.

According to this stage-theory, the ten characteristics of 'Openly chosen structure' are mutually consistent with one another and reinforce one another, creating a qualitatively different kind of structure or gestalt from the 'Predefined productivity' kind of structure. If only some of the characteristics of 'Openly chosen structure' are implemented, then the organization will be unstable and will tend to regress back to 'Predefined productivity'. At the same time, it would obviously be a contradiction in terms to impose an 'Openly chosen structure'. Indeed, what begins to become evident in the transition to 'Openly chosen structure' is that organization structures are precisely *not* external realities which can be imposed, but rather internal realities which are either shared or not shared (*Greenfield*, 1973). To say that the 'Openly chosen structure' is a qualitatively different kind of structure from 'Predefined productivity' is to say that persons come to think, feel, and behave in qualitatively different ways in such an organization.

Organization development to date has paid least attention to the kind of thought which reinforces openness about feelings and responsibility for the effects of one's behavior. Several clues about this kind of thought are offered in characteristics 'a', 'c', 'd', 'e', and 'f' of 'Openly chosen structure'. This kind of thought welcomes both poles of paradoxes rather than choosing between them, struggles to determine the degree of congruity between abstractions and concrete behavior rather than focusing on one or the other, looks through conventional categories to creative solutions, and appreciates how history plays a role in determining what is appropriate action for this particular person in this particular organization at this particular time. The only organization development technique of which the author is aware that explicitly encourages paradoxical creative thinking is *Synectics* (*Gordon*, 1961). *Argyris* (1970) and *Argyris and Schon* (1974) have focused on the question of congruity between persons' espoused theories and their actual practice.

The field of organization development itself reflects symptoms of dichotomous rather than paradoxical thought, especially in the battle between propo-

nents of structural approaches and proponents of interpersonal approaches to organizational change. Both camps share a tendency to emphasize one approach at the expense of the other. The unintentional paradoxes that result from such dichotomous thinking can be suggested by the *tight theoretical structure* which *Argyris* (1970) has developed over the years to guide his own interventions in organizations and to argue in favor of the priority of *open interpersonal process* as a lever for organization change. The present stage-theory suggests that *both* a different kind of structure *and* a different kind of process are mutually necessary if an organization is to grow beyond the 'Predefined productivity' stage of functioning. More important than the question of 'Which comes first?' is the recognition that when both process and structure change qualitatively, not only 'external' organizational arrangements will have changed but also the 'internal' lives of the organization members. But why would a member of an organization wish to change himself or herself in a fundamental way? Such questioning is itself one characteristic ('shared continual reflection') of 'Openly chosen structure'.

Implications of the Stage-Theory for Policy

Not only administrative structures but also substantive policies are affected when an organization develops an 'Openly chosen structure' quality of functioning. For example, a policy adopted by Yale University with regard to its stock holdings can convey the creative and paradox-resolving quality of a policy based on the principles of 'Openly chosen structure'. In recent years universities and foundations have been challenged to vote their institutionally held stocks in ethically, politically, and ecologically justifiable ways rather than simply voting with management and thus potentially supporting unjust policies. Of course, there are severe barriers to accepting this challenge: first, who is to judge finally what is justifiable? And second, how can the university remain neutral and receptive to divergent points of view if it takes stands for and against particular actions? On the other hand, even if the university always votes its stock with mangement, it is still making judgments (at least implicitly) about what is justifiable and it is still taking stands for and against particular actions.

Yale University has so far resolved this paradoxical dilemma as follows. A faculty-student seminar met for 2 years to discuss the issue and resulted in a book called *The Ethical Investor* (*Simon et al.*, 1972). This step reflects the 'shared continual reflection' characteristic of 'Openly chosen structure'. On the basis of recommendations from this seminar and book, Yale developed a specific policy which reconciled the apparently conflicting demands of 'morality' and 'neutrality'. It is described as follows:

We argued that although universities – or at least those without explicit ideological goals – should avoid the active championing of social or economic causes (for such campaigns may endanger the academic environment), an institutional investor cannot, and ought not, take a 'neutral' stance with respect to the practices of its portfolio companies alleged to cause social harm. *When a proxy controversy thrusts questions of corporate self-policing upon a shareholder (including a shareholding university), 'neutrality' is impossible to achieve.* Certainly it is not achieved the way most investors seem to construe it – as mandating an automatic vote for management on all questions. Even abstention usually helps one side more than the other and often carries some kind of message.

Moreover, the effort to avoid 'involvement' is not only futile but inconsistent with the basic moral obligation we all share as individuals and as institutions – the duty to correct our own socially injurious conduct and to participate in similar self-regulation by the organizations to which we belong, including corporations ['evaluation of effects of own behavior' characteristic of 'Openly chosen structure']. These points are reflected in the guidelines which we recommended in which Yale adopted. They do not permit the University to take affirmative action to promote social or moral causes – for example, by purchasing shares for that purpose – but they do require the University to vote, and speak to management, *in favor of reasonable self-regulatory measures* ['resolution of paradox' characteristic].

This policy does not relate to decisions on what Yale's portfolio should contain. The guidelines endorse maximum financial return as the sole criterion for portfolio purchases and generally preclude the dumping of securities on social grounds. We rejected the 'clean portfolio' approach because it does not seem likely to influence corporate conduct; it impedes efficient folio management; it requires a shareholder to sit in judgment on the overall moral quality of a company as prelude to a divestment decision; and it suggests a quest for an unattainable degree of moral purity.

(Simon, 1974)

An interesting feature of the new Yale investment policy is that it uses a principle of the 'Openly chosen structure' quality of organizing – the standard of evaluating the effects of own behavior on environment – both as a justification for the policy itself and as a standard for the management of the companies in which it holds stock. Many persons have assumed that a university cannot afford the chance of alienating potential corporate donors by voting stock against management wishes. The Yale policy suggests a more symmetrical, less subordinate view of the university's relation to sources of funds (characteristic 'i' of 'Openly chosen structure').

Conclusion

This article has presented the skeleton of a stage theory of organization development, suggesting its scope by comparing its categories to those of bureaucratic theory and practice as well as to previous stage theories. It also attempts to breathe some life into the theoretical categories by offering examples drawn from a variety of small educational organizations. Particular attention has been paid to the characteristics of the 'Openly chosen structure' stage of organizing

since it represents the direction in which bureaucratic organizations might evolve if they were to become more effective.

Many issues about and aspects of this stage-theory of organization development remain unexplicated in this short introduction to it. For example, the dynamics by which organizations enter, resolve, and transcend a given stage have not been articulated. Nor have the relative effectiveness of different qualities of leadership at different stages of development been explored. Criteria of successful versus pathological resolution of stages remain implicit at best. What a 'right pace' of development would be remains unclear (indeed the very meaning of time appears to come into question at the 'Foundational community' stage). Certain stages, such as 'Determinations' and 'Liberating disciplines' have received no discussion at all. The political conflicts which inevitably arise when a person, group or organization begins to operate in a qualitatively different way from other systems in the environment have not been mentioned. The question of how social scientific work itself would look if it were organized in post-bureaucratic ways has not been raised. Many of these matters are dealt with in the author's *Creating a Community of Inquiry: Conflict, Collaboration, Transformation* (1973).

This paper merely introduces the stage-theory as a new vision of what organizational growth can mean. It attempts to provide enough discussion and examples to help the reader determine (1) whether this stage-theory has some application to situations in his or her own life, (2) whether it points organization theory in fruitful new directions and provides new perspective on existing theory, and, thus, (3) whether it is worth continued attention.

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