

Project Title

Examining positive system change: An inter-level structuration investigation of a health care innovation

Principle Investigator and Student Investigators

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Project Purpose

The purpose of the study is to conduct an investigation of a health care change that exceeded its goals—an innovative concept aimed at helping older adults navigate the complexities of healthcare while enabling them to remain in their homes. We plan to investigate external and internal structures across levels that led (and are leading) to the structuration of an innovative approach to delivering health care. To understand how the innovation was structured, we will employ positive organizational scholarship. Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is an area of scientific inquiry and research that emphasizes what elevates individuals and organizations (in addition to what challenges them), what goes right in organizations (in addition to what goes wrong), what is life-giving (in addition to what is problematic or life-depleting), what is experienced as good (in addition to what is objectionable), and what is inspiring (in addition to what is difficult or arduous). POS examines enablers, motivations, and effects associated with remarkably positive phenomena. Our purpose is to investigate how positive phenomena is facilitated, why it works, how it can be identified, and how organizations can capitalize on it. (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012). Our overarching research question is: how is positive change structured across the different levels of a human system?

Background

Many studies of social and organizational change examine the phenomenon from a problem-centered perspective. In other words, researchers focus their efforts on identifying factors that hinder or prevent a change from being successful. On the contrary, limited research has been conducted on large system change from a positive organizational scholarship perspective, an approach that centers on identifying the factors and processes that give life to a change and that make it successful. Using structuration theory, this study examines the institutional systems and agentic behaviors that structure a thriving innovation in a health care system—a program that keeps seniors safely in their homes led by Tandem365, a customized care provider in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

This study is an investigation of a healthcare innovation specifically the concept of keeping seniors safely at home using the lens of a positive organizational change. Our working definition of a positive organizational change is a change that (1) moved along at a vigorous pace, (2) was continually infused with constructive energy, (3) remained on course in the face of surprising impediments, (4) was characterized by heightened levels of emotion, meaning and motivation, and positive interactions, and/or (5) surpassed its projected objectives. In order to understand this phenomenon, we are asking participants to reflect on the change and to describe the change from its launch through its present state today.

Methods and Plan of Work

Design

To understand the phenomenon, we plan to conduct a case study of the entire system involved with the development and implementation of the innovation. A case study approach will allow us to conduct an in-

depth and detailed examination of the innovation, as well as its related contextual conditions. We will employ Stones' Strong Structuration to collect and analyze data (Stones, 2005). Strong Structuration is a strengthened version of Giddens' structuration theory that was developed by Stones as a way to use structuration theory to guide empirical research (Jack & Kholief, 2007). It not only frames a research study, but it also provides a methodology for investigating how social organization is created and reproduced, and it is beginning to be used to investigate organizational phenomena (Sapio, 2012; Fjellstedt, 2015). The framework includes four components: external structures, internal structures, agent practices, and outcomes.

Data Collection

Our data collection procedures will include one-on-one interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Data will be gathered primarily with 30-90 minute face-to-face, one-on-one interviews in participant organizations and in patient homes. However, skype interviews may be scheduled to accommodate both researcher and participant schedules. Participants include: (1) nurses, (2) social workers, (3) paramedics, (4) medical assistants, (5) administrators, (6) directors, (7) organization leaders, (8) providers, (9) board members, and (10) patients. (See Appendix C: Interview Protocol A and B.) To interview patients in their homes, WMU researchers will accompany Tandem365 clinical staff members on their patient visits. WMU will only interview patients in the presence of a Tandem365 clinical staff member.

Data will also be collected with direct observation techniques. Researchers will observe: (1) interdisciplinary team meetings that include nurses, social workers, paramedics, medical assistants, and directors, and (2) strategic planning sessions that involve board members of the agencies involved with the change, and patient visits. Researchers will observe these meetings and sessions and capture data as it relates to the research question: how is positive change structured across the different levels of a human system? Finally, we will conduct a content analysis of any documents connected with the change.

To address credibility, we will triangulate our data collection and data analysis methods, ensuring that they are sound and grounded in established protocols. Dependability will be attended to by detailing all procedures enabling future researchers to repeat our study. To address transferability, the researchers will generate a thick description of the context of the study, and to ensure confirmability, we may contact participants a second or third time after their interviews to verify the narratives shaped by the researchers.

Data Analysis

In his strong structuration methodology, Stones (2005) proposes a bracketing approach to analyze agents' conduct and context. In other words, researchers conduct (or bracket off) a conduct and a context analysis separately, and then examine interactions between the two structures to explore the structuring of outcomes. Our analysis comprises three steps: context analysis, conduct analysis, and outcome analysis.

Step 1: Context Analysis. A context analysis examines external structures, or the conditions of the change (Stones, 2005). During this step, researchers will analyze the terrain that faces the agent from the agent's perspective—the institutional structures and processes of each organization that enabled or hindered the development of the innovation.

Step 2: Conduct Analysis. Our second step entails conducting a conduct analysis of the agents-in-focus (Stones, 2005) within the system context established in step 1. This step includes analyzing the internal structures of the agents, i.e., the conjuncture-specific (knowledge about the change from the agent's perspective), the general dispositional, i.e., habitus as defined by Bourdieu (1980), and agent practices as a result of the interaction between internal and external structures.

Step 3: Outcomes Analysis. During our last step of the analysis, we will examine the outcomes of the change and the extent they were intended or unintended. Here, we will analyze the extent to which the structures (both internal and external) were either modified or endured during the structuration of the innovation.

Work Plan and Time to Completion

	2018	2019		
	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall
Proposal				
Emerging Lit. Review				
Research Statement				
Research Questions				
IRB Approval				
Data Collection				
Interviews				
Observations				
Documents				
Data Analysis				
Transcription				
Coding				
Analysis				
Publication				
Final Lit. Review				
Write-up				
Submit				
Revisions				

Budget and Justification

(Redacted)

Anticipated Outcomes

Drawing on the experiences of both change leaders and change recipients, this study explains the creation of a new approach to delivering healthcare as the result of the operation between preexisting structures, i.e., various institutions, and individual agency. The study will explain the structuration of an innovation, and put forth a new theory of interlevel-level structuration during the implementation of an organizational change.

Plans for Continuing Research or Creative Activity

The study will be disseminated with a peer-reviewed article in a journal that publishes organizational change research, for example, *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *The Journal of Organizational Change Management*, or *The Journal of Change Management*. In addition, the results of the research may be presented at an academic conference, for example, The Organizational Development and Change Division of the 2021 Academy of Management Conference. The implications for future research that this study will put forth are sure to stir additional investigations, not only among students and faculty within the Organizational Change Leadership doctoral program, but also among change scholars across the field of organizational change.

References

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