Rapid change is a pervasive part of our lives as human beings. Therefore, it is no surprise that change is also a fact of life within human systems. Recent developments in the global economy have catapulted this fact to the forefront of management concerns as well. Catalysed by technological breakthroughs in distribution, information, and communication systems, we are moving rapidly towards a world in which the geopolitical boundaries that have been the hallmarks of our history are fading (Toffler, 1980). Contemporary organizations are immersed in a virtual cyclone of change as they strive to adapt to the ever increasing demands of their domestic and global markets (Chandler, 1994; Morrison, 1981). Organizational learning (e.g. Huber, 1991; Mohrman and Mohrman, 1993; Senge, 1990), process re-engineering (e.g. Hammer and Champy, 1993) and total quality management (e.g. Ciampa, 1992; Sashkin and Kiser, 1993) are several particularly popular movements that have been incorporated into organizations in their efforts to respond to demands placed on them by their external environments (Burke and Litwin, 1992). All these “trends” in management consulting represent attempts to generate systematic responses to the pervasive need for change imposed by an increasingly competitive and complex marketplace.

Unfortunately, many such change initiatives, even those undertaken by organizations with the best of intentions, are often destined for failure at some point in their implementation. For example, in a recent survey of 300 electronics companies, though 73 per cent reported having some form of total quality programme or initiative under way, 63 per cent had failed to yield improvements in their level of product defects (Schaffer and Thompson, 1992); only 10 per cent of these programmes were successful. Failures such as these can be traced in hindsight to a number of factors, including inappropriately conceived future states, resistance by organizational members, faulty implementation strategies during transition periods, or simply a lack of
knowledge regarding important aspects of change management on the part of managers and executives (Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Burke, 1994; Burke and Goodstein, 1980; Kanter et al., 1992; Tichy, 1983).

While some of these problems can be attributed to the content of a change initiative itself (e.g. are a new set of values identified by senior management the correct ones for their company as a whole?), issues of resistance or implementation throughout the organizational system can be attributed to poor management of the change process. In our experience, it is management of the process elements of organizational change that are often least considered during change initiatives. And yet, management of these factors is vital to the successful implementation of change, a perspective advanced by Kotter (1995) and, perhaps somewhat more surprisingly, by Champy (1995) in his recent book, Reengineering Management. Champy recounts a number of instances in which process re-engineering efforts were stymied by disintegrated approaches to change throughout the organization or by inadequate conception of the human challenges that would arise during implementation. It seems apparent that one considerable strategic advantage available to organizational managers who wish to experience a greater level of success in their efforts in organizational transitions involves reliance on a more well-rounded and integrated conception of the general nature of system-wide change within organizations (Champy, 1995).

Given the lack of attention to human systems issues in many contemporary change management theories and practices, and the considerable failure rates reported for improvement interventions in organizations, it is clear that more theory and research are needed if we are ever to gain a better understanding of the process of change in organizations. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the field in this area by presenting an alternative perspective regarding the nature and management of organizational change in social systems, and to investigate the various interpretations different organizational members may have on such an integrated model. After providing a brief review of several major theoretical influences on current approaches to the management of change processes in organizations, a framework that integrates these influences and applies them to change initiatives in organizations will be proposed. Next, the results of a survey, based on the content identified in this framework and administered to over 1,800 managers, will be presented. Particular attention will be given to respondents’ different responses to the various elements of the integrated change management model and how these perspectives vary among demographic, organizational, and industrial groups. The paper will conclude with a review of the issues identified and their implications for organizational needs in terms of management education and appropriate approaches to transition management.

Managing the process of organizational change: a review of the theoretical literature

There are a number of theoretical perspectives (e.g. Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Burke, 1994; Kanter et al., 1992; Nadler et al., 1992) from which managers
and consultants currently draw their knowledge about the process of change in organizations. The following presentation will focus on process-oriented change models which address changing organizations’ cultural and human systems using techniques grounded in theories from the behavioural sciences (Burke, 1994, p. 54). This perspective is distinct from the strategic planning models that are frequently the primary, if not the only, focus of many organizations’ change efforts (Beer, 1994; Goodstein et al., 1993). It is the case, more often than not, that effective and successful organizational change incorporates and manages both these perspectives concurrently (Champy, 1995; Kanter et al., 1992).

The present review of the change literature will focus on three important process-oriented perspectives, which exemplify significantly different conceptualizations of how change affects organizations:

1. that change is typified by certain patterns that affect organizations similarly (e.g. Lewin, 1958; Schein, 1987);
2. that organizations are challenged to maintain their entities and identities throughout a transition (e.g. Beckhard and Harris, 1987; Duck, 1993); and
3. that change affects the individuals within an organization more fundamentally than it does the organization as a whole (e.g. Bridges, 1986; Jick, 1990).

Each is described below.

Patterns in the change process

Lewin (1958) presents a fundamental description of change that has been incorporated into many organizational consultants’ and managers’ emergent models (Tichy et al., 1977) of organizations in their attempts to understand and direct the process of systemic change. Lewin’s perspective describes three basic steps that are inherent in any change process. The first step involves unfreezing the present level of behaviour. An example of this unfreezing would be a series of management training sessions in which the need for change is incontrovertibly revealed. The second step is called movement and involves taking action to change the organization’s social system (Katz and Kahn, 1978) from its original level of behaviour or operation to a new level. Finally, the third step is called refreezing. This involves establishing a process that ensures the new levels of behaviour will be relatively secure against reversion to prior modes of operation.

Schein (1987) provides an example of a contemporary approach to organizational change that develops from Lewin’s three-stage process. For him, unfreezing is the process of creating motivation and readiness for change. In general, there are three ways of accomplishing this:

1. disconfirmation, when members of the organization experience a need for change which, in turn, motivates them to embrace change;
Understanding the management of change

(2) induction of guilt or anxiety involving the establishment of a perceived gap between what is not currently working well and a desired future state; and

(3) creation of psychological safety, providing an environment in which people feel safe enough to experience disconfirmation and induction.

The second step for Schein is changing (or cognitive restructuring), which is akin to movement in Lewin’s model. This is the process of helping people to see things differently and react differently in the future. Changing can be accomplished by identification with a new role model, mentor, boss or consultant, which enables one to see things from another’s viewpoint, or by scanning the environment for new and relevant information. The third step, refreezing, involves integrating the change process through personal refreezing, which involves taking the new, changed way of doing things and fitting it comfortably into one’s total self-concept, and relational refreezing which involves successfully integrating the new behaviour in interactions with significant others.

Challenges to organizational identity

Beckhard and Harris (1987) focus on the importance of the transition state through which the organization must navigate in order to evolve from its “present state” to its “desired future state”. Members of an organization first realize their dissatisfaction with the current state and then identify a desired future state, thus describing the new role, function, or structure that the organization needs to adopt. To manage this transition effectively, Beckhard and Harris recommend creating a transition management team (TMT) composed of leaders who are respected by the organization and have wisdom, objectivity and effective interpersonal skills. This team must also have the resources and clout to manage the change process. Beckhard and Harris further recommend “activity planning” as a mechanism for creating a detailed roadmap of all the tasks that must be accomplished during the transition state in order to achieve the desired future state.

Duck (1993) expands on Beckhard and Harris’ approach, highlighting the dynamic nature of change and the importance of an effective transition management team composed of people who report directly to the CEO and can commit all their time and effort to managing the change process. From Duck’s perspective, for successful change to occur it is critical for the TMT to manage the “dynamic” aspects of change, not just the individual pieces of it. The cornerstone of this process is effectively communicating, throughout the whole organization, the new work processes that will define the changed organization. In addition, the transition management team must be responsible for managing the emotional connections that are essential for the successful completion of any transformation (Kanter, 1983).
Impacts on individuals
The third set of approaches to change concerns the experiences of individuals in the change process. Jick (1990) and Bridges (1986) focus on the psychological adjustment that individual members of an organization must make during change. These authors magnify a frequently overlooked aspect of organizational change—the impact on the individual. Bridges presents a three-part individual transition process that accompanies Lewin’s three stages of change. The first stage involves letting go of one’s old situation and identity. For example, a manager who is being encouraged to develop a more participative climate in her work group may have to accept the loss of the more overt control, which she may have worked hard over a number of years to secure, if she is to be successful. The second stage is described as the “neutral zone”, where organizational members move through a period of ambiguity and contradiction as they search for a new framework and identity that they can use to establish themselves in the changing organization. Following Kubler-Ross (1969), Bridges asserts that the “new beginning, or final stage of transition” cannot occur until the various losses experienced in the first two stages are acknowledged, accepted, and resolved.

Integration of change process models
Each of the theoretical frameworks briefly described above focuses our thinking about organizational change from the broader, general patterns of change that affect the organization as a whole, down to the difficult psychological adjustment individual members of the organization must make during the actual implementation process. Table I provides a summary of the issues raised by each of these approaches.

Taken alone or together, however, these three perspectives do not provide a comprehensive or integrated understanding of the organizational change process that is useful for managers who find themselves in the position of planning or implementing change.

The Managing Change model (Burke, 1988; Burke and Spencer, 1990; Burke et al., 1991, 1993) offers just such a perspective (see Figure 1). This framework integrates the strengths of the theoretical perspectives presented above and incorporates important issues involved in evaluating the overall effectiveness of the change process. The model consists of the following dimensions:

- Individual response to change: concerning the nature, prevalence, and utility of resistance to change.
- The general nature of change: concerning whether effective large system change is evolutionary or revolutionary in nature and the characteristic patterns that typify change efforts in organizations.
- Planning change: concerning the causes of change in organizations, articulation of the vision, how to get from the present to the future, and barriers to effective transitions.
Managing the people side of change: concerning how, when and how much to communicate about change within the organization, and psychological issues related to transition.

Managing the organizational side of change: concerning the design and structural issues of systemic and long-term change efforts.
Evaluating the change effort: concerning indicators of a change effort's effectiveness.

Since 1988, the Managing Change Questionnaire (MCQ) (Burke, 1988, 1990) has been used to assess executives', managers' and organizational change practitioners' different perspectives regarding the fundamental propositions in each of the above dimensions. The MCQ has been used in consulting and training workshops to provide feedback to managers and executives regarding their perspectives on key concepts of change management in organizations and groups. The instrument is designed to increase participants' understanding of important issues in the fundamental aspects of change, as well as their own approaches to the process of managing change in groups and organizations. It is grounded in principles and concepts derived from social psychology, organizational theory, applied research findings and consulting experience (Beckhard and Harris, 1987; Burke, 1982, 1994; Burke and Jackson, 1991; Burke and Litwin, 1992; Chandler, 1962; Duval and Wicklund, 1972; Goodstein and Burke, 1991; Kanter, 1983; Lawler, 1992; Lewin, 1951, 1958; Lippitt et al., 1958; Nadler, 1981; Schein, 1980, 1985, 1988; Tichy, 1983; Tichy and Devanna, 1986). The questionnaire was originally designed with the assumption that "correct" answers – i.e. those consistent with the theoretical and applied approaches cited above – indicate respondents' familiarity with, or knowledge about, important aspects of change management in organizations. However, it is also possible to interpret responses as indicative of various perspectives on the change process. Indeed, such an approach seems especially appropriate, since many of the items have been delicately worded to stimulate thought and controversy in group discussions.

The questionnaire consists of 25 true/false items that measure agreement with fundamental propositions in the dimensions of the Managing Change model (Burke and Spencer, 1990). The concepts covered in the 25 items are based on theory, applied research and consulting experience. Table II provides some sample content issues and sources for each of the six areas of the underlying framework.

A total score for the MCQ, as well as six unique scores (corresponding to the six dimensions outlined above) for a subscale associated with each dimension in the model, is obtained by simply summing the number of answers in agreement with our normative propositions, and converting them to a percentage format. In order to investigate group differences and similarities in responses to the model's subscales, correlational analysis and analysis of variance by each of the demographic variables on overall scores, as well as on the subscales reflecting dimensions of the model, were conducted.

Method
Sample characteristics
In 1991 results were reported based on responses obtained from over 700 managers. At that time, their average score on the instrument was 71 per cent agreement (Burke et al., 1991). Since then the same instrument has been administered to an additional 1,840 managers from over 12 organizations and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension of model</th>
<th>Content issues addressed</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual response to change</td>
<td>Change is not always resisted. Apathy can be more difficult to work with than resistance. Involvement in the direction of change can reduce resistance</td>
<td>Brehm (1966); Burke (1982); Hambrick and Cannella (1989); Kanter (1983); Marris (1975); Tichy and Devanna (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General nature of change</td>
<td>Certain patterns typify change efforts. Effective change requires certain elements of transformation or dramatic steps</td>
<td>Adizes (1979); Fornaciari et al. (1993); Gersick (1991); Jantsch (1980); Lewin (1958); Schein (1987); Tichy and Sherman (1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning change</td>
<td>The importance of surfacing dissatisfaction with the present state and articulating a desired future. Involving people from all areas of the organization in the planning process rather than relying on a single entity or group. The power of “turf issues” among and between different groups and subcultures. Recognizing the impact that the external environment has on the need to change</td>
<td>Beckhard and Harris (1987); Champy (1995); Duval and Wicklund (1972); Kabz and Kahn (1978); Lewin (1968); Lippitt et al. (1958); Pfeffer and Salancik (1978); Schaffer and Thomson (1992);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the people side</td>
<td>The need to communicate what will and will not change. Allowing people to disengage from and grieve the loss of the present state. Utilizing the power inherent in groups as a positive force</td>
<td>Burke (1994); Duval and Wicklund (1972); Goodstein and Buke (1991); Horstein et al. (1971); Kanter (1983); Kotter (1995); Lewin (1951)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the organizational side</td>
<td>The contribution of slogans, signs and symbols to establishing credibility and importance. Preventing “knee jerk” reactions to using structural changes as a panacea. The importance of involvement as a means for building commitment. The need to reduce barriers and restraints to achieving goals rather than applying more pressure</td>
<td>Beckhard and Harris (1987); Bennis and Nanus (1985); Chandler (1962); Duncan (1979); Schein (1985); Tichy and Devanna (1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating change</td>
<td>Recognizing that complaints can often be a sign of progress and positive energy. The need to modify reward systems to support changes in other areas. The importance of providing feedback to people regarding progress made. Awareness that a reduction in presenting problems may often reflect a change in symptoms rather than root causes</td>
<td>Burke and Litwin (1992); Lawler (1992); Maslow (1960); Schuler and Jackson (1987)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
five industries worldwide. Almost 60 per cent of the individuals in the present sample were 40 years of age or older. Of the participants 72 per cent were male and 13 per cent were female; the remaining 15 per cent of the sample did not indicate gender. Regarding education, almost eight out of ten participants had completed at least a college education; specifically, 43 per cent had obtained their Bachelor’s degree or the equivalent, 24 per cent had obtained a Master’s degree, and 11 per cent had a doctoral level or other advanced degree (e.g. PhD, MD, JD).

Although over half (56 per cent) the sample was North American (i.e. from Canada or the USA), a number of other nationalities were also represented. The surveyed participants were also from a wide range of industries: 10 per cent from the pharmaceutical sector, 38 per cent from the chemical industry, 19 per cent from federal agencies and public service positions, 15 per cent from professional service firms, and 10 per cent from financial services organizations. Furthermore, participants represented numerous functional groups within their organizations: 14 per cent were from general management, 9 per cent from accounting/finance, 8 per cent from marketing and sales, 8 per cent from engineering, information technology, research and development, and science/research departments, 7 per cent from human resources, and 4 per cent represented maintenance, secretarial, clerical and non-professional functions.

In general, the participants had extended tenures with their respective companies (24 per cent having worked more than 20 years for their organization, 31 per cent between 11 and 20 years, and the remainder for less than ten years). The management level of the participants tended to be more senior and middle (30 and 44 per cent, respectively) (see Table III).

The diversity of this large sample provides an opportunity for learning about how managers’ different perspectives on change management vary with personal and organizational characteristics. The sample does, however, have some limitations. More specifically, some of the demographic variables are not equally represented in the sample. For example, nationality is highly skewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Country/region</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Canada/USA</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chemical</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Marketing/sales</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Middle management</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Federal agency/</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1st-2nd line management</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 30</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>public service</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Scientific/</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Professional/non-manage</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Central/South America</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Professional services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Administrative/clerical</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Financial services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maintenance/</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Non-exempt</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other/missing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>secretarial/</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Accounting/finance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. Demographic characteristics of the sample
towards North Americans (56 per cent), and women are under-represented. Since this sample is primarily one of convenience, however, there is little that can be done to change the demographics. While this has consequences for the generalizability of results, statistical corrections were incorporated in the analyses to correct for skewed distributions whenever possible.

Missing demographic data are another limitation of the sample. Information such as age, gender, education and functional area in the organization was often left blank on the questionnaire because it can be potentially identifying and therefore threatening to some individuals. For example, 15 per cent of the subjects did not provide information about their gender, 19 per cent did not disclose their age, 22 per cent did not specify level of education and 38 per cent did not identify the functional group in which they work. When interpreting the results of analyses presented here, generalizations should be made with caution and consideration of the limitations discussed above. Nevertheless, we believe that the pattern of differences presented below indicates important issues for understanding both the latent forces supporting the successful implementation of change in organizations, as well as the hidden challenges to it.

**Results and discussion**

**Overall score**

As mentioned earlier, the average level of agreement on the MCQ, as reflected by the overall total score, among the present sample of managers was 71.24 per cent. If the instrument is viewed as normative, this score can be described as roughly equivalent to a grade of “C” in the subject of change management. This finding is similar to scores previously reported with other samples using this instrument (Burke and Church, 1992; Burke et al., 1991). Scores on each of the six subscales were also quite consistent with those previously reported.

Based on this general finding, it would appear that there has been little, if any, in the way of meaningful improvement over the past several years in managers’ perspectives on important issues related to change management in organizations (based on the means of the two groups), despite increasingly complex trends in the business environment. This finding, in and of itself, is both surprising and disturbing. The normative model on which the MCQ is based advocates an approach to organizational change appropriate to the implementation of system-wide interventions in a turbulent economic, political, and social environment. However, total scores on the MCQ indicate that, on average, organization members of all types have seemingly still not developed a more integrated approach to the conceptualization, planning, management and evaluation of change in organizations based on the specific issues covered in the questionnaire, despite the growing prevalence of organizational effectiveness (OE) and improvement initiatives.

Given this trend, further exploration was conducted using the six subscales of the model in an attempt to discover specific content areas that might explain managers’ perceptions about change management in organizations. Lowest scores (indicating the least amount of overall agreement with the propositions
advanced in the conceptual framework outlined above) were found on the subscales measuring individual response to change (60 per cent), the general nature of change (65 per cent), and managing the people side of change (68 per cent). This replicates earlier research findings (Burke et al., 1991) which indicated that, as a whole, managers are most adept at managing the organizational aspects of change processes but not the “soft” or human side. These data reflect what many researchers and practitioners (e.g. Beckhard and Pritchard, 1992; Burke, 1994; Champy, 1995; Kotter, 1995) have already suggested, that is, that managers might improve their intervention success rates through a more thorough consideration of both the fundamental aspects of change and their employees’ responses and reactions to such change efforts.

Demographic variability in responses to the Managing Change Questionnaire
Given these differences in areas of focus, additional analyses were conducted using the demographic data to explore trends in the responses collected. Overall, the data yielded appreciable distinctions in understanding of and approaches to change management with respect to several demographic variables. Most notable among these were age, length of service, nationality and gender. Patterns in agreement and disagreement with the propositions advanced in the various aspects of the model were further reflected in the subscale scores. What follows is a general discussion of similarities and differences across demographic and organizational groups.

Education, age and length of service. Overall agreement with the principles assessed by the MCQ was moderately correlated with level of education attained ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$), replicating earlier research with change practitioners (Church and Burke, 1993). Weak but significant negative correlations between total score and both age ($r = -0.10$, $p < 0.001$) and length of service ($r = -0.14$, $p < 0.001$) were obtained, indicating that younger managers may be more likely to utilize such a comprehensive approach to change management than their older counterparts. This finding came as a surprise; intuitively, one might expect that experience with organizational management in recent decades would increase the sophistication of one's approach to change. While it was originally hypothesized that the observed relationship could be due to a more robust educational curriculum having been available to these younger managers, the age groups were not found to differ by level of education. The effects of age and length of service persisted over and above those observed for education.

An examination of the subscales showed that the inverse correlation of age and the MCQ total score was attributable to specific scores on the “managing the people side of change and planning change” subscales. One possible explanation for this effect is that a “changing of the guard” is occurring in which yesterday’s organization man, trained in the classical principles of scientific management, is being replaced by a group of managers who are (at least slightly) more concerned about issues related to the satisfaction of people within organizations (Raelin, 1987). It is possible that the differences in these subscales reflect the more humanistic management style of younger managers, who might also be more willing to entertain a revolutionary, as opposed to
incremental, approach to change in organizations. This is evidenced by the finding that managers over 60 were less likely than their younger counterparts to agree with the proposition that “Effective organizational change requires certain significant and dramatic steps or ‘leaps’ rather than moderate incremental ones” (37 per cent versus 42 per cent agreement).

Nationality/global region. The diverse international composition of the present sample facilitates a number of comparisons relating national culture to differences in perspectives on the management of change. To overcome underrepresentation of certain groups, subjects were classified into six global regions:

1. the USA and Canada;
2. the UK;
3. Japan;
4. Europe;
5. Asia; and
6. Central and South America.

Means for each national group on the MCQ are presented in Figure 2. Overall, Asian subjects received the lowest mean total agreement score (66.3 per cent), while individuals from the UK received the highest score (73.6 per cent). An analysis of variance was used to verify the significance of these differences by national region $F (6, 1516) = 6.2, p < 0.001$. Also worthy of note is the apparent inverse relationship between overall agreement with the principles on the MCQ and Hofstede’s (1980) uncertainty-avoidance index. Aside from Japan, a background in a culture high in uncertainty-avoidance is related to a lesser concurrence with the overall managing change framework. This supports findings reported by Church and Burke (1993) that higher levels of tolerance for ambiguity is related to more agreement with the integrated model measured by the MCQ. Furthermore, the results show a direct linear relationship between the total score and Hofstede’s (1980) individualism index.

In an attempt to gain a clearer understanding of the nature of these results, the

![Figure 2. Total scores by nationality/global region](image)
two highest and lowest scoring groups for each of the subscales are presented in Table IV.

While one obvious interpretation of the results presented above is that there is a main effect for native language, a more interesting possibility is that heightened exposure to and awareness of organizational change issues are reflective of real differences exhibited in the sample set. Indeed, the tendency of non-native language subjects to disagree with the MCQ propositions does not occur uniformly across each of the subscales. Results on the “general nature of change” subscale show that Japanese subjects were among the least likely to agree with this dimension’s propositions, despite their use of a native-language instrument. Conversely, non-Japanese Asian subjects were among those most likely to agree with propositions advanced in the “managing the organizational side of change” dimension. It would seem, then, that the language effect does not fully explain the pattern of results obtained. It was therefore deemed appropriate to examine the group profiles across the subscales for patterns of regional differences in approaches to and perspectives on the change management process.

Differences regarding fundamental aspects of change, and the change process. No single national group distinguished itself on a combined score reflecting the first two subscales (in our model, these represent the fundamental aspects of change). North American, British and Japanese managers demonstrated greater agreement with different aspects of the upper (more process-oriented) aspects of the Managing Change model. Central and South American subjects demonstrated the greatest overall disagreement with the framework proposed.

Resistance to change. The most marked disagreement with the present model was observed in the scores obtained by members of Asian organizations on the “individual response to change” subscale. Items in this section address the nature of individual resistance to change by organization members. This finding clearly indicates a cultural difference in the understanding of how individuals relate to the broader collective. It is quite possible that in more
collectivist and high power-distance cultures, where individual resistance to change does occur, it is expressed and interpreted quite differently from that suggested by the “managing change” framework. Cultural differences in how individuals understand themselves in relation to organizations, especially in the degree of subordination of personal to collective goals or vice versa, have been documented (Hofstede, 1980). The tendency of Japanese subjects to agree with this subscale’s propositions may be indicative of their stronger cultural orientation towards individualism than that of other Asian subjects.

Revolutionary versus evolutionary change. Japanese managers were also the least likely to agree with the propositions constituting the “general nature of change” subscale, despite Japan’s changing industrial economy and subsequent experience with organizational dynamics. Topics addressed by this section include whether clear patterns typify all change efforts, and whether change requires significant and dramatic “leaps” rather than moderate incremental steps in order to succeed.

A more detailed analysis of both these propositions indicated some intriguing patterns. The first proposition, that clear patterns typify all organization change efforts, largely accounted for the differences observed on this subscale (72 per cent agreement by Japanese subjects and 65 per cent agreement by Central and South American subjects versus 89 per cent for all others). Whether the tendency to avoid typifying an approach to change issues strengthens or impedes the effectiveness of a specific change effort remains an empirical question. Nevertheless, the disparity is worthy of note.

The latter proposition in the “general nature of change” dimension pertains to the effectiveness of transformational versus incremental movement in organizational change. Although both Japanese and Central and South American subjects were once again relatively unlikely to agree with this proposition (51 and 52 per cent agreement respectively), they were by no means the least likely to agree. In fact, North American subjects and subjects from the UK were by far the lowest scorers on this item (36 and 46 per cent). Thus, while the results of this subscale demonstrate a tendency of Japanese organization members to question the value of transformational as opposed to evolutionary change in organizations, it is worth noting that in at least two regions where organizational change is widespread, managers clearly do not recognize dramatic “leaps” as an effective approach to change. The question arises as to whether this tendency will remain stable, or will also change as organizations in these regions are increasingly required to respond to the competitive demands of the international marketplace. Of interest here is the finding that European respondents, many of whom are undoubtedly in the midst of significant organizational change resulting from the formation of the EEC and the recent geopolitical upheavals in eastern Europe, are the highest scorers on the “general nature of change” subscale (74 per cent).

Conceptualizations of the organizational system. Japanese and other Asian respondents demonstrated a greater level of agreement with the propositions advanced in the “managing the organizational side of change” subscale as well.
This dimension focuses on the organizational aspects of change – the reward system, the organizational structure, barriers to the achievement of the desired end state, and the use of symbols to facilitate the change process. The “managing the people side of change” subscale, on the other hand, addresses principles and guidelines for communicating with organization members throughout the change effort. Subjects from the UK and North America showed the greatest agreement with this dimension of the change management process.

There are two possible interpretations of this pattern. On the one hand, the high level of agreement among UK and North American respondents might reflect their broader experience with issues of individualism and democracy within organizations. On the other hand, it is precisely these propositions, pertaining to the organization’s social structure and its management, that might reflect the greatest level of cultural biases. The differences observed on these subscales might be interpreted in the light of Hall’s (1976) discussion of the distinctions between high- and low-context communication. Following Hall’s assertions, communication in Asian cultures encodes a broader base of assumptions about the society and the organization as a whole (high-context). It is therefore possible to address individual concerns in a less explicit fashion within these cultures. The “managing the people side of change” subscale, then, could be measuring aspects of change management that are addressed less explicitly, or through other means, within Asian organizations.

Gender. A one-way analysis of variance indicated that women were more likely than men to demonstrate agreement with the overall Managing Change model $F(1,1545) = 6.86, p < 0.01$. The mean total score was 70.8 per cent for men, 72.9 per cent for women – a minor difference in magnitude, yet significant nonetheless.

Subsequent tests of the subscales indicated significant differences only on the “managing the people side of change” subscale $F(1,1545) = 26.40, p < 0.001$. Mean scores on this subscale were 66.4 per cent for men and 74.2 per cent for women – a dramatic difference. The “managing the people side of change” subscale generally reflects the importance of communicating with organization members about the transition they are experiencing throughout the change effort. It also addresses the need to state clearly what will not change, as well as allowing time for people to disengage from the present state of affairs before change can occur. Women’s higher performance on this subscale may relate to suggestions by Gilligan (1982) that women may be more sensitive and responsive to the needs of their immediate peers than are men. Further explanations could also include: the more interpersonally oriented socialization patterns experienced by women; and the different roles to which men and women are selected within organizations. Clearly, male managers have something to learn from their female counterparts in this important aspect of change process management, especially since this dimension is among those showing the greatest room for development. Thus, a more extensive role for women managers on change planning, management, and evaluation teams is warranted.
Organizational level. Additional analyses indicated differences in overall agreement with the Managing Change framework by subject's level in the organization. Senior and middle managers demonstrated significantly greater overall acceptance of the normative framework than non-exempt employees (a group consisting primarily of plant-level and union personnel). Figure 3 indicates the overall means by level, varying from 62.6 per cent for non-exempt employees to 71.7 per cent for senior management.

Clearly, senior and middle managers demonstrate a greater likelihood to agree with statements, reflecting a systematic approach to change process management in organizations. This is good news. Senior managers are most often responsible for spearheading change efforts and guiding organizations through transitions, while middle managers largely constitute the group responsible for the implementation of such ideas and plans. Moreover, middle managers represent the next generation of organizational leaders. Given their knowledge – acquired through a broad base of experience in organizations – and the inevitability of continued change within organizations in the future, perhaps organizations should consider more carefully the long-term cost of personnel reductions at the middle management level. While short-term efficiencies may be being achieved through these reductions, the achievement of such efficiencies might affect the organization's longer-term knowledge base if systemic steps to compensate for such a potential loss are not taken. The eventual impact on an organization's ability to continue changing successfully could be severe.

Aside from the dramatically lower performance of the non-exempt group, an unsurprising finding probably arising from educational differences (see above), administrative and clerical-level workers demonstrated the least overall agreement with the Managing Change framework. The pattern of performance by level remained consistent across each of the subscales.

Function. Differences in responses to the MCQ were also evident, both in the overall total score and among the six subscale scores, when the data were examined by job type or functional area. In general, based on a comparison of
the total scores from the seven different functional groups, it was clear that those individuals in the human resources and/or personnel functions in an organization were most likely to approach the process of change management in a way similar to that advocated by our model. These individuals tended to agree more often with our propositions (obtaining a score of 75.9 per cent) than did those from management positions (71.6 per cent) and marketing and sales functions (72.4 per cent). Perhaps not surprisingly, the difference in total score between the HR participants and those from maintenance and clerical areas was the greatest (almost 12 per cent), while individuals from the remaining three groups – engineers, accountants and technical support personnel – yielded almost identical scores at 69 per cent. Figure 4 provides the mean scores for each of these groups.

These subscale mean scores for these groups were also examined for differences. Interestingly enough, all seven groups demonstrated the most agreement in the area of managing the organizational side of change (which concerns the effective use of symbols and slogans in a change effort and the importance of involvement as a means for building commitment), and the least agreement in either the individual response to change or the general nature of change (both of which are at the foundation of the Managing Change model, and reflect the fundamental aspects of change). This pattern is not atypical, as previous research with the MCQ has shown. It does suggest, however, that while most of these individuals are comfortable implementing change at the organizational level, once such an effort is fully under way they are perhaps less familiar with issues relating to the more universal aspects of change (e.g. the importance of major transformations and the typical patterns that accompany such shifts) and its typical effects on individuals (e.g. what to do with resistance and how to manage people’s contributions) at the onset of such an endeavour.

In terms of functional differences on the subscale means, HR professionals were more likely than individuals from the other functional groups to agree with the propositions advanced in five of the six content domains of the
Managing Change model. They were most likely to agree in the areas of managing the organizational side of change and evaluating change (achieving scores above 80 per cent). Thus, beyond the organizational issues cited above, these individuals indicated an understanding of the need to support and solidify changes in other areas through modifications in the reward system, and the importance of keeping employees informed throughout the change process. As would be expected, HR professionals were also far more likely to agree with the propositions advanced in the “managing the people side of change” and the “individual response to change” dimensions (74.9 versus 67.5 per cent, and 68.4 versus 59.3 per cent, respectively).

Although HR professionals demonstrated the greatest overall agreement with the model, programme participants from management as well as marketing and sales functions also scored in a similar range. While the pattern of scores was similar to those of HR professionals, one interesting difference was that management employees, in particular, seemed less likely to value the importance of the “managing the people side of change” dimension (scoring 66.8 per cent). Clearly, many executives and middle-level managers are still lacking in “people skills” – a trend that has also been indicated in previous research with this instrument. Moreover, the fact that managers scored only by the smallest of margins above engineers, accountants, and production staff with respect to their integration of this “soft” side of change management into their overall perspective bodes poorly for the long-term success of many change programmes in industry today.

These results pose an interesting question: why are HR professionals, who demonstrated such consistent agreement with the Managing Change model’s dimension, often viewed as broadly inept at managing change in their organizations? The answer lies, we believe, in the role to which the HR function is assigned during organizational change initiatives. Far too often, senior managers mandate organizational change programmes as strategic responses to environmental conditions without considering the simultaneous opportunity to revitalize the organization’s human systems (i.e. evaluation and reward of individual and group performance, intergroup relations, organizational flexibility, and employee development). Instead, the HR function is left in a “clean-up” role – forced to design systems that support a preconceived, and often incomplete, change initiative. Thus, the relative absence of an HR voice in the design of organizational change initiatives might arise, in part, from this inherent conservatism of the HR function’s role. But such a role, whether it arises from the expectations of managers in other functions or from within the HR function itself, severely limits the potential benefits to be reaped from the active inclusion of an HR perspective in the design and implementation of transformational change in organizations.

Another less ominous difference observed between these groups was that marketing and sales staff did slightly better than HR personnel on the “planning change” subscale. This difference, although relatively minor in size, may reflect the importance placed in many organizations on generating detailed marketing plans and strategies. Further, those HR functions which are less
active in implementing large scale change efforts may have had less exposure to the complexities inherent in the planning process, thus explaining the shift among these scores as well.

While HR professionals overall seemed to utilize the most integrated approach to the management of change (as measured by the MCQ) when compared to the other functional areas among the present data set, interestingly enough, however, these HR professionals still scored significantly lower overall than did a sample of organizational development practitioners in a recent study (80.3 per cent). This difference in scores would suggest that HR professionals have considerable room for improving their change management skills - an improvement that might contribute to their greater utilization in and contribution to large scale organizational change efforts. Of course, it is important to point out that HR professionals in this study demonstrated a significantly greater knowledge and understanding of the principles of change management than did general managers. It would be wise for organizations planning or pursuing change to explore this expertise appropriately. Too many HR functions in organizations today are undervalued and/or trapped in the more traditional roles of selection, appraisal and compensation. While highly important for the continued functioning of organizations, these roles do not permit HR professionals to contribute as directly to organizational effectiveness as the results presented here indicate they might.

Industry. Performance by industry on the MCQ is presented in Figure 5. Civil and professional services (i.e., consulting and strategic business advising firms) demonstrated the strongest tendency to agree with the comprehensive model. Financial industry managers, drawn from banking and accounting firms, received lower overall scores than did managers from the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. This may seem a bit surprising at first glance, given the former's supposed broader exposure to a wide variety of organizations and issues attending to strategic organizational management in general. Once again, an analysis of the pattern of performance on the subscales helped to add clarity to this apparently anomalous finding. Financial industry managers were among the highest scorers on the subscales measuring agreement with propositions regarding fundamental aspects of change and evaluation. Conversely, these same managers were the lowest scorers on those

![Figure 5. Total scores by industry group](image-url)
subscases relating to the change process – planning change and managing the people and organizational sides of change. This pattern indicates some degree of familiarity with change in organizations from an external perspective. That is, managers from the financial industry may be adept at diagnosing the effectiveness of a proposed or completed change effort, and thus recognize the existence of patterns that typify change efforts, for example. However, these individuals are probably not especially familiar with the processes involved in the successful implementation or management of the change process within organizations, a speculation that is supported by the pattern of results observed here.

Conversely, managers from the federal agency/civil services group demonstrated the greatest agreement with propositions related to these internal process-related issues, and were the highest scorers on planning change and managing the people and organizational sides of change. These managers received scores that were average, relative to the other groups, on the fundamental aspects of change subscales, as well as on the "evaluating change" subscale. In comparison, professional services managers were among the lowest scorers on the fundamental aspects of change subscales, but demonstrated an average pattern of agreement, relative to that of the other groups, on the remaining subscales. It might thus be inferred that managers from both these groups are acquainted with the issues related to the effective implementation of change in organizations, but are less likely to value the strategic importance of revolutionary change, to recognize the patterns that typify change in human systems, or to appreciate the possible energy represented by resistance to change within their own organizations. It might be further inferred that these values will not be stressed in their consultations to their client organizations, which could have profound consequences for the ultimate success of the changes they advocate.

The results obtained here are suggestive of industry “mindsets,” wherein the conceptualization of an organization’s relationship to its environment, as well as the conceptualization of the appropriate relationship of various organizational systems, can vary widely. While respondents from the financial industry demonstrated clear agreement with the concepts of change as advanced in our integrated model (i.e. the existence of clear patterns that typify change efforts, awareness of signs of progress and achievement), they were relatively uninformed about how an organization actually achieves change. Conversely, federal agency/civil services respondents, as well as professional services respondents, indicated some agreement with our propositions about planning and managing change within the organization, but were less consistent regarding the fundamental aspects of change and its evaluation. This pattern is suggestive of a macro/micro difference in approaches to change management. In our research, no one industry demonstrated a solid integration of both perspectives. Clearly, both are needed for the effective implementation of change. Managers undertaking change initiatives would thus be well advised to consider the traditional perspectives and assumptions that inform their analysis of problems,
opportunities, and solutions, and to take whatever steps possible to supplement this analysis with different perspectives.

Interestingly, attention to the “hard and soft” aspects of change process management (i.e. scores on the managing the organizational side of change and the people side of change dimensions) did not vary considerably by industry. As discussed above, these differences were more related to function. Diversity on the transition management team is clearly called for during all aspects of the change process. We would expect the integration of such a wide range of perspectives in the visualization of, and transition to, an organization’s desired future state to be related to the most successful and enduring change efforts.

Summary and recommendations

Summary
This paper has discussed a variety of theoretical approaches to the management of the change process within organizations. It has focused specifically on approaches drawn from the behavioural sciences. An integrated framework that capitalizes on the strengths of these selected theoretical approaches to the fundamental nature of change, the change process itself, the evaluation of change, and the personal and organizational issues accompanying each of these dimensions has been proposed.

Responses from 1,840 subjects to an instrument measuring familiarity with each of these dimensions have been analysed and presented. Unfortunately, we cannot report any notable developments, relative to previous studies, in managers’ perspectives on the process and management of change. The average scores of these managers remains 71 out of a possible 100.

An overview of the findings from this study is presented below. It is hoped that the results presented here will contribute to an understanding of the variety in perspectives demonstrated by different demographic and organizational groups with respect to the topic of change management. It is further hoped that these findings can be used both to direct the operation of change initiatives in varying organizations by providing a framework with which to explore organizational members’ assumptions about change management and to respond strategically. Finally, we believe that our findings are highly suggestive of the pitfalls to which an organization’s leaders must attend as they consider, design, implement and evaluate change initiatives in their organizations:

• Overall. Organization managers from all functions demonstrated no change in their perspectives on change management relative to earlier studies. Lowest scores reflected disagreement on subscales measuring fundamental aspects of change (individual response to change and general nature of change). The pattern of scores indicated more integrated approaches to managing change processes that are under way, but there is a lack of such perspective in understanding the
nature of effective change, how people respond to it, and how these patterns affect organizations.

• Age/length of service. Age and length of service showed low but significant inverse correlations with scores on the Managing Change Questionnaire, independent of education. This could represent an historical change in managers’ concepts of the organization and its relationship to employees.

• Education. Scores on the overall questionnaire showed a low positive correlation with education. This relationship probably reflects more exposure to issues relating to working with complex systems as education progresses.

• Nation (global region). Several differences were observed. These differences possibly indicate different perspectives, especially in Asian cultures, on the general nature of change, individual response to change, and managing the people side of change. One implication is that the working propositions of OD practitioners may need modification in cross-cultural organizational work.

• Function. HR professionals demonstrated the most agreement with the integrated process model of the change process proposed here. This distinction can be attributed to more experience and education in the human systems-related aspects of change management.

• Industry. Federal agency and civil service employees achieved the highest overall score. These employees’ high scores reflected agreement with propositions advanced in the planning change and managing the people and organizational side of change dimensions, i.e. those dimensions associated with the process area of the model. Financial services employees received the lowest scores overall, and on the process dimensions, their scores on the two subscales constituting the fundamental aspects of change were highest, possibly indicating a great deal of familiarity with organizational change issues from an external perspective.

Recommendations to practitioners

Based on the results described above, we present three general recommendations:

(1) attention should be devoted to extending familiarity with the content of our integrated model of change management;

(2) diagnosis of perspectives on change management should be conducted prior to the design and implementation of change efforts; and

(3) organization leaders should take steps to ensure that congruent change initiatives for each of an organization’s subsystems are planned and implemented during a change effort.
With regard to the first recommendation, the findings presented here can be taken to suggest the specific developmental needs of different types of managers. With regard to the second and third recommendations, this study suggests one, but certainly not the only, method of proceeding.

General implications for managers and for managerial education are clear. A more comprehensive development of skills related to the management of the change process is indicated to supplement the initiatives being widely implemented in numerous organizations, including strategic planning (Beer, 1994; Goodstein et al., 1993), high involvement (Lawler, 1992) and organizational re-engineering (Champy, 1995; Hammer and Champy, 1993). While the content of programmes designed to supplement the planning, implementation and evaluation of the change process must necessarily vary according to the target population, our review indicates that it should certainly focus on two important content areas: the fundamental aspects of change (including those propositions outlined in the general nature of change and individual responses to change dimensions) and human aspects of the change process (including managing the people side of change). Such an educational initiative would empower managers from a variety of industries to plan and implement responsible actions within the human systems that underlie the standard functional and structural relationships normally considered in organizational change initiatives. In this way, managers and change agents can take further steps towards harnessing the human potential for growth and change within their organizations and towards ensuring the long-term successful implementation of programmes designed to enhance organizational effectiveness. It is largely the responsibility of internal and external change agents (i.e. OD practitioners, management consultants, HR professionals, and other organization managers empowered to facilitate change efforts) to ensure that managers in their host/client organizations possess the information necessary to undertake such a “holistic” approach to change management.

Change agents can fulfil this responsibility by considering the strengths and weaknesses, with respect to an integrated model of change and change process management, that already exist within their host or client organization. These strengths and weaknesses can be assessed and responded to at several levels: within the organization’s management team, the change management team, the work groups most directly affected by the change effort, or throughout the organization. The results presented here can be used as guidelines in the formation of hypotheses regarding these strengths and weaknesses. However, it is strongly recommended that hypotheses be tested through the use of diagnostic instruments such as the Managing Change Questionnaire, interviews and surveys, before a programme that capitalizes on existing agreement, and responds to perceived needs, is developed. In other words, this study is best taken as suggestive of one approach to diagnosing an organization’s unique perspectives on change management. It is our experience that organization change programmes can benefit from such a
consideration of indigenous assumptions about organizational change and the change process.

Diagnosis can be undertaken in an attempt to respond to two key questions affecting the implementation of change in organizations. What are the implicit theories about change management currently held by organizational managers? And which aspects of these theories support, and which interfere with, the development of a change programme that incorporates congruent innovations in an organization's work systems, social systems, and managerial systems (e.g. Weisbord, 1987)?

Investigations of implicit change theories are likely to reveal some incongruities with respect to the normative model presented in this study. For instance, this study has revealed two broad categories of potential incongruities with respect to our model: an internal (focusing on the change process) versus an external (focusing on organizational environment and performance) perspective, and a hard (focusing on structural elements of the change process) versus a soft (focusing on social elements of the change process). Finer distinctions with respect to the model will probably exist within a particular organization. For example, managers in an organization might be unlikely to agree with the propositions advanced in the managing the people side of change dimension. Whether this tendency indicates a developmental need or is simply indicative of cultural differences (see above) is up to a particular change agent to determine. Nevertheless, change agents can certainly contribute to the success of a change initiative by responding appropriately to any developmental needs that might be indicated at the various levels of an organization, and by providing guidance regarding the composition of planning and transition management teams.

Above all, organizations should use diagnostic data of the sort described here to capitalize on their strengths. If managers throughout an organization tend to share beliefs about a particular dimension of change management, then policies that build on these shared, functional beliefs can be used as "selling points" for a more thorough and integrated change programme. Champy (1995) has clearly indicated the limits of organizational transitions that focus on work processes alone. It is our belief, supported by the data presented here, that human resource professionals are in a unique position to develop and implement meaningful, system-wide organizational change.

References and further reading


Duncan, R. (1979), "What is the right organizational structure? Decision tree analysis provides the answer", Organizational Dynamics, Winter, pp. 59-80.


