UGSM-Monarch Business School
Doctoral Dissertation Proposal

Recursive Organizational Dynamics:
A Novel Approach to Organization Structure

PROGRAM: Doctor of Philosophy in Business Research
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Throughout this document, Mandarin expressions have been rendered in *pinyin* in italics, and Sanskrit terms have also been italicized, and romanized without diacritical marks.

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1.0 Overview

The structure of an organization is what is typically depicted in the organization chart and is a specific result of organizational design. According to Naomi Stanford, as quoting Jennifer Rheingold, organizational design is formally defined as: "The outcome of shaping and aligning all the components of an enterprise towards the achievement of an agreed mission, [and] is a straightforward business process that 'is so critical it should be on the agenda of every meeting in every single department.'" (Stanford, 2007, p.1)

Kates and Galbraith have stated that, "Organization design is not limited to structural considerations, and many variations of a structure can be made to work… The structure sets out the reporting relationships, power distribution, and communication channels." (Kates, 2007, p.9) The structure and its associated processes fundamentally affect organizational behavior. Gibson et al describe these processes as those activities that breathe life into the organization chart, and observe that, "Sometimes, understanding process problems such as breakdowns in communication and decision making will result in a more accurate understanding of organizational behavior than will simply examining structural arrangements." (Gibson, 2006, p.7) Similarly, Stanford (2007) states: "Knowing what a model is and the reasons for using one help determine which to use." She further states that, "Without a model it is hard for a CEO or other senior executives to describe or think about their organization in a holistic way. Their tendency is to think about only the structures (that is, the organization chart), and with this narrow focus they cannot see the necessary alignment of all the elements that comprise a fully functioning organization." (Stanford, 2007, p.20)

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There are many ways to structure and staff an organization but as functional groups and departments become more decentralized and structurally complex, there tends to be greater use of internal and external consulting services, ad hoc project-based groups and matrix reporting structures. Also, the more people involved in a logical unit of work and the more complex the organizational structure involved, one can argue that it becomes more difficult to manage interpersonal communications and relationships. Sexton echoes this thought on organizational complexity when he writes "There must be a plan showing how the work will be organized. The plan for the systematic arrangement of work is the organization structure. Organization structure is comprised of functions, relationships, responsibilities, authorities, and communications of individuals within each department." (Sexton, 1970, p.23)

Therefore, as the structure of the work environment continues to diversify, there could be a need to gain additional insight into ways of enhancing interpersonal relationships and effectiveness in both intra-group and inter-group situations. Kates and Galbraith note that, "It is the job of leaders and managers to manage the complexity that is created by the organization's design." (Kates, 2007, p.5)

Outside of any legal considerations, many have noted that the characteristics of a modern corporation fulfill the defining requirements of a living system, a new life form (Wheatley, 2006) and yet almost allorganizational design seems to have been addressed at the macroscopic surface process level in building communication pathways and structures. The principles of quantum cosmology and chaos theory are beginning to appear in organic organizational models but there has been little recourse to practical and time-tested oriental cosmologies and techniques to illuminate and manage underlying mechanisms. This knowledge has shaped Eastern understanding of the world for thousands of years and may also be applicable to the world of Western organizational design. Otherwise said, what we find

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missing in the Western worldview is a lively connection and attention to the intrinsic natural architecture shaping evolving systems.   The principles are recursive and we find them nested within every level of the discussed structure.

Successful organization designs are typically about people and are typically oriented towards the desired corporate culture they support. However, up to this point it can be argued that the Western academic community has not tied the organizational structure of business relationships back to the underlying theories of the natural world that seem to be at the core of more holistic thinking and systems. The research contemplated herein is expected to augment existing theories with a deeper and richer understanding and application of the architecture of natural law, as evidenced through Eastern philosophy, and thus strives to fill the gap in the existing Western academic business literature that does not presently speak to this line of reasoning.

From an Eastern perspective, the ultimate system of relationships found within and between organizational structures, in terms of sheer size, scope and complexity is argued to be the same system of relationships as found within the functioning of the chaotic universe. Moreover, it is understood that this machinery runs automatically, efficiently, purposefully and without any apparent or commonly recognized organizing structure. For example, several academic observers have noted that the underlying fabric of the universe appears to be self-organizing by virtue of its very nature. (Hagelin, 2004; Walter 1996; Wheatley, 2006) Moreover, this is seen to be the case at every scale from the smallest quantum-mechanical event to the cosmic. More importantly for the purposes at hand, this machinery has been described throughout the ages with intricate precision within the philosophical traditions of ancient India and China yet this important philosophical tradition and understanding has

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not been integrated into the language or tradition of organizational theory within Western academics to any large extent. And this is believed by the present researcher to be in error.

For instance, although we pattern much of our technology after the surface achievements of nature, e.g.: bio-engineering, robotics, pharmacology, and cellular automata, human organizational endeavors for the most part have been directed towards achieving specific end results seemingly without much consideration for background natural processes. Corporations, defense forces, governments and associations have demonstrated their immense ability to organize and produce extraordinary results in the face of environmental inertia. However, it is believed that by integrating the approach and philosophy of the Eastern traditions as they relate to organizational design that even greater process effectiveness and self-organizing capability may be obtained by today's enterprises.

2.0 Philosophical Orientation

For millennia, the peoples of Taoist China and Vedic India have had highly detailed cosmological models that they have used to explain everything from the largest to the smallest processes within the natural environment as well as the affairs of men. Such understandings have also been put to use in an organizational context. For example, Cheng Yi, the eleventh-century luminary and founder of the *Lixue* movement in China, used the venerable Taoist *Yijing* in analyzing group dynamics, "By understanding the patterns of events and the human condition, Cheng contends that it becomes possible to bring about mutual understanding and cooperation among people, thus making possible the effective

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accomplishment of the tasks facing the group." (Cleary, 1988, p.218) This is nothing short of organizational design.

However, these ancient explanations of the workings of nature tend to be couched in symbolic language that has made their two traditions hard to correlate and difficult to apply to modern business organization as a complete and verifiable system. Moreover, it is not clear that the fundamentals have been understood, or at least, faithfully transmitted, by sages and intellectual leaders throughout history. These issues create some difficulty for scholars from both the Eastern and Western perspectives in relating the underlying lessons of the Eastern philosophies back to practical insights for modern day Western management thinking. Surmounting these identified gaps will be a critical task for the present researcher.

3.0 Main Research Question

Keeping in mind the above discourse along with the necessity to clearly identify the crucial elements of the analysis with respect to organizational design the following research question has been developed:

> "Can proto-historic Vedic and Taoist cosmologies be reconciled and productively co-opted, in conjunction with existing paradigms of western business practice, to develop an organization design model to clarify inter- and intra-group relationships and provide a tool to proactively optimize effective communication? "

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In answering the above research question, it is hoped that a bridge will be developed between existing models of organization structure and design and the underlying dynamics understood to be the basis of natural systems and processes identified as being existent throughout the universe as evidence by the Eastern philosophical traditions. In elucidating the above the research will also investigate the following secondary or sub-research questions:

i. Is the proposed model effective and useful for managing functional and interpersonal transactions? And can we optimize the deployment of skills and talent, minimize areas of potential conflict and miscommunication whilst guarding against impossible tasks?

ii. Can diagrams and techniques derived from ancient eastern philosophies be used to faithfully map dynamic structures within the modern workplace? Does the methodology support decision-making and proffer a means to proactively intervene in a predetermined manner in order to favorably influence the outcome of any specific transaction?

iii. And further, is it possible to couch the deployed methodology in an easy-to-use framework devoid of all arcane jargon?

4.0 Research Relevance

Any descriptive or predictive mechanism that could improve the quality of managerial decisions and increase the human cohesiveness of a workgroup should be of great value to any organization. It is

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hoped that a model that could proactively mitigate unfavorable interactions within any organizational context would be a most useful addition to the business management arsenal.

Moreover, if a new model that bridges the philosophies of the East and the management thought of the West could be stripped of the arcane terminology typified within the Eastern systems and codified into a generalized, simple-to-apply modern management technology, then the candidate group stands to adopt a mechanism that may prove effective for millions of business practitioners and management scholars. When the essence of all the philosophical inputs is rationalized within the rubric of an acceptable management paradigm, it is anticipated that the final product will produce a simplified set of prescriptions. Otherwise said, once the organizational functions have been coded and the fundamental model diagram has been built, then the actual business application should not influence the overall efficacy of the model. The reason is that the fundamental characteristics of the constituent relationships are expected to be the similar in every case, i.e.: model-driven rather than business-driven. In summary, the contemplated methodology will be organizationally and hierarchically independent and is expected to be suitable for deployment within any context.

5.0 Research Methodology

The research methodology for the proposed study will be broken down into three separate sections each with its own particular focus as describe below.

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5.1 Stage I: Heuristics and Meta-Research

The first stage of the research will primarily be carried out using a Meta-Analysis of the seminal literature from both the domains of Eastern Philosophy and Western business literature as they pertain to organizational structure and dynamics. A thorough literature review will be completed with respect to the Vedic and Taoist literature as well as modern Western business literature post-1950 era to identify important concepts, paradigms and inflection points with respect to assumed theories. That is, high-level analysis will be performed to elucidate and illustrate the trends and focus of the literature as well as identify the knowledge gaps that persist in conjunction with the identification of the more resilient theories within the domain. Further, a study of the comparative elements and characteristics of the predominant and resilient theories from both cultural perspectives will be analyzed in order to identify any shared elements and mutual understandings with regards to organizational theory and structure. In like fashion, a study of the contrasting elements and characteristics of the predominant and resilient theories from both cultural perspectives will be analyzed in order to identify the divergent nature of the systems and to speak to the opportunities to successfully bridge the divide between these separate yet possibly concordant systems of thought.

5.2 Stage II: Blended Active Research

The second phase of research takes on the form of blended active research. Using the context of information systems, the contemplated model will be reiteratively built and tested for a hypothetical Business Intelligence (BI) group. For this exercise, BI will be considered to be an internal consulting service for the business. Because it is expected that the model will predict certain clear characteristics

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for each component, there will be a measure of self-correcting that will operate in tandem with developing the model.

5.3 Stage III: Case Study Analysis

The final phase of the research will enlist the participation of industry managers and domain experts to contribute to case study analysis to construct scenario examples across various organizational structures, including: a retail sales organization, a military operational unit, and a non-profit teaching group. The goal will be to determine whether the contemplated model delivers results consistent with the BI solution within these different environments. If successful, the model should be able to address the desired categorization aspects that a useable and functional model should encompass within the envisioned scenarios.

Thus, the final goal of the study is to provide a graphical model of the dynamics and tendencies of and between the various functional entities within any organization applied to Western management theory based upon the way Natural Law governs the unfolding of events within the physical world as interpreted by the Eastern philosophies.

As a result of the research, the following outputs are intended:

i. The development of diagrams for various organizations across the spectrum of business, governmental and non-profit organizations which demonstrate and provide a solid framework that describe the intrinsic relationships and skills dynamics within the chosen group.

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ii.   The compilation of a cross-reference manual for the resultant possibilities of transformation and

relationships predicted by the model when applied to an organizational unit.

6.0 Literature Review

The literature review will focus on the two main areas of knowledge, being: modern management

theory and Eastern philosophical thought. The literature review will highlight the commonalities as well

as the divergence between the two systems of thought in order to provide a foundation on which the

development of the contemplated model may take place.

6.1 Modern Business Theory

The proposed model is intended to augment and enrich traditional organization design and

implementation. The contingency approach to organizational design states that there is no one best

way to manage an organization and that the organization design needs to fit the specifics of the

environment. (Gibson, 2006, p.7) An important consideration is that of role conflict. As organizational

structures become more complex, more matrix-oriented, and more quickly evolving, an individual may

face the situation of multiple simultaneous role requirements.   Gibson et al observe that: "Three

different types of role conflict: person-role, intrarole, and interrole, can occur in organizational settings.

Research has shown that the consequences of role conflict to the individual include increased

psychological stress and other emotional reactions. Management can minimize certain types of role

conflicts and should be continually aware that the consequences of conflict to the organization can

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include ineffective performance by individuals and groups." (Gibson, 2006, p.258) Whereas commonly used organization design methodologies tend not to directly address these concerns, the proposed model is specifically concerned with aligning role qualities and inter-role relationships in order to minimize possible role conflicts and thus minimize the resulting costs incurred by the organization.

Peter Drucker has stated that, "Analyzing relations is not only indispensible to the decision of what kind of a structure is needed. It is also necessary to make the vital decision how the structure should be manned. Indeed, only an analysis of the relations in a job makes possible intelligent and successful staffing." (Drucker, 1979, p.243) Thus the envisaged analysis could prove vital to inform management with regard to the intrinsic relational dynamics between any applicable functional or staffing components within the business.

6.2 Eastern Philosophical Thought

In connecting Eastern thought to the business domain, we see the example of the Unified Field Chart approach to relationship dynamics put forth by Maharishi University of Management in Iowa. These types of charts do not normally deal with naming and placing specific individuals, but rather look at how the product and processes of the organization trace back to their ultimate source in the unified field. The original charts were created for each department at the university and provide a graphic way of demonstrating the inter-disciplinary basis of all knowledge and how each subject, student and faculty could be related to the other. (Dillbeck, 1987) This is immensely valuable in an organizational context as it provides each employee with a lively connection to the purpose, goals and foundation of all team members, colleagues, management, competitors, customers, suppliers, etc. It aligns the organization and its constituent parts into a larger universal context whilst simultaneously keeping in perspective the

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micro dynamic and micro-relational aspects of the organization. In this way, the entire range of subjective and objective corporate experience is enlivened and considered.

Keeping in mind the above description, one could say that the traditional or contemporary organizational design offers a static description and mapping of the social architecture while the Eastern approach is considered to be more of a dynamic representation.

The contemplated model sits in the space between the above two described orientations or poles. What it proposes is an augmentation or addition to both approaches by providing a dynamic mapping of the fundamental processes in nature as they impact and inform the unfolding of the relationships found within the organization.

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7.0 Research Budget

The total cost of the research project is estimated to be approximately $27,500. The author will fund

these costs privately. No scholarly or governmental grants will be sought after or used in carrying out

the research. No extra supervisory costs or other reimbursements are being requested from UGSM-

Monarch Business School. The budget is presently fully funded and research may begin immediately.

Research Budget	
Item	**Cost (US$)**
Defense Travel Expenses	$ 5,000
Case Study Interviews/Fieldwork	15,000
Computer Equipment	4,000
Additional Texts	1,500
Printing and Binding	750
Office Supplies	1,250
Total	**$ 27,500**

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8.0 Research Timeline

The following schedule presents the best estimates for important milestones in the dissertation research and completion. There could be unforeseen delays in Phase III as it depends upon availability of outside participants. However, any overrun at that stage can most likely be absorbed during the writing and manuscript preparation period.

Research Timeline	
Date	**Milestone**
March, 2011 – September, 2011	Prepare proposal/obtain approval.
September, 2011 – November, 2011	Complete Phase I (Phenomenological): Meta-Research and Heuristic formulation and documentation of the model.
November, 2011 – March, 2012	Phase II (Active Research): Flesh out the full model for a BI implementation.
March, 2012 – December, 2012	Phase III (Case Studies): Engage subject matter experts to build out charts and explication for other organizations.
December, 2012 – June, 2013	Manuscript writing and preparation.
June, 2013 - September, 2013	Dissertation completion, submission and defense.

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Thesis Proposal Approved

26-September-2011

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