THE SYNERGY OF STUDIES OF CHANGE, SCHOOLS, NETWORKS AND SOCIAL COGNITION

The collective experience of the research team is a source of confidence about the impact this research can have on broad understandings of organizational change as well as change in public schools. The theoretical and empirical work of the first investigator, Stephen Mezias, has provided foundational contributions to the field of organizational learning and change. His selected works focus of models organizational learning and adaptation and include, “Managing Discontinuous Change: A Simulation Study of Organizational Learning and Entrepreneurial Strategies,” (1990) with T. Lant in the Strategic Management Journal, “An Organizational Learning Model of Convergence and Reorientation,” (1992) with T. Lant in Organization Science, “The Three Faces of Corporate Renewal: Institution, Revolution, and Evolution,” (1993) with M. Glynn in Strategic Management Journal, “Ugly Duckling No More: Pasts and Futures of Organizational Learning Research,” (1996) with A. Miner in Organization Science, “An Organizational Learning Model of Convergence and Reorientation” (1996) with T. Lant in M. Cohen’s and L. Sproull’s Organizational Learning. The investigator’s depth of knowledge about existing models and processes of organizational change provide the foundation for the development and testing of new models, such as the one presented herein. Furthermore, his past successes with simulation methodologies as a theory-generating lend efficacy to the similar use of simulation methodologies proposed in this research.

What the first investigator brings in theoretical, empirical and methodological experience, the second investigator, Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell brings in hands–on experience with organizational change and development in schools. In addition to formal training in educational policy at Cornell University and Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government the investigator has over ten years of experience in educational research, consulting and practice. This work includes published international work assessing the national capacity for a School to Work initiative in Peru (“Ready For the World? Initiating the School-to-Work Movement in Peru” (1999) in A. Barnechea (Ed.) Building Human Capital in Peru, evaluations of the economic efficiency and educational effectiveness of undergraduate programs at Diné College, the tribal college for the Navajo Nation in New Mexico, USA and work honored in The Cornell Working Papers on Public Policy on the effectiveness of instructional programs in Washington D.C. public schools. Work with the US Department of Education assessing school reform plans under GOALS 2000, consultancies for charter schools seeking to reform or implement new programs and experience as an instructional lead teacher in New York City provides an invaluable understanding of the research context and the dynamics of change in this environment.
The primary investigators’ expertise in organizational change and the public school context is extended by the expert support of senior personnel and project participants who study the dynamics of social networks and sociocognitive models. The senior personnel support of Ray Reagans brings expertise in the interplay between social network structure and performance as well as how network structure influences the diffusion of knowledge and information. His published works and working papers most relevant to the current project include, “Managing Knowledge in Organizations: An Integrative Framework and Review of Current Themes”, (2003) with W. McEvily Jr. and L. Argote, *Management Science*; “Networks, Diversity and Performance: The Social Capital of R&D Units” (2001) with E. Zuckerman, *Organization Science* and “Network Structure and Knowledge Transfer: The Transfer Problem Revisited” (2003) with McEvily, working paper, Columbia University, New York, NY. As a project participant, Theresa Lant’s support provides critical knowledge in the construction of collective cognitive models and how sociocognitive models influence organizations, industries and markets. Some examples of her directly relevant to the project include, “A Situated Learning Perspective on the Emergence of Knowledge and Identity in Cognitive Communities,” in R. Garud & J. Porac (eds), *Advances in Managerial Cognition and Organizational Information*. 