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Patterns of Management Thought: The Search for New Perspectives

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PATTERNS OF MANAGEMENT THOUGHT

THE SEARCH FOR NEW PERSPECTIVES
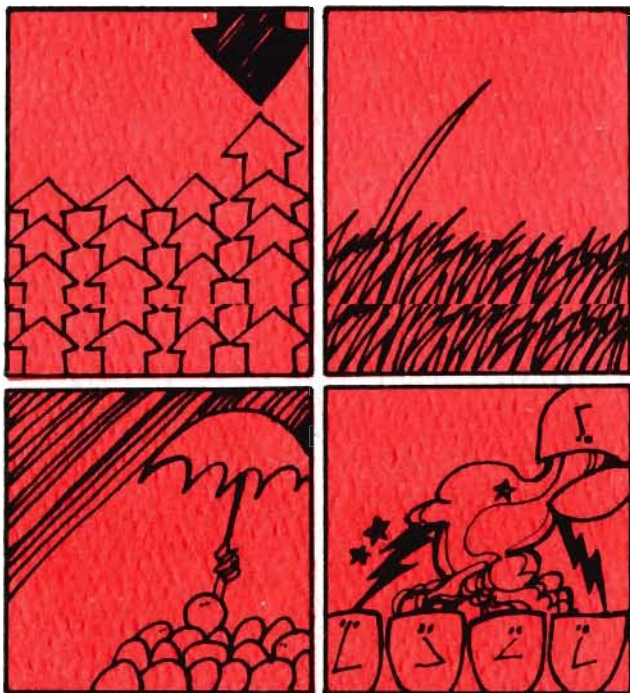
HOWARD CARLISLE

FIFTY-FOURTH HONOR LECTURE

DELIVERED AT THE UNIVERSITY

A basic objective of the Faculty Association of Utah State University, in the words of its constitution, is:

> to encourage intellectual growth and development of its members by sponsoring and arranging for the publication of two annual faculty research lectures in the fields of (1) the biological and exact sciences, including engineering, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Natural Sciences; and (2) the humanities and social sciences, including education and business administration, called the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities.

The administration of the University is sympathetic with these aims and shares, through the Scholarly Publications Committee, the costs of publishing and distributing these lectures.

Lecturers are chosen by a standing committee of the Faculty Association. Among the factors considered by the committee in choosing lecturers are, in the words of the constitution:

> (1) creative activity in the field of the proposed lecture; (2) publication of research through recognized channels in the field of the proposed lecture; (3) outstanding teaching over an extended period of years; (4) personal influence in developing the character of the students.

Howard Carlisle was selected by the committee to deliver the Annual Faculty Honor Lecture in the Humanities. On behalf of the members of the Association we are happy to present Professor Carlisle's paper.

Committee on Faculty Honor Lecture

Faculty Honor Lecture

PATTERNS OF MANAGEMENT THOUGHT: THE SEARCH FOR NEW PERSPECTIVES

by Howard M. Carlisle

As a member of the audience in the Faculty Honor Lectures for the past several years, I have noticed that the presenters have typically done two things: they have reviewed some of their most significant research or theoretical contributions, and they have engaged in some freewheeling speculations or prescriptions about future trends. I intend to do both of these tonight. I would like to report on several aspects of contingency or situational theories of management where I have done most of my publishing, and I would also like to express some personal concerns and prescriptions I propose to improve the effectiveness of organizations.

Four caveats need to be identified prior to our moving into an analysis of theories of organizations and their management. First, in reviewing our current knowledge of organizations, it is obvious that the struggling, new discipline of management is just now, after approximately seventy years of development, finding sufficient empirical roots to support any sort of valid theoretical superstructure. The unknowns associated with organizations far exceed the knowns, and the knowns are more related to precepts that do not work than those that do. In fact, the frequently paraphrased statement that our knowledge is the equivalent to the light of a candle in a dark abyss seems appropriate.

Second, no researcher or analyst of organizations can delve into the subject without being impressed with the fact that an organization represents one of the most intricate sets of relationships that can be found in any form of existence. One quickly comes to agree with

Kenneth Boulding's well-known hierarchy of systems, in which organizations are the apex of complex systems.[1] Physical and mechanical systems and even biological forms of life all represent simpler phenomena. As one observer recently commented, trying to study an "organization is like trying to nail Jell-O to a tree."[2] The many different variables and the dynamic relationships associated with them make either micro- or macro-analysis extremely difficult. We often are forced to make predictions or conclusions when we only understand ten percent of the cause. This recognition that organizations are incredibly complex warns the researcher and analyst that simplistic solutions and explanations, that all too often flourish and hold wide appeal, are always forms of deception and frequently serve as roadblocks to further understanding. Most of our current assumptions about organizations are built on notions that are far too superficial and elementary.

The third caveat is that in doing research and analysis of organizations, it is almost impossible to assume the detached view of the true classical, scientific observer. Personal values, attitudes, and rewards tend to interfere with our observation and analysis of the subject or subjects being studied.

A final caveat is that as a participant in organizations I have developed many biases that will be represented in the material presented. I feel that organizations generally tend to be mismanaged, large bureaucracies are a hindrance to progress, our leadership selection processes are far from optimal, and society is experiencing a genuine crisis resulting from inadequate leadership.

All of this may be interpreted as reflecting the pessimism that has taken hold in many areas of higher education in the past several years. If so, it is not intentional. I think we have made considerable advance since 1964 when Harold Koontz made the following statement: "Most management problems exist in an extraordinarily complex environment in which it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to isolate variables and where the laboratory or the computer cannot simulate reality."[3] In the past 15 years we have not been able to simulate the reality of organizations in any broad sense, but we have certainly made commendable strides in uncovering the

[1]Kenneth Boulding, "General Systems Theory — The Skeleton of a Science," *Management Science*, April 1956, pp. 197-208.
[2]Comment at the Southern Illinois University Fourth Biennial Leadership Symposium, Carbondale, Illinois, October 27, 1976.
[3]Harold Koontz (ed.), *Toward A Unified Theory of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 254.

primary variables that dominate the functioning of organizations. We may be more pessimistic today, but it is because we know more what to be pessimistic about. The naive claims by some theorists in the 1960s that we would have a general theory of management within five years indicate the danger of making judgments when little data are available. Another significant sign of improvement is that our knowledge of management, even though it is extremely limited, still tends to at least double and more likely quadruple every ten years. The mass of information available today represents a broad stream of thought that was merely a trickle just thirty years ago. Nevertheless, we still live in a world where the Dale Carnegies, Werner Erhards, and Yogis often have as much influence as the trained professionals.

In getting into our topic, patterns of management thought, it is first important to emphasize the significance of the mental frameworks that we use to conceptualize a discipline or organize our sensory inputs. The frame of reference and mental set we use to comprehend any phenomena will structure what and how we perceive it. These mental frameworks can greatly expand or restrict our thinking and analysis, and are therefore vital to the development of a body of knowledge. The link between these theoretical models and a science is explained by L. L. Thurstone:

> It is the faith of all science that an unlimited number of phenomena can be comprehended in terms of a limited number of concepts or ideal constructs. Without this faith no science could ever have any motivation. To deny this faith is to affirm the primary chaos of nature and the consequent futility of scientific effort. The constructs in terms of which natural phenomena are comprehended are man-made inventions. To discover a scientific law is merely to discover that a man-made scheme serves to unify and thereby to simplify comprehension of a certain class of natural phenomena. A scientific law is not to be thought of as having an independent existence which some scientist is fortunate to stumble upon. A scientific law is not a part of nature. It is only a way of comprehending nature.[4]

Thus it is my contention, that especially in the early stages of the evolution of a science, the primary task is to develop ways of thinking and basic models that are representative of the topic under study. A model as used here can be simply defined as "a coherent and

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[4]L. L. Thurstone, *Multiple-Factor Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 51.

systematic set of descriptions of relevant relationships.[5] Broad models covering a discipline must be able to accommodate vast amounts of information, and they must also contain the primary variables that account for the functioning of the entity under study, in our case that of the organization. The ultimate hope is to be able to account for the interdependences among the variables in the model and thus to uncover cause and effect relationships.

Our greatest need in the development of management thought is to establish more accurate ways of thinking encompassing models covering the management process and the functioning of organizations. Again, in recent years, especially those since 1970, we have made giant strides in this regard. However, nothing could more quickly accelerate the advance of management thought than conceptual breakthroughs that would serve to open up new vistas of thinking. It is this topic, along with some practical problems in the management of organizations, that will be the subjects for discussion in the balance of this lecture.

THE UNIVERSALIST PARADIGM OF MANAGEMENT

In order to fully appreciate the current theoretical approaches to management, it is first necessary to look at some of the early beginnings. In the time available this evening, it is obviously not possible to consider all of these approaches through reviewing what we refer to as the various schools of management. Only two major thrusts will be covered. These two schools are selected not only because of their significance but also because the more recent contingency approach that I am associated with grew out of a reaction to some of their limitations.

Most writers on administration start with the scientific management movement that began around 1900. This approach to management was under the leadership of Frederick Taylor, an engineer who became a major owner-manager in the iron and steel industry in the United States. As an engineer, Taylor was perturbed because there was no established sequence by which most physical tasks were performed in organizations. Accordingly he developed methods for analyzing jobs, primarily through observation, that would lead to the optimal sequence for maximizing efficiency. As he stated, ". . . there is always one method and one implement which is quicker and better than any of the rest. And this one best method and best

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[5]Mihajlo Mesarovic and Eduard Pestel, *Mankind at the Turning Point* (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1974), p. 33.

implement can only be discovered or developed through a scientific study and analysis of all the methods and implements in use, together with accurate, minute, motion and time study."[6]

This concern for finding the one best way and the absolutes in management dominated study in the field for the next fifty years. Management theory was obsessed with the "principles approach" which emphasized that there are universal truths underlying organization and management practice that must be discovered and mastered if a science of management is to be developed. Organization theorists such as Henri Fayol, Lyndall Urwick, Alvin Brown, and Harold Koontz attempted to develop sets of principles of organization that could be universally applied. Researchers investigating leadership during the first half of the century were also attempting to identify the universal set of skills that constitute leadership. Following this approach, the initial management textbooks were filled with principles for managers and students to memorize and apply.[7]

In the late 1950s, disenchantment developed with the principles theme. As early as 1945, Herbert Simon had referred to them as "little more than ambiguous and mutually contradictory proverbs."[8] In stretching the concepts to force them to be universal, they lost their practical value. As Ernest Dale stated, "A principle so broad as to cover all types of situations is necessarily so broad as to tell us little we did not know before."[9] The principles were normally deductive in nature and rarely supported by any empirical research. And, yet, the emphasis on universalism and absolutes has been slow to wane.

The 1950s and 1960s saw the rapid rise of another theoretical thrust. Behavioral scientists, following the Hawthorne studies of the late 1920s and early 1930s, started to infiltrate management thinking and by 1960 they gave rise to a large number of concepts aimed at humanizing organizations and improving their management. In 1960 Douglas McGregor expounded his famous contrasting assumptions of behavior in his formulations of Theory X and Theory Y. He favored the Theory Y view holding that man does not inherently dislike work, will exercise self-direction and self-control, seeks responsibility,

[6]Frederick Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1916), p. 25.

[7]See Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell, *Principles of Management* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1955).

[8]Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1945), p. 240.

[9]Ernest Dale, "Some Foundations of Organization Theory," *California Management Review*, Fall 1959, p. 84.

and has the capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organization problems.[10] Warren Bennis, a contemporary of McGregor's at M.I.T., coauthored with Philip Slater a landmark article in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1964 stating that democracy in organizations is inevitable. They perceived democracy to be "the only system which can successfully cope with the changing demands of contemporary civilization."[11] If you are not familiar with the name of Warren Bennis, I hope you will remember it because we will come back to his contrasting views some ten years later. At the same time in the early 1960s, behavioral scientists such as Chris Argyris and Rensis Likert were decrying autocratic leadership and urging the adoption of more participative, democratic styles. The words of Chris Argyris, which I have repeated many times in the classroom, gave me rightful cause for indignation. He argues that task specialization "inhibits self-actualization and provides expression for few, shallow skin-surface abilities that do not provide the 'endless challenge' desired by the healthy personality."[12]

In 1963 at the time most of these ideas were showing up in print, I was just returning to the university, after ten years of working in government and industry and I found comfort in these new directions. I was pleased to be able to help eliminate some of the abuses that I had recently experienced. At the time the following conditions were still prevalent in organizations: there was too little consideration of subordinates' views by supervisors; no real due process existed in industry especially in non-union plants or for salaried employees; profit was too exclusively the goal of the firm which made subservient the consideration of social issues or values; the mistaken assumption that the administrative hierarchy was a knowledge hierarchy was allowed to persist; if an employee was to be transferred to another location, his or her only expected response was to ask when; employees furloughed or terminated were often treated with the nonchalance of a day dreamer plucking blades of grass; it was unthinkable that a female would handle any position except that of a secretary; and centralization continued to predominate even though there had been outcries against it since at least

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[10]Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960).

[11]Warren Bennis and Philip E. Slater, "Democracy is Inevitable," *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1964, p. 52.

[12]Chris Argyris, "Personal vs. Organizational Goals," *Yale Scientific*, February 1960, p. 45.

1950. I soon became convinced that the firm, as a subunit of the broader American democratic society, could not counter the values of this larger suprasystem.

Such an emphasis on democracy eliminated or reduced many of the social abuses found in organizations, but it did not provide for a general theory of management. It forced the manager to be more humane, but it still left largely undone the task of adequately conceptualizing the role of the manager and the functioning of organizations. It also persisted in the emphasis on absolutes implicit in industrial humanism and the fostering of participative styles of leadership.

THE CONTINGENCY PARADIGM OF MANAGEMENT THOUGHT

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, several developments contributed to the rise of a new approach to management known as situational or contingency theory. First, there was the general dissatisfaction with the simplicities of traditional approaches especially in the assumptions behind the search for universal principles. Also research studies demonstrated time and again that different concepts and techniques tended to be successful depending on the situation at hand. Behavioral scientists were disappointed to find that they could not verify that happy work groups were always the most productive or that participative leadership styles were the most effective. Ralph Stogdill concluded following a comprehensive review of studies on leadership that the "results clearly indicate that neither democratic nor autocratic supervision can be advocated as a method for increasing productivity. . . ."[13] Practitioners also found problems in universally applying the egalitarian dogma, and one began to hear such sarcastic questions as, "How do you get everyone in the act and still get action?"

Another theoretical forerunner of contingency approaches was also a phenomena of the 1960s. General systems theory came in as a popular means of viewing organizations and integrating the knowledge of a discipline. The basic assumption of G.S.T. is that nothing exists in nature that is unattached. The current state of any entity is dependent, at least partially, on other factors and forces that are external in nature. Systems theory focuses on relationships among variables and on the wholes that these variables represent.

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[13]Ralph Stodgill, *Handbook of Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 370.

It is the "big picture" approach that attempts to broadly integrate systems, subsystems, and suprasystems. It provides a relationships-oriented framework that can effectively serve as a method for integrating diverse fields of knowledge, as an eclectic discipline like management demands.

Contingency approaches to management thus grew out of the disenchantment with traditional management thought and the new understanding provided by systems theory. It rejected the universalism of traditional management and captured the relationships orientation of systems theory. It strongly emphasized that the selection and application of management concepts and techniques is dependent on the context of the situation. The behavior of individuals and the functioning of organizations is thus reliant on the environment in which this behavior or functioning takes place. The problem in management is not to search for universals but to be able to diagnose situations so that those differences can be identified that will influence the operations or change processes the manager is interested in. "If-then" statements come to replace broad, universal principles. "If" certain conditions exist in the context of the situation, "then" certain actions or the application of particular management concepts appropriate to the situation are warranted.

There have been many major contributors to contingency theory going back to at least the industrial studies conducted in England in the 1950s.[14] Likewise, now there are many different contingency models of management. Underlying these models are several common assumptions. Eight stand out as being significant:

1. Contingency approaches are model-oriented while traditional theory emphasizes abstract, often unrelated, principles. Using a systems orientation, contingency theory provides a framework for sizing up and evaluating the variables that are dominant in the broader organization or in any subset restricted to a particular situation.

2. Contingency theory is based on the assumption that even though common elements exist in most organizations (tasks, technology, people, group norms, and so forth), they tend to differ from situation to situation both in terms of the nature of the variables and their significance. The variables external to an organization often exist in a deterministic relationship to the firm or other unit so that

[14]See Tom Burns and G. M. Stalker, *The Management of Innovation* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961) and Joan Woodward, *Industrial Organization: Theory and Practice* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).

it must meet the demands of the environment to survive and to maintain effectiveness. Thus the context of a situation is generally the crucial factor in determining managerial action. The executive needs to size up the forces that are at work in his or her area of responsibility and determine what steps can be taken either to accommodate or to change them. This is true at both the macro- and micro-levels.

3. Even though contingency theory emphasizes the differences in situations, certain commonalties can be identified among classes of situations. Thus there are sets of similar conditions that frequently can be found in organizations. Some sets will call for the use of adaptive, loose structures and more participative leadership styles while other conditions will make bureaucratic structures and more directive styles desirable. Accordingly, universal principles are rarely appropriate but classifying subcategories of organizations or situations based on common conditions and forces associated with them is. As MacKenzie and House state ". . . the fate of the better theories is to become explanations that hold for some phenomena in some limited conditions."[15] The real issue in management becomes one of matching appropriate concepts and techniques with situational constraints or variables.

4. Contingency approaches emphasize the importance of understanding the relationships among situational variables. The conditions in any situation are a result of the interplay or interaction of a number of factors, and it is the relationship among these that accounts for the particular conditions evidenced. The important point to note is that contingency theory has changed the concern in management from knowing a set of rules or principles to viewing it as a method of analysis.

5. Contingency theory strongly endorses relativism and rejects the notion of absolutes. Since the same set of variables generally predominates, it is the relative differences in the nature and significance of these variables that become important, especially since all situations tend to be dynamic. Dualism often dominates our thinking where right or wrong and black or white extremes are the only alternatives. Yet, while organizations cannot simply be classified as centralized or decentralized, they all generally fit at some different point along a centralization-decentralization continuum. Scales reflect-

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[15]K. D. MacKenzie and J. R. House, Paradigm Development in the Social Sciences: A Proposed Research Strategy, University of Toronto Working Paper #75-03, 1975.

ing relative differences thus replace universalistic rules-of-thumb. Decision making becomes a process in evaluating trade-offs rather than an exercise in selecting absolutes.

6. Contingency theory is deeply founded in pragmatism or the doctrine of using what works. With the exception of certain value and behavioral absolutes, essentially all others are rejected so that the ultimate test of management practice is the question of whether it achieves the results desired. Democratic leadership styles may be preferred for certain humanitarian reasons, but if the situation calls for more directive styles (such as an emergency during a crisis), they are to be utilized.

7. Traditional theory emphasizes the natural integration and mechanical functioning of organizations. Fayol often referred to centralization as the "natural order of things" and pointed out the importance of unity of direction.[16] Contingency theory recognizes organizations as having multiple goals and subunits with the result that all organizations experience built-in conflict. The emphasis is on diversity rather than on commonalty, and on the problems involved in managing highly differentiated organizations characterized by multiple interests and operations rather than the single-purpose, hierarchically integrated firm.

8. Probably the most significant characteristic of contingency theory is that it is an affirmation that management theorists have finally faced up to the complexity of organizations and their management. As Morse and Lorsch state, "The strength of the contingency approach . . . is that it begins to provide a way of thinking about this complexity rather than ignoring it."[17] Management consists of a host of different variables where multicausation is involved. Thus contingency paradigms generally reject single causation as an explanation for conditions in organizations, and also reject the assumption that the relationship between variables is unidirectional. The basic model is an interaction one where influence flows in both directions among a large number of variables. Hellriegel and Slocum state, "If the single-cause assumption is inadequate, an obvious substitute is the assumption that events are caused by many forces working in complex relation to each other."[18]

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[16]Henri Fayol, *General and Industrial Management* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1949), pp. 20-41.

[17]John J. Morse and Jay W. Lorsch, "Beyond Theory Y," *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 1970, p. 68.

[18]Don Hellriegel and John W. Slocum, Jr., *Organizational Behavior Contingency Views* (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1976), p. 4.

Many wonder if it is possible to design any contingency model of management if the previous eight characteristics are accepted. The basic problem in model building is explained by Hubert Blalock: "The dilemma of the scientist is to select models that are at the same time simple enough to permit him to think with the aid of the model but also sufficiently realistic that the simplifications required do not lead to predictions that are highly inaccurate."[19] Thus, in the contingency model I have developed, I attempt to identify the primary factors that account for the functioning of organizations and that tend to predominate in situations (while seeking at the same time to avoid developing a laundry list of all factors that can come into play). The intent is to enumerate a limited number of variables that a manager can understand and cope with in his or her decision processes. If executives are to have their influence felt in a situation, they must have their hands on the right valves or controls that determine how the organization functions. Organizations are complex enough without managers mistakenly concentrating on factors that are of secondary importance in the field of forces represented by an organization.

Following these guidelines, the management model that I use consists of two sets of variables: those internal to the firm and those that are external. The internal variables (figure 1) consist of the goals of the organization and the tasks, technology, people, and organization structure involved. It is the nature and condition of these five factors that tend to dictate the need for the various different methods of planning, leading, job design, resource allocation, and other decisions that fall on the shoulders of the manager. To be effective in the decision process, the executive needs to concentrate on understanding these five factors. However, as indicated earlier, many of the conditions that exist in an organization are imposed by external forces. Thus a more comprehensive model of management incorporates the primary external variables similar to those contained in figure 2. The marketplace of any firm is dictated by economic, political, technological, and social considerations, and if a firm is to compete it must adapt its internal operations to meet these external contingencies. As a nonbusiness example, Title IX legislation has forced many changes in our education systems.

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[19]Hubert M. Blalock, *Causal Inferences in Nonexperimental Research* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 8.
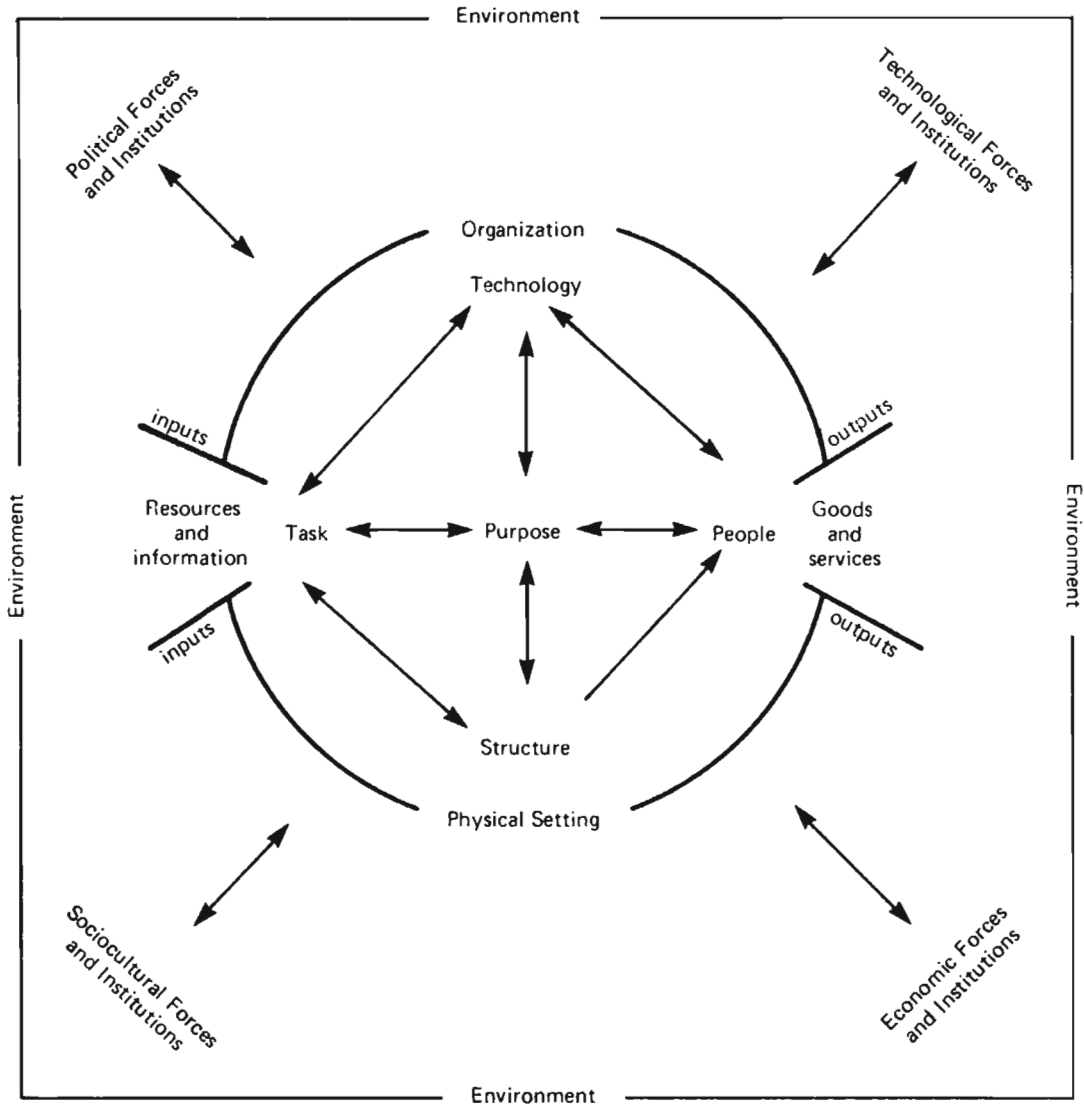
Figure 1

SITUATIONAL VARIABLES INTERNAL TO THE ORGANIZATION

Technology

Task   Purpose   People

Structure
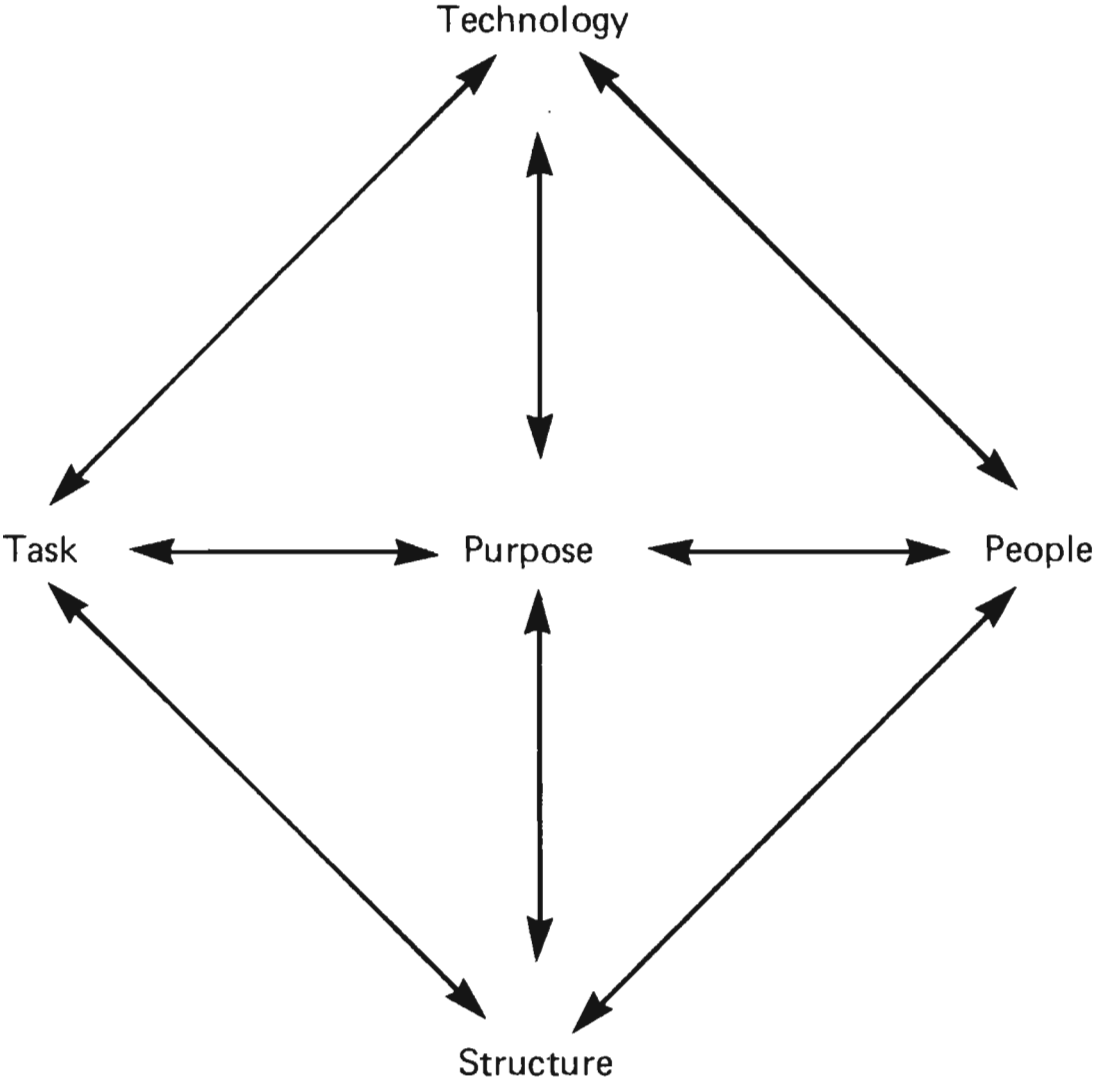
Figure 2

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL VARIABLES IN THE CONTINGENCY MODEL OF A FIRM

It is probably easy enough to develop a multivariate contingency model such as this, but the pragmatic question is how it is to be used? Since at this time it is impossible to explore this in any detail, I would refer you to my textbook published last year entitled *Management: Concepts and Situations* (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1976) for a fairly thorough analysis of its implications in relation to planning, organizing, decision making, motivating, leading, communicating, and controlling.
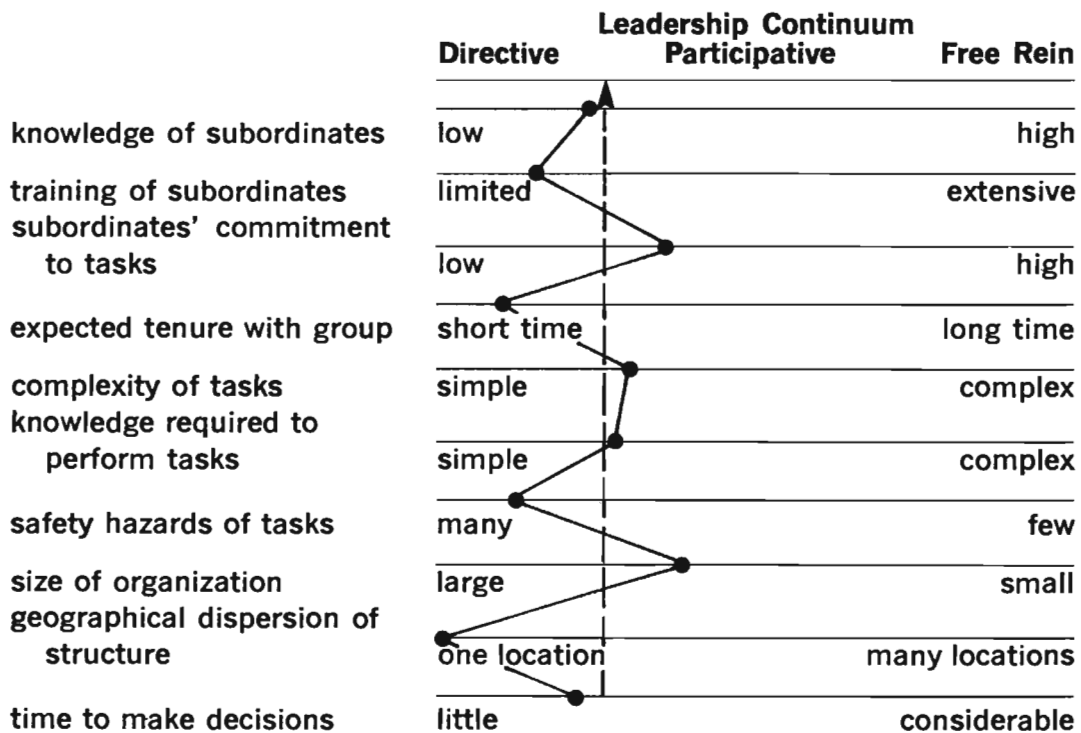
For our purposes, two examples will suffice. In determining which styles of leadership are appropriate in an organization, the primary variables are the knowledge of subordinates, their training, commitment to the tasks, expected tenure with the organization, complexity of the tasks, size of the organization, and other such factors. Figure 3 contrasts two situations in the U.S. Forest Service. In the first a supervisor has temporary summer hires who have little knowledge and training in Forest Service operations and who are engaged in simple tasks such as cleaning up campgrounds and constructing trails. Since the characteristics of the situation are all on the left side of the scales, it indicates that a directive style of leadership is more appropriate. This situation is contrasted with the National Forest Supervisor who has professional foresters reporting directly to him. In this situation the subordinates are well trained, knowledgeable, committed to the organization, and engaged in challenging tasks. Given these factors, a more participative style of leadership will be most effective.

As another quick example, figure 4 shows that where you have many knowns in terms of tasks, technology, and the environment, it results in the need for specific, detailed planning systems but where you have more unknowns in these factors, it calls for more general, flexible plans.

This is approximately where we stand today in management theory. It tends to be contingency oriented and its evolution is paced arm in arm by what has been the rather slow development of research data, enlightened models, and improved methods of getting from the theory to practice. However, it does seem to be on a track that will eventually lead us to greatly improved approaches and methodologies.

Figure 3
SITUATIONAL PROFILES OF VARIABLES INFLUENCING LEADERSHIP STYLES

Situation Involving a Supervisor of a Forest Service Work Crew

	Leadership Continuum		
	Directive	Participative	Free Rein
knowledge of subordinates	low		high
training of subordinates	limited		extensive
subordinates' commitment to tasks	low		high
expected tenure with group	short time		long time
complexity of tasks	simple		complex
knowledge required to perform tasks	simple		complex
safety hazards of tasks	many		few
size of organization	large		small
geographical dispersion of structure	one location		many locations
time to make decisions	little		considerable

Situation Involving a Supervisor of Professional Foresters

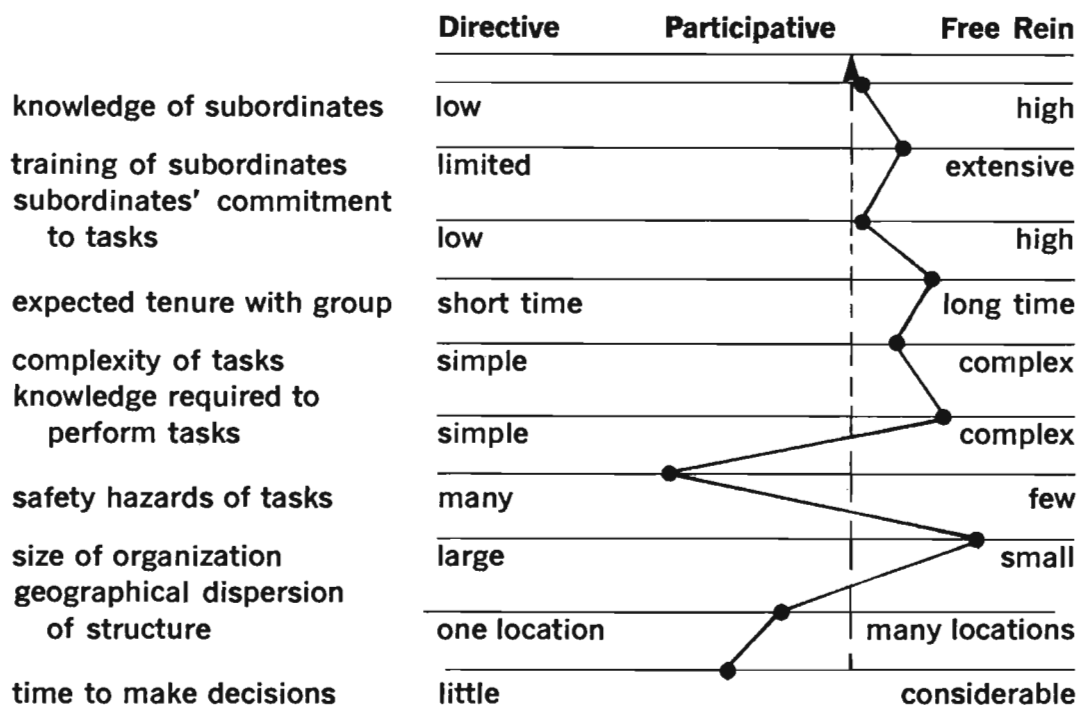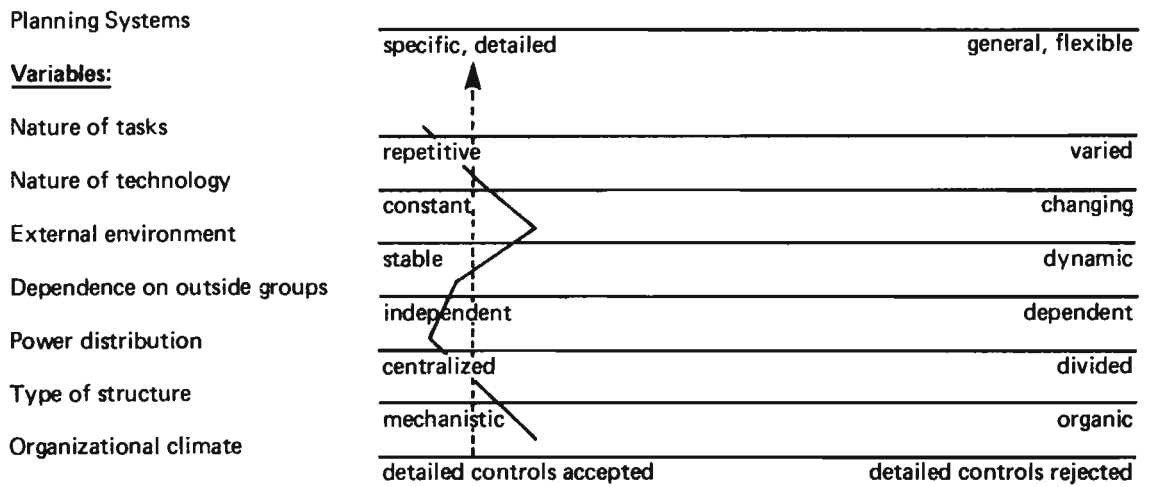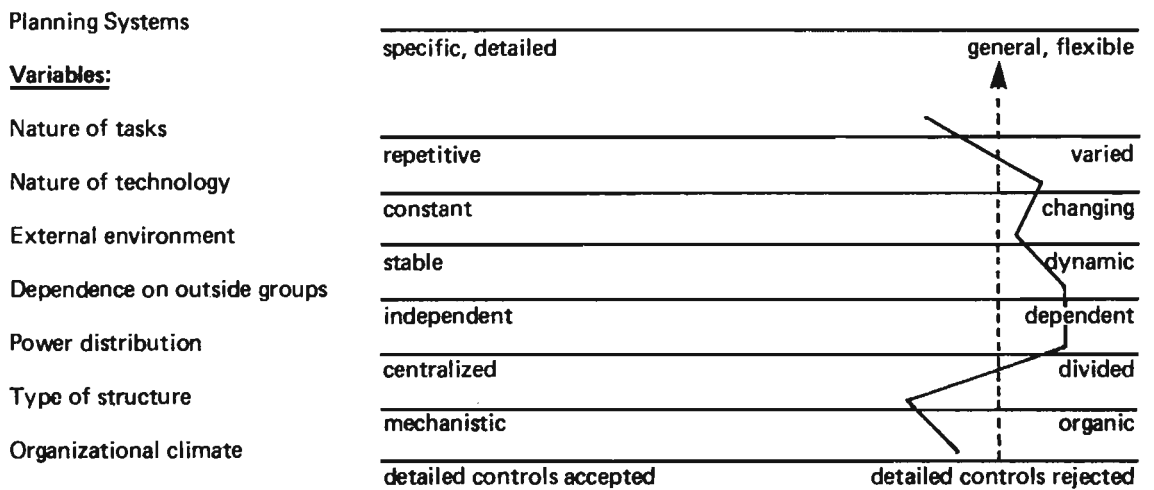|	Directive	Participative	Free Rein
knowledge of subordinates	low		high
training of subordinates	limited		extensive
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expected tenure with group	short time		long time
complexity of tasks	simple		complex
knowledge required to perform tasks	simple		complex
safety hazards of tasks	many		few
size of organization	large		small
geographical dispersion of structure	one location		many locations
time to make decisions	little		considerable

Figure 4

PROFILES OF TWO SITUATIONS RELATING CONTINGENCY VARIABLES TO THE NEED FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF PLANNING AND CONTROL SYSTEMS

Family Corporation Producing Canned Vegetables

Planning Systems	
Variables:	
Nature of tasks	
Nature of technology	
External environment	
Dependence on outside groups	
Power distribution	
Type of structure	
Organizational climate	

specific, detailed — general, flexible

repetitive — varied
constant — changing
stable — dynamic
independent — dependent
centralized — divided
mechanistic — organic

detailed controls accepted — detailed controls rejected

Environmental Protection Agency

Planning Systems	
Variables:	
Nature of tasks	
Nature of technology	
External environment	
Dependence on outside groups	
Power distribution	
Type of structure	
Organizational climate	

specific, detailed — general, flexible

repetitive — varied
constant — changing
stable — dynamic
independent — dependent
centralized — divided
mechanistic — organic

detailed controls accepted — detailed controls rejected

PROBLEMS FACING MODERN ORGANIZATIONS

I would now like to look at some specifics in terms of problems we are experiencing with organizations. Unfortunately, some of the signs do not appear very encouraging. I am sure that what is more a reflection of my advancing senility than anything else is a feeling that there is a certain softness creeping into our society. Now softness is of course not necessarily undesirable if it involves humanitarianism, but it has other implications if it relates to personal and organizational commitment. I become disturbed each year to find that the national student norms on achievement tests (American College Testing Program tests and Scholastic Aptitude Test) have continued to drop, a trend in evidence since 1964; I find it appalling that the current high school graduate has averaged 15,000 hours watching television and 11,000 hours in school, and that between the ages of 2 and 65 a person will spend nine years watching television;[20] I have the uncomfortable feeling, manifest in more ways than just television, that our desire to be entertained has come to exceed our desire to be educated; I also am inclined to think that the norm of doing the minimal to get by is replacing the norm of striving for excellence; and, finally, that we as educators have gradually let academic standards crumble.

For some reason we have assumed that all learning should be fun and that it is not acceptable if it does not meet this criterion. I feel more inclined to agree with Eliot Butler who states:

> To learn is hard work. It requires discipline. And there is much drudgery. When I hear someone say that learning is fun, I wonder if that person has never learned or if he has just never had fun. There are moments of excitement in learning: these seem usually to come after long periods of hard work but not after all periods of hard work.[21]

While I do not want to also start this section off with a pessimistic note, still I find some rather alarming conditions in the management of organizations. Large bureaucratic structures tend to be unmanageable and out of control, and the decline of leadership is such that to find examples of leaders we are forced to look to the past. Alvin Toffler, the futurist, finds me sympathetic when he writes that "We are not going to make it through the upheavals of the

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[20]Angelyn Nelson, "Television Impact Outlined to Health Officials," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 28, 1976, p. C-2.

[21]Eliot Butler, *Brigham Young University Today*, November 1976, p. 11.

next 10 to 20 years with the political machinery we have."[22] While this is probably an overstatement, his general theme holds considerable merit. This is that the pace of change in society, resulting primarily from technology, is increasing at a much more rapid pace than either people, institutions, or organizations are able to adapt. Just as a few examples, in the past hundred years we have increased our communication by a factor of ten to the seventh power, our speed of travel by ten squared, our speed of data handling by ten to the sixth power, our energy resources by ten to the third power, our power of weapons by ten to the sixth power, our ability to control diseases by ten squared, and our rate of population growth by ten to the third power.[23] When one merely stops to analyze all of the changes that have come about in society since the late 1940s which saw the introduction of the computer and television, it is difficult to ponder what might transpire in the next 100 years. Certainly the pace of change will not decrease even though the rate of growth will have to be brought under control if overpopulation and resource depletion are not to threaten our survival.

The major problem I see in management is that we are not encouraging the development of those types of organization structures and leadership styles that are necessary to meet the dynamic, environmental demands of the future. We have tended to foster organization climates where leadership is minimized and the status quo is protected with the result that organizations too frequently drift rather than experience a controlled change orientation. Now I am not arguing that all change is desirable, for some recent ones in management theory and practice are those to which I am most opposed, but in the name of democracy we have made many of our institutions so cumbersome and leaderless that any form of controlled adaptation becomes almost impossible.

I would like to express these concerns relating to current management theory and practice in the form of four paradoxes:

The first paradox is the one already referred to resulting from the environment demanding more flexible structures at the same time we tend to be building in more rigidities. Organizations naturally have many defenses to protect the status quo. Leaders are going to resist any change that potentially threatens their power positions.

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[22]Alvin Toffler, "Re-invent Political System, Proposes Future Shock Author," *University of Utah Review*, November 1975, p. 1.

[23]Warren Bennis, *The Unconscious Conspiracy Why Leaders Can't Lead* (New York: AMACOM, 1976), pp. 127-128.

If someone holds four aces he hardly wants the deck reshuffled. Organizational policies, group norms, shared beliefs, and existing procedures and regulations all argue for conformance to existing standards. As Charles Perrow the noted sociologist states,

> Even those organizations which do start out as adaptive and innovative strive to rationalize and routinize. Every manager prizes freedom and initiative for himself but attempts to routinize the areas under his control. Similarly, those in control of the expanding, innovative organization appear to maximize their own freedom and rewards by making the organization itself more predictable.[24]

Furthermore, in recent years we have added to this, especially in universities, by following the democratic urgings to instill more representation based on interest groups in the authority structures and to expand the trend towards power sharing or power equalization. It is interesting to note how Warren Bennis, who was one of the authors of the widely quoted article on the inevitability of democracy in 1964, changed his views after serving as Executive Vice President at Buffalo in the New York system and later as the President of the University of Cincinnati. Reflecting on these experiences, he now interprets this subject as follows:

> Vast splintering and fragmentation arise from the new populism of those who felt denied in the past and who, rightly, want to be consulted in those decisions that affect them. All this is supposed to add up to "participatory democracy" but adds up, instead, to a cave of winds where the most that can usually be agreed upon is to do nothing. . . .[25]

Gail Parker, a former college president, writes, "And we have created participatory bureaucracies in our institutions, elaborate systems of surveillance by committee, which guarantee that we can do only one thing really well, and that is to explore our mutual hostilities."[26] Dwight Ladd further notes, "As so often seems to be the case in systems of shared power, the ability to prevent change has generally been greater than the ability to bring it about."[27]

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[24]Charles Perrow, *Organizational Analysis: A Sociological View* (Belmont, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1970), p. 66.

[25]Warren Bennis, *op. cit.,* p. 25.

[26]Gail Thain Packer, "While Alma Mater Burns," *The Atlantic,* September 1976, p. 47.

[27]Dwight R. Ladd, "Achieving Change in Educational Policy in American Colleges and Universities," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* November 1972, p. 209.

We have somehow assumed that Adam Smith's invisible hand of economics also applies to politics in organizations. For each firm to pursue its own interests in the marketplace may result in the common good from an economic standpoint, but for each interest group to pursue its own ends in a bureaucracy more likely leads to organizational paralysis and compromise at the lowest common denominator. The danger is that the groups involved may become more concerned with the internal distribution of power and status than with organizational goals.

My immediate concern is with universities where committees and administrative groups established on the basis of interest representation are given the responsibility for handling the major administrative affairs of their institutions. The delegates to these groups by the nature of their appointments generally feel they are to represent the narrow interests of their constituencies. This results in a large number of factions where no one has the perspective or is held accountable for what happens to the total organization. It is also a situation where the organization became overly reliant on committees. I am reminded of the statement of Charles Fraser of South Carolina's Sea Pines Company who stated that he knew his company was in deep trouble when committees began to form "for the simplest tasks."[28]

Fritz Roethlisberger's statement of 1964 still holds true: It is a debatable question as to whether you can "humanize" bureaucracies.[29] The question is not whether organizations should be humanitarian and foster the will of their membership, but it is a question of how these values can be preserved without turning the organization into a forum for dissent and without shackling the momentum to move ahead and keep an adaptive posture.

The second paradox is closely related to the first. Organizations desire progress and innovation, but they tend to develop demands for conformity which stifle these very processes. Unfortunately, organizations are at their best in dealing with matters that are routine, and they are at their worst in establishing climates that are conducive to new ideas. The same factors that block adaptation also block creativity: Namely, the desire of leaders to protect their power positions, the effective socialization process which forces membership compliance with group norms and expectations, and rules, procedures, and policies that reward conformance and penalize those that

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[28]Charles Fraser, *Time,* November 8, 1976, p. 41.
[29]Fritz Roethlisberger, contained in Harold Koontz (ed.), *op. cit.,* p. 57.

thwart the system. Much of this resistance is psychological in nature. As human beings, we tend to have little tolerance for ambiguity and if our sensory input is not consistent with images we have of the world, we tend to force it to fit our patterns. Unfortunately, we seem not to be satisfied unless other people think the way we do — as is manifest in the zeal of a missionary, the critical review of an accreditation board, or the march of an army into an enemy's territory.

Organizations are simply not hospitable to innovators. If the individual does not share the common view of the organization, he or she is considered an outsider or a heretic and the organization soon learns how to eliminate or wall off the dissenter. Calvin Taylor concludes the following from his numerous studies on creativity: "The more highly creative an idea people have the more they will be in trouble with the institutions around them."[30] Part of this results also from our desire to avoid conflict and to reward those who are team players. Certainly once a decision or organizational policy is established, members of the organization should support it until it is proven faulty, but in the process of collecting ideas and evaluating alternatives prior to the establishment of these policies, as wide a divergence in thinking as possible should be fostered.

The third paradox is that at this time in our history when we are in dire need of strong leadership is the very time when we are experiencing a leadership vacuum and, as John Gardner states, we have created an "antileadership vaccine." The question is frequently asked, "Where have all of our leaders gone?" since it is hard to scan the world scene and find anyone who could compare with a Lincoln, Roosevelt, Ghandi, Schweitzer, or Churchill. John Gardner says, "Most of the people picked by the system are not the kind of people you would have chosen to lead the society,"[31] which is all too evident in our last presidential election. Now I am not necessarily arguing for the man on horseback, but I feel that we have tended to generate leaders who are consensus takers, nonalienators, and arbitrators rather than those who can provide new directions and guide the organization to higher levels of accomplishment. One of the discouraging things to me is that in our graduate management programs we have tended to create efficient managers and keen analysts, but we have done little to develop the leader's role that is contained in the following statement by John Gardner:

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[30]Calvin Taylor, *Needed: Leaders Who Facilitate Creativity*, mimeographed publication, p. 17.

[31]John W. Gardner, quoted in Max Lerner, "The Political Man vs. the Politician," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, August 5, 1970, p. 15.

Leaders have a significant role in creating the state of mind that is the society. They can serve as symbols of the moral unity of the society. They can express the values that hold the society together. Most important they can conceive and articulate goals that lift people out of their petty preoccupations, carry them above the conflicts that tear a society apart, and unite them in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts.[32]

The leader's role is more than testing the winds to see what his or her subordinates desire and it is more than placating and cajoling interest groups. The leader, because of his or her position in the organization, is frequently the only one with the perspective to pursue the common good. Now certainly we need checks on power since power does breed contempt, but to restrict the leader to being only a moderator or a tightrope walker is to force the organization into a drift condition.

The current situation in universities is again depicted by Warren Bennis:

Academic leadership must develop the vision and strength to call the shots. There are risks in taking the initiative. The greater risk is to wait for orders. This means that administrators at every level must lead, not just manage. This means that colleges and universities have to recognize that they need leadership, that their need is vision, energy, and drive, rather than a bland and safe figurehead.[33]

We have done many things in recent years to make leadership difficult. The media has so exposed the private lives of executives that we have relegated them to commonplace; we have tied their hands with legal issues through making every decision a potential law suit; we have strongly fostered the organizational norm of power equalization; and we have seen the rise of large numbers of interest groups both internal and external to the organization. Regarding this last comment, the remarks of Governor Richard Lamm of Colorado are appropriate. He said, "We are umpires, not leaders. We mediate between all those strong factions, but there's no common consensus."[34] Unfortunately, in permitting these developments to occur we have invited that blandness that now characterizes the upper structure of most organizations.

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[32]John W. Gardner, quoted in Warren Bennis, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

[33]Warren Bennis, "Managing the Unmanageable," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 22, 1975, p. 20.

[34]Richard Lamm, *Time*, November 8, 1976, p. 41.

The fourth paradox is that the organizations in which enlightened management is the most critical are the very ones that are out of control and border on being totally unmanageable. These are the massive institutions of society represented by the federal government, conglomerates, large labor unions, and multinational corporations. One is almost inclined to agree with Richard Goodman that the villians of society are these gigantic bureaucracies that have experienced unparalleled growth and power.[35] The concern is not necessarily their size but the fact they have become dangerously unresponsive and thus self-serving. Their complexity defies understanding and forces leadership into a reactive rather than proactive stance.

C. Jackson Grayson, Jr. notes that when organizations are shielded from the forces of change they become "bureaucratic, rigid, irrelevant, and inefficient," and he should have added inhumane.[36] Peter Drucker, the elder statesman of management thought, makes these observations about large organizations: "Our society has become, within an incredibly short fifty years, a society of institutions. It has become a pluralist society in which every major social task has been entrusted to large organizations. . . ." He later writes, "It is managers and management that make institutions perform."[37] This latter statement may be right regarding smaller- and medium-sized organizations, but I am not so sure about the massive institutions. Charles Perrow raises a more intriguing question when he asks, "To what extent are organizations tools, and to what extent are they products of the varied interests and group strivings of their members?"[38] I believe we have made the mistake of assuming that organizations are tools and subject to the control of managers, but the large bureaucracies have moved beyond the regulation of one person or group of persons. Furthermore, they are resistant to most of the integrative, structural devices we have concocted. Trying to control them is like grabbing a giant balloon. You might force air out of one portion but it just pops out somewhere else.

Unfortunately, we in academe have done very little to alleviate the situation. We have focused our attention and research studies on

[35]Richard N. Goodwin, *The American Condition* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974).

[36]C. Jackson Grayson, Jr., CBS Morning News Editorial, February 27, 1976, p. 2.

[37]Peter Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1973), pp. ix-x.

[38]Charles Perrow, "The Short and Glorious History of Organizational Theory," *Organizational Dynamics,* Summer 1973, p. 11.

smaller organizations and have almost ignored problems of managing the large, unwieldy ones. In some of our classes we deal with forms control, but what do you do in the federal government where there are over 700,000? Sociologists in studying organization structure have tended to concentrate on the dyad of two persons, the small group of normally less than a dozen, or else the complex organization of perhaps several dozen subunits. In management we have emphasized principles such as span of control, departmentation, job design, and leadership at the supervisory level and have avoided trying to look at the extremely large organizations except in terms of policy and strategy determination. We have again caught ourselves in the universalist trap of assuming that the organizing, planning, and control concepts designed for the medium-sized firm (those holding up to several hundred million in assets) are also appropriate for the gigantic bureaucracies. Part of this indifference has resulted from the feeling of futility in dealing with anything so massive, but destroying the will to change these organizations will only guarantee their continued unbridled expansion.

It is quite easy to identify problems in society and in management or organizations, but it is much more difficult to propose reasonable solutions. I have already mentioned some of these, but I would like to add a few more prescriptions or at least identify areas where we need improved ones.

The greatest need is the one mentioned several times and that is for new ways of thinking about organizations and management. Contingency theory has made it possible to reach a new plateau but further major improvements are dependent on more realistic paradigms and better taxonomies. As D. O. Hebb states, "A good theory is one that holds together long enough to get you to a better theory."[39] Theory evolution will set the pace for the future development of management thought.

A second need is to foster a greater tolerance of diversity in organizations and society. Many would call this unrealistic and wishful thinking but much the same could have been said about the need to improve race relations in the United States twenty years ago. The human and group inclination to force others to think as they do and to impose their desired behavior patterns on them is not consistent with the pluralism found in the world and with the great number of differences that characterize human existence. A greater

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[39]D. O. Hebb, "Hebb on Hocus-Pocus: A Conversation with Elizabeth Hall," *Psychology Today,* November 1969, p. 21.

tolerance for diversity would enhance the process of change in organizations, and it would provide more maneuverability for the innovator. One is reminded of Darwin's gardner who said of him, "Poor man, he just stands and stares at a yellow flower for minutes at a time. He would be far better off with something to do."[40]

A third requirement that would facilitate management is more adaptive forms of organization structure. Toffler asserts that we need more temporary or ad hoc structures that he refers to as ad-hocracy.[41] Trying to back off from the trend toward bureaucracy in organizations is extremely difficult but some actions can be taken. The project form of departmentation is an example where the organization structure is eliminated once the project is completed. Assigning a temporary task force rather than establishing a permanent structure to handle a problem or future activity is another example. The current interest in sunset laws relating to organizational charters, functional assignments, and rules and regulations which make their periodic renewal dependent on a review that would substantiate their continuing need and ability to contribute are trends that I support.

Zero-base budgeting or a modified form of this proposal also holds considerable merit. As growth has leveled off in many segments of society, such as education, the response has been for legislatures to annually establish appropriation increases that approximate the inflation rate. What this does is protect the status quo because there are only enough resources to fund existing projects. This leaves nothing left over to start new programs or to provide seed money for the innovator who wants to pursue some far-fetched scheme that is counter to current organizational activities. Under zero-base budgeting, existing programs are not automatically funded. Rather organizations are required to justify current activities which, in effect, puts them on a par with new programs up for consideration.

More adaptive units are especially needed in the gigantic public institutions such as the federal government. Business has been partially able to overcome the problem of bigness by dividing up the massive corporate structures using profit decentralization. Major divisions of the corporation are permitted to function in a relatively independent fashion as long as they achieve certain profit objectives. However, we have no such convenient method of accountability in public institutions. If the current search for better methods of social

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[40]Quoted in Warren Bennis, *The Unconscious Conspiracy, op. cit.,* p. 81.
[41]Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1970). See Chapter 7, "Organization: The Coming Ad-Hocracy."

accounting is successful, it should lead to more semi-autonomous public agencies where accountability is more to the publics served than to some supposedly strong central executive.

As a final comment on the need for adaptive structures, I again return to the issue of interest representation. Many times it is justified in committees and other forms of organization structure, but we need to eliminate the assumption that this is the normal pattern for differentiating organizations. As any method of organizing, there are certain circumstances when it is appropriate, but there are also many when it is not. Often groups which have no ax to grind should have an input into the decision process similar to what Common Cause represents in governmental affairs. Furthermore, our aim should be to get the most knowledgeable people involved not just those who represent some faction in the organization. Again, a change in thinking is required. We need to be more concerned with how to make the processes of the organization flow rather than with creating endless roadblocks and checks on power. As Bennis states, we require a declaration of interdependence that will place greater emphasis on the common good rather than continually diffusing organizations through fragmenting structures based on interest elements.

A fourth requirement in improving organizations and their management is to establish and make paramount individual standards rather than universal ones. This may sound as if it is a repudiation of the concepts just discussed relating to interest representation. However, the difference is between goals and methods of evaluation. While we need a greater emphasis on total organizational goals, if we use organization-wide standards to measure subgroup or individual performance, it frequently creates stress and alienates subunits because of the disregard of their uniqueness. Feedback is significant in all motivation and performance, but the feedback must be based on standards that are considered fair by the individual or unit involved. This requires recognizing situational and individual differences within the overriding interdependence of the organization. As an example, I would commend Utah State University for its policies requiring that each faculty member have a separate role statement and that his or her performance be individually evaluated based on this role assignment.

More emphasis should also be on self-evaluation if we are to unleash the strivings for originality that are found in human beings. Carl Rogers states,

> Perhaps the most fundamental condition of creativity is that
> the source or locus of evaluative judgment is internal. The

value of his product is, for the creative person, established not by the praise or criticism of others, but by himself. Have I created something satisfying to me? Does it express a part of me — my feeling or my thought, my pain or my ecstacy? These are the only questions which really matter to the creative person. . . .[42]

A fifth requirement is that we develop improved methods of leadership selection. I believe that this is probably the greatest unrecognized failure that exists in organizations today. Too often those people who float to the top are those who have never taken a strong stand on anything, who have made sure they never alienate anyone or at least any significant segment of the organization, who have been unwilling in the past to buck the hierarchy or undermine the inbreeding found in essentially all organizations, and whose opinions and values seem to fluctuate with each change in the power elite. The political syndrome is too evident in all organizations. The less one says that is controversial and the more one is able to dodge taking a clear position on an issue, the more likely he or she is to gain broad-based support. Pussyfooting with the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and the abortion issue are recent examples. I am afraid that what this tendency has led to is "do-nothingism" and to the wasteland we refer to as leadership.

It would be my recommendation that before a leader is selected, or at a university before a committee is appointed to handle this selection, a determination should be made of what deficiencies exist and what future conditions or goals the organization is striving to attain. Consistent with this, criteria for a leader should then be established that will result in the selection of an individual who has the background and interest to be effective in helping the organization reach these goals. Leaders are too often selected based on pleasing personality characteristics that have nothing to do with the mission and tribulations of the organization. There is no valid attempt to match the needs of the organization with the capabilities of individuals.

Accordingly, a selection committee should be appointed based on individuals who are most familiar with the future goals and needs of the organization rather than on the basis of someone from each interest group. Interest representation only insures the selection of a compromise, nonoffending candidate who is the very antithesis of the leader. I, of course, am hardly the one to advocate an absolute, but I would be suspicious of all candidates who have proven records

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[42]Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), p. 354.

of nonalienation. How can individuals provide leadership if they have never firmly made up their minds or forcefully expressed their views on anything? The curious mixture of attitudes comprising modern man is demonstrated by the tendency towards nonalienation coupled with an intolerance for diversity.

The sixth requirement is to improve leadership through upgrading our expectations of leaders and through modifying our standards for evaluating them. Peter Drucker told us over thirty years ago that we should measure organizations, individuals, and leaders on results, not on current activities, vague promises, or outward appearances.[43] By focusing on what someone has accomplished one avoids being deceived by a pleasant personality, flurry of activity, or expression of support. Drucker's management by results theme is one that holds considerable rational appeal but one which is difficult to implement in practice. The problem of establishing individual standards for all positions has already been addressed as has the difficulty of letting interpersonal relationships interfere with the objective interpretation of a subordinate's progress.

Another mistake in measuring performance is to establish rewards and place emphasis on achieving short-run, expediency goals, rather than on the more basic long-term objectives of the individual or organization. Generally, pay raises and other formal organization reinforcement contingencies occur on an annual or more frequent basis that provides obvious advantages in achieving short-term results which are often suboptimal in terms of the future good of the organization. Jerry Apodaca, Governor of New Mexico, recently related this issue to government when he stated that "we have too many politicians who look from one election to the next, rather than to where we might be in 20 years."[44] The energy crisis is certainly one place where short-range expediency planning continues to take precedence over long-run solutions to the problem.

One of the major changes required in relation to leadership is a modification of the expectations that people have for leaders. Buoyed on by the participative management movement, we have come to expect leaders to be consensus takers and group facilitators. Now certainly, these are important situational roles for some managers but with this trend has faded the image of the leader as an advocate. The leader's roles in goal articulation, image building,

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[43]Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1954).

[44]Jerry Apodaca, *Time,* November 8, 1976, p. 49.

providing a vision of the future, instilling confidence, tackling problems head-on, striving for excellence, and attempting to uplift the values and achievements of an organization and society have taken a backseat to avoiding controversy and minimizing risks. The leader's role should be to rise above the petty power struggles that characterize the infighting of interest groups. If this becomes the focus of the leader, as we found in Watergate, the result is to degrade the organization and society rather than to enrich it. Leaders have a significant and powerful role that we have tended to diminish. The role is not that of the dictator who forces change on society, but it is that of providing uplifting alternatives that can enhance a society.

What I am advocating is not hero worship because I believe there is a difference between this and leadership. Also it is not the leadership mystique preached by Eugene Jennings[45] nor is it for the all-powerful executive. But it is for a greater will to take controversial positions, attempt to clarify issues, stimulate thought and action, and above all force a broad consideration of where an organization is now and where it ought to be headed. The administrative structure of the organization should be involved in any final decisions, but the leader has to ensure that alternatives under consideration can raise the organization or society to higher levels of accomplishment.

If the leader is to deal with these types of issues, one of the greatest needs we have is to shield him or her from the necessary routine that constitutes much of the workings of an organization. One of Warren Bennis' administrative laws is that routine matters will drive out the nonroutine.[46] Leaders need to be given time away from the distracts of everyday administration to engage in long-range planning and to concentrate on improving the system rather than merely tending it. Tying up executive ability in housekeeping affairs is a great loss to the organization and erodes the type of leadership role I am advocating.

A seventh need we have in organizations is to improve staff selection. This is especially the case with the personal staff of the chief officer or other top administrators because by necessity in the extremely large organizations we have been forced to move to a group executive. The Executive Office of the President in the federal government in recent years has included several hundred staff members, and top administrators in industry are typically backed up by

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[45]Eugene E. Jennings, *An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960).

[46]Warren Bennis, *The Unconscious Conspiracy, op. cit.,* p. 20.

an entourage of personal aides. The problem I see in staff selection is a carryover of some of the same weaknesses we have discussed in other areas of management. Executives normally select as their staff assistants individuals who think and act the same as they do. They want loyal subordinates, team players, and back slappers who effectively feed their egos. But again, as we saw in Watergate, all this normally does is protect their insular parochialism and shield them from the realities of the organization.

The issue is again one of diversity. An executive is normally much more justified in selecting a subordinate who will provide complementary rather than supplementary skills. If subordinates only mimic and resemble the thinking of the executive, they do not offset his or her weaknesses or fill conceptual voids. Also they are normally reluctant to challenge ideas, suggest different alternatives, or force a rethinking of issues which should be their most vital functions. What all executives need are people close to them who will provide a different perspective and who will avoid, in the name of loyalty, caving in on every issue and silencing those who want to suggest that things are not going as anticipated. Now certainly there are many different roles that staff assistants play and one of these is to represent the executive to groups inside and outside the organization where reflecting the party line is important, but for those staff members who are responsible for drafting policies, evaluating proposed programs, and serving as a sounding board, a wide divergence of thinking should be involved. The "yes man" syndrome is one that is hard to eliminate both in the thinking of staff personnel and the reward system of the executive.

The eighth and final recommendation is that we need to develop more skill in matching individual, organizational, and environment variables. Too frequently we look almost solely at one factor as I have done in some of these recommendations. This again fails to recognize that conditions (both current and potential future ones) can only be accounted for by considering many different variables. We need improved methods to identify the primary factors in a situation, reflect the relative differences in these variables, and determine what management concepts and techniques are appropriate. The models should be more dynamic but they also need to be developed around common sets of conditions such as a certain or uncertain environment represents.

Many of the views I have expressed are those shaped through being a business professor, but our input into society has its place

just as anyone else's. I am convinced that a continued passive course in dealing with leadership and bureaucracy can only see us slide backwards into mediocrity or and maybe even to the precipice of disaster as we have recently seen in Britain and some of the other advanced Western countries. Norman McRae, deputy editor of *The Economist,* predicts this when he states, "Americans on the eve of 1976 are showing the same drift from dynamism as the British did at the end of their century in 1876."[47] The challenges are many. It is doubtful that we can reduce the societal pace of change so we will be forced to modify our institutions and methods of adaptation to keep up with it. To fail to adapt is to invite both economic and political chaos. The capacities of a society are found in its resources, institutions, and leadership. Certainly we have the resources in this country to continue to be a world power. The question now is whether we can establish the type of institutions and leadership that will have a synergistic effect in continually revitalizing and synthesizing the strengths of our country rather than letting them languish in a quagmire of indifference. Indifference can only lead to the growth of cumbersome bureaucracies that sap a society, an overcommitment in government services that is inconsistent with a society's ability to fund these activities, petty infighting relating to jurisdictional disputes and private gains, and leadership that tends to pacify rather than rekindle the will to achieve. In the end I am inclined to agree with Peter Drucker who states, "To make our institutions perform responsibly, autonomously, and on a high level of achievement is thus the only safeguard of freedom and dignity in the pluralist society of institutions."[48]

I have wanted to express some of these things for a long time and I appreciate the opportunity this forum represents. Attacking sacred cows is not necessarily a pleasure even though it is considered by some to be an academic pastime. I hope you will tolerate my indiscretions but also share with me my desire for change.

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[47]Quoted in *Exchange,* Fall/Winter 1976, p. 47.
[48]Peter Drucker, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, op. cit.,* p. x.