CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

David R Oxley

Planned Strategic Change in a Family-Owned Firm: An Ethnographic Study

Bettany Centre for Entrepreneurship

Executive DBA

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Academic Year: 2015 - 2019

Supervisors: Dr Shailendra Vyakarnam & Dr David Buchanan
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ABSTRACT

*Empirical research into how planned strategic change (PSC) occurs in family owned businesses has received little academic attention. Since organizational change is at least as important for family businesses as their non-family counter-parts, understanding whether widely accepted distinctive dynamics within family firms influence attempts at PSC represents a major gap in existing research. This thesis reports the results of an ethnographic, single company case study into Reliance Industries' (RIL) transformation program, designed to address this gap. This research contributes in several ways. First, it demonstrates that PSC in this large, owner-centric, family owned business does follow a distinctive path. Second, it shows that PSC in RIL is not adequately predicted, explained, or helped by conventional Organization Development (OD) change frameworks, such as Kotter's 8-steps. Third, it identifies three paradoxical forces linked to "familiness" (leveraging faith versus persuasion, individual justice versus utilitarianism, and formality versus informality), as the primary enablers for and barriers to PSC in RIL. Fourth, it discovers and defines the phenomenon of **Faithful Adoption** as a powerful force that can be employed by a talismanic owner to achieve rapid shifts in a business strategy. Fifth, it offers a new theoretical model, '**Two-Step Change**,' as an explanation of how PSC has occurred in a large family owned business. And finally, the ethnographic method and resulting dataset provide a unique and unprecedented richness and depth to this research subject.*

Keywords:

Planned Strategic Change, Family Business, Owner-Centricity, *Familiness*, Paradoxes, Kotter's 8 Steps, *Faithful Adoption*, Two-Step Change

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BHAG   Big Hairy Audacious Goals

DOA   Delegations of Authority

FOB   Family Owned Business

GTM   Grounded Theory Method

MDA   Mukesh D Ambani

MNC   Multi-National Company(ies)

NFF   Non-Family Firms

OD   Organizational Development

PSC   Planned Strategic Change

RBV   Resource Based View (theory of firm)

R-HR   Reliance Human Resources Transformation Program

RIL   Reliance Industries Ltd

RMS   Reliance Management System

1 – Introduction: Serendipity

David, would you be willing to make a quick trip to India? Reliance has asked us whether we could assist them by giving them an independent view of their transformation plan." – From a telephone conversation with Dr. Helmut Schuster, BP Group HR Director, August 2013.

1.1 The Phenomenon and Inspiration to Investigate

I arrived in Mumbai on September 22, 2013 for a two-week trip to help my employer's Indian partner review a transformation plan. Four years later, I sit down to write this introduction to a DBA dissertation on "planned strategic change (PSC) in a large family-owned firm." As my involvement with Reliance Industries (RIL), relationships within the company, and interactions with people across the company grew, so did my curiosity. This impressive company was attempting something extraordinary, and its efforts appeared to be following an unfamiliar path. What I increasingly realized while working to help RIL reinvent itself was that traditional frameworks of organizational change— such as Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change (2007) and aspects of Jim Collins' *Good to Great* (2011), particularly the getting the right people on the bus—seemed inadequate to describe the company's chosen path for transformation.

I began my career in management consulting in the U.K., helping multi-national companies (MNCs) refine their international reward programs for efficiency and effectiveness. Subsequently, I took the leap into practitioner roles with two successive companies based in the U.S.A., helping them build their human resources functions. However, in the last 15 years, my focus has been on crisis management and corporate restructurings. Consequently, dealing with the need for change, developing a roadmap, and attempting to navigate a path to a modified state have become my primary professional goals. My perspective, therefore, on observing RIL's transformation program, was one of experienced change practitioner, and invited advisor from RIL's international partner, BP.

RIL's rapid and decisive deployment of far reaching changes across its business was disorientating. They simply were moving more rapidly than any other company I had worked with. Moreover, they seemed to be defying the conventional wisdom of taking time to persuade employees and leaders why and what needed to change. And yet, most fascinating of all, not only did everyone in the organization seem content to follow the wishes of their larger than life leader, but they also seemed to be getting their change plans to stick. Unable to explain the phenomenon I was witnessing, I was driven to see if there were answers at the core of existing research, such as Lewinian change theory, Kotter, Schein, and the various philosophical perspectives about how organizational change occurs (Higgs and Rowland, 2005; Kotter, Lawrence, and White, 2007; Papanek, 1973; Poole and Van de Ven, 2004; Schein, 2010). I looked at leadership and followership, resistance to change, leader-manager exchange, episodic and co-invented change, and many interesting studies purporting to explain how change in an organization might occur and should be managed (Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber, 2009; Eisenbach, Watson, and Pillai, 1999; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; Weick and Quinn, 1999). While aspects of this work were helpful, none really seemed to do justice to what I was witnessing. Why was this? One explanation, however unfulfilling, was that PSC was inherently prone to failure. Often-reported statistics indicate that over two-thirds of change initiatives fail to meet their goals (Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Higgs and Rowland, 2005). Since RIL appeared to be getting good results, I wondered whether an explanation for the company's distinctive approach might stem from its family ownership. RIL is a second-generation family business, majority-owned by Shri Mukesh Ambani (MDA). Admittedly, it is a huge family business, with over 200,000 employees and a market cap of close to $70 billion. Nonetheless, I wondered whether PSC in family firms might somehow be distinctive from PSC in non-family-owned firms.

1.2 Existing Literature

To determine what was already known about change in family businesses, I undertook a systematic literature review (Denyer and Tranfield, 2009; Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart, 2003). After whittling down the initial 3,000 journal articles, books, reports,

newspaper articles, and conference papers to a surprisingly small core of literature that addressed my question, I distilled the following:

(1) My review did not identify any existing research that directly addressed either of my main questions:

(a) Are the enablers and barriers to change in a family business distinctive from those in a non-family-owned business?

(b) Are existing organizational change models, exemplified by Kotter's 8-Step framework, adequate guides for how change occurs in a family-owned business?

(2) The limited relevant research that I could identify was heavily skewed toward grey literature and was focused on providing practical advice on navigating change due to family life-cycle events rather than strategic business choices. The suggestion here is that change in a family firm is likely precipitated by intra-family-related conflict, such as divorce, succession, or questions of growth versus cash distribution (Gersick et al., 1997).

What can be gleaned from the existing literature are certain clues that reinforced the impetus for my pursuit of empirical research. Scholars appear to agree on the following:

(3) Family businesses generally exhibit different behaviors than their non-family counterparts, and there are theoretical frameworks, including socioemotional wealth (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007) and *familiness* (Habbershon and Williams, 1999), that attempt to explain this.

(4) These differences tend to exhibit themselves in important ways:

(a) a tendency toward patriarchal and paternalistic forms of leadership and organizational culture (Dyer, 1986)

(b) owner-centricity, with a strong bias across family-owned businesses to "please the boss" and avoid challenges (Aronoff and Ward, 2011; Dyer, 1986; Nordqvist et al., 2010)

(c) a strong allegiance, protectiveness, and loyalty to employees (Lansberg, 1988)

(d) a desire for informality and flexibility in decision-making systems and processes (Aronoff and Ward, 2011)

(e) a tendency to control trust networks and reserve key positions for family members (Aronoff and Ward, 2011)

1.3 Identified Gaps and Problems

Given my observations of RIL's change tactics and trajectory along with the identified gap in existing research, I was driven to embark on a project to address the questions posed in (1)(a) and (b) above. Moreover, I was intrigued by the clear bias in family-business literature regarding change primarily occurring as a reaction to intra-family crisis rather than being undertaken proactively for strategic business reasons. I wondered if this framing of organization change challenges in family literature might have caused scholars to overlook the potential value of an investigation that placed the focus on the change program itself. It should be noted that the widespread application and utility provided by contemporary planned change models in general Organizational Development (OD) literature is enabled by the unit of academic analysis being the "change program itself" (Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron, 2001). Consequently, this question arose: Might undertaking a research project into a family business change program where the unit of analysis was on the change program itself, provide a different perspective on the enablers and barriers to change while also maximizing the study's potential utility for other family businesses faced with similar challenges?

1.4 How I Address the Problem – Framing my Research Question

This thesis reports the results of my empirical research project designed to answer these questions. I have undertaken an ethnographic single-case study of RIL's PSC program, using a Glaserian grounded theory method (GTM) (following Urquhart's [2013] articulation of the difference between Glaser's and Strauss' methods) to code and report my findings. My aims are to (1) record, analyze, and explain the motivations and

objectives behind RIL's transformation program; (2) investigate the enablers and barriers to change in RIL's transformation program; (3) explore whether the enablers and barriers are connected to *familiness* (a concept defined in my Systematic Literature Review); and (4) determine whether the prevailing wisdom of OD change literature, exemplified by Kotter (2007; 2012), is adequate to describe how change takes place in a family business. In the process, I aim to provide guidance to RIL in understanding and improving the efficacy of their transformation program. I also intend to fill a gap in the existing academic literature. My research question is this**: What are the enablers for and barriers to PSC in a large owner-centric family-owned business?**

1.5 Methodology and Field Work Approach

I conducted this research in the capacity of an embedded ethnographic observer. Additionally, as is outlined in more detail in my research methodology, I take a social constructivist view of reality. My purpose with this project has been to understand, through observation and semi-structured interviews, social realities as construed by the main actors in the RIL transformation program. I have been inspired in this regard by David Silverman's methodological advice to avoid the superficial; to be thorough, particularly in analyzing narratives; and above all, to not shirk the sweat equity required to persuasively deliver thoughtful analysis (2013, p.31). I have been privileged to be an embedded observer in the fashion described by Kathleen and Billie Dewalt (2011). Using these authors' definition, I have been "completely participating" in RIL's transformation program, and I have written my account having gained insights from immersion in the company's routines, ceremonies, symbols, and artifacts (2011, p.263). While I have undertaken this work in full transparency to MDA and RIL, it has been with total independence and editorial freedom. I have committed to ensuring anonymity to those I have interviewed and otherwise corresponded with, except when they have given me explicit permission to use their names.

Ethnographic research relies extensively on observation, and as such, this thesis will read differently than a traditional qualitative research report. I have used Bud Goodall's (2000) guidance in *Writing the New Ethnography* to balance the designed narrative storytelling form, which is a hallmark of good ethnography, with the equally important

need to show evidence and explain the foundations for my observations. I have attempted to follow Goodall's advice:

> …write [something] that emerges from the confluence of deep, personal self-reflection, epiphany, the use of rhetorical narrative devices, and the poetics of expression, [while] relying on skilled observation and analysis [to] establish the credibility of the ethnographic writer and the *vraisemblance* of the scenes and accounts depicted (2000, pp.91–92).

This document is the culmination of over three years of direct observation and 26 semi-structured interviews with well-informed, candid contributors. The material reviewed in preparation for this empirical research project comes from these sources:

- Attendance at over 50 RIL executive committee meetings

- Participation in 12 group people committee meetings (bi-monthly HR executive meetings with business leaders)

- Observation of six leadership conferences (which were digitally recorded)

- Attendance at eight HR, remuneration, and nomination board committee meetings

- Participation in over two dozen senior leadership change-management seminars, more than 20 HR leadership team meetings, and 40 transformation project meetings

- Observation of a dozen change-management engagement meetings led by members of RIL's leadership (which were video-recorded)

- Attendance of three webcasts and five focus groups (called "Chai-time") covering aspects of the change program

- Participation in over 100 individual meetings (including transcribed interviews) with RIL leaders and staff

My research has been greatly aided by over 1,120 pages of transformation materials, 720 pages of meeting notes, 75 pages of transcripts from interviews, 70 pages of senior executives' speeches, five books written on RIL, and even a movie about the company's founder (*The Guru*). While all this information has been essential to completing my research, my primary references will be to the formal change management steering committee recordings, speeches at RIL leadership events, my field journal notes (including discussions with MDA and his Executive Committee [EC]), and, of course, the 26 interview transcripts.

1.6 Contributions Made by this Research

This research project makes several contributions to existing knowledge. First, I show that contemporary PSC models, exemplified by Kotter's 8-Step approach, do not align with RIL's deeply held beliefs, which stem from their *familiness*. Second, based on observation and semi-structured interviews on RIL's transformation program, I identify the primary enablers and barriers to change as three paradoxical forces (namely, leveraging faith versus persuasion, individual loyalty versus utilitarianism, and informality versus formality). Third, I present the phenomenon of **Faithful Adoption** as a powerful force capable of achieving early adoption of change. Fourth, I have developed a grounded theory explanation of how PSC really occurs in RIL and in the process how RIL can achieve change by optimizing their *familiness*. Finally, my research approach and dataset, representing as it does the accumulation and distillation of over 3.5 years of being an embedded observer in RIL, might also be considered an important contribution.

1.7 How this Thesis is Organized

In Table 1-1, I have provided a schematic and summary of this thesis. I have divided the report into nine chapters:

Table 1-1 Schematic of thesis and summary of contents

Chapter	Content	Key Points	Page
1	Introduction	What this research project is investigating, how, and why it is important.	15
2	Literature Review	Systematic Literature Review methodology used to examine and analyze what we already know about change in family owned firms.	27
3	Methodology	A social constructionist epistemology, and abductive enquiry; I present an ethnographic case study on a single large family owned business. Data has been collected over 3.5 years by the author and is augmented by 26 field interviews undertaken between March and May 2017. Grounded Theory Method is used to code the interview results.	65
4	Case Study Subject	Reliance Industries (RIL) is a large family owned firm based in India. RIL has diversified interests in petrochemical and refining, mobile telecoms, and retail.	89
5	RIL's PSC Program	In 2013, RIL embarked on a major transformation program. In this chapter, I explain the aims of their program, the tactics they have used to achieve change and the initial results. RIL's path to change is shown as not adequately explained by existing OD literature (Kotter's framework is used for illustration).	113
6	Data Collection, Analysis, and Findings	Three paradoxical tensions are identified as the major enablers and barriers to change at RIL. The discovery of *Faithful Adoption* is offered as the explanation for how RIL has been able to achieve change adoption very rapidly. Distinctive linked challenges are shown to exist in achieving full benefits from the transformation investment.	161
7	Discussion	Findings are compared to existing family business and change literature and the case is made that the three paradoxes are a manifestation of *familiness* during PSC. Grounded theory method is used to present a theory of how PSC has occurred at RIL. A number of areas for further research are presented including	181

Chapter	Content	Key Points	Page
		the possibility of followership and motivation theory as a means to explain *Faithful Adoption* along with the influence of national and societal culture.	
8	Conclusion	In summary, this research project makes a number of contributions (1) I demonstrate that existing change frameworks are inadequate to explain RIL's transformation program (2) RIL's main enablers and barriers to change are three linked paradoxical forces, (3) The discovery of *Faithful Adoption* promotes the possibility that some family firms could achieve change more rapidly than institutional owned counter parts, (4) the paradoxical forces present in RIL are likely the manifestation of *familiness* during change. Limitations of the research are also presented and discussed.	211
9	Impact Statement	As a DBA project the expectation is to demonstrate close practitioner partnership and relevance. Equally, as a doctorate level project, I must show academic rigor and relevance. In this chapter, I present practitioner feedback and impact thus far. I also share academic feedback and encouragement received which points to both rigor and relevance.	231
References	Provided using Cranfield Harvard Style		259
Appendices	A to H	**Appendices A-B Support the Literature Review** **Appendices C-F Support my Empirical Research** **Appendices G-H Support the Impact statement**	291

Chapter 1: Introduction – This present section of the thesis is where I have outlined the problem that I am addressing and why I believe it is important. I have also provided a summary of my personal disposition and point of entry into the enquiry, the existing literature, my methodological approach, the findings, and their contribution.

Chapter 2: Systematic Literature Review (SLR) – Here I report the results of a literature review undertaken to uncover what we may already know about planned organization change in family businesses. After an initial 3,000 journals, books, and other grey literature were identified and systematically reviewed, the conclusion reached is that no detailed exploration has been undertaken to understand whether PSC in a family firm may be distinctive.

Chapter 3: Methodology – As indicated in this introduction, my research has been inspired by my experience in working with RIL during their efforts to transform their management systems and culture. In this Chapter I explain the ontological and epistemological assumption implicit in my work, along with the logic and rationale for the empirical field research which follows.

Chapter 4: Case Study Context – Here I analyze who and why RIL are the way they are, how they came to seek change. I do this in a narrative, ethnographic style, based on my participant observation and supported by data collected from RIL (artefacts in the forms of change documents, presentations, and speeches given by company leadership). My goal in this Chapter is to provide important context on RIL in the form of a story that does justice to the complexities in which RIL's culture, organization, and search for change are anchored.

Chapter 5: RIL's Change Program - I have divided this chapter into two sections. First, I describe RIL's change program, its goals, its tactics, and its results to date. Second, I share my observations of how RIL's change tactics have meaningfully departed from contemporary PSC models exemplified by Kotter's 8-Step framework.

Chapter 6: Fieldwork: Data, Analysis, and Findings – The core of my research findings and where I answer my research question. I present my findings in three main pieces: (a) my participant observation and initial thoughts on the main enablers for and barriers to PSC at RIL; (b) sharing my field interview data and presenting my analysis, and finally; (c) offering the conclusion to my research question "What are the enablers and barriers to PSC in a large, owner-centric, family owned business?"

Chapter 7: Discussion and Presentation of a Grounded Theory Explanation of How PSC Takes Places in RIL – Here, I link the findings in Chapter 6 to existing family business literature. I then present the case for RIL's enablers and barriers as manifestations of *familiness* (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). I also present a PSC framework that I have named "Two-Step Change," which is designed to maximize the enabling aspects of RIL's paradoxical *familiness* capabilities and reduce the potential barriers. I present the case that the discovery of paradoxical enablers and barriers that do not feature in contemporary PSC models' is a critical gap in knowledge. I argue that by embracing rather than ignoring these paradoxical forces, RIL may be able to leapfrog their non-family counterparts. Doing so, however, requires a new model for navigating PSC. Finally, I explore several avenues for further research including the role of followership and motivation theory along with influence of national culture.

Chapter 8: Conclusion – I summarize my research findings and describe my primary contributions stemming from this project before reviewing the limitations.

Chapter 9: Impact Statement – Demonstrating academic and practitioner impact is an important facet of the Cranfield DBA and in this chapter I provide details of the work done to disseminate this work and the immediate impact reported by the targeted beneficiaries.

References – contains my reference bibliography.

Appendices – Several appendices are provided in support of the research covered by this thesis.

2 - Systematic Literature Review

"There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know" Donald Rumsfeld (Feb, 2002)

This chapter will share the results of a systematic literature review (SLR) designed to uncover what we may already know about planned strategic change in family owned businesses. In doing so, I make four contributions. First, I demonstrate that there is reason to believe that planned organizational change is likely to occur differently in a family firm. Second, I show that no empirical research has yet been undertaken to explain the impact of family influence during change. Third, I challenge the prevailing grey literature's assumption that change in family firms should only be analyzed at a family system unit of analysis. And finally, fourth, I demonstrate that no coherent attempt has been made to test prevailing organizational development (OD) theories of change in a family business setting.

This chapter is organized into five sections: (1) important distinctions and definitions; (2) literature review methodology; (3) analysis of the identified literature; (4) discussion and conclusions, and; (5) contribution and limitations.

2.1 Planned Strategic Organizational Change, Socio-Emotional Wealth, *Familiness*, and Owner-Centrality

I have used planned strategic organizational change to mean large scale organizational change prosecuted with an assumption that change can: (a) be planned, and; (b) be largely imposed upon an organization (Bartunek, Balogun and Do, 2011; Johnson, 1990; Toelken, 2012). By planned I intend to refer to Van de Ven & Poole's (1995) typology which they describe as "life-cycle" change. This refers to the assumption that change can be imposed, top-down, and follow a prescribed plan or program.

2.1.1 Planned Strategic Organization Change

In so far as the magnitude of change, existing research provides us with different ways to categorize and think of the relative scale of change being contemplated. Buchanan (2017, p.345), for example, points to the degree of change as a continuum from shallow to deep. While this description of change as a continuum is accurate, I have adopted the term strategic to mean what Johnson (1990) describes as "second-order" change. My purpose is to understand what we currently know about 'transformative' change which implies the need for a family business to shift, as Johnson puts it, its "cultural, cognitive, and organizational assumptions."

In the organizational change literature, there are a plethora of concepts and models offered to explain how organizational change might occur (see Figure 2-1). Presenting these existing concepts as a diagram helps explain how they have different underlying philosophical assumptions. In the illustration, I have used four dimensions: from top to bottom I have used an axis showing episodic versus continuous (or more chaotic) constructs, and from left to right I have shown research implying the imposition of change versus a more organic, ground-up design. I present this as a extrapolation from Van der Ven and Poole's (1995) depiction of different ideological dispositions to change. This illustration is offered for three purposes: (1) to demonstrate breadth of currently existing change models in existence; (2) to point out that in this domain of literature, the unit of analysis is most often the change itself and derivatives based on key actors during that change attempt (Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron, 2001), and; (3) to amplify the focus of this literature review which is to understand what we currently know about research into how family firms might experience change fitting philosophically into the top left of this grid.
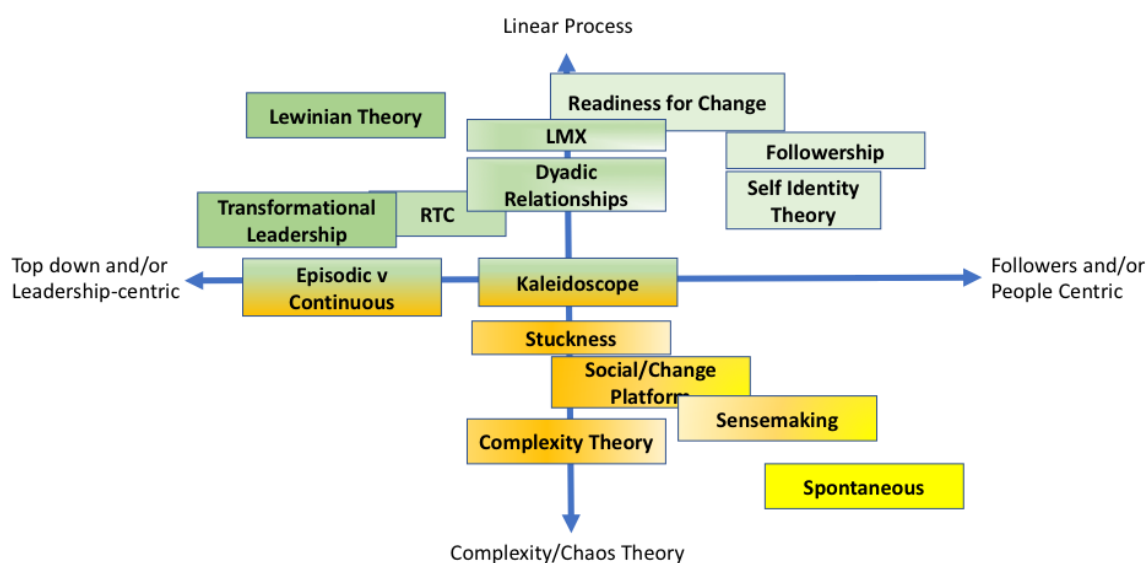
Figure 2-1 Overview of the Change and Change Leadership Literature (Oxley, 2016)

2.1.2 Distinctiveness of Family Businesses

The question of what makes an organization "family-owned" is an unresolved debate (Steiger, Duller and Hiebl, 2015). There are challenges in differentiating family ownership from family influence in a business' operations (Litz, 1995). Great progress has, however, been made by family business scholars to address these definitional challenges. Perhaps most noteworthy in this regard are the theoretical constructs of Socio-Emotional Wealth (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007), and *Familiness* (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). These theories provide a basis on which to describe how a company's family ownership results in different values, strategic choices, and capabilities than those of non-family firms (NFF).

2.1.2.1 Socio-Emotional Wealth (SEW)

Socio-Emotional Wealth (SEW) extends behavioral agency theory (Berrone et al., 2012). The essence of this theoretical construct is that family business owners' will place a greater emphasis on reputation, longevity, and dynastic succession. Consequently, what is posited here is that a family firm may place a

greater emphasis on protecting its "good name" by comparison to a generic non-family firm (NFF) counterpart, where a pure profit maximization approach might be assumed (Gomez-Mejia, et al., 2010; Zellweger, et al., 2011). SEW provides an explanation for how family firms are distinctive in how they evaluate business opportunities and how they may place a greater emphasis on 'emotional' wealth.

2.1.2.2 *Familiness*

The term *familiness* has also emerged as a means to describe how the presence and involvement of family in a business creates a distinctive behavioral and decision making paradigm (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). It was first introduced by Habbershon & Williams as a means of describing how the Resource Based View of the Firm (RBV) can be used to explain the unique bundle of resources and capabilities created by the confluence of family, business, and management (Chrisman, Chua and Litz, 2003; Chrisman, Chua and Steier, 2005; Habbershon and Williams, 1999). At its heart, familiness postulates that a family firm has distinctive capabilities when compared to their non-family counterparts. In simple terms this distinctiveness is born from the abilities of the owning family to pull among resources, reputation, and capabilities across the family network. This could take the form of calling among unpaid help, through low cost financing, all the way toward the loyalty of customers to members of their own community (Habbershon et al., 2003; Chrisman et al., 2003)..

Since its birth, *familiness* has been refined by subsequent authors who have expanded its use to include integration with agency theory (Lester and Cannella, 2006), social capital theory (Arregle et al., 2007), and systems theory (Frank et al., 2010). While these efforts have gone a long way to cement *familiness* as an important construct, there remains some work to ensure it avoids being labelled as "an umbrella concept with confusion as to its component dimensions, antecedents, or consequences" (Sharma, 2008).

Familiness has, however, evolved sufficiently to provide some critical insights as to how a family's influence can create distinctive capabilities that give certain

advantages over their corporate equivalents. Equally, this distinctiveness can also create constraining or restrictive affects (Craig and Lindsay, 2002). Irava & Moores' (2010) research into how these advantages and disadvantages might manifest themselves is particularly helpful in establishing a conceptual framework for how *familiness* might reveal itself during an organizational change program. They first adapted Barney's (1991, p.101) categorization of a firm's distinctive resources being the sum of three main groups: physical, human, and organizational. They then investigated how *familiness* provided positive (F+) and negative (F-) influences across these three categories in case studies into four family owned firms. They found six components of *familiness*, which they called resource dimensions, two in each of Barney's three categories. What is particularly noteworthy in Irava & Moores' (2010, p.139) research, is not only did they find evidence of these positive and negative *familiness* dynamics, but that they presented them as interrelated paradoxical tensions (see Table 2-1**).**

Table 2-1 Familiness paradoxes as found by Irava & Moores (2010)

Dimension	Paradox (within the characteristic patterns)
Reputation	The founder's strong reputation presents a source of advantage for the firm and subsequent generations but it also places immense pressure and can hinder the ability of subsequent generations to establish their own reputation.
Experience—insights and skills	Outside the firm experiences are important for generating new skills and knowledge into the family business yet at the same time they can be in conflict with the values and the culture of the firm that has been passed down over generations of the family.
Decision-making	Quick decision-making have allowed agility and responsiveness to opportunities and threats. It has also led to expensive losses for the firms.
Learning	Informal learning has allowed the passage of the firm's culture and values across generations. It has also been a channel for the passage of not so desirable habits.
Relationships	Strain in relationships that both enhance and impede organisational processes.
Networks	Weak ties expand a firm's access to networks, information, and opportunities. However, they are more distant, financially driven, less loyalty (in comparison to weak ties)

What we can take from Irava & Moores' findings is some insight on how family ownership, and the involvement of family members in a business, creates clear distinctiveness. In reputation, they found that owners' personal reputation and brand created a network of contacts and promoted a business's interests. Paradoxically, it also created obstacles to the transition of the business to future generations. Decision-making was another important finding, showing how family business owners tended to prize flexibility and optionality over how their businesses operated. The implication of this 'informality' around decision making was a suggested lack of rigor prior to making commitments. I would also highlight their relationship finding, which points to the typically patriarchal and paternalistic cultural paradigms present in family firms. Irava & Moores found that these provided a positive 'creative tension' but on occasion a more destructive rivalry among family members. These research findings are an important foundation on which to ask the question, how might these dimensions of *familiness* manifest themselves and influence an attempt at organizational change?

The existence of paradoxical management tensions is not a new concept and is widely discussed in management literature, but in the context of *familiness* they shed important light on our enquiry into the how family businesses may experience planned change (John Tokarczyk, Eric Hansen, Mark Green, 2007; Leenders and Waarts, 2003). A question which follows, and is the focus of this chapter, is to what extent these dimensions of *familiness* have been empirically investigated in the context of a change program.

2.1.2.3 Owner-Centrality

Finally, given the choice of Reliance Industries as a research subject and the extraordinary role played by MDA, it is important that we also discuss and define the concept of owner-centrality within the family business literature (Brundin et al., 2010). A great deal has been written by family business scholars about the typical cultural paradigms and organization constructs for family businesses. A thread that runs through the family business literature is the often powerful role of a founder or later generation owner (Dyer, 1986; Levinson,

1971; Ward, 2004). Lansberg (1988, p.125) points to the integral role that a powerful central figure can play in some family owned businesses' when he reflects: "[the] owner's strong need for power and centrality [become] evident in the way they structure their businesses." He makes the observation that, driven in part by entrepreneurial zeal, but also a need for ego fulfilment, "owners [particularly first and second generation] make themselves indispensable to their businesses by . . . insisting they be involved in decisions that [could] be handled at lower levels in their organization." Helpfully, Brundin et al., (2010) have provided us with a definition of owner-centric culture as; "Owner-centric culture refers to the organizational and family business cultures being greatly influenced by owners who are also operatively involved as business leaders, even if they are not the founders" (p.126).

Such is the prevalence of owner-centric family businesses that we might consider them as their own sub-category within this research field. Findings from studying them may well be distinct for those with the other cultural types described by Dyer (1986); such as laissez-faire or participative (p.23).

2.2 Important Distinctions and Definitions Summary

The purpose of this preceding section has been to introduce and define some critical terms which will be central to both the literature review and the empirical research that follows. Given the preponderance of literature on organization change, I have provided a very specific definition of what is meant by planned strategic change. These terms narrow the philosophical disposition to change and are congruent with what I present in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 as RIL's approach.

In terms of family business, I have provided a brief explanation of SEW and *Familiness* as a means to justify the claim that family businesses are distinctive from their non-family counterparts. Moreover, I have pointed to the concept of owner-centricity as a distinct type of family firm. This is important as I will build the case in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 that RIL's owner-centricity has been a pivotal factor in arriving at my findings.

Now returning to the literature review, my aim is to discover what existing empirical research has been undertaken into organizational change in family owned firms. While the definitions provided above are an essential foundation for my research, I will now undertake my literature review somewhat more broadly to address the question; "What do we currently know about organizational change in family-owned firms?" As we shall see, the existing literature is thin and as such I will focus the remainder of this chapter on distilling all we can in aid of my primary research goal…to discover what are the enablers for and barriers to PSC in a large, owner-centric, family owned business.

2.3 Systematic Literature Review (SLR): Methodology and Results

Informed by the preceding frame of reference, a SLR was undertaken into planned strategic change in family-owned businesses. A SLR is a disciplined process for undertaking literature reviews, distilled from clinical studies (Wright et al., 2007). According to Denyer et al (2009) "Systematic review is a specific methodology that locates existing studies, selects and evaluates contributions, analyzes and synthesizes data, and reports the evidence in such a way that allows reasonably clear conclusions to be reached about what is and is not known" (2009, p.671).

This SLR began with the construction of search strings carefully designed to capture literature containing forms of change and family business. I developed these search strings in collaboration with Cranfield University faculty. Optimizing the search words was an iterative process that included testing whether incremental words and phrases provided sensible results. For example, derivatives of the word *Familiness*, when added to those already selected returned no incremental results. In the case of 'strategy' the decision was made not to include it on the basis that it returned an impractically large set of results and departed from the core target of the review which was to find empirical

studies into a planned change process within a family owned firm. The final search strings are shown in Appendix A.

I focused my initial search on mining three reputable and widely acknowledged academic databases, EBSCO, API, and SCOPUS. These were selected as they gave the best results and coverage, with the least number of duplicates. To ensure as comprehensive coverage of the relevant literature as possible, minimum exclusions were made in the initial database searches; they were restricted to peer-reviewed journals and must have been in English. No date restrictions were employed, consequently, EBSCO's coverage included some sources as far back as 1884, where API and SCOPUS provided complementary coverage of all established academic sources from 1971 onwards. The initial database search resulted in nearly 3,000 titles. Table 2-2 provides a detailed recording of the six steps I undertook to synthesize the materials for relevance and quality. After the first four steps of the review, 109 articles and books were identified for full review. Each document was then read and appraised against a set of quality criteria (see Appendix B).

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Table 2-2 Systematic Literature Review Search Results

	Explanation of Each Step	API	EBSCO	SCOPUS	**Total**
Step 1	Search strings results (see appendix A)	476	1,197	1,220	**2,893**
Step 2	Removal of duplicates, blanks, or non-papers (posters etc.)	-29	-249	-230	**-508**
Step 3	**Title review:** Removal of obvious off-topic papers, exclusions included: Off-topic papers (domestic workers, clinicians, non-academic papers, liberalization of labor markers, ethnic discrimination, **inheritance taxes, estate planning, and trusts**, dispersed teams, paternity leave, **work life balance**, family support services, racism, self-immolation, family medicine, wrongful death, healthcare systems, China's one-child policy, spirituality, corporate social responsibility, forest planning, farming)	-162	-490	-357	**-1,009**
Step 4	**Abstract review**. In this step, all remaining paper abstracts were reviewed, and a qualitative decision was made to include papers considered to be on topic. Papers were excluded when they: 1. were clearly not about family businesses 2. were clearly not about change as a process:	-240	-415	-612	**-1,267**
Step 5	**A full-paper review** was conducted on the remaining papers	45	43	21	**109**
	Based on the full-paper review, a qualitative assessment was made to further exclude papers that did not: (a) provide a theory of how change occurs in a family firm (b) analyze a case study of organizational change in a family firm (c) Report empirical research results on organizational change in a family firm	-30	-31	-15	**-76**
	Totals from Database Searches	15	12	6	**33**
Step 6	Additional publications: based on citation mapping, advisory panels, and supervisor recommendations, plus results of supplementary hand search of three primary journal sources		9		
	Total no. of publications included in systematic literature review		**42**		

Since it became apparent during step 5 of this process that very few studies reported empirical research into any form of change in a family firm, I completed a supplementary literature search to provide additional assurance of the completeness of my search. This supplementary search took the form of a "hand-search" of widely respected small business and entrepreneurship journals where it was likely (while not explicitly stated) that the subject of investigation might be a family firm (Shaw et al., 2004).

Figure 2-2 provides a summary of this process. I conducted searches of all publications from International Small Business Journal, Entrepreneurship, Theory, & Practice, and Family Business Review. These publications were selected based on supervisor recommendation and a review of the relative impact factor of small business and entrepreneurship publications. These three journals were found to have the highest impact and, based on my analysis of the literature identified in steps four and five in Table 2-2, appeared most frequently to publish work of interest to this review. My hand search identified an additional 50 papers for thorough investigation but after detailed review only two were considered sufficiently relevant for inclusion in this SLR.

Database Search May/June 2016

EBSCO, API, Scopus

2893

Studies/Examples of Planned Changed in FoB

5

Add in grey change Lit
Add in succession process Lit
Add in agility/innovation/ professionalisation characteristics which assist with change papers

40*

*This includes: FBR hand search and supervisor recommendations

*² – abbreviations explained in thesis

Hand search Feb 2017

*² JSB   ET&P   FBR

300   521   142

Full paper review   50

Additional citation mapped   21

Possible Additions   2

Category	Original Search (May-July 2016)	Original Citation Map (July – Sept 2016)	Hand Search (Feb 2017)
Planned Changed in FOB	5		
General Change Grey Lit	3	4	
Succession Process	13		1
Agility/Innovation/ professionalisation	13	2	1
Totals	34	6	2

Figure 2-2 Results of Hand-Search of Select Journals

Figure 2-3 provides a final summary and analysis of the main characteristics and sources of literature finally selected for inclusion in this systematic literature review. As one might expect, the single largest source of literature came from *Family Business Review* (12 out of 42). However, the multiple database searches combined with citation mapping and hand-searches provided a diverse list of publishers.

Only 5 studies reported empirical research into an attempt at organizational change in family business. Consequently, a choice was made to cast the net more broadly to include papers discussing change in a more general context (7 papers and books), along with literature discussing how succession, professionalization, and innovation might be achieved as a process, even though not directly referencing planned change. This last category of literature provided some important insights on the challenges of achieving planned change in family-owned firms (these represent 30 of the 42 included in review).
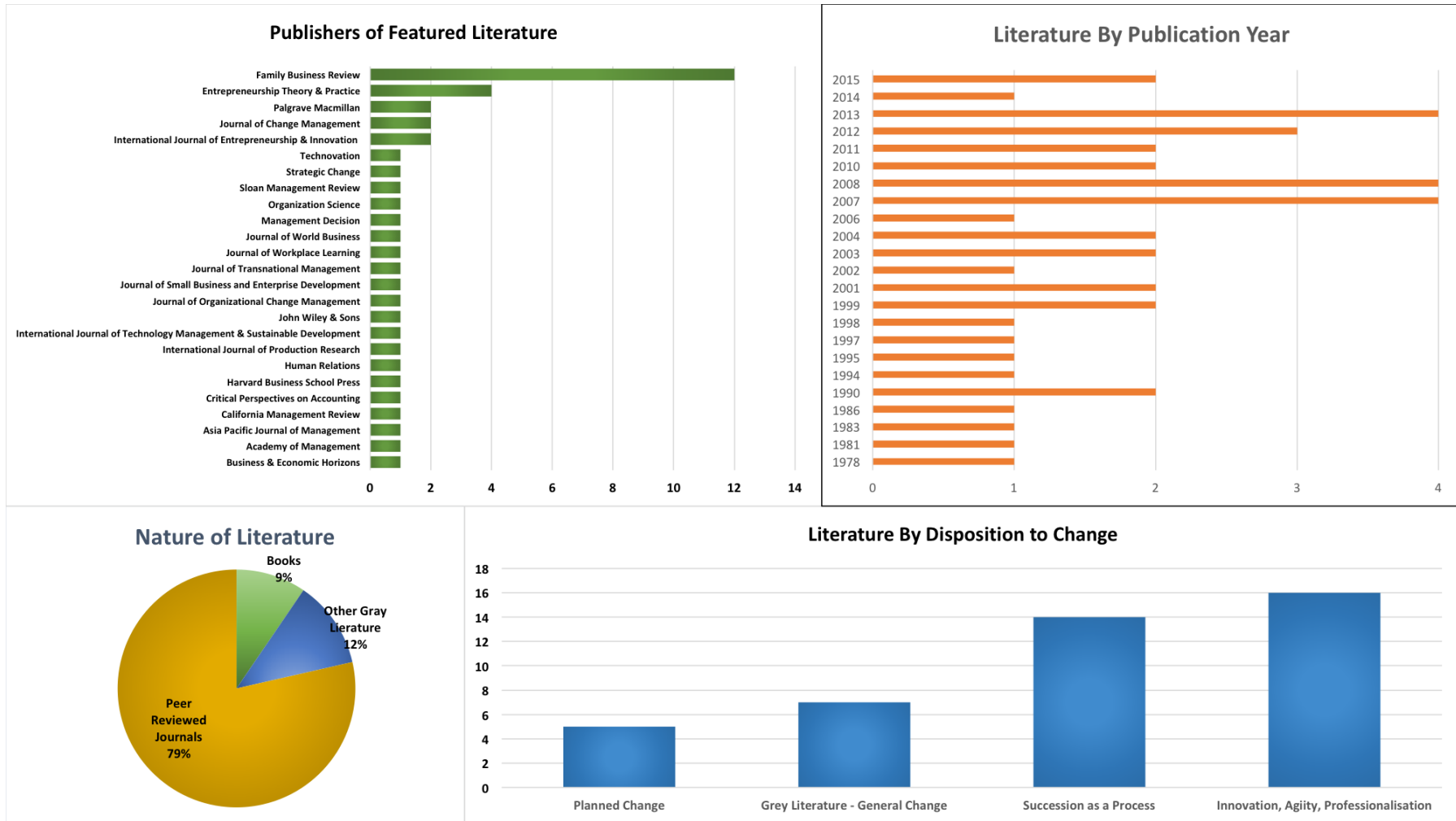
Figure 2-3 Analysis of Reviewed Literature

The relatively small resultant body of literature identified by this systematic review are consistent with the findings of general literature reviews in the family business domain (Benavides-Velasco, Quintana-García, and Guzmán-Parra, 2013; Debicki et al., 2009). The majority of identified research has been published in the last 15 years. While there has been a small increase in research on change, this represents only a very small fraction of the total family business literature published (less than 5% according to previous literature reviews), with succession matters seeming to dominate researchers' attention.

Finally, the research methodologies of the selected sample are illustrated in Figure 2-4. The predominance of case studies is perhaps not surprising, given the nature of the family business field and my area of interest. De Massis & Kotlar (2014) have explained why the case study form has historically been preferred by family business scholars and the benefits it provides for deep insights into the distinctive dynamics of intra-family behaviors. Equally, for similar reasons, a dominance of qualitative research is probably to be expected.
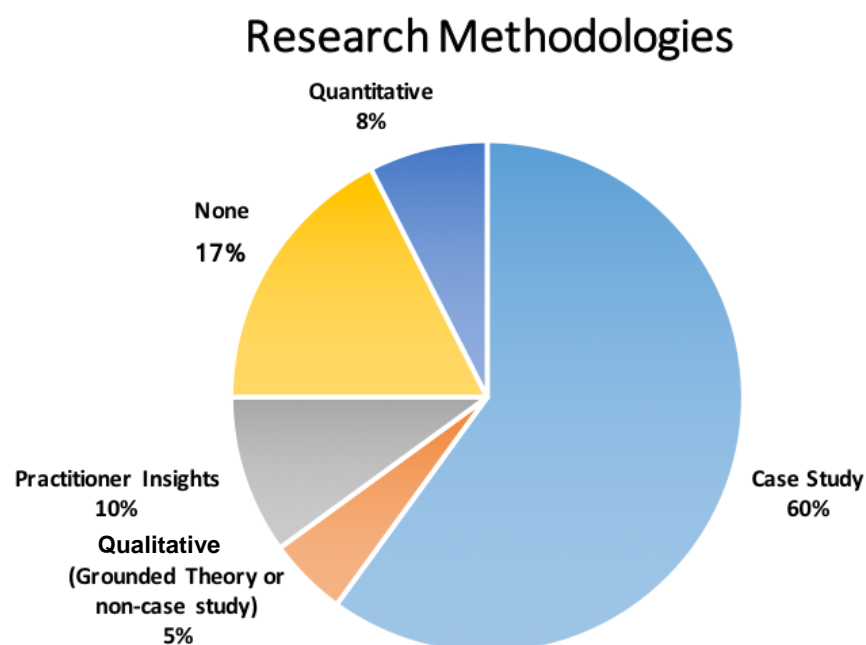
Figure 2-4 Research Methodologies of Reviewed Literature

2.4 Analysis of the Identified Literature

The SLR results point to both a limited degree of investigation into planned change in family-owned businesses and a lack of coherence in the current research. Only five of the identified studies could reasonably be considered to report the results of a planned change program in a family-owned firm. There is slightly more work on change in general (including cultural change), but these are general 'grey' literature reports which are more anecdotal and use the family-system as the unit of analysis. The succession work is narrow in analyzing founder and successor tensions in a linear process. The final category of literature, which relates to adaptability and innovation readiness, is potentially the most helpful albeit does not directly reference planned organization change nor provide any empirical research results.

The analysis of identified literature is organized as follows:

(1) A review of what I have found that directly addresses planned change in a family firm;

(2) What I can glean from the more general 'grey' change literature;

(3) A brief synthesis from the succession work; and finally,

(4) Insights from innovation, professionalization, and other indirect studies into change in family firms.

2.4.1 The Planned Change Literature and Family-Owned Firms

Only five of the identified studies made direct reference to an investigation into organization change in a family-owned business. Table 2-3 lists these studies. What the authors tell us falls into four broad categories: (a) the question of change in family firms has intrigued a very small audience of scholars, (b) given the limited degree of enquiry, there is no current depth to this research and no studies have achieved a detailed investigation of the different philosophical dimensions of organization change as it may manifest itself in a family firm, (c) no one has enquired into the possible influence of '*familiness'* during a change process, and (d) the research conducted to date does not address the question of the adequacy of existing OD change frameworks for family firms.

Table 2-3 Studies on Change in a Family-Owned Business

Author(s)	Title	Year	Perspective on Change in FoB	Research (if any)
Change in a Family-Owned Business				
Barresi, G. et al.	Criticalities of ICT implementation: The case of a family firm operating in the Italian health-care sector	(2012)	Follows this FOB as it implements an IT system – uses Kotter's framework but does not address its adequacy	Case study
Canterino, F. et al.	Leading transformation in a family-owned business: insights from an Italian company	(2013)	Authors cite gap in understanding of how change occurs in FOB; study explores case study using Lewinian framework	Case study
Haddadj, S.	Organization change and the complexity of succession: a longitudinal case study from France'	(2003)	Identifies succession as a change process and challenges existing linear models using narrative analysis in reporting results of a case study	Case study on French small FOB
Herriau, C. and Touchais, L.	The role of control systems in the process of change: application to a family business succession	(2015)	Addresses the question of how control systems might assist in a change process within a FOB.	Case study
Stergiou, K. et al.	The role of structure and agency in management accounting control change of a family-owned firm: a Greek case study	(2012)	Chronicles attempts at planned change in a family firm – uses agency and critical realist perspectives to explain breakdowns (emotional wealth comes before economic wealth).	Case study

What is apparent from these papers is that there is a recurring assertion that it is likely that family firms' distinctiveness might influence the process of achieving organizational change. As Canterino at al., (2013) put it:

> Building transformation capabilities in family businesses, which are a critical engine of the economic fabric in every community, region, country and continent, is complex. The notion of '*familiness*' – viewed as the interweaving of business and family relationships (Habbershon, Williams, and MacMillan, 2003) – creates unique and intriguing organizational characteristics and dynamics. Indeed, despite the increased scientific focus on family businesses, relatively little is known about leading and managing complex transformations and transformation capabilities in family-owned businesses (p. 56).

This assertion is repeated in each of these papers in different forms. These five authors report on case studies into family-owned businesses that attempted an organization change. In three cases, the nature of this change was more incremental (what might constitute first-order change programs such as

technology adoption, accounting systems, control systems), and in the other two, it was somewhat more transformative (shift of business model and owner/CEO succession). These distinctions are important as it is only with second-order change that we are likely to see the necessary realignment of cultural, cognitive, and organization challenges. While each paper implies that these programs took unconventional paths, no explanation is provided of why or how the businesses' *familiness* may have had an influence.

Furthermore, there is no exploration of how general OD theories may be impacted by a firm's family ownership. While Canterino et al. (2013) refer to Lewin's three-step model, they use it as a literary device to report their observations of how the firm experienced tensions within their wider family stakeholder group (Lewin, 1951). Barresi et al. (2012) utilize Kotter's eight-step framework to investigate the introduction of new technology in a family-owned business (Kotter, Lawrence, and White, 2007). However, this use of Kotter's work was limited to a reporting frame of management's attempts to achieve change. The research findings, while colorful, are silent on whether or how the business' family ownership may have influenced the process. Equally, since in this case the focus was on adoption of new software within the firm, what others have described as a lower order change challenge, I conclude that the study is largely unhelpful in addressing what the issues might be for a family firm during an attempt at culture change or strategic change.

As I mentioned in the overview of literature covered by this SLR, it is perhaps unsurprising that all five studies shown here are case studies. A qualitative approach does seem natural to serve the purpose of understanding the dynamics at play during an attempt at change. However, it may be worthy of note that there is no diversity in the qualitative approaches deployed, in particular since an ethnographic approach might be still more insightful in understanding the social constructionist realities of key actors.

2.4.2 General Life-Cycle-Related Change and Practitioner Advice

As the literature on planned change in family firms is so limited, this SLR has expanded the search to include more general change literature in an effort to

ensure completeness. Table 2-4 summarizes the work included in this section. Much of this literature takes the form of authoritative practitioner advice. The voice here is focused on addressing the existing family business owner or his/her advisors and explaining how to navigate the tensions between family, ownership, and business needs. There is also a prevailing perspective, borne from authors' experience, that the source of most conflicts in family firms is between the 'trinity' of the family system: family, owners, and business (Aronoff and Ward, 2011). While these authors are highly insightful, there is little detail on organizational change as a process. Instead, we gain largely anecdotal insights to the likely enablers for and barriers to "life-cycle"-driven, reactive, attempts to sustain a family business. What resonates most is the consistent advice to establish sustainable communication structures to avoid conflicts, and engage all important stakeholders in key matters.

Table 2-4 General Change in a Family-Owned Business

Author(s)	Title	Year	Perspective on Change in FOB	Research (if any)
Aronoff, C.E. and Ward, J.L.	*Preparing your family business for strategic change*	(2011)	The disposition of the family and founder toward change is critical to survival.	Practitioner insights
Beckhard and Dyer	Managing change in the family firm – issues and strategies	(1983)	Advice on how to navigate life-cycle changes in FOB; Lewinian construct.	Case studies
Dyer, G.W.	Cultural change in family firms: anticipating and managing business and family transitions	(1986)	Comprehensive picture of family firm life-cycles and the difficulties of changing cultures	Practitioner insights
Gersick, K.E. et al.	*Generation to generation: life cycles of the family business*	(1997)	Seminal work on life-cycles of FOB, ownership, and family. Authors examine how each life-cycle change creates challenges and how some business are able to overcome these.	Practitioner insights
Gersick, K.E. et al.	Stages and transitions: managing change in the family business	(1999)	Extension of earlier work looking explicitly at challenges of ownership dilution between sibling partnerships and cousin consortia	Practitioner insights
Hatum, A. and Pettigrew, A.	Adaptation under environmental turmoil: organizational flexibility in family owned firms	(2004a)	Explores the ingredients that promote successful change in FOBs; concludes that key factors are (1) stage of ownership, (2) formalization of systems, (3) professionalization of management, and (4) value system imbued by owners.	Case studies
Hilburt-Davis, J. and Dyer, W. G.	*Consulting to family businesses: a practical guide to contracting, assessment, and implementation*	(2007)	Authoritative book providing advice to FOB consultants wishing to help facilitate change and resolve conflicts	Practitioner insights

In *Generation to Generation,* Gersick et al. (1997) chronicle the challenges family business owners face in navigating changes in ownership, business, and family. Their advice for those attempting to help implement change is as follows: "[for]…change to be successful, the system (members of the business or the family) must experience a need to change, key leaders must support the change, the change agent must establish clear timelines and open communication, and appropriate resources must be allocated to support the change efforts" (p. 260). While in this sense they are broadly setting out a contractual process like most planned change initiatives, they go on to state that

"change efforts must account for the structural and emotional complexity of the family business system, and people's natural tendencies to fall back on familiar patterns in times of uncertainty. The resistance to change is powerful, but, in most cases, family members are not aware of the dynamic" (p. 261). In these last statements, what emerges is the broader question of whether all change in family business is an artefact of life-cycle changes within a family. The resistance that these authors speak of relates to the intra-family conflict associated with ownership issues, not necessarily all forms of strategic change. The question follows whether it is correct to suggest that family-system management should be at the heart of all planned business change programs.

Dyer (1986) and Aronoff and Ward (2011) make similar points in their widely-read books *Cultural Change in Family Firms* and *Preparing your Family Business for Strategic Change*, respectively. In both cases, they point to the fundamental centrality in family businesses of the owner and his/her philosophical dispositions to business, management, and family. Throughout Dyer's writing, there is a clear thread reinforcing this point of tension (first identified by Levinson, 1971) of the founding owner's relationship with the business being intimately linked with his/her own identity, mortality, and personality. Aronoff and Ward sum this up when they point to the duality between the founding entrepreneur's beliefs around what made his/her idea become a commercial success and the creation of unhelpful but unchallengeable assumptions that can become a huge obstacle to the evolution of a business. They list seven factors that they present as unique obstacles in any family firm, which must be overcome if any attempt at organizational change is to succeed (see Table 2-5).

Table 2-5 Inhibitors of Change in Family Firms (Aronoff and Ward, 2011, pp. 12-13)

1	Institutionalization of operating details and specific behaviors (which helped found the firm)
2	Deeply entrenched values (in the founder's image)
3	Long tenures by each generation of leaders
4	Long-term loyalty to managers and advisors
5	Autocratic/paternalistic management styles
6	Insulation from changing conditions outside the business
7	Tendency to be risk and debt averse

The key thrust of this literature, captured again by Hilburt-Davis and Dyer (2007) in *Consulting to Family Businesses: A Practical Guide to Contracting, Assessment, and Implementation,* is that all these authors see successful change as requiring a focus and management of the entire "family system." The perspective offered here is that any change initiative which does not look holistically at family, ownership, and business will likely fail.

2.4.3 Succession as a Change Process

As mentioned earlier, I made the decision to include select literature on family-owned business succession. While this work does not directly recognize the succession process as a planned organizational change event, in many ways, this is exactly what it was. The research included here and summarized in Table 2-6 is a sub-set of succession research, specifically referencing how a family firm might manage through a succession process.

Handler (1990, 1994), Le Breton Miller et al. (2004), and Murray (2003) provide the most authoritative and widely cited examples of succession as a process. Taken together, these authors help us see that succession can be viewed as a planned change process with an interesting mix of what Van de Ven and Poole (1995) would describe as both prescribed and negotiated. However, what these succession models have in common is a focus on founder and successor dynamics, including the psychological struggles of the incumbent not to

sabotage the process. Consequently, much of this literature ignores broader organizational matters beyond the dynamics of the two central actors.

Table 2-6 Literature Describing Succession as a Planned Process

Author(s)	Title	Year	Perspective on Change in FoB	Research (if any)
Barach, J.A. and Ganitsky, J.B.	Successful succession in family business	(1995)	Underlines difficulty of success; suggests 12 critical factors	Case study
Chittoor, D.	Professionalization of management and succession performance – a vital linkage	(2007)	India-specific research that helps illuminate the challenges of succession; makes a strong case for non-family succession pools	Case study
Davis, P.S. and Harveston, P.D.	The influence of family on the family business succession process: a multi-generational perspective	(1998)	Provides a positivist perspective on factors that promote effective succession processes	Quantitative: 1600 phone interviews
Dunn, B	The Family Factor: The Impact of Family Relationship Dynamics on Business-Owning Families during Transitions	(1999)	Reports on the tensions, emotional anxiety in 5 FoB's as they attempt to transition ownership.	Qual case studies into 5 FoB's
Georgiou, T. and Vrontis, D.	Wine sector development: a conceptual framework toward succession effectiveness in family wineries	(2013)	Literature review on FOB succession completed in 2013; offers an "integrative" framework	
Handler, W.	Succession in family business: a review of the research	(1994)	Authoritative article on the state of understanding of the process of family firm succession planning	
Handler, W.C.	Succession in family firms: mutual role adjustment between entrepreneur and next-generation family members	(1990)	Formation of a theory of succession in family firms	Qualitative: 32 family firms
Howorth, C. and Ali, Z.A.	Family business succession in Portugal: an examination of case studies in the furniture industry	(2001)	Tests Handler's theory and suggests succession is not a linear process	Case studies
Ip, B. and Jacobs, G.	Business succession planning: a review of the evidence	(2006)	Summarizes FOB succession research as of 2006	
Le Breton-Miller, I. et al.	Toward an integrative model of effective FOB succession	(2004)	Constructs a theory of how succession occurs in a FOB as an integrated process	
Janjuha-Jivraj, S. and Woods, A.	The art of "good conversations": a strategy to negotiate succession within South Asian family firms	(2002)	Important paper in making the case that Western borne linear/insular succession models may not be sufficient to address Indian companies	Case studies
McGivern, C.	The dynamics of management succession	(1978)	One of the earliest examples of thinking about family succession as a change program	Case study
Murray, B.	The succession transition process: a longitudinal perspective	(2003)	Paper distills a lot of previous work on succession phases of a time-bound model	Case Study
Saxena, A.	Transgenerational succession in business groups in India	(2013)	Attempts to provide a holistic framework for succession in Indian businesses	Case study

Most succession models typified by Handler (1994) depict a linear stage gate process focused narrowly on the transition of the owner to an apparent heir (typically son). These models focus on the role adjustment of the founder/incumbent CEO, reinforcing his/her centrality in the succession process. These models place the incumbent family member CEO at the center of the change process, looking at other dimensions of a change as they intersect with the incumbent's psychology and motivations. In this sense, most of these models are narrow, static, and prescriptive, and they assume that the founder/incumbent CEO is the primary instigator, actor, and determiner of success.

Le Breton-Miller et al. (2004) and Barach and Ganitsky (1995), along with Saxena (2013), and Chittoor (2007), offer more integrated attempts to describe succession as a holistic change process. Barach and Ganitsky identify 12 factors that they suggest are critical to achieve a successful succession. Among these are external stakeholders, non-family managers, and regulatory agencies. What is more, however, is that even in this model, current and future family CEOs are depicted as the main actors, like the sun in a succession process solar system. Change here is viewed as an insular act within the family, and other factors are to be managed in this context.

A noteworthy exception to the linear succession offerings is provided by Janjuha-Jivraj et al., (2002). These researchers point out that the linear approximate "10-year insular process" offered as an explanation by Western scholars is probably not helpful for South Asian firms. In this sense, they begin to challenge the prevailing wisdom of family business research into succession based change. However, their research points to the importance of "good conversations" as a means to break down misunderstandings and resolve intra-family disputes. As such, their perspective is similar to the advice of many grey literature authors who point to communication breakdowns as the source of many family business failings (Gersick et al., 1997, Aronoff & Ward, 2011).

2.4.4 Indirect References to Planned Change

Where the previous three categories of literature to some degree reference a form of organizational change in family firms, during the SLR process some additional literature was uncovered which provided indirect commentary on the subject. As explained earlier, given the very thin results of empirical investigations into change in family firms, I decided to cast a wider net during step 6 of the SLR process. The literature reviewed in this section (see Table 2-7) has eclectic points of entry into subject which include attributes of innovative companies, crisis management, and procedural justice. Taken as a collective there are some valuable clues to understanding how change occurs in family firms. These clues may be helpful in framing a future empirical research study that addresses the gap currently apparent in this area. In this section of the SLR I will provide a synopsis of these more tangential pieces of research.

Table 2-7 Indirect References to Change in Family Firms

Author(s)	Title	Year	Perspective on Change in FoB	Research (if any)
Alpay, G. et al.	Performance implications of institutionalization process in family-owned businesses: Evidence from an emerging economy	(2008)	The paper addresses change in family firms in an emerging market: Turkey. It appears to show some correlation between more participative management and success in change.	Case study
Ayranci, E.	Family involvement in and institutionalization of family businesses: A research	(2010)	Empirical research to look at how Turkish family firms relate to 'institutionalizing' their companies. Form of professionalisation. Concludes there is reluctance to do so due to loss of flexibility and perceived costs.	Quant study of 400 Turkish firms
Barnett et al.	Vision and exchange in intra-family succession: effects on procedural justice climate among nonfamily managers	(2012)	It addresses the role of non-family managers in FOBs and the need for procedural justice to reduce resistance to change.	
Berenbeim, R.E.	How business families manage the transition from owner to professional management	(1990)	Practitioner and family owner advice on how to professionalize management and the consequential challenges	Practitioner insights
Bruque, S.S. and Moyano, J.J.	Organizational determinants of information technology adoption and implementation in SMEs: the case of family and cooperative firms	(2007)	Follows FOBs in Spain on the implementation of new technology; addresses key enablers (1), professionalized management (2), formalizing systems and (3) sponsorship of family members	Case study
Cater III, J.J. et al.	Turnaround strategies in established small family firms	(2008)	Looks at how small family businesses react to crisis and the difficulties they face in making tough choices	Qualitative case studies
Chirico, F. and Salvato, C.	Knowledge integration and dynamic organizational adaptation in family firms	(2016)	Looks at the role of knowledge sharing and how it creates adaptability	
Chung, C.-N. and Luo, X.	Human agents, contexts, and institutional change: the decline of family in the leadership of business groups	(2008)	Role of next-generation family members in Taiwanese firms as catalysts for change	Quantitative survey: 100 Taiwanese FOBs
Davis, P. and Stern, D.	Adaptation, survival, and growth of the family business: an integrated systems perspective	(1981)	Early paper discussing family-centric life-cycle transitions – precursor to Dyer, Gersick, and Ward.	Practitioner insights
Dodd, S.D. et al.	Organizational renewal in family firms	(2014)	Suggests FOBs that (1) are more democratic, in relation to founder disposition, (2) are growth-orientated and (3) are proactive succession planning perform better	Quantitative study: 140 Greek FOBs
Elsey, B. and Tse, R.C.-H.	Changing the behavior of traditional bakers in a Chinese multi-family-owned food company through workplace action learning in Hong Kong	(2007)	Case study into how action learning was used to help Chinese bakers adopt new production techniques	Case study
Gunasekaran, A. et al.	Resilience and competitiveness of small and medium size enterprises: an empirical research	(2011)	Looks at 40 FOBs and analyses characteristics of resilience; points to owners' disposition to leadership and level of professionalisation	Quantitative: 40 FOBs in the US

Author(s)	Title	Year	Perspective on Change in FoB	Research (if any)
Hall et al.,	Entrepreneurship as radical change in the family business: Exploring the role of cultural patterns	(2001)	The authors explore attributes that support the achievement of radical change in FOBs; conclude that owners' disposition and behaviors are critical	Case studies
Hatum, A. et al.	Building organizational capabilities to adapt under turmoil	(2010)	Second paper from authors on the key ingredients for FOBs to adapt and change	Case study
Holt, D.T. and Daspit, J.J.	Diagnosing innovation readiness in family firms	(2015)	Holt (author of several general change articles) offers a framework for FOB "readiness for innovation" – a framework very similar to change readiness	
Konig, A. et al.	The family innovator's dilemma: how family influence affects the adoption of discontinuous technologies by incumbent firms	(2013)	FOBs may have advantages in adopting disruptive change, given (1) the family can make bigger/longer-term bets, (2) organizational informalities allow them to be more decisive, (3) however, stakeholders need to feel congruent behaviors and communication, and (4) the ownership construct needs to allow for decisiveness.	

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Several authors, including Bruque et al. (2007), Cater II et al. (2008), Dodd et al. (2014), Gunasekaran et al. (2011), and Hatum et al. (2010) point to very similar observations. Firms owned by: (1) progressive individuals; (2) who are committed to more democratic and participative forms of management; (3) who are focused on business growth; (4) who set a clear and consistent vision for how the business will be run; (5) who attract professional management, and; (6) who formalize their institutions of governance, fare far better than those who do not. Each of these authors reports quantitative survey results from US and European family-owned businesses that corroborate these findings. The measures of success here are largely financial and focus on the track record of profitability and growth of each respondent. The suggestion here is that family firms with these characteristics find navigating change and adapting their business models easier than those who do not. In this sense, the six ingredients are a recipe for how change is enabled in a family firm.

Elsey and Tse (2007) point to the potential of next-generation family members, leveraging societal and educational differences, as change agents in effectively countering more conservative parents' content with the status quo. In the process, they suggest that successful change is linked to encouraging the next generation of family members to participate in the family business. Chirico (2016) and particularly Barnett (2012), point out the advantages of family businesses that effectively harness the knowledge and discretionary effort of all members of the firm. In these more democratic organizations, there is said to be a correlation between their willingness to experiment and greater success at reinvention and change. Barnett's (2012) paper is noteworthy as it addresses the matter of procedural justice in family-owned firms. It points to the role of non-family managers as a critical resource that is disenfranchised if there is incongruence between family vision and actual deeds. In the process, it identifies what seems to be an under-researched constituency of any planned organizational change program in a family firm – the non-family population. Barnett's paper also offers a glimpse into the importance of followers and taking their perspective into account during change.

One of the most interesting publications identified was Holt and Daspit's (2015) "Readiness for Innovation in Family Firms" (see Table 2-8). The authors take an existing OD change construct and propose a derivative for a family-owned business. Their frame is innovation rather than organizational change but a detailed analysis of their work provides some important insight on the question of how change may occur using the organization level of analysis. The summary here is largely consistent with earlier writings from practitioner authors; that change in family firms is intimately linked with: (1) family factors, most notably, the personal attributes of the founder and/or family CEO; (2) the level of expertise and diversity in the management ranks (in particular, whether external talent has been acquired and assimilated), and; (3) that the firm's systems have been formalized (as opposed to being unstructured and opportunistic). While this frame is, on the surface, a promising discovery given the central enquiry of this paper, the authors largely speculate on the validity of their model and offer no empirical research to appraise its adequacy.

Table 2-8 Readiness for Innovation in Family Firms (Holt and Daspit, 2015, p. 85).

Innovation Readiness Factors	
Structural Factors	**Psychological Factors**
Factors that reflect the extent to which the circumstances under which the innovation is occurring enhance or inhibit the acceptance and implementation of innovation.	Factors that reflect the extent to which the members of the family and firm are cognitively and emotionally inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt an innovation.
Family Factors ■ *Ownership Control*—extent to which the family has sufficient ownership to exercise discretion and guide the strategic direction of the firm ■ *Perceived Discrepancy*—family belief and understanding that there is a difference between the current state or practice and a more desirable state (without a particular innovation in mind) ■ *Family Commitment*—family belief and resolve among the family to pursue courses of action that will lead to successful innovation	■ *Innovation Appropriateness*—belief among the family that a specific innovation is correct for the situation that is being addressed ■ *Innovation Benefits*—belief among the family that the innovation is beneficial to the family's goals and aspirations
Individual Factors ■ *Knowledge, Skills, and Ability Alignment*—extent to which (family and non-family) members have knowledge, skills, and abilities that align with the innovation	■ *Perceived Family Support*—belief that controlling coalition (i.e., the family) is committed to the success of the innovation ■ *Innovation Efficacy*—belief that the individual can successfully adopt the innovation
Firm Factors ■ *Support Climate*—sufficient tangible (e.g., incentive systems) and encouraging intangible (i.e., culture and climate) environment to support adoption ■ *Facilitation Strategies*—a set of clearly articulated goals and objectives supported by a detailed adoption plan defining roles and systems to measure progress	■ *Collective Efficacy*—shared belief in the abilities to organize and execute the courses of action required of the innovation ■ *Collective Trust*—shared belief that the guiding coalition will act in the best interest of the firm's stakeholders

Finally, in Konig et al. (2013), we are given a glimpse of what might be said to be a form of the competitive advantages predicted by Habbershon & Williams' (1999) as they point out that family-owned businesses can be at an advantage in competing with their non-family counterparts. While Konig et al., also point to the similar challenges for family owned firms as provided by Holt & Daspit and others, they set a more optimistic tone in pointing out that when a family business owner and management are aligned on a strategy, their ability to act more boldly and decisively provide them with a competitive advantage. While Konig's work infers some of the *familiness* RBV predictions mentioned at the

outset, the link is not investigated in a way that lets us understand why or how these occur.

2.5 Discussion

In this chapter, I set out to explore the extent to which the existing literature addresses the question of how planned strategic organization change occurs in a family-owned business. I explained the important distinctions which have been developed within OD literature to codify the philosophical approaches toward organizational change. I also pointed out that the degree of change has a large impact on the explanation of how change might be enabled. Since I was interested in exploring how "second-order" change occurs in family firms, I offered the concept of *familiness* to define the influence of family ownership on a firm's resources and behaviors. I referred specifically to work by Irava & Moores (2010) who have developed six resource dimensions which they offer as the manifestation of *familiness* in business dealings.

I undertook an SLR to uncover what we may already know about how strategic organization change may occur in family firms. Nearly 3,000 academic papers, journals, dissertations, and books, including grey literature, were synthesized to identify as comprehensively and completely as possible what research might already have been undertaken into this enquiry. I have shared in detail the methodology used to refine the search leading to the preceding analysis of 42 pieces of literature.

The headline finding from my SLR is that there is little research that addresses the question of how organization change may occur in family owned firms. Given this lack of research, my attempts to gain deeper insights into the nuances of different levels and philosophical dispositions to change were moot. What I could identify were several clues which might set the scene for further research into this subject. Let me discuss these now.

There is support for the idea that change in a family business may occur distinctively (Barresi, Coppolino and Marisca, 2012; Canterino et al., 2013; Haddadj, 2006; Holt and Vardaman, 2013). Almost all the literature reviewed

starts with an argument that family owned businesses exhibit different cultural and behavioral paradigms which likely impact attempts to achieve organizational change. However, none of the literature explores this subject beyond some opening contextual commentary. Many of the papers pointed to the growing body of work in the family business domain which has used either the RBV *familiness* construct (Frank et al., 2010; Habbershon and Williams, 1999) or Socio-Emotional Wealth theory (Gomez-Mejia, et al., 2010; Zellweger, et al., 2011; Dawson and Mussolino, 2014; Minichilli et al., 2014) to justify the assertion that attempts at change are likely influenced by family ownership. However, these contextual statements are not investigated by any of the literature identified by this SLR. What are reported instead are colorful stories of the intra-family battles and unconventional journeys. While these papers tell of conflicts involved in the journey, they provide no commentary on why and in what ways these might be distinct from non-family firms. Moreover, none of these papers address whether existing general OD change frameworks are adequate for family business. This is puzzling given the consistent assertions that family firms probably exhibit distinctive attributes and tensions from their non-family counterparts.

In the grey literature, several authors offer predictions of the likely barriers to change in a family owned firm. However, there is a predominance of the view that the root of all strategic change stems from intra-family life-cycle matters. Equally, the assertion is that huge resistance to change also flows from family tensions. These views, while clearly accurate based on authors' experiences, do seem to be blind to the possibility of more proactive business-centric strategic change. There are, however, some clues in the literature of the potential distinctive advantages and disadvantages a family business possesses over their non-family counter-parts. Interestingly, these do not reference or appear to connect with the *familiness* literature referred to in my introduction. This perhaps should not be a surprise because the grey literature is written for practitioners and is based largely on the experience of academics acting as consultants to mainly US based family firms attempting major life-cycle transitions.

In the literature that deals with innovation, agility, and more indirect references to change, there are some interesting concepts. Holt & Daspit's work stands out, but is not alone in providing a view of change in family businesses less wrapped up in intra-family conflict. This work is noteworthy, as in this sparsely researched area the least amount of attention has been paid to the intriguing question of how a family firm might proactively navigate strategic change, absent ownership and family crises. Consequently, in attempting to piece together some insight on this question, one must extend some considerable effort to piece the various contributions together. What does emerge is a list of probable distinctive constraints and advantages which family owned business likely exhibit during attempts to achieve planned organization change.

I have synthesized the aggregated advice in Table 2-9. The contents of this table borrow from all the literature I reviewed but most notably from Holt & Daspit (2015) and Aronoff & Ward (2011). In both these cases, the frames they offer are either distilled from general OD work (in the case of Holt & Daspit) or conclusions derived from years of consulting with family owned businesses (Aronoff & Ward). Both sets of authors come to their conclusions from different ideological stances which does suggest some caution should be exercised in assuming their transferability to address the question I am interested in exploring (Dolma, 2010; Whetten, Felin and King, 2009).

Table 2-9 Clues to the potential unique obstacles and advantages Family Owned Firms may possess toward achieving organizational change (adapted from Aronoff and Ward, 2011; Holt and Daspit, 2015).

Obstacles	Advantages
The strong bias toward Owner/CEO centricity: with an emphasis on patriarchal cultural paradigms and less participative forms of management.	Decisive and powerful decision making enabled by powerful and authoritative owner/CEO
Risk aversion: with a strong set of beliefs around core business principles	Strong desire for organizational members to please owner and comply with their wishes
A lack of formality to decision making: a tendency for management systems to be informal and flexible	Ability to take long term view of business needs and avoid compromises dues to public shareholders and earnings reporting pressures
A pre-disposition to appoint family to key positions and avoid the appointment of outside professionals	Ability to unify organization around strong core family vision and values
Incredibly strong emotional bonds to historic operating details and behaviors passed down from founding generation	

In all the literature reviewed, but particularly loudly in the grey literature, is a prevailing bias that change in a family business should be viewed through the interaction between a powerful trinity of family, ownership, and business – the so called 'family system' (Gersick et al., 1997; Hilburt-Davis and Dyer, 2007). This sentiment assumes an ideological stance that all family businesses attempting any form of organizational change must focus their attention on aligning and reducing conflicts among the 'family system' if they are to succeed (Hilburt-Davis and Dyer, 2007; Zellweger, Nason and Nordqvist, 2012). Indeed, the suggestion here is that most change in family businesses will be at the instigation of a 'family system life-cycle event' (Gersick et al., 1999). The evidence for this assertion is provided mainly from the 'grey' literature which points to the experience of advisors in helping family owners sustain their businesses, through succession, divorce, sibling rivalry, reinvestment versus

cash distribution disputes and associated financial distress (Aronoff and Ward, 2011; Ward, 2004).

This view seems to ignore the prospect of family owners wishing to adjust their businesses proactively for purely business reasons. The unit of analysis here is focused at the family system. This sits in stark contrast with the majority of existing OD literature which as Pettigrew et al., (2001) reports, primarily focuses its analysis on the change process itself. This is interesting on at least three levels: (1) without exploring change in a family firm at the change level of analysis it is difficult to appraise the efficacy of existing general OD concepts, (2) the construct of *familiness* explained in the opening of this chapter is essentially an organization or firm based construct and thus offers an opportunity to test whether family influence has some impact during a change program, and; (3) an explanation at the change program level might provide a more generalizable set of results for family owned businesses considering strategic change. Moreover, the case that particularly large family owned businesses who compete on a global scale, who might attempt a strategic transformation of their business model, would be better served by the results of an empirical investigation conducted at the organizational level of analysis, has yet to be presented.

What is also clear from this SLR is that no attempt has yet been made to test the efficacy of existing OD change concepts in a family owned business setting. The only recognizable theories of change which appear in the literature review were Lewin's and Kotter's (Barresi, Coppolino and Marisca, 2012; Canterino et al., 2013). In both cases, no attempt was made to examine their usefulness or efficacy to explain '*familiness'* dimensions. Instead they were used only as literary frames to report the results of a case study. This is disappointing and suggests a large gap in our current understanding. A systematic investigation into whether Kotter's (2012, 1995) 8-step change framework or the various other OD concepts which are offered to explain and guide organizations seeking transformation would surely be insightful. If, after all, family businesses do exhibit different behaviors and capabilities to their non-family counterparts

there is a reason to at least test whether these general OD concepts still hold true (Buchanan, 2017; Burnes, 2004; Higgs and Rowland, 2005; Holt and Vardaman, 2013).

2.6 Conclusion

The clear conclusion from this SLR is that there is currently no evidence of a systematic exploration of how organizational change occurs in family owned firms. This is problematic as family firms remain the bedrock of our modern economy (Family Firm Institute Inc., 2017). They face the same competitive pressures as other business and the same dangers of obsolescence (Hatum, Pettigrew and Michelini, 2010; Olenski, 2016; Oppenheimer, 2016). Since there is widespread support for the idea that family firms exhibit different behaviors and capabilities to their non-family counterparts, our lack of understanding into whether this has any influence during attempts at strategic change should be a matter of concern.

Given the findings from this SLR, an empirical investigation which explores what might be the enablers for and barriers to change in a family owned firm would be very valuable. The gaps established by this SLR provide multiple points of entry into future research. I suggest, however, the starting point is to attempt to understand how a firm's *familiness* may manifest itself during an attempt at strategic change. Since strategic change as articulated by Johnson (1990), suggests a shift in organization, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of a firm, such a case study would provide valuable insights into whether *familiness* has an influence.

2.7 Contribution and Limitations

This chapter makes a number of contributions in uncovering what we currently know about how change may occur in family owned firms. First, I have established why and how family firms are thought to be distinctive to non-family firms. I make the case that *familiness,* as a construct, is sufficiently well researched and accepted as a conceptual frame so as to give us justification to believe that the six positive and negative dimensions identified by Irava &

Moores (2010) are likely to have some impact during a planned change attempt. Second, I have shown that many authors have pointed to the potential for family firms to experience change distinctively. Third, while I show that there are some clues to how a firm's *familiness* may create distinctive barriers and enablers to change, these have yet to be tested in a systematic empirical investigation. Irava & Moores' findings taken together with those shown in Table 2-9 provide a potential starting point for research. Fourth, I have raised questions as to the prevailing assumption that change in family firms should only be analyzed at a family system unit of analysis. I point out that *familiness* is an organizational level phenomenon, and that exploring change at an organization level may provide insights which at present we are ignorant to. And, finally, fifth, I demonstrate that no coherent attempt has been made to test prevailing organizational development (OD) theories of change in a family business setting.

This literature review has some limitations. First, while every attempt has been made to include all valid literature, some exclusions were made by initially limiting the search enquiries to the three major academic databases. Non-English language papers were also excluded, as were unpublished dissertations. Equally important, it is possible that some pertinent grey literature has not been captured in the systematic review methodology.

The premise of this chapter is that during processes of change, family-owned businesses may behave differently from their non-family counterparts. Of course, this might not necessarily be the case. The intention of this chapter was to underline the lack of empirical evidence either proving or rejecting this assertion. Nonetheless, it is possible that a bias exists in the writing of this report and the undertaking of the systematic review, thus clouding some of the commentary. Conscious of this, I have solicited independent reviews of early drafts of this manuscript from a cross section of family business research academics and practitioners. I am deeply grateful to their support and encouragement. Their comments and suggestions have been addressed in this final draft.

3 - Methodology

"Running taught me valuable lessons. In cross-country competition, training counted more than intrinsic ability, and I could compensate for a lack of natural aptitude with diligence and discipline. I applied this in everything I did." Nelson Mandela (1995)

In this chapter, I will explain in some detail the research goals, strategy, design, data collection and process of analysis. In Chapter 1 (and throughout this thesis), I provide more than an indication of the philosophical and methodological approach assumed by this research but, given its importance, I will consolidate and expand upon it here. I have taken a social constructionist position (Weinberg, 2014), following an ethnographic (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Goodall, 2000; Schein, 1988), participant observation method (Dewalt et al., 2011), supplemented by field interviews (Silverman, 2013; Burgess, 1984). In analyzing the resultant data, I have augmented my embedded anthropologic narrative, with a detailed coding of interview transcripts following the grounded theory method (GTM) approach (Glaser and Strauss, 2009; Urquhart, 2013). My purpose in this chapter is to provide a more detailed explanation of methods such that the reader and future researchers can be best equipped to understand, extract, and apply the findings appropriately. While the tradition for a thesis is also to provide this information to allow replication of the research results, one must underline the unique opportunity afforded the researcher in observing RIL during their PSC journey. Nonetheless, I will provide all the detail on methodological approach possible, while also providing a discussion on the pros and cons of single case study research.

3.1 Motives and Goals

The pursuit of this research is fueled by the following motivations: (1) I have been granted privileged access to and permission to explore a large scale corporate transformation program launched by India's most iconic family owned business; Reliance Industries Limited, in 2013 (Business Today, 2014; Sabarinath, 2014); (2) Based on a systematic literature review, there is a lack of understanding of how organizational change may occur in large family-owned

firms (see SLR starting on page 27); (3) Existing family owned business literature on change is predominantly "grey" literature with the unit of analysis on the 'family-system' and not the change process itself; (4) No analysis of the efficacy of existing change frameworks has been systematically tested for large family-owned businesses, and, finally; (5) India is emerging as a global economic power with a large number of family-owned businesses leading the way, consequently studying how they may successfully navigate PSC may be of great salience (The Indian Express, 2015a).

Delivering this research project entails describing in detail: (1) Reliance Industries' cultural paradigm and contributing history; (2) the causation factors for seeking PSC; (3) the PSC programs goals and ambitions; (4) the organizational change program tactics, systems, and mechanisms; (5) the enablers and barriers to PSC, and; (6) How these may compare to existing OD change frameworks. Through this analysis, the goal is to address the research question "What are the enablers for and barriers to PSC in a large, owner-centric, family owned business?"

3.2 Research Question and Purpose

The primary research question has been constructed following the results of a literature review shared in Chapter 2. This enquiry is designed to address whether a large, owner-centric company's "*familiness*" has an impact or influence during an organizational change program. I have used the words 'owner-centric' to describe a particular type of family business where the presence of a strong central figure exists. I have explained the significance and existing literature on owner-centric family business cultures in the introduction to my literature review. Additionally, *Familiness* is a useful pre-existing construct designed to explain the distinctive bundle of capabilities within a family owned firm. I have also defined this construct in more detail in my literature review (see page 27).

Developing the empirical research question was an iterative process. The conclusion was to investigate the enablers and barriers to "Planned Strategic Change" at RIL. The logic was simple; establishing what these were within RIL's

change process would allow a subsequent discussion of how these might be similar or different to non-family firms. Equally, it did not presume that RIL's change program was distinctive but left that to be discovered through empirical investigation. Consequently, the final research question is stated as:

"What are the enablers for and barriers to planned strategic change in a large, owner-centric, family-owned business?"

This question does require an explanation of some of the terms. Enablers and barriers should be self-evident, qualified, of course, by the nature of this research project as social research conducted in the tradition of social constructionism (discussed later). However, the type of organizational change is important to define given the plethora of existing literature in the field of organizational development (OD). I have chosen to describe the form of change studied here as "Planned Strategic Change" (PSC). I have provided a definition of this throughout my empirical research but in some detail in my SLR (see page 27). My goals in using this description are to: (1) Describe a specific ideological approach to how organizational change can occur (i.e. imposed and following a prescribed path) and; (2) differentiate RIL's planned change program as "strategic" as a means to underline its implied implications to "cultural, organization, and cognitive" components of the firm (Johnson, 1990). These are critical definitions which are important for interpretation and application of my findings.

RIL is a large family-owned business. I define family-owned on Page 92 but would again underline here that there are some continuing debates about what family-owned means. Academics continue to struggle with the nuances of family-owned versus family-run businesses, pointing out that the essence of the debate is how a family's direct involvement in the running of a business potentially creates different priorities and decision-making processes than their institutionally owned counter-parts. While acknowledging this unresolved debate, my presentation of this study into RIL offers an investigation into a somewhat "pure" family business which is both owned and operated by Shri (the Indian salutation for respected leader) Mukesh Ambani. Where there is a

qualification, it is perhaps on RIL's sheer size. At nearly $70b in market capitalization and with some 242,000 employees and contractors, RIL is an extraordinarily big organization by any standard. I will discuss generalization of my findings in Chapter 8 but would make the point here that this investigation into RIL's change program clearly and unambiguously focuses on identifying the enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL. However, it may be of interest and note to the reader to understand that the number of large family-owned groups in India alone total in the hundreds (Bhattacharya, 2010; Family Firm Institute Inc., 2017; PwC, 2012).

3.3 Philosophical Foundation and Research Strategy

I have been presented with an opportunity to study RIL's PSC program. As I mention in my opening chapter, there is an aspect of serendipity regarding this research project. Having been embedded with RIL since September 2013, the opportunity to use this vantage point to chronicle their PSC journey is the starting point for my research design. Consequently, my starting vantage point seemed to naturally fit within a social constructionist ontology. Equally, the choice to undertake a single company case study in the capacity of ethnographic observer, who has been "completely participating" in RIL's PSC program appeared almost organically as the "right" approach (Dewalt, Dewalt and Wayland, 2011). However, let me explore each of these components in a little more detail.

The inspiration for this enquiry began with observations of RIL's different approach to achieving PSC and was enhanced following the inability to find an explanation in existing literature. The methodological challenge was to design a research project which leveraged the opportunity while remaining realistic and time bound. RIL began a transformation program in 2013 designed to formalize its management systems and reshape its leadership ranks with a view to creating a sustaining "eco-system." I was invited to join RIL as advisor to this program and the company's executive team. The subsequent access to all aspects of RIL's PSC journey has provided a unique opportunity. I list the depth and breadth of the access I have been afforded on page 20. With some

transparency, therefore, I declare the entry into this project and the resulting choice of research design begins with the opportunity and realization that something interesting was occurring.

While it is not my purpose here to detail the historic evolution of social constructionism, I think it is important to explain its philosophical stance. Relative to the positivist tradition, with its general assumption that a true answer exists and the job of the researcher is to discover it, social constructionism makes no such claims. Instead, the constructionist view is that truth is subjective and relative to many social influences (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). Consequently, social constructionist researchers focus on illuminating different interpretations and competing explanations of truth as they have been constructed by groups of individuals. Taking a small but illuminating explanation of social constructionist philosophical evolution from Weinberg's (2014) *Contemporary Social Constructionism: Key Themes* amplifies how social constructionist is founded in this relativist perspective. Here Weinberg chronicles how noteworthy philosophers came to embrace a more relativist view of truth specifically for exploration of social research:

> …Dilthey fiercely opposed the efforts of social theorist such as John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, and Auguste Conte to produce mechanistic causal analysis of society. He insisted that because it is purposeful, meaningful, and creative, social life cannot be explained by natural laws but can be grasped only through *Verstehen*, or interpretive understanding. Dilthey advocated what he called a Lebensphilosophie, a philosophy of life, anchored neither in sense data nor in grand philosophical cosmology but in the variety and complexity of "lived experience" itself. He argued that philosophy, like all meaningful activity, is inevitably motivated and informed by the sociohistorical conditions under which it is accomplished (and from which it cannot be dislodged). (2014, p.54).

According to Weinberg, Dilthey's ideas were the foundation of subsequent work by Max Weber and Martin Heidegger which in turn are believed to have had a profound influence on twentieth-century intellectual history (Weinberg, 2014, p.55). What I seek to show here, however, is that social constructionist

perspective encourages us to explore the shared meaning created by social groups and how it influences their behavior. It is this constructed reality and its power to control and "enslave" large groups of people that inspired much of Karl Marx's work (Weinberg, 2014). It is also why the social constructionist tradition is used so widely to explore such matters as beauty, gender, morality, pathology, and, in the business context, organizational culture. These attributes and constructs are not widely believed to have fixed natural law explanations, but, as the old saying goes, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" (Weinberg, 2014, pp.13 & 15).

If we return to the research reported in this thesis and address how we can decipher the socially constructed "truths" which individuals within RIL hold relative to the change program, how we can investigate their cause, and their power to influence; then a qualitative and ethnographic approach emerges as a sound research methodology. Ed Schien (1988) is one of the foremost authorities on studying organizational culture and he makes a strong case for adopting an embedded observer approach:

> The things we observe that do not make sense are the best basis for proceeding with cultural deciphering. We now need some willing and motivated insiders who can be asked about our observations. As we inquire about the things that puzzle us, we generally elicit the level of values, the reasons insiders give to ex- plain why they do the things they do. But these reasons are more likely to be the espoused values, the organization's ideology, not necessarily its underlying assumptions. To get at those assumptions we must combine the resources of 1) the observant outsider who raises questions with 2) the efforts of motivated insiders who want to decipher why they do the things they do. This pushes the deciphering process to the level of assumptions by confronting the insider with the discrepancies between observed behavior and espoused values. (Schein, 1988, p.17)

Many others seem to agree that the most effective way to understand a culture and the hidden assumptions is to be immersed in it. The "quid pro quo," however, is that to provide a thorough analysis of an organization's cultural assumptions, to trace their origins and implications during an attempt at organizational change, is a time-consuming process. De Massis et al., (2014)

for example, talk about the prevalence and value of conducting case study research specifically into family firms in their paper titled *The Case Study Method in Family Business Research: Guidelines for Qualitative Scholarship.* As they say "it…[is]…a valuable method for family business scholars to describe complex phenomena, develop new theory or refine and extend existing theories" (2014, p.16). They add to Schein's point by explaining that while a single case study may be criticized for its one organization context, to undertake the immersive and time-consuming investment to fully uncover the complex social constructions at play, there are few alternatives. Consequently, the largely consistent advice from contemporary scholars of organizational culture in the pursuit of uncovering explanations of underlying assumptions and their influence over members' behavior is to select fewer subjects, but to fully commit to investigating them very deeply.

In my case, I had found myself as an embedded observer into RIL's PSC program. I began my role with them in late 2013 and completed my formal assignment with them in July 2017. In this period, I was immersed in their management processes, PSC program strategy and tactics, as well as being an advisor to members of their executive team and their Chairman. Consequently, an ethnographic method seemed natural. Indeed, any other approach may have felt rather contrived or even what Silverman (2013) disparagingly describes as "manufactured." Many methodological commentators talk of the richness and value of conducting ethnographic, anthropologic studies but lament the total time required by a researcher to achieve high quality work (Dewalt, Dewalt and Wayland, 2011; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012; Goodall, 2000; Schein, 1988). In my case, the opportunity materialized and this research project evolved through a combination of serendipity, researcher curiosity, and Cranfield DBA program membership. On this last point, it may be important to note that while I began my DBA program in September 2015, I had been maintaining field notes and capturing data from my involvement with RIL since September 2013. I had done this in large part because I wanted to record for perpetuity what I was witnessing. I had also been encouraged by RIL and BP

executives to maintain a journal of key events with a view to write a summary after the conclusion of my assignment.

In my introduction (page 19), I discuss my approach as embedded observer, "complete participant," and faithful ethnographic reporter. I do not wish to repeat those explanations again here, except to explain the congruence of this approach with the social constructionist philosophy. I argue that my approach to this research project maximizes my ability to deeply understand the socially constructed realities of key actors during RIL's PSC program. As embedded observer I was able to develop a level of rapport and trust with participants, which went well beyond the capacity of a visiting researcher (Dewalt, Dewalt and Wayland, 2011). I was afforded access and candor that allowed the exploration of meaning that went far deeper than might otherwise have been possible. Moreover, my ability to use my 3.5 years in RIL to strip down levels of superficiality and attempt to understand the motivations and realities as viewed through the eyes of organization members was essential to fulfill my goals.

In summary, my intended approach fits the generally accepted strategy for attempts to understand and explain the very intricate behavioral patterns at play in family businesses (Blaikie, 2009; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 1989). Blaikie (2009) and Yin (2014) both make clear that case studies need not necessarily automatically adopt qualitative research methods. However, the nature of this enquiry, the circumstances of the researcher, and the complexity of the research goals in this case make the selection of an ethnographic approach the natural one. The formulation of the research question also supports this approach. Blaikie (2009, p.109), the noted authority on social research design, remarks that while *Inductive* and *Deductive* research strategies may be equally effective at addressing 'What' questions, only the *Abductive* approach provides the additional opportunity to address 'How' and 'Why' questions.

Additionally, the chosen ethnographic approach not only lends itself to this research project but does add a certain diversity to the small sample of existing research methods identified in my SLR. The case studies used in the five pre-existing studies that directly referenced a planned change event were short

term interview based qualitative projects. This study will go further and deeper. Moreover, an ethnographic study would constitute a methodological expansion of perspective from priori research.

Finally, let me add that this single ethnographic case study, focused as it is on investigating RIL's attempt to transform its management systems, is worthy of being considered a 'critical case.' Yin (2014, p.56) gives three rationales or justifications for conducting a single case study (1) it is critical (2) it is a unique case (3) it is potentially a revelator. RIL potentially provides all three; (1) RIL provides us with an extraordinary opportunity to test our existing understanding of how change may occur differently in a family owned firm; (2) It represents an extraordinary and hitherto inaccessible set of insights into how a large family owned firm is attempting to sustain itself, and; (3) it possesses the ingredients to emerge as the proverbial 'black swan' event providing an opportunity to demonstrate the inadequacies of existing change frameworks (Taleb, 2010).

3.4 Concepts

This is an abductive enquiry which sets its goals on identifying and understanding the sources of the main enablers and barriers to PSC in RIL's transformation program. Consequently, there is no hypothesis testing or other such pre-conceived test which will be applied. This said, my enquiry has been informed by the following three pre-existing literature strands:

(a) Clues stemming from SLR: While my literature review identified no existing research directly into PSC in large family owned firms, I did uncover some clues to the likely enablers and barriers to more general change within family firms. I have shown these again here as Table 3-1. The contents of the table are a summation of the clues found during my literature review but come with a caveat that: (i) they were pieced together from multiple sources; (ii) they were primarily from "grey" literature sources, that is to say books from academic authors focused on providing family business owners with pragmatic advice relative to change; (iii) the unit of analysis for these sources was generally the so-called "family-system" and not the change program itself, and finally; (iv) none of these concepts has hitherto been tested in an empirical study.

Nonetheless, the table shows some insights on what existing family business scholars believe may be the biggest enablers and barriers to change in family firms. It will be useful to use this table to contrast findings from the empirical study. In particular, I may be able to use any findings which overlap with the contexts of Table 3-1 as evidence of a distinctive form of *familiness* playing a role in RIL's PSC program.

Table 3-1 Clues to the potential unique obstacles and advantages Family Owned Firms may possess toward achieving organizational change (adapted from Aronoff and Ward, 2011; Holt and Daspit, 2015).

Obstacles	Advantages
The strong bias toward Owner/CEO centricity: with an emphasis on patriarchal cultural paradigms and less participative forms of management.	Decisive and powerful decision making enabled by powerful and authoritative owner/CEO
Risk aversion: with a strong set of beliefs around core business principles	Strong desire for organizational members to please owner and comply with their wishes
A lack of formality to decision making: a tendency for management systems to be informal and flexible	Ability to take long term view of business needs and avoid compromises dues to public shareholders and earnings reporting pressures
A pre-disposition to appoint family to key positions and avoid the appointment of outside professionals	Ability to unify organization around strong core family vision and values
Incredibly strong emotional bonds to historic operating details and behaviors passed down from founding generation	

(b) *Familiness*: I have mentioned previously that I believe the pre-existing construct of *familiness* may be useful in understanding any distinctions in RIL's main enablers and barriers to change. I have defined *familiness* in my literature review (see page 27), consequently I will not do so again here. However, I should underline that my intent is to ask the question whether *familiness* might help explain any deviations from conventional OD change frameworks which may be present in RIL. The chronology, therefore, is to explore the enablers for

and barriers to PSC in RIL unfettered by the *familiness* construct but to return to it should evidence be presented of some distinctiveness in RIL's approach.

(c) Prevailing OD PSC Frameworks: To demonstrate the consistency or deviation from conventional PSC approaches, I plan to use Kotter's (2012, 1995) 8-step change framework as a contrast to my findings. It is important to underline my enquiry is not about Kotter's change framework and I will attempt to be clear throughout my dissertation that my primary goal is to understand RIL's main enablers and barriers to PSC independently. My desire is to use Kotter's work as a point of comparison and ask whether it is adequate to explain RIL's experience during change. In part, this seems a sensible approach because I believe Kotter's work is philosophically aligned with RIL's (discussed in more depth later). Moreover, I am intrigued to see if Kotter's framework can help explain RIL's process as it would then address one of my main questions about whether contemporary OD research could be applied to family businesses.

3.5 Data Sources, Types, and Forms

I have relied extensively on what Silverman (2013) calls "naturally occurring" data in the course of this study. I have supplemented this with 26 semi-structured field interviews. The richness of the total available data has been daunting but ultimately a blessing. The corresponding depth of materials has been extraordinary and I hope the research has thusly benefited.

By naturally occurring, Silverman (2013, p.4) points out the already existing data all around us: From printed materials, to mundane behaviors…from what the newspapers have said and why… to why people stick to similar routines each day. The skill of a good ethnographer is to be able to see it and analyze it. As Silverman (2013, p.66) himself puts it "…all things being equal, it is usually a good ploy to begin a research project by looking at naturally occurring data." He goes on to talk disdainfully of the perils of what he refers to as the "interview culture" that he says now invades much of social research before extolling the benefits of looking instead at what "already exists:"

> "…naturalistic data can serve as a wonderful basis for theorizing about things we could never imagine…using what ordinarily happens in the world around us means we can start with things that are not currently imaginable, by showing that they happened."

As an embedded observer of RIL's transformation journey, I have also been afforded tremendously rich data from participant observation. This participant observation and the narrative or chronological story which I have tried to faithfully record in this thesis forms what I consider the core of my research. Such has been the extraordinary opportunity of living and breathing the RIL PSC journey alongside RIL owners, executives, and employees, I have wanted to record this experience in as rich and accurate detail, viewed through the eyes of participants. The value I believe of doing so is extraordinary and given the combination of time commitment and privileged access, may represent a unique moment in time, at least in regard to RIL. De Massis et al., (2014, p.20) point out the main drawback of ethnographic, anthropologic work as the time commitment but emphasize the value when they say:

> "Direct observation….allow[s] researchers to obtain "rich insights into the human, social and organizational aspects of business organizations" (Myers, 2013, p.92). This data source is particularly suited to studying aspects of organizational culture because it is only by experiencing organizational life that the underlying values and philosophies commonly held by organizational members can even begin to be understood."

Being an embedded observer does give rise to some questions of objectivity and replicability of research. I will discuss these matters later in the section on limitations. However, ethnography has at its heart the challenge of faithfully recording the lived experience and perspectives of a valuable social community. As experienced ethnographic scholars have noted, questions of data, evidence, and interpretation can be somewhat blurred as the researcher's "lived experience" and "full immersion in the phenomenon being studied" does not always provide convenient quotes or soundbites aligned with valuable observations (Clifford, 1983; Dewalt, Dewalt, and Wayland, 2011; Gans, 1999; Goodall, 2000; Tedlock, 1991). However, the richness and depth that can emerge from ethnographic enquiry is worth the slight messiness in providing the

reader with clarity on the salience of observed events, the process of recording and translating them, and how I have arrived at my interpretations.

To help simplify the ethnographic evidencing process, I have followed Goodall's (2000) guidance as provided in *Writing the New Ethnography*. My goal is to "write my personal experience as a researcher with meaning that serves as analysis of culture. As such, ethnographic inquiry and storytelling is analogous to being involved in a mystery" (2000, p.127). Simultaneously, I will provide signposts as to how I found the clues and, hopefully, how I solved the mystery. Rather than punctuating the flow of my descriptive narrative in this work, I have footnoted any assertions and conclusions that are not directly linked to a quote or to other referenced evidence.

A final important data source is the outcome of the 26 semi-structured field interviews I conducted between March and April 2017. It is quite common in ethnographic research to undertake more formal field interviews towards the end of a period of study. Indeed, this is encouraged in various ethnographic methodological texts (Agar and Hobbs, 1982; Burgess, 1984; Clifford, 1983; Skinner, 2014; Tedlock, 1991). Consistent with my bias, stated above, to avoid the manufacturing of data, these interviews were designed: (a) to flow naturally from the cumulative observations and preliminary conclusions I had reached as faithful ethnographer and participant observer; (b) to follow a loose semi-structured format, where conversation was encouraged based on respondents appetite and interest to share their views, and; (c) have been reflected in more detailed conversational exchanges in this text to authentically allow the reader to examine the nuances and intricacies of the dialogue.

3.6 Selection of Data Sources

As mentioned above, I based my research on essentially three streams of data: (1) naturally occurring data in the form of RIL materials and artefacts, external publications, and journal articles on RIL; (2) participant observation captured by my field notes and other records of directly observed events; and (3) 26 semi-structured field interviews. Let me elaborate on the why and how these data sources were selected below:

3.6.1 Naturally Occurring Data – Historic and Contextual

I identified the importance of understanding who RIL are as an organization early in 2013, before I began my DBA journey. In August 2013, when BP approached me to spend some time with RIL, as a natural course of doing some homework before embarking on the assigned task, I began to identify contextual materials. These included books on RIL's history and some journal articles related to the intra-family arguments which followed the original founder, Dhirubhai Ambani's, death in 2002. These documents helped provide a rich historical context for how RIL came to be the company they are today and provided clues as to the formation of their deepest cultural assumptions.

A plethora of additional data became available through my role at RIL as advisor on their transformation program. RIL kept a library of these documents; the R-HR and RMS materials. When I began the process of formally writing up my fieldwork observations in late 2016, I asked members of the RIL HR team for access to these materials. They very kindly granted my request. The cumulative materials between the records I had kept and the library of materials from RIL exceeded 5,000 pages of MS Word, MS PowerPoint, printed speeches, and web pages. It was a treasure trove of material from which much of the first three chapters of my empirical work have been written.

3.6.2 Participant Observation – Field Notes

I had also for many years kept a journal of my work activities. These were typically maintained in Moleskin notepads. With some prescience of what was to follow, I paid special attention to recording my interactions from September 2013 onwards. Initially this was through a sense of wanting a personal record of what I thought might be an extraordinary professional and life experience. In subsequent months, it became something of an addiction and a form of therapy.

When I embarked on my DBA in Sept 2015, I paid more attention to maintaining my notes as a field journal. This said, my journal entries even in early 2014 reflect powerful moments:

Jan 8, 2014

Met MDA today to discuss systematizing pay and reward for RIL executives. Mark (BP Secondee) presented his paper. It was interesting that MM (Mr. Modi) and AA (Akash Ambani) were present. One gets the sense that MDA is interested in making some changes but he has a cortege of loyal lieutenants that are skeptical and he is trying to find a way to bring them along. It's strange because he can be somewhat prescriptive and authoritative. Yet, he seems deeply anxious that his long-standing folks are negatively disposed to some of these ideas. Pay is one of the touchier subjects for sure. I think MDA is reluctant to impose his will too frequently…perhaps he is testing here whether this is a subject they will align behind or not and simply doesn't see it as an area he wants to mandate.

This was a typical journal entry. As time elapsed I probably became slightly more skilled and focused on looking at different themes. For example, in late 2015, a journal entry looked more like this:

Dec 4, 2015

In the visit today to Jamnagar (JMD), I witnessed the tension between this deeply held desire to be loyal to long serving employees and yet dissatisfaction with their current collective capabilities. MDA addressed the APEX (Leadership Team) of the JMD site and explained his vision for "shared leadership" or what he sometimes called "Indian family" approach to management. His point was that he wanted to have 3-people simultaneously accountable for key leadership tasks. He envisaged a situation where these 3-people acted as an inter-changeable whole. Any one could act for the other 2. Yet, at the same time, we discussed throughout the day the need to improve the capabilities of JMD leadership, particularly on the functional side. On the journey home, I asked him whether he saw a conflict here. He said no, that he wanted to keep flexibility; he didn't want to create or endorse kingdom building. He mentioned 'fiefdoms,' and 'silos.' My sense was he was mixing up his dissatisfaction with some existing staffs behaviors with where he had set a course for RIL with these systems changes. In the moment, it is clear that the emotions swirling on this and a number of other matters are creating "knee jerk" reactions. Spasms of angst. What I think I mean is that as some existing staff are pointing to the new management systems and saying, "But boss you say I can act without approval…so I am doing so." Some in RIL are chipping away at MDA behind the scenes saying, "But boss these people don't have the right judgment or skills, we should go back to the old ways, appoint 3 people and deliberately make accountabilities

ambiguous so we can arbitrage ideas and pick whichever one we like on a given day." The picture painted is of battles behind the scenes for those feeling threatened by a new approach to decision making and how that reduces their influence. The currency used to fight against the change is the observation that the new systems empower less talented people to make decisions, decisions they will never be able to make as well as the owners. This creates doubts in MDA's mind. I think today we saw those doubts being articulated under the guise of shared leadership. I also think MDA was testing me and others to see whether we thought this "reversion" was acceptable. It's all very indirect and yet the language is very emotional, very…loud!

Over the 3.5 years of my time working with RIL, I filled four Moleskin notepads with various notes relating to what I was witnessing. While there is not an entry for everyday and as such might not fulfil the definition of a field diary, the notes are extensive and reflect a combination of what I did each day and my reflections, extemporaneously, of what I thought I was witnessing. These field notes, collectively, have been a major source of data for Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

3.6.3 Field Interviews

In concluding my research into RIL's PSC program, I wanted to record directly in the voice and words of some of the key actors exactly what they thought were the main enablers and barriers to RIL's PSC journey. I was keen to do this for several reasons. One key reason was to test whether my preliminary conclusions on the enablers and barriers for RIL's PSC were accurate. Gathering interview responses was a means to triangulate and deepen some of my observations. Since I wanted these conversations to be free to contradict or point to hitherto unexplored explanations, I felt it was better to allow these to be semi-structured interviews, where respondents could be free to share their explanations without the restrictions of a dogged interview guide. I also felt I would be able to gather more candid feedback if I leveraged my relationships with the company and made the interviews as relaxed and informal as possible.

Consequently, with assistance from Cranfield DBA faculty, I developed the interview guide shown in Appendix C. A key feature of this design was to have a

list of questions as themes to be explored during an interview. This guide was revised after the initial 10 interviews to incorporate feedback from respondents. There are three things about this guide and the structure of interviews to be underlined: (1) I designed the questions from general to more specific to try to elicit new explanations, prior to testing some of my observations; (2) participants struggled with ways to comprehend "enablers and barriers" and tended to translate these to successes or failures. It is understood here that these have different meanings, but I changed the interview guide to initially steer respondents through this nomenclature and then dug down to ask what enabled or obstructed these outcomes. This worked far more effectively in uncovering their views of enablers and barriers; (3) the interviews were conducted in conversational style, this is to say, I rarely just asked the question on the interview guide. More often, during a dialogue, I would steer the respondent to the next point, paraphrasing the next theme to fit into the context of our conversation.

The sample logic for my field interviews was technically a non-probability purposeful quota approach. My main aim with the field interviews was to ensure I interviewed an insightful selection of key owners, leaders, and managers from key vantage points. There were four I was primarily interested in: (a) levels of governance, ownership, executive, and management; (b) functional and business coverage, looking at the change from different internal power bases (i.e. the commercial side of a business very often is considered more influential than functional support); (c) new versus old management, and; (d) international versus purely Indian experience. Since I had access and existing relationships with many of the senior management team at RIL, I selected approximately 30 people who fit the above demographics. In the context of RIL's overall management team, since the Directors number only a dozen, I probably had greatest representation in this group (having interviewed 2). In the group leader cadre, RIL's top 100 officers, I interviewed 14. And the balance of my 26 interviews can from a cross section of middle and junior management. For an organization that, as I will report, has some reservations with discussing internal matters for any external purpose, the willingness and enthusiasm with which

these respondents volunteered was I believe remarkable and represents an unprecedented step for RIL.

I have shared the specifics of my field interview sample and demographics on page 145 and a detailed listing of my interview respondents can be found in Appendix D. Consistent with Blaikie's (2009, p.178-180) advice, my approach has focused on purposeful sampling, emphasizing pragmatism while ensuring high quality data gathering. My experience as an embedded observer afforded me certain privileges and one of those was being able to have unprecedented access to RIL's most senior executives. I took advantage of this access while ensuring careful triangulation of inputs from different vantage points, both inside and outside India. The results I believe are very comprehensive.

3.7 Data Reduction and Analysis

Consistent with the ontological, epistemological approach outlined so far in this chapter, I have analyzed and reported my findings using: (1) an overall ethnographic narrative, telling the story of RIL's PSC journey and how this has been furthered or hindered by three paradoxical forces stemming from their inherent *familiness*; (2) my participant observation conclusions within the context of the ethnographic narrative, including an analysis of Kotter's 8-step change framework as a comparison; (3) general dialogue analysis of my field interviews; (4) detailed open coding abstraction and constant comparison in the tradition of the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) of 26 transcribed field interviews, and; (5) a GTM theoretical explanation of how change has occurred in RIL based on the data presented.

I have described in my introduction (page 18) the overarching ethnographic approach I have embraced. My goal has been to tell the story of RIL's change journey as a faithful representation of how key actors within the organization are guided and influenced by their conceptions of reality. The challenge with ethnographic work is to balance storytelling with academic rigor, data, and analysis. I have tried to strike this balance throughout my work.

I have provided detailed explanations for my own observations of the enablers for and barriers to PSC based on my field notes and referencing were appropriate pre-existing academic sources (namely my SLR results and by comparison to Kotter's 8 step framework). The synthesis of this work is my own. However, I have undertaken this research project with the full collaboration and support of three very important constituencies who have helped challenge my conclusions. These are listed in Appendix G. The purpose here is to demonstrate that the data reduction for participant observation was not undertaken in a silo.

My field interview results were analyzed using open coding and constant comparison employing the Glaserian version of Grounded Theory Method (GTM) (Urquhart, 2013). I have provided substantial detail on my coding approach on pages 18, 161, and 295. Finally, I also used GTM to help develop a theoretical explanation of how PSC has occurred in RIL. The process followed here is shared in section 7.3 (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 1989; Glaser and Strauss, 2009).

In preparing this thesis, I should also mention the influence of Scott Snook's (2002) work *Friendly Fire: The accidental Shootdown of U.S. Black Hawks over Northern Iraq*. His work stands out in demonstrating the power of a single case study to provide great academic and practitioner value. He was also the inspiration behind using a causal map shown at section 4.6, to illustrate the complex interrelated factors that contributed to RIL seeking PSC. Others have also contributed in this form including examples based on the Cuban Missile Crisis and Challenger Disaster (Kennedy, 1969; Perrow, 1999). I hope to have produced work, albeit in a different field and context, which does some justice to the daunting example set by these great and very engaging scholars.

3.8 Problems and Limitations

There are two potential challenges with the applied methodology requiring discussion. The first is the question of researcher and informant bias in ethnographic research. The second is the question of generalizability of my findings into a single company case study. Let me deal with these in turn.

3.8.1 Bias in Ethnographic Research

Let me address this question from two perspectives; (1) the question of objectivity and influence of the researcher on the subject, and; (2) the possibility of bias from those involved in this study as respondents.

3.8.1.1 Addressing Researcher Bias

It is important to acknowledge that the role of the researcher may not be viewed as objective but an active influence as advisor to and designer of some components of RIL's change program. Blaikie (2009, pp.50–53) discusses the different stances a researcher can take toward the subject matter. While he might describe this research stance as taking a 'postmodern view' he acknowledges the validity nonetheless, with the researcher unashamedly embracing the role as mediator of languages (between practitioner and academic), reflective partner (or sounding board), and conscience (or provocateur) rather than detached outsider. While this description might be said to validate the approach I have taken, the 'postmodern' label, at least as described by Silverman (2013, p.138) may be inaccurate, and certainly sits uncomfortably with me. A more appealing description would be as aspiring ethnographer in the fashion of Snook (2002), Schein (2010), or Dyer (1986). In each case, these researchers had a presence and influence in their research subjects as either consultants or employees. Their work also stands out as testament to the potential academic and practitioner value of using their lived experience to report important observations and theoretical expositions. Perhaps the labels are less important than the ultimate product. Either way, it is fully accepted that disclosure of my relationship to RIL and role in advising them in their change program should be acknowledged and transparently disclosed.

In critically assessing this position as 'active participant' and faithful recorder, my research may benefit from being criticality analyzed through a similar lens to that used in action research (Herr and Anderson, 2014). Action research methodology scholars accept the 'critical subjectivity' inherent in employing this research method (Reason, 1994). A natural bias is said to exist in all such research and the key challenge for researchers is to accept and critically

examine this. In my case, I have shared in my introduction on page 15 and throughout this chapter my starting perspective and how it has been drawn from my own experiences (Herr and Anderson, 2014, p.327). Equally, I have made a concerted effort throughout this thesis to employ reflexivity and challenge to my observations via the mechanisms described here and in the Chapter 9 (Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008; Gilding, 2010).

However, Lomax et al., (1996) underline the importance for ethnographic researchers to put in place other triangulation, challenge, and validation mechanisms contemporaneously to force the researcher to defend findings 'as they emerge' (p.156). Embracing this advice, I put in place four validation mechanisms as follows:

(1) Cranfield Faculty: In my monthly meetings with Cranfield supervisors and quarterly meetings with DBA panel members, I presented my research progress and invited challenge.

(2) Personal DBA Advisory Panel: In late 2015, I formed a panel of family business academics (listed in Chapter 9), who agreed to review and critique my draft findings.

(3) BP practitioner collaborators: Senior members of the BP Human Resources department were enlisted to review my observations of change mechanisms with RIL and challenge my interpretations (again listed in Chapter 9).

(4) RIL practitioner collaborators: Similar to (3), members of the RIL Human Resources function were invited to challenge my initial observations.

What aided these conversations were some of the material listed on pages 20 and 21. Combined with my own journal entries, the ability to share video, written materials, and, my interview transcripts, provided a valuable and interesting exchange with collaborators that enhanced and informed my research.

Finally, let me directly address the question of whether my presence in RIL had an impact on their change program. RIL's decision to embark on change and the timing were independent of my arrival in India. My role was to advise RIL's

senior management team on how to adapt BP's management systems for use in RIL. Consequently, my presence will have had some influence on their change program. Since I have already covered in the section above the accepted validity of this stance (as active participant and reflective partner in the anthropologic and ethnographic tradition described by Schein (2010), Dewalt (2011), Snook (2002), Dyer (1986), and others), what may remain is to address whether my findings into RIL's change program journey might be distorted in some way. My response to this is to argue instead that rather than distort, I was in a position to help interpret and discover how RIL, provided with similar systems to a company such as BP, choose to approach their application, implementation, and modification in new ways. While I assisted RIL to understand BP's management systems, the central enquiry here was not those systems but how RIL adapted them, the tactics they employed, and the reactions of those who interacted with them. In each of these dimensions, I played exactly the role described by Blaikie (2009) – interpreter and analyst. Consequently, borrowing again from action learning, this research is unambiguously "new" while being nested in my previous experiences of navigating change for BP and other companies (Herr and Anderson, 2014).

3.8.1.2 Addressing Respondent Bias

I describe later, in my introduction to my semi-structured interview data (see section 6.3), the question of respondent bias. While I cover the steps I used to mitigate response bias in Chapter 6, for completeness, let me provide a brief summary here:

(1) Perceived Sponsor Bias: In my interactions with collaborators, and particularly in my semi-structured interviews, I was concerned that respondents would perceive MDA and RIL as the sponsors for this research. This might have resulted in their desire to speak well of RIL and the change program.

To counter this, I took a number of steps: (1) I prefaced all my interviews with an explanation of how the work was independent from

RIL; (2) I made it clear that the interviews would not be shared with RIL management, and (3) I assured respondents of confidentiality.

(2) Social Acceptance or Desirability Bias: To reduce the possibility of respondents providing overly optimistic views of the transformation program (see particularly Sections 5.2 and 6.4.1), I structured my interview guide using Furnham (1986) and Fisher's (1993) guidance by combining direct and indirect questioning techniques.

These techniques represent widespread tactics advocated by methodological scholars to improve the veracity of qualitative interview data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Skinner, 2014). However, as Alvesson (2003) reminds us, "…[while]…the interview appears, on the whole, as a valid source of knowledge production,…the social process and local conditions need to be appreciated and managed by the interviewer in order to accomplish valid results" (p.17). Consequently, I also took the additional steps of ensuring I met respondents in the safety of their own offices or in other venues chosen by them to feel safe. Moreover, the biggest factor I would represent that increases my confidence in the candor of respondents in my research is the investment of time and development of rapport (Dewalt et al., 2011). Over the 3.5 years of my immersion in RIL, I came to share experiences with members of the management team which created a personal bond. As Dewalt (2011) puts it "…the breakthrough in rapport [and therefore trust] was achieved when the researcher showed that their relationship with the community was important and serious; when they demonstrated a more than passing commitment to the community" (p.269). Consequently, my cumulative presence in RIL saw me help management team members with small personal professional battles, resolve occasional disputes, provide support for non-change related initiatives, and even attend more than a dozen weddings. The developed rapport, I represent, will have resulted in a far greater level of candor in my investigations into RIL than would otherwise have been available to the passing qualitative researcher.

3.8.2 Generalizability of Research

The generalizability of my research findings may be subject to some challenge as it is a research project into change within a single large Indian family owned business. Consequently, the criticism may arise that any findings are only generalizable to RIL itself. Blaikie (2009, pp.192–194) once again provides a strong response to this criticism by his articulation of how results from a single case study can still provide wide utility beyond the subject itself. Equally, Buchanan (2012, pp.364–365) provides a comprehensive defense of single case study generalizability. Whether it be under the banner of 'typical' cases or moreover as an example of organizational change in a large family owned business, the sentiment here is that value can be determined by independent observers who, given a thorough description of RIL as it attempts transformation, can use their judgment to extract aspects which may be of utility (Blaikie, 2009, pp.193–194). De Massis et al., (2014, p.17) seem to summarize this well when they say:

> "External validity refers to the definition of the domain to which a case study's findings can be generalized. It is important to note that case study research does not allow for statistical generalization, for example, inferring conclusions about a population (Numagami, 1998; Yin, 2014). Rather, case studies allow for analytical generalization. Whereas statistical generalization refers to the generalization from observation to a population, analytical generalization denotes a process that refers to the generalization from empirical observations to theory, rather than a population."

4 - Case Study Context: A Brief History of Reliance Industries

"Ah, you've met all the right people," he said. *'But if you want to get anywhere in India, you must meet all the wrong people."* – Dhirubhai Ambani (Luce, 2007, pp.7–8)

"..the Indian mindset is full of paradoxes consisting of too many pieces of white, black and grey matters!" (Sinha, 2014, p.21)

RIL's PSC program is the focus of this empirical project. However, to understand and appreciate the data, analysis, and findings from this research, I believe it is critical to understand the makeup of RIL's "DNA.". In this chapter, I seek to provide a deep and rich explanation of how and why RIL are the way they are and what motivated their pursuit of change. While not the direct focus of my enquiry, I will also provide an introduction for the reader into relevant aspects of Indian national culture. RIL is, after all, an Indian company that has operated for much of its 40-year history at the forefront of Indian social and political events. In doing so, I will rely on a combination of "naturally occurring data" (RIL documentation, presentations, speeches, and commentary in the media), borrow from respected academic insights into Indian national culture, and my own participant observation (Silverman, 2013, p.58).

4.1 RIL Industries – A Brief History

Dhirubhai Ambani (the father of the current owner) began his entrepreneurial journey around 1958, when he returned to India from Yemen, where he had worked as a gasoline-pump attendant for a subsidiary of Shell (Ambani, 2007; McDonald, 1998). He is said to have partially raised seed capital by ingeniously speculating on differences in the value of silver in Yemeni currency in its raw form. He started his business with 150,000 rupees (roughly $250). While he was intent on owning his own business, his path was typically opportunistic for a budding entrepreneur, with some accounts saying he had considered several directions, including car dealerships, before his forays into spice and cloth trading led him to set up his own textile manufacturing facility in a 500-square-

foot office in Masjid Bunder, Mumbai (McDonald, 1998, 2011; Reliance Industries Ltd., 2014; Singh and Goodrich, 2006).

In 1966, his first manufacturing plant was built in the Indian state of Gujarat, at Naroda. The company had only 15 to 20 employees in the beginning, and stories from this period eulogize the incredible ingenuity that kept the yarns spinning. Indeed, the story goes that, later in the company's development, in 1981, Dhirubhai asked his eldest son, MDA, to return from Stanford University early to handle a flooding problem at his Patalganga facility (McDonald, 1998, p.48). These early days set a tone of solving problems as hands-on owners. This was an operation in which everyone was focused on one thing: making the equipment work and selling the final product.

Dhirubhai demonstrated an eye for unexploited investment opportunity and flair for leveraging an 'everyman' image. Through a series of public stock offerings between 1977 and 1984, RIL raised considerable amounts of capital from small private investors across India. Because of RIL's pioneering efforts, the number of Indians owning shares rose from less than one million in 1980 to over four million by 1984. RIL rode a populist "people's company" moniker from this point on, something that Dhirubhai and his executive team embraced. In May 1985, the company held its AGM at a sports arena, an event which some 12,000 small shareholders attended (http://www.ril.com/TheRelianceStory). Providing a return on investment to small investors was something the company took seriously. An original investment of 1,000 rupees ($15) in 1977 has returned nearly 8 lakhs ($10,200) by 2012, an annual return of over 21% (Press Trust of India, 2012).

From the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, RIL pursued "backward" integration from textiles to chemical feedstocks and then to petrochemicals. In 1992, Dhirubhai started in earnest on his most ambitious adventure; to build the world's biggest single refining complex in Jamnagar, Gujarat. This would test all his entrepreneurial and persuasive skills because, up to this point, such facilities were the domain of the nationalized oil company. In a testament to his extraordinary prowess and ability to find a way, he succeeded. That said, the

construction in Jamnagar was to be yet another test of the company's ability to overcome long odds, considering that the proposed site: (1) was on the edge of a great desert; (2) sat on a geological fault line; (3) lacked fresh water, and; (4) was partly occupied by a Hindu temple. In addition, a refinery construction project of this scale and technological design was unprecedented. The company partnered with Bechtel for the facility's design and Fluor for construction. The result?: The world's biggest and most technically sophisticated petrochemical-refining facility was commissioned on July 14, 1999 (Reliance Industries Ltd., 2014).

In the early 2000s, RIL diversified into telecoms and life sciences, but it also endured a series of tragedies and crises. On July 6, 2002, Dhirubhai passed away. He didn't leave a will, and in the two years that followed, a dispute arose between his two oldest sons over control of the empire. The dispute was famously resolved by Dhirubhai's widow, the matriarch Kokilaben, who divided the organization between the sons, with MDA receiving the petrochemical-refining businesses and Anil receiving everything else, including the telecom, media, and power generation businesses (Singh and Goodrich, 2006). While the resulting division of the company took place in 2005, disputes between the two brothers, particularly relating to gas pricing and non-compete agreements, festered until 2010 (Thakurta, 2014).

In 2011, RIL sold 30% of its upstream business to BP. BP paid RIL $7.2 billion and promised cooperation across a range of shared interests (Business Standard, 2017). Following the final resolution of the disputes between the brothers in 2010, MDA's RIL group of companies embarked on two new extraordinary investments that departed in major ways from previous business operations. Previously, the business had grown to a large extent linearly, by making one investment in a physical site, commissioning it, and then commercializing it before moving on to the next. RIL made two simultaneous "bet the farm investments." First, it committed to doubling the manufacturing facilities in Jamnagar, a $20 billion, five-year project that was to become the biggest single construction project in Asia and the largest energy project

anywhere in the world (OGJ Editors, 2014). Second, it won licenses to build India's first nationwide 4-G wireless data network (Gujarat, 2016).

At the time of this writing, these expansion projects are maturing, and RIL's footprint is impressive. It is India's largest private-sector company by all major financial measures. With annual revenues and a market cap near $70 billion, it is the first private-sector company from India to make the Fortune Global 500 list of the world's largest corporations, ranking 117. It operates over 100 manufacturing plants across India, with other operations in Malaysia, Korea, the U.K., and the U.S.A. Should RIL's current investment programs succeed, the company will become, by market capitalization, one of the top 50 companies in the world (Financial Times, 2017; Reliance Industries, 2016a).

4.2 A Family Business

RIL is a second-generation family business. According to the latest securities filings, the Ambani family owns at least 46.48% of the company's stock (Reliance Industries, 2016b). However, this understates MDA's effective control of RIL. When the company was demerged following the settlement with his brother in 2005, a portion of stock was earmarked for Dhirubhai's sisters, including as much as 5% to the Meswani family (Singh and Goodrich, 2006). Within the company, it is generally acknowledged that, when MDA's actual stock holdings and his influence over other family members are taken into consideration, he effectively has majority control.

While what constitutes a family-owned business depends on whom in academia you ask (Kraus, Harms, and Fink, 2011; Litz, 1995; Steiger, Duller, and Hiebl, 2015, etc.,), with RIL, there is little doubt. Most academic debates center on the degree of family involvement and the nature of ownership. Litz's (1995) framework is a useful tool to navigate the ambiguities inherent in the study of family businesses. Litz points out that one can imagine multiple scenarios concerning businesses that are family owned but not family managed or that are institutionally owned but family run. Such possibilities blur the lines regarding what *family-owned* really means. In each case, the eccentricities generated by *familiness* (defined in Chapter 2) or the interaction between

relatives running the company might be absent or substantially reduced (Gersick et al., 1997; Habbershon and Williams, 1999). In the case of RIL, if we were to imagine the debates about defining family firms as a dart board, with the more debatable cases farthest from the bullseye, RIL would be near the center. I will demonstrate this in the following text. RIL are not only majority owned by the Ambani family, MDA runs the firm in a hands-on, very directive style. The influence of the Ambani family is felt every day across the organization. Given its size, this is an extraordinary feat. One that to some extent is unique and difficult to imagine ever being replicated should MDA move on to other challenges.

4.3 The People Who Run Reliance Industries

Searching for an accurate picture of who runs RIL is a complicated task (Watts and Sabarinath, 2013). Organizational charts are not published, and there is some deliberate ambiguity about accountability across the group of companies.[1] While the group has a multitude of operations—from sports teams and philanthropic foundations to refineries and wireless Internet—the core operations seem to be run by a small group of executive directors. Figure 4-1 illustrates my observations of how RIL is managed and decisions are made.[2] In constructing this, I tried to show the relative influence of key actors across RIL's ownership, board, and executive management team. The sizes of the boxes are an attempt to show relative influence.

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[1] The explanation in 2013 from several RIL executives on why there were no official organization charts was that it allowed owners to flex the influence of different individuals informally, (Field notes Oct 2013-Feb 2014).

[2] This was constructed based on observation of RIL's annual operating plan process, the cascading of annual performance objectives, and the practical workings of RIL's delegations of authority, (Field notes March 2014-April 2017)
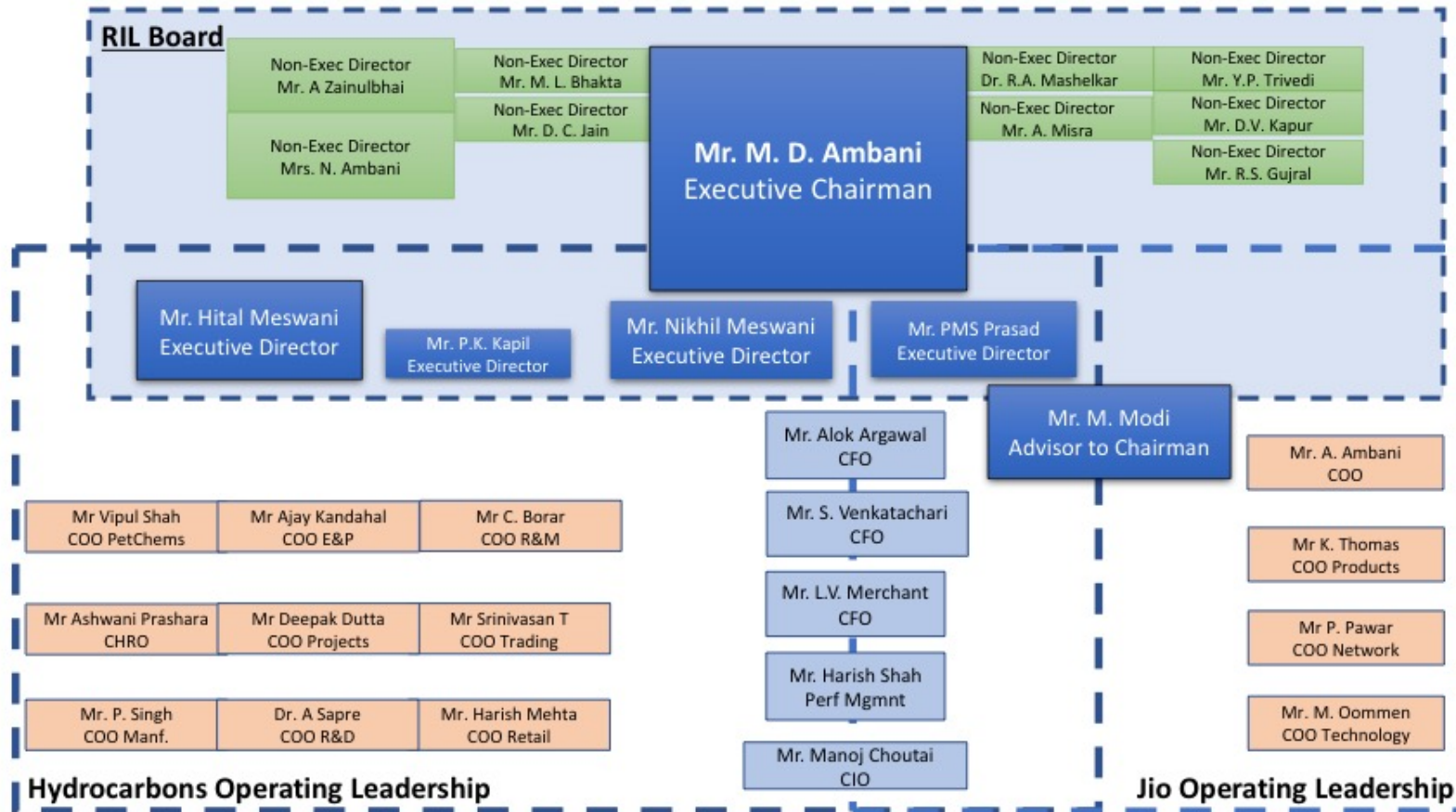
Figure 4-1 RIL's board and senior management team as of January 2017

MDA is at the center of RIL. This is an important starting point for understanding how RIL operates. It is also important to emphasize the strong "owner-centricity" of RIL, something I will explore further in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 (Kelly, Athanassiou and Crittenden, 2000; Poutziouris, Smyrnios and Klein, 2003; Shehabaddin, Ku Nor and Noor, 2014). Most critical decisions, strategies, and operational matters flow from and to MDA. He is at the heart of both the hydrocarbon and Jio (4G) businesses. The board provides what Gibb Dyer (1986) might label either a "rubber stamp" or an advisory role.[3] This organization depiction, based on my observations of how the company operated, appeared to show many hallmarks of a strongly owner-centric, patriarchal, paternalistic culture, in which decision making is highly centralized (Aronoff and Ward, 2011; Dyer, 1986; Habbershon, Nordqvist, and Zellweger, 2009; Kelly, Athanassiou, and Crittenden, 2000).

4.4 Critics and Detractors

Most large companies have some detractors. The most common criticisms levelled at RIL involve crony capitalism, the opaque corporate structure, and ineffective corporate governance (Thakurta, 2014; *The Economist,* 2014). These are largely historical in nature and, while they might also be levelled at all RIL's corporate contemporaries, they appear to have stubbornly followed RIL. Reading the most vociferous critical commentaries of the company (see Appendix E), one gets a sense that RIL is being singled out for some reason. The probable explanation is RIL's reputation for being a tough place to work and an uncompromising partner with which to do business. These two dimensions are best illustrated by an informal survey of people in Mumbai and interviews with several potential service vendors.

During the last three months of 2013, I conducted an experiment by asking the following three questions to everyone I met who did not work for RIL. I recorded

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[3] Based on attendance at RIL board meetings and observance of the relationships between board members, owners, and senior executives, (Field Notes: April 2014-May 2017)

30 interviews in my field notes.[4] The results are summarized in Table 4-1. What I found fascinating during this exercise was the incongruence between responses to the first two questions and to the final one. Perhaps because they were answering questions from a British expat, the positivity in the interviewees' responses to the opening questions may have been influenced by a desire to speak well of India. However, when it came to their own careers, I believe their answers were entirely genuine. None of those whom I interviewed—arguably the kind of talent that RIL would consider hiring—said they were interested in working for the company.

Table 4-1 Informal interviews containing "outsiders'" perspectives of RIL (Conducted by the author between September and December 2013)

Question	Example Answers	Summary
1. When I mention Reliance Industries Ltd., what are the thoughts that come to your mind?	1. India's biggest company 2. Dhirubhai Ambani and his incredible rise 3. Polyester and energy business 4. Hugely successful company	Generally, positive to effusive praise
2. When I mention Mukesh Ambani, what are your immediate reflections?	1. He and his wife Nita are almost royalty in Mumbai. 2. They own the Mumbai Indians cricket team. 3. They have the world's most expensive house. 4. He is a visionary businessman like his father.	General admiration or outright awe at their wealth and (to a slightly lesser degree) their investment in Mumbai's sporting and cultural scene
3. Would you work for Reliance Industries?	1. No 2. No 3. No etc.	Universally, the answer was "no."

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[4] These conversations were not captured verbatim nor did I capture all the names of those who agreed to answer my questions. These conversations were impromptu and I recorded only the sentiment of their responses to my questions, (Field Notes: Sept 2013-Jan 2014).

When I asked them why they would not work for RIL, their answers were superficially quite diverse. The most common responses were variations on the following: (1) "Reliance works a six-day week," (2) "I heard they work you like dogs," (3) "The work isn't interesting," (4) "I heard that they treat you badly," and (5) "I'd much rather work for a Western company." Despite the variety of answers, the theme that emerges is a perception of RIL as a formidable company but not a desirable workplace. The word on the street, quite literally in some of these interviews, was that RIL should be admired and respected—but, ideally, from a distance.

Another explanation for continued criticism of RIL's business dealings may be its reputation among suppliers and vendors. During the three years that I worked with the company, I found it hard to get some vendors to agree to do business with RIL. Their explanations were often based on a recent dispute of some nature surrounding an unpaid invoice or an aggressive fee negotiation. When I spoke with members of RIL's procurement team, there seemed to be some substance to these stories. The general sentiment in RIL's negotiations team was that no one must ever "get the better" of the company. There was an adversarial mindset reminiscent of a winner-take-all machismo (Raghunathan, 2007).

4.5 RIL Organizational Cultural Paradigm

There are perfectly reasonable explanations for how RIL operates. The company's culture has evolved to protect and preserve its advantages while operating in an inhospitable Indian business and political crucible (Collins and Uhlenbruck, 2004; Garde, 2011). To better understand how to help RIL with their transformation program and to provide a roadmap to help navigate the company, in September 2013, I worked with a senior member of the BP leadership team with in-depth knowledge of RIL to construct an early attempt at a "cultural paradigm" map.[5] In preparing for my field interviews in March 2017, I returned to this draft map and updated it using the methodology and guidance

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[5] Field notes dated September 16, 2013.

from Ed Schein's *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2010).To explain RIL's collective behaviors and apparently inconsistent reputation as actually rational outcomes from its history, Schein underscores the value of attempting to understand an organization's deeply held assumptions:

> If we think of culture as, in part, a learned defense mechanism to avoid uncertainty and anxiety, then we should be able to help the organization assess for itself the strengths and weaknesses of its culture and to help it modify cultural assumptions if that becomes necessary for survival and effective functioning (2010, p.277).

Schein provides us with a model for cultural paradigm maps in his book, using as an example Ciba Geigy and Digital Equipment (2010, pp.315–327). In accordance with Schein's advice, I updated the draft cultural paradigm map using my cumulative field notes and in consultation with members of RIL's HR function. Constructing RIL's cultural paradigm map was a three-stage process that plotted my cumulative impressions from routine interactions with RIL EC, senior leadership, and members of the HR leadership team. In many of these conversations, I asked questions such as, "What is it that RIL really values?" "Why is it that things work the way they do?" and "Who are the real heroes in RIL and why?" I then plotted their responses using Schein's mapping format and used the RIL HR team's critiques to arrive at Figure 4-2. It should be emphasized that this remains my view of RIL's culture as an embedded observer.
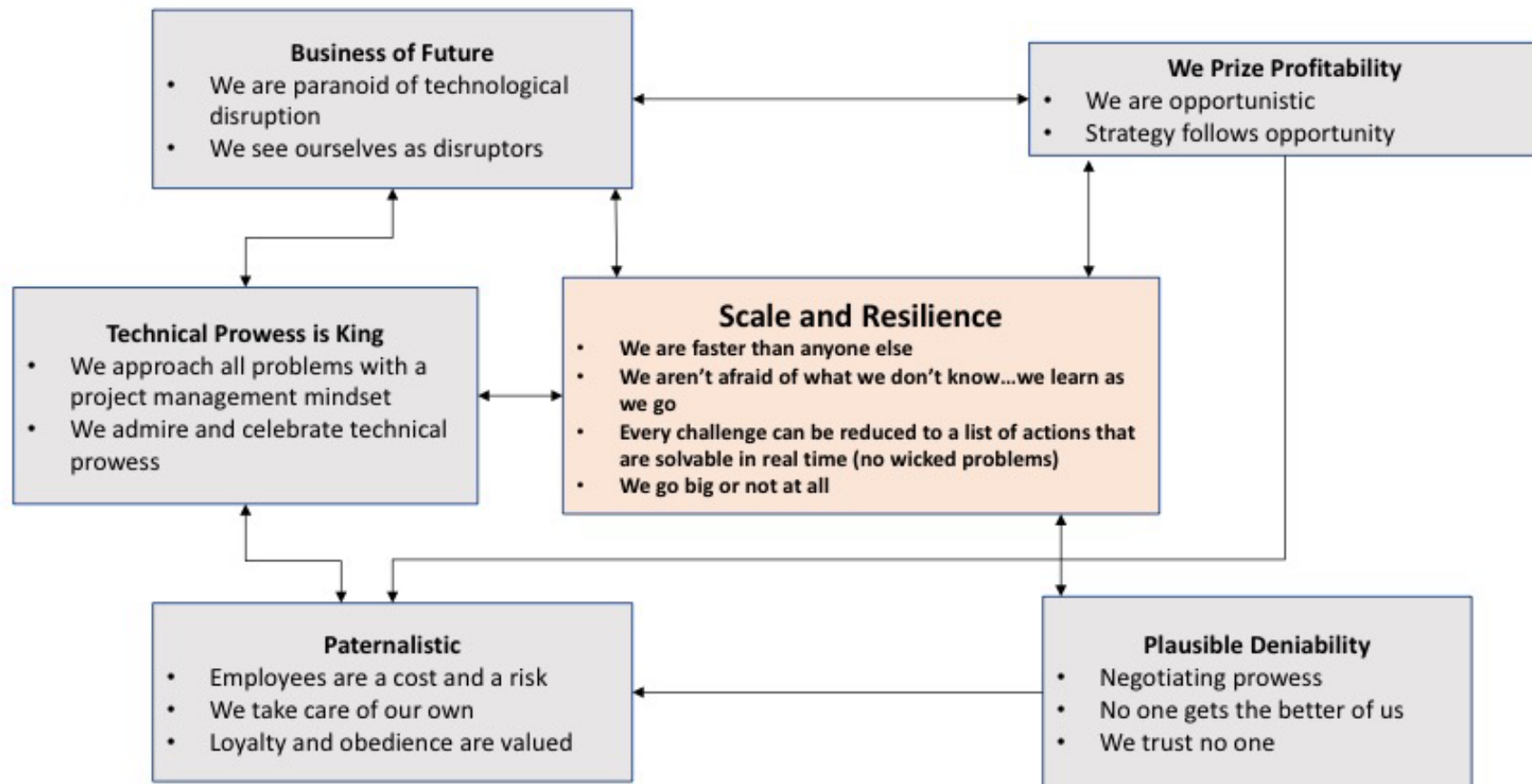
Figure 4-2 RIL organizational culture paradigm

At the center of this illustration is the statement that RIL prides itself on being faster and more creative in seizing opportunities than anyone else in their markets.[6] Equally, they are problem solvers extraordinaire, approaching every challenge as eminently beatable. The senior executives would lavish praise on those employees who fixed the unfixable and squeezed extra life out of old equipment. The stories abound at RIL of the real heroes being those who helped Dhirubhai get outdated equipment to work in the early days. A more recent example is the symbolism one can extract from what was celebrated at large leadership gatherings. For example, when MDA introduced a 40-year veteran at one leadership event by saying, "We love Mr. XXXX, for he was the one who fixed the centrifuge at Hazira when others said it could not be done. He will forever have a job at RIL…." the suggestion was clear, this is what is valued by the owners and they have long memories.[7] RIL has been hugely successful in entering new industries without prior knowledge or expertise and "disrupting" the status quo by sheer brute force of will and perseverance.[8] These are traits that stem from RIL's early days and can be traced back to Dhirubhai's successes in refitting polyester plants.

However, a few other aspects of this map are worthy of amplification. First, RIL tends to jump from opportunity to execution and focus on solving short-term challenges one at a time.[9] In this sense, it tends to avoid many other companies' long-term planning activities, which it views as something of a constraint or a waste of time. There is an emphasis on flexibility and adaptability. While there is an overarching vision, perhaps summarized as relentless growth through opportunistically seizing market inefficiencies on a grand scale, there is little time wasted writing down detailed business plans. This is exemplified by MDA's often repeated mantra that, "I want my company

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[6] This is expressed regularly by senior executives who recite the list of projects completed in record time; see also RIL Website and Annual Reports.

[7] October 2016 Group Leader event

[8] While my choice of language here is perhaps how RIL would like to characterize this, the company's history has many examples of being the 'disruptor' of incumbents. It is easy to find multiple sources including the book Polyester Prince (McDonald, 1998)-- which isn't otherwise very complimentary-- that paint RIL as willing to make bold bets.

[9] This is a consistent behavior which senior leadership practice. One respondent summed this up when he said "RIL are brilliant at taking complex tasks and breaking them down to simple lists. The leadership cut through the complexity and just send staff 'to do' lists." See field interviews for more on this.

to be able to change shape, in a day, or even an hour. This is a competitive advantage and I demand we retain our flexibility." Once the goal is clear, the focus shifts immediately to execution, and the senior management team takes a hands-on, direct approach to solving day-to-day challenges in real time.

Second, doing business in India comes with certain risks. Suppliers and partners do not always play by the rules (Raghunathan, 2007). The negative sentiment reflected earlier in this chapter fuels, within RIL, a sense of being under attack from the outside world. While aspects of this come from a sense that competitors, and even some government officials, seek to earn personal promotion at RIL's expense, the more telling story here is where a covert scam was uncovered at one of RIL's manufacturing sites. The head of manufacturing explained "Yes, a truck driver had found a way to forge invoice stamps and was essentially trying to skim an extra truck load of product which he intended to sell on the black market." (Field notes, Oct 2016). RIL consequently has an effective internal machine that ensures no one can ever take advantage of it. One of my favorite stories illustrates this point and whether literally true or not it spoke strongly to senior management's belief system. My conversation with a member of the EC went as follows: "David, you need to understand that Dhirubhai passed down a number of immutable laws to his son and the current leadership, one is that as far as cash is concerned, imagine it in a pile, 50 feet underground, in a secure vault, with the biggest cobra on top of it…and understand if you want to spend some, you will have to negotiate with the cobra….now reconsider if you want to ask again to spend some money!" (Field notes, Feb 2014). The mantra is never to show weakness in negotiations and always take any opportunity to press an advantage. It is important to understand that this is a self-preservation tactic that RIL management believes is fundamental to the company's survival.

In terms of RIL personnel, technical expertise is a key currency, one that's considered essential for middle and senior management. Linked to the "we know how to make anything work" ethos is the technical competence necessary to fix complex engineering problems. Individuals who show their prowess in

fixing or increasing the capacity of technical equipment are considered heroes. In fact, there are constant tests and reinforcements during senior management meetings, when participants are asked direct questions about the metallurgy of piping in obscure locations within their plants. The impression given is that any leader who is not intimately familiar with every technical detail is failing. I witnessed an exchange during a staff meeting to this effect, when the Head of Manufacturing and Company Director pressed his team as follows; "Do you know what is going on at the train two refinery? Do you know when the piping at the PX4 location was last inspected? Tell me what is the exact metallurgy of that pipe? Why don't you know? You need to be hands-on!"[10]

Finally, RIL has a paternalistic culture, which is not uncommon for family businesses. Loyalty and obedience are prized. For those who offer unquestioning allegiance, there is support and lifelong employment. This was exemplified when in mid-2014 I asked whether RIL should consider making some space in senior leadership ranks for new blood. MDA responded, "RIL will not make people redundant, it is us, the leadership, who must strive to find them useful work. While I am Chairman, we may ask people to step aside, we may reassign people, but if they have shown honesty and integrity and remain committed to us, we will do at least the same for them."

However, the duality here is extreme; individuals who wish to leave the company are treated quite poorly (Sengupta, 2015a). This cultural trait has intriguing results, potentially pushing those who leave to join the chorus of external detractors. Finally, while working at RIL can be challenging, management strenuously avoids contentious employment matters, preferring avoidance over confrontation. The recurring illustration of this is the performance management system, which in 2013 rated 90% of the population as 'exceptional.' However, the vignettes also include accommodation of

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[10] Oct 2016 Field Notes

individuals who play on sympathy to get promotions. The company chooses to acquiesce and avoid individual conflict.[11]

4.6 RIL Strategic Change Causal Map

Hitherto in this chapter, I have delved into who and why RIL are the way they are. Now, I will link this to how the company decided to seek change. Most contemporary organizational-change mechanisms start with a clear, somewhat singular compelling event (Kotter, 1995; Dyer, 1986). However, in the case of RIL, there is no single explanation for why MDA chose 2014 to launch a transformation program.[12] My examination and analysis are captured in a causal map shown in Figure 4-3. Such a map is useful because my analysis suggests that multiple interrelated factors cumulatively led to MDA's pursuit of change. In conceiving this approach, I was inspired by the work of Scott Snook (2002, p.23).

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[11] 2012/13, 13/14, 14/15, 16/17 Performance Rating data per RIL HR, plus field notes capturing EC reaction to disaffected long serving employees

[12] I expand on this later in the chapter but the way MDA explained this in 2015 was as follows "My goal with transformation is to get RIL ready before it becomes a compelling problem. I want to proactively reinvent the company, not wait for a crisis. I see this as an opportunity not a requirement. Equally, I want to restructure the company while I am here 'hands-on' and make sure we get it right. If we make mistakes, I want time, while I am still able, to correct it myself" (captured during meeting with MDA in first of 4 coaching engagements – Jan 2015).
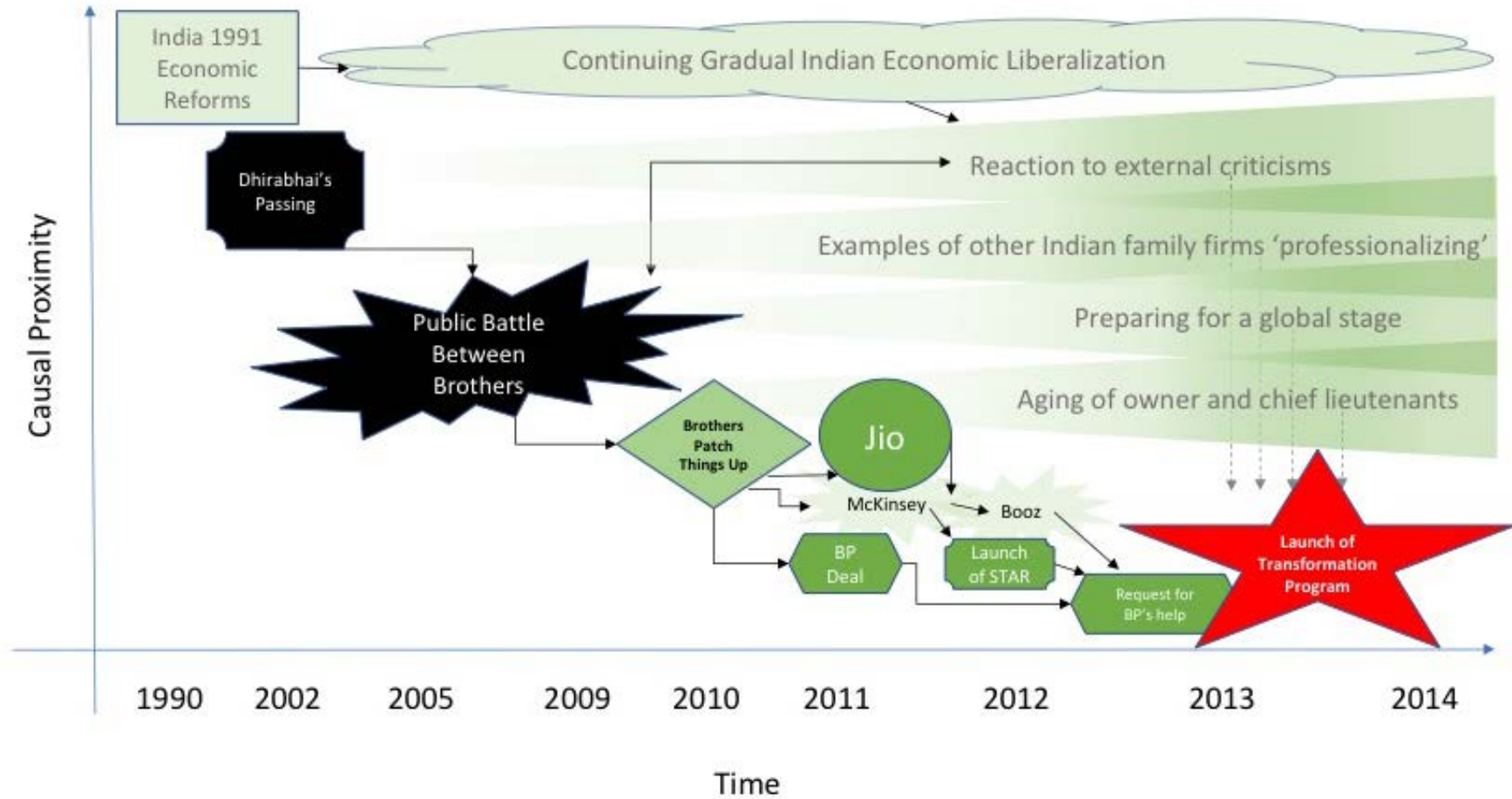
Figure 4-3 RIL "Transformation" Causal Map

The impetus for RIL's PSC has more complex roots than an "untapped business opportunity" or "restructuring following a failure" (Collins, 2011; Kotter, Lawrence, and White, 2007, etc.). To illustrate this point, I have used this more scientific version of a decision tree (Eden and Ackermann, 1992; Weber and Manning, 2001). Causal maps are visualization tools most often used in social science to "model… the relationships (causal or otherwise) among the elements of a system. Typically, causal maps are drawn with nodes representing concepts, ideas, or areas. The nodes are linked with unidirectional arcs that represent beliefs about causal relationships among these nodes" (Scavarda et al., 2006, p.264). In constructing this map, I started at the end (the launch of the RIL transformation in March 2014) and worked backward. In doing so, I asked a question: What were the key factors that contributed to MDA's decision to attempt change? Discounting the more obvious events immediately tied to the launch of the program, I went back as far in time and causality as necessary to trace the events without which the decision would not have occurred.

4.6.1 RIL's Strategic Change: Root-Cause Explanation

My analysis of the circumstances leading up to RIL's transformation program suggests four major strands of influence: (1) the intra-family disputes that followed Dhirubhai's death in 2002, (2) a trend toward regulatory and governmental liberalization, (3) an increasingly compelling series of influences that pointed toward organizing the company differently, and (4) a business deal that presented the opportunity to leverage a partnership with BP.

Dhirubhai's death led to a messy dispute between MDA and Anil (Bhardwaj and No, 2013; McDonald, 2011; Thakurta, 2014). While this dispute was technically settled by Kokilaben, their mother, who split the assets between them in 2005, it continued in different forms before ending on May 23, 2010 with an Indian Supreme Court ruling (Thakurta, 2014, p.139). In the wake of this ruling, a détente emerged that included a release from non-compete clauses and settlement of a gas-pricing dispute.

India took a major step toward liberalizing its economy with the big reforms of 1991, and it has continued this trend (Dixit et al., 2016; Luce, 2007; Mazumdar, 2011).[13] The impact for many large Indian businesses has been increased foreign competition (Dawar and Frost, 1999; Prabhakar, 2010; Som, 2006). The ways of doing business in India are, therefore, changing in meaningful ways. The tendency for "crony capitalism" is subsiding as successive Indian government's attempt to provide a stable and transparent platform for overseas investors (Bora, 2017; Dixit et al., 2016).

The most-often-cited "case for change" within RIL is the need to come to terms with the dual challenges of an aging leadership team and the company's massively increased scale (Watts and Sabarinath, 2013).[14] Sustainability, with a focus on how to prepare the organization for a gradual delegation of operational control, is an increasing concern. The increase in operational complexity caused by current expansion plans, essentially quadrupling its size, has fueled anxiety that old systems of management will be inadequate.[15]

There also has been some influence on RIL from a general trend of Indian family-owned businesses "professionalizing" by upgrading their management systems. Reports of large-scale Indian family groups turning to consulting firms to help them restructure their internal processes while hiring high-profile non-family professionals to run aspects of their enterprises are quite common (Bhattacharya and Ravikumar, 2010; Chittoor and Das, 2007; Prasad, Nath, and Ramnath, 2010; Saxena, 2011). The trend among large Indian "promoter"[16] groups of moving from informal to formal types of management systems has

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[13] There is a good deal of literature explaining India's shift to a liberalized market economy over the past 20 years. Manmohan Singh is accredited with the first major set of reforms in this direction when he was finance minister in 1991. While not essential to this research, I have provided references here for further context.

[14] The change management material for RIL's transformation program cites the desire to move from a linear decision-making model to an exponential one. This along with the need to prepare the next cadre of leaders to operate without direct oversight from MDA and his loyal lieutenants are the most frequently occurring justifications for seeking change at RIL (see Wave 4 Change Management material, August 2015).

[15] I base these assertions on the discussions which took place at 'transformation steering committee meetings' and the outcome of those in the form of the employee communication materials used during the change program (see chapter 5 for more details) (Wave 1 launch change materials, April 2014).

[16] The term "promoter" has legal and tax foundations in India. Family businesses can aggregate different business activities under a "promoter group" framework which affords advantages for inheritance tax. The term has however become synonymous in popular media as a short hand for large family led conglomerates.

exerted some influence on RIL's desire to follow suit (Kaur, 2017; Khanna and Palepu, 2008; Taj, 2011).

The last of these pervasive influences is that of the persistent external criticism of RIL. A fervent desire to be held up as a glowing example of the best in Indian corporate governance permeates the walls of RIL's Mumbai headquarters. MDA declared this regularly including saying how he planned to "prove the doubters and detractors wrong."[17] This is also evident in many of the company's annual reports and the chairman's AGM speeches. In 2016, one of the company's overt goals was to have the most professional, transparent, investor-friendly annual report of any Indian private enterprise (RIL, 2015, p.139). RIL's desire to be praised rather than pilloried should not be underestimated (Bureau, 2014; Sengupta, 2015b).

From 2010, it seems evident that the desire to transform how RIL operated was strong. What remained was finding a viable roadmap. McKinsey was hired in 2012, closely followed by Booz in early 2013 (Saxena, 2011). Neither firm delivered a persuasive plan. I asked several members of the EC what went wrong with these engagements, one executive director summed it up as follow; "They got trapped into presenting to us what we asked for—the best practices available around the world for organizational design and people practices— instead of what MDA really wanted—a plan he was confident he could get the company to adopt and that in the process he could be confident would work."[18] So, in the late summer of 2013, MDA turned to BP for help (Sabarinath, 2014). This chronology and choice of change partner are important. MDA was focusing on adopting a plan for transformation that he believed would work and was, consequently, more interested in practicality than innovation.[19] Also, since BP was not a consulting company, RIL could not approach BP's offer of help as an open-ended search for some unspecified solution. Instead, RIL had to ask,

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[17] Field notes: May 30, 2016 EC meeting

[18] Originally October 2013 but repeated at a meeting largely verbatim June 8, 2017 by HRM in a conversation (Field notes)

[19] See previous point but also my respondent interviews in chapter 6. One respondent was very clear that "MDA needed a plan that no one could argue with. It needed to come from a respected source and be difficult to argue against. BP was the perfect source. It is a highly-respected company and evidently its systems must work!" (April 2017)

"How can we adapt BP's people, management, and governance systems to work for us?"

4.7 Indian National Culture

India is of course a quite different context to the UK and USA when it comes to the pursuit of social science enquiry. The most often cited explanations for how Indian business culture differs from its Western counterparts is the, so-called, Power-Distance and Collectivism-Individualism dimensions from Hofstede's work with IBM in the 1970s (1983, 2016; 2015). The concept divides national cultures into those where:

> "Societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty"

as opposed to those where:

> "Societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family." (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, p.51)

India is said to embrace the (former) collectivist value, where the USA and UK fit more into the (latter) individualist category. These constructs are suggested to explain how individuals in Western culture are more comfortable with challenging authority, and more individually maximizing (or mercenary) than their Indian counterparts, who are more observant to hierarchy and avoid conflict.

In this study, however, I subscribe more to the explanation of Indian psychology offered by Jai Sinha (2014) in his work, *Pyscho-Social Analysis of the Indian Mindset*. Sinha offers a far more nuanced and sophisticated explanation for Indian culture and its manifestations in the modern workplace. He points to a far more dynamic culture that defies easy codification and gives pause to reconsider the frameworks offered by Hofstede. The modern Indian workplace is home to a new and rapidly growing generation of ambitious young talent, many of whom has either worked for multi-national companies or was educated in top Western institutions. The relative youth of the Indian nation is a well-publicized component of the nation's rise to prominence on the global economic

stage (McKinsey, 2014; The Indian Express, 2015b) To them, the measure of a good career is being able to contribute and meritocratically progress similarly to their USA and UK contemporaries. This sits simultaneously alongside the more mature Indian managers, who are perhaps more traditional in their views of what is expected and more reticent in challenging power. Let me give two examples of this. The first is where in a meeting attended by MDA and his executive committee, along with members of the newly hired Jio management team, a rather precocious 30-year-old interrupted MDA, stood up, and proceeded to explain how a new technology worked. In the process, he not too subtly showed MDA to be incorrect.[20] The juxtaposition of this story of boldness that might be considered out of place even in a USA company, sits alongside the story of an individual I met in late 2016 who was designing a safety poster for Hital Meswani. I asked him why he was squeezing so much text onto a poster, such that it might not be legible from more than a few feet away. His answer was simple, "I am doing what I have been told. Mr Meswani told me he wanted these messages conveyed, so, I have put them on the poster."

This second story talks more to the conception of social determinism, the idea that individuals' lot in current life are constrained and defined by their birth, and how that is manifest in India through its spiritual belief system and complex caste system (Moore, Gunz and Hall, 2007; Prashar, 2017; Sinha, 2014). This form of social determinism promotes the idea of a cosmic deal where in exchange for absolute obedience, their 'betters' are honor-bound to 'take care of them.' In an Indian context, where society has historically been more vertical and there exists a spiritual belief system (karma) understood to reward those who "behave properly and abide by their duties in their current life" by reincarnating them in better positions, helps explain the exhibition by some of blind obedience (Sinha, 2014, p.87).

What is important to add here is that I saw an equal number of occasions of each of these examples. The sense I took was that RIL was changing, as was

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[20] Field notes: Business Review Meeting with Jio Advisory Board July 2015. My observation was also that there were no obvious consequences to this individual. At the point I left RIL he remained at the company and from what I observed had actually elevated himself in the eyes of the owners.

Indian society more generally (Behrens, 2014). The new generation of younger talent had different expectations and ambitions. It was striving to break free of some of the older self-imposed 'glass-ceilings' and, to some extent, selected employers based on the likelihood of being allowed to rise based on their own merits (Prashar, 2017; The Economic Times, 2017). Consequently, my own experience in working with RIL might be summed up as follows: Societal influences undoubtedly are different than those in Western cultures, however, these may be exaggerated or at the least may not fit the black and white models offered by Hofstede. Sinha amplifies this point when he says:

> Indians are deeply anchored in their ancient thoughts and habits that are still resilient and helpful to understand, cope with and excel in the globalizing world. The most salient feature of the primordial mindset is a pluralistic worldview that allows adding new ideas and influences to the old ones. Indians neither get rid of the old nor reject the new. Thus, they accumulate paradoxical beliefs, values, norms, and practices. They smoothly navigate back and forth between then, often inviting the comment that Indians are elusive, hypocritical and unreliable. But in reality they are highly sensitive and responsive to contextual factors in organizing their thoughts and behaviors in order to serve their individual and collective interests and goals.(2014, pp.i–ii)

My enquiry into PSC at RIL does not set out to directly explore the role national culture may play. This said, the context of a single case study into RIL is inherently contextualized in India and therefore an early declaration of the main distinctions with Western cultural contexts is important. In later chapters (particularly Chapter 8), I will return to this subject to address to what extent Indian societal psychology might play a role in explaining some of my findings.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, I have analyzed who and why RIL are the way they are and how they came to seek change. I have done this in a narrative style based on my participant observation and supplemented by naturally occurring data (Silverman, 2013, p.58). My objective was to provide this important context on RIL in the form of a story that would do justice to the complexities in which RIL's culture, organization, and search for change are all anchored. I started with a brief history of the founder Dhirubhai Ambani, the ownership construct of the

company, how it is organized, and what I have observed to be its deeply held cultural assumptions. I then presented RIL's family ownership credentials before illustrating how the company is run. MDA plays a pivotal role in RIL's energy and telecoms arenas. I followed this by discussing the various causes which have cumulated to produce the conditions for RIL to pursue change. Finally, I provided a summary of the contextual national cultural influences which may have an influence on individuals' behaviors.

The key points that I would underscore from this chapter are that RIL is a strongly owner-centric family-owned business (Kelly, Athanassiou and Crittenden, 2000; Sonfield and Lussier, 2004). MDA is the conduit through which most critical decisions are funneled. The broader organization has been built to simultaneously execute on strategic business opportunities and protect itself against external threats. RIL is not unique in being strongly owner-centric. The literature reports that many successful family businesses, particularly in their first and second generations, possess a strongly charismatic and powerful figure who has proven to be a very effective entrepreneur (see, e.g., Levinson, 1971; Dyer, 1986; Ward, 2004; Aronoff and Ward, 2011). However, considering RIL's owner-centric nature is a critical component of understanding the company's main enablers of and barriers to change. RIL possesses the capacity to shift its organization rapidly either to deliver a new infrastructure project or to pursue an opportunistic new venture. The apparently malleable workforce has shown itself over the years as being very willing to adopt new ideas and find innovative solutions when necessary to make something work. However, a multitude of threats and opportunities now present MDA and RIL with the need to find new ways of working. The future for RIL has been acknowledged as requiring different tactics and the owners have chosen to refit their company to be future ready.

5 – The Transformation Program: Substance and Tactics

"What got us here won't get us where we need to go." – MDA, March 22, 2014

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new" - Socrates.

Where the previous chapter focused on explaining the historical context and RIL's cultural paradigm prior to embarking on a change program, in this chapter, as it is my main unit of investigation, I will focus on the change program itself. RIL's transformation program has been far reaching, representing what I have described as "second-order" change. I will describe how RIL's approach initially began with a people centric, HR foundation but quickly was redefined as a more root and branch, systems led transformation of all aspects of their management systems. The scale of their transformation directly implied shifts to their underlying cultural assumptions which I described in the previous chapter. I have divided this chapter into two sections: (a) RIL's change program, its tactics, and its results to date; and (b) my observations of how RIL's change tactics have meaningfully departed from contemporary PSC models exemplified by Kotter's 8-Step framework.

5.1 RIL's Transformation Program Is Born

Between September and December of 2013, a team of HR and OD specialists from BP, including me, helped RIL to design a transformation program (Sabarinath, 2014). There was rapid progress, and by December 6, 2013, a transformation roadmap was agreed upon by MDA and his executive team. While the backdrop to the transformation has been provided, and is summarized in Figure 4-3, the goals of the PSC program were prospective, pointing to reinvention, not repair. In the discussion that led to RIL's change-program goals being approved, several strands were discussed, including the need to modernize HR systems and processes, the need to install new technology, and

the need to improve the capabilities of the company's HR function.[21] However, it was clear that these were tactics and not the main objective. MDA and his executive team agreed that the main goal was to create scalable, sustainable structures within which leaders could take on greater aspects of operational responsibility. This broader vision was captured in the strategic roadmap, the wording of which was negotiated and agreed with MDA and his EC in December 2013:

> Positioning RIL for long-term, sustainable success as an independent, highly respected Indian company with a deep sense of purpose and commitment to improve the lives of Indians, provide fulfillment for its employees, and create value for shareholders, RIL will use its expertise in energy, retail, and technology to provide a better quality of life for all Indians. RIL will create sustaining, high-quality institutions of management, governance, and assurance to help its employees achieve greatness in the pursuit of its purpose. RIL's employees will create superior value for shareholders by safely, consciously, and expertly bringing high quality and reliable energy, retail, and technology solutions to Indian and other geographies, where its unique skills can be of benefit (RIL Transformation Roadmap: Executive Presentation [December 20, 2013, p.2]).

The true aspiration of RIL's PSC program is articulated later in the same document:

> Moving from an owner-managed company to one capable of sustained success for many decades to come will require the formation of new capabilities in RIL. It is clear that people will be a key enabler for RIL's vision, but perhaps the single most important capability to the realization of the vision statement above is generating not only the next cadre of business leaders, but continuous cadres of high-quality global leaders. While the Chairman and EC will drive this change, a key partner in this endeavor will be the Human Resources function at RIL. Thus, clearly articulating the role of the Human Resources function and its processes is a critical step on this road to change.
>
> **Role of the RIL HR Function**: The RIL HR function will be a key partner to the RIL EC in the desired change, and will thus need to evolve from its current characteristics of a personnel department to a value-accretive differentiator to the business. The following vision statement for RIL HR is more reflective of its required future role than the current RIL EVP: '*A*

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[21] No crisis existed at RIL requiring an intervention. The cause map shown as Figure 4-3 is intended to underline that a series of complex interrelated events led to the company's pursuit of change. Later in this chapter I will share the explanation given to "Why" RIL sought change when I ask respondents' what their understanding of the objectives was of the RIL transformation. Here I simply make the case that RIL's change did not start with the proverbial 'burning platform.'

modern, progressive people environment, where purpose-driven talent (is) attracted, engaged, and motivated by a consistent meritocratic HR framework and where high-quality leaders capable of realizing RIL business goals are identified, encouraged, and rewarded' (RIL Transformation Roadmap: Executive Presentation [December 20, 2013, p.3]).

These statements help set the scene for RIL's transformation aspiration. While perhaps slightly superficial, they are nonetheless important as they reflect the publicized goals of what became known in RIL as the "R-HR" and Reliance Management System (RMS) initiatives. The program was launched in March 2014 in front of an audience of the top 300 officers of the company. A further 800 senior leaders were invited to view a live streaming of the event online. MDA's opening address included the following comments:

> What got us here won't get us there… We have been incredibly successful. The most successful Indian company. But I want more. To be the most successful Indian company for the next 100 years and more. Quite simply, our raw guts, entrepreneurial spirit, driven project management, and operational excellence will not be enough to assure our future. But if we are brave enough, if we have the resolve, if we can make a change now, I have a solution. How we got here will not get us there. We've been brilliant. We've been faster. We've been better at making calculated bets. We've been braver. But… we've done this without structure, without systems, without governance, without a means to pass on what we've learned. We need to change how we do things at RIL. We need to make sure the system gives us confidence that, as people change (let's be clear: most of us will soon be moving on), that those who follow operate within a system which guides them (rather than us telling them [what to do]!). Are you ready to pass the torch to the next generation? I need you to be" (From MDA's opening address at a transformation launch event [March 2014]).

Later in this same speech, MDA announced that RIL would move from a six- to a five-day workweek. For the past five or more years, there had been growing criticism and negativity surrounding RIL's maintenance of a six-day workweek. This announcement proved to be extraordinary effective at grabbing everyone's attention. It demonstrated that MDA was serious about changing RIL.

RIL's transformation program has four components as illustrated in

Figure 5-1: (1) HR systems and process "re-engineering" to support new ways of working; (2) building new HR functional capabilities to help support management with these new ways of working; (3) developing new leadership capabilities across RIL to allow additional accountabilities to be delegated from the existing executive directors; and (4) reinforcing new ways of working in the form of management and employee behaviors that would constitute a shift in the prevailing culture of the organization.
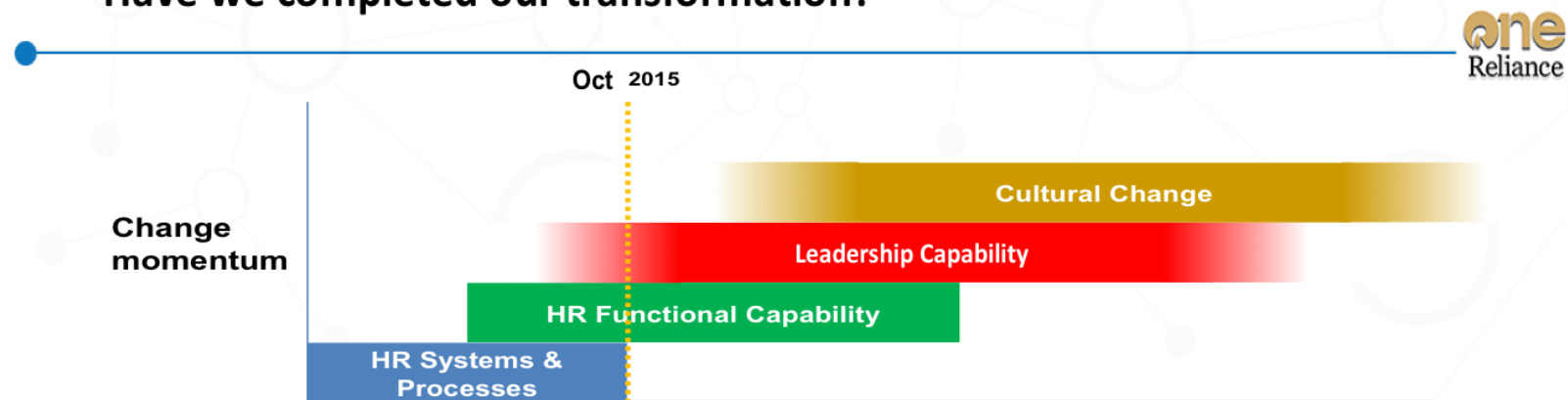
Figure 5-1 Slide presented at RIL leadership event (October 2015)

The transformation project could also be divided into two distinct phases, the first of which consisted of building a foundation of new processes, policies, and systems, and the second of which might be collectively referred to as behavior shifts or competence building (Checkland, 2000; Sangiovanni-vincentelli, 2002).[22] The first phase of change is captured in the diagrams shown in Figure 5-2 and

Figure 5-3. The metaphor of a house is used in Figure 5-2 to suggest the construction of something tangible and solid that would guide and even contain how RIL's management processes will be administered. Figure 5-2 also provides a breakdown of the various systems and processes constituting this new designed eco-system, which was planned for release in four "waves."[23] Under the four wave headings at the foot of Figure 5-2, you can see the high-level scope and scale of RIL's HR activity. This included organizational design (layers and functional/business reporting matrix), overarching values & behaviors, along with logically supporting career ladders, recruiting, talent, and reward processes. While the totality of this endeavor to some extent or other was all intended to help assist owners in making the desired cultural and cognitive shifts, some, such as financial accounting standards, had a more compliance and governance objective. Consequently, I have focused here on those aspects that most directly impacted the "organization, cognition, and culture" of the company (Johnson, 1990).

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[22] The RIL EC and MDA remarked several times that they wanted to think of the R-HR change as a 'platform based' strategy. In several conversations in May to Sept 2014 this was a theme of discussion "How do we create a change platform." On enquiry the idea stemmed from some discussions with Dr. Gary Hamel (2014) but also aspects of technology organizations and the use of technology to enable social collaboration. However, Hamel's construct does not adequately describe RIL's change approach. His platform methodology focuses on social change occurring from the ground up, not top down and prescriptively as is the case with RIL. A more apt description for RIL's change approach is to describe a systems phase and behaviors phase.

[23] When the metaphor of building a new house for RIL employees to live in was conceived, members of the transformation steering committee remarked sentiments to the effect 'we can build this first and then tell people to live in it." I have a field note dated Dec 6, 2013 to this effect where I note: MDA feels he needs to be uncompromising in engineering and installing these new systems. The perspective here is that if the systems are installed, management will be compliant in using them. This is repeated in April 2014 when MDA and the EC asked "Give us a handbook which tells managers how to use the new tools. If we give them a manual they will do as instructed."
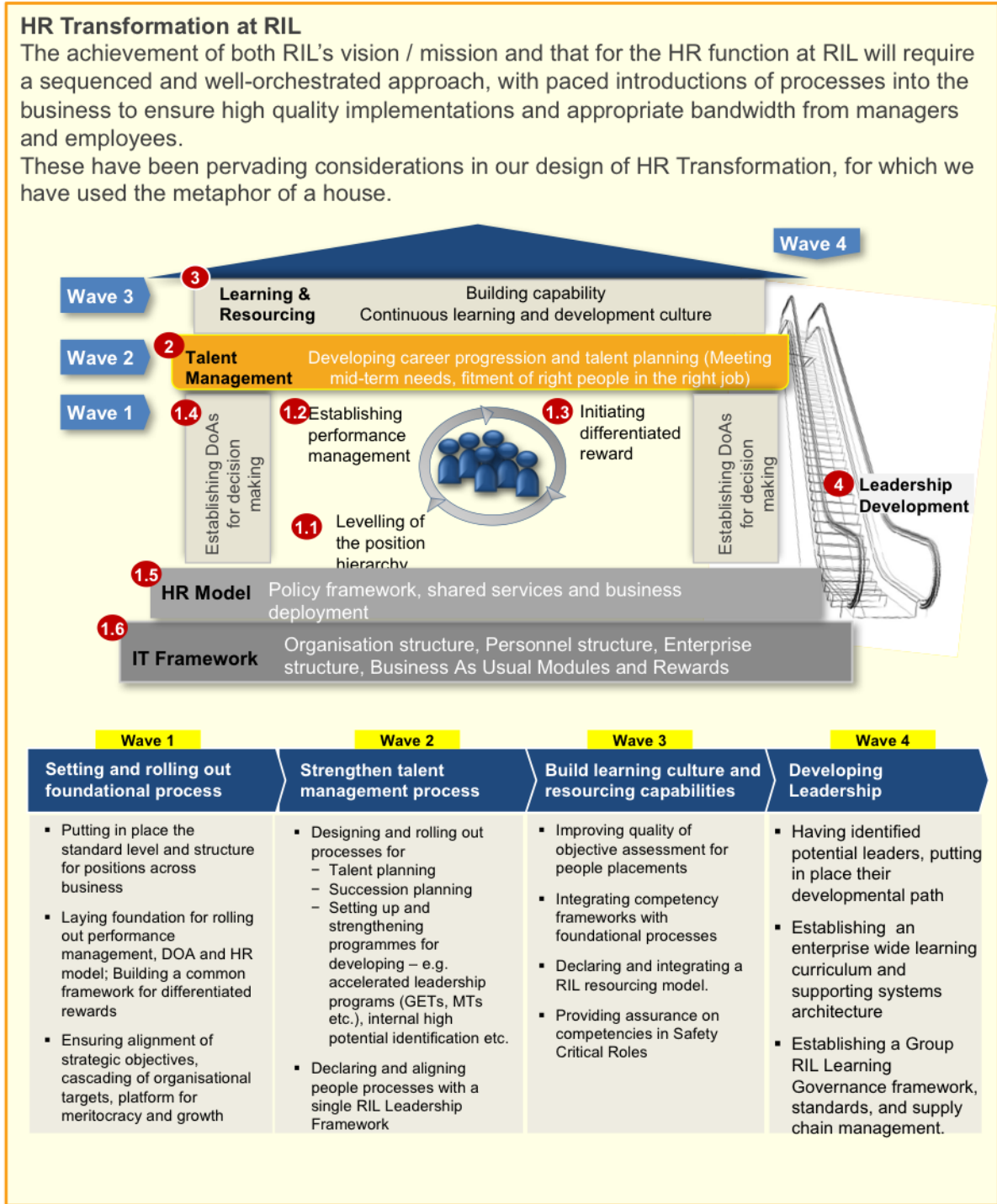
Figure 5-2 RIL's R-HR transformation "new house" (RIL transformation presentation, Oct 2013)
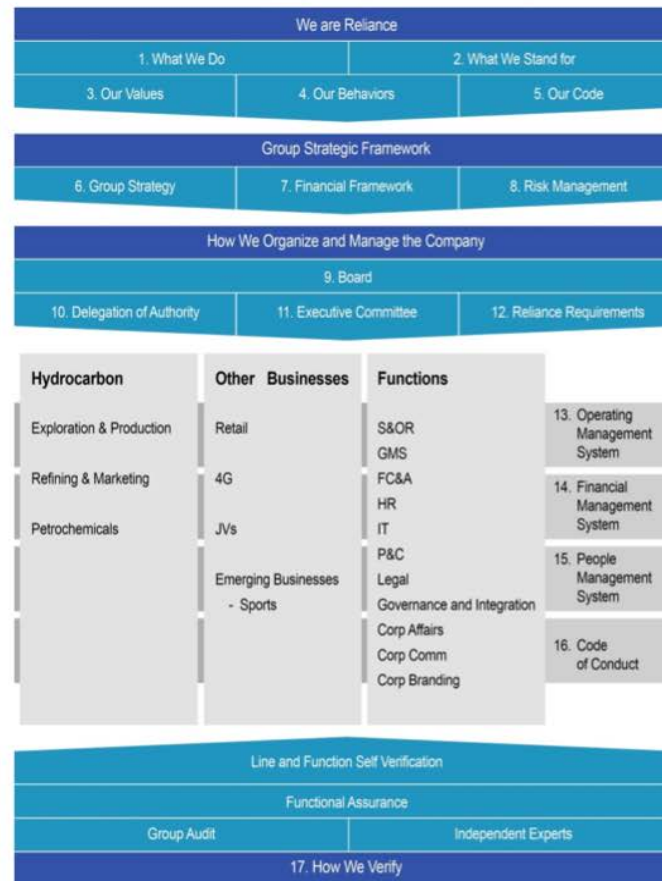
Figure 5-3 RIL's RMS, launched in October 2014

In

Figure 5-3, the totality of RMS is described. RMS is a comprehensive articulation of RIL's intended management apparatus: delegations, financial controls, operational parameters, and so forth. An exhaustive set of rules, policies, guidelines, and processes has been designed not only to help institutionalize the cumulative knowledge of the company's executive directors (see Figure 4-1) but also to establish the checks and balances necessary to inspire confidence that the company can operate without the continued daily intervention of its owner. This was an extraordinary exercise in soft systems and design thinking on a scale probably greater than studied previously in at least a family business context (Alpay et al., 2008; Herriau and Touchais, 2015; Paucar-Caceres et al., 2016; Young, 2011).

To expand briefly on the contents of what I describe as this first phase (which is summarized by the Figure 5-2), RIL designed an entirely new set of management processes and encoded them using a combination of technology (SAP, Success Factors, Fiori) and policies (articulation of delegations of authority, management grading systems, organization design). Individually these are substantial tasks but collectively this was a herculean undertaking. Imagine if you will, going back to work on Monday and finding out that almost overnight, you had new overarching values and behavior expectations, job description, reporting lines, authority to commit the company, a career ladder, a series of common decision-making forums, and your pay was now managed in relation to operating within the auspices laid down by RMS? In this first phase, RIL owners attempted to anticipate, redesign, systematize (by encoding as much as possible in enterprise wide software and workflow systems), and implement a complete rewiring of how work and decisions were made within the company (Bartunek, Balogun and Do, 2011).

The second phase of RIL's transformation program captures the required "behavioral" shifts, which include building an HR function that can sustain change, developing new

capabilities in the RIL management cadre, and helping the company's executive directors let go of some decision-making activities. As indicated in

Figure 5-1 and then specified in Figure 5-4, there was a clear expectation that the designed foundational "eco-system" of processes alone would be insufficient without behavioral and capability changes.

RIL leaders current state	RIL leaders end-state
Highly centralised decision-making	Devolved and expanded Leadership cadre
Expectation of line managers as executors	Expectation, selection and development of line managers as leaders
Value of execution and project management	Expanded and balanced with judgment, capability building and follow-ship
Subjective personnel decision making	Meritocratic, consistent and objective evaluations of talent and leaders
Mechanistic forms of management	Direction setting, coaching, and empowerment acts of leadership

Change will be achieved by:

The Change desired by RIL requires a multi prong approach in the following areas:
- Behavior change by Leadership
- Capability building
- Org Structure review & transparency
- HR Process re – engineering

Figure 5-4 The RIL "5 Shifts" identified as necessary to achieve transformation goals (RIL GL Event, March 2014).

Figure 5-4 provides an early articulation of what the management team believed would be needed to complete and sustain the transformation program goals. This depiction is the conclusion of a series of discussions that took place between October and December of 2013. The form shown here was presented at the transformation program launch event. The contents of the slide present an insightful summary of how deep-seated cultural assumptions would need to change. Figure 5-5 is a further distillation that was presented in October 2014 and illustrates, in practical terms, how shifting the expectations of leadership at RIL was necessary to maximize the new management

systems and would entail management evolving from executors to embrace more participative and disseminated forms of leadership.

How do we Jump the Fence?
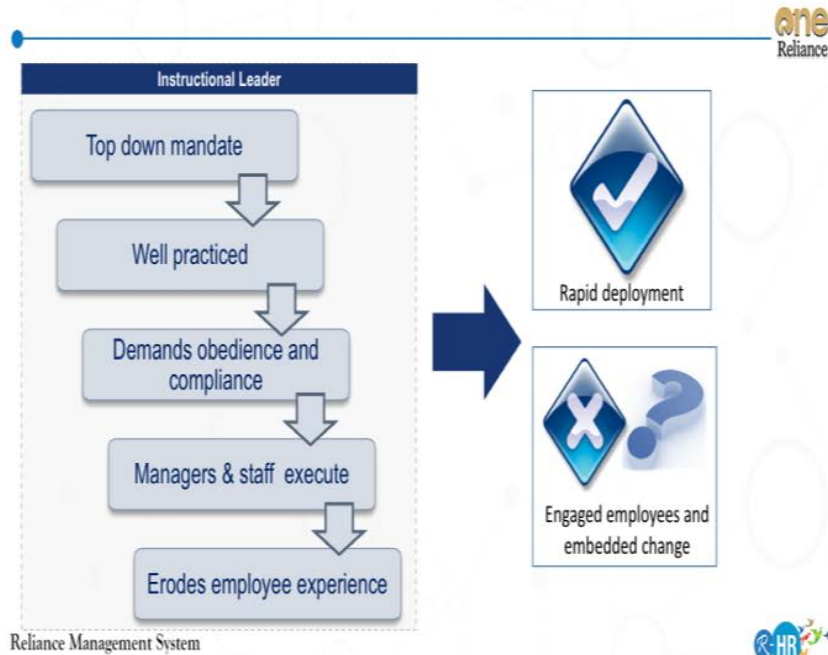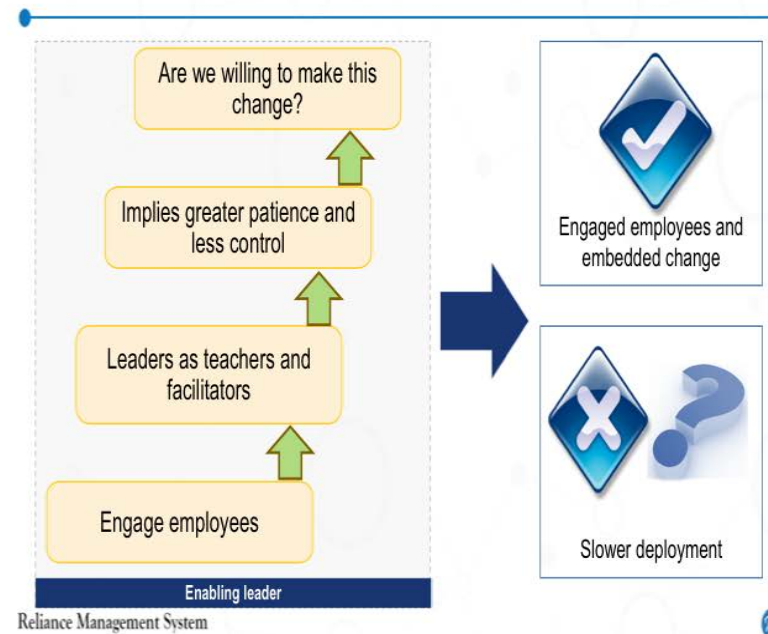
Figure 5-5 Leadership and Organizational Paradigm Shift, presented at a September 2014 RIL leadership event

5.2 Trajectory of RIL's PSC Program

When attempting to measure the success to date of RIL's PSC program, one faces some difficulty. There currently appears to be no agreed-upon measurement protocol. In academic literature, the most commonly referenced measures are these: (1) reports from the leadership team as to whether their stated goals have been achieved (Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Jacquemont, Maor, and Reich, 2015; Keller and Aiken, 2009; Kotter et al., 2003), and; (2) the financial performance of the company after a restructuring (Berger and Ofek, 1999). When these measures are applied to RIL, their trajectory appears favorable. In my field interviews, leadership asserted consistent optimism in the change program's impact. Financially, RIL has shaken off lackluster results from the 2011–2013 period to emerge once again as India's most valuable company in 2017 (Jaiswar, 2017). Additionally, while peripheral to the traditional measures, data from an IBM Kenexa staff-engagement survey show a substantial increase in employee engagement, trust, and confidence between 2014 (68%) and 2017 (76%). There is also more positive external acknowledgement of RIL, which has recently been recognized as one of the best companies to work for in India (Khetarpal, 2017). In conclusion, the evidence suggests that RIL's transformation program is on a positive trajectory.

I acknowledge that the data shared here may give rise to a debate about causation versus correlation. The main purpose of sharing this data is to provide some early insights into what we know about the relative success or failure of RIL's PSC attempts. Since this is a work in progress and I cannot easily separate other factors playing a role in RIL's financial or reputation improvements, all I can say here is that: (1) the management team report confidence in the PSC program's impact, and; (2) there is little evidence to suggest the PSC program has proved detrimental.

5.3 Analysis of RIL Transformation Program Tactics

The previous sections of this chapter have described RIL's PSC program, how it could be said to have two distinct phases, and what we know of its current trajectory. I now

plan to abstract from this information how RIL's PSC might be codified in existing academic terms. Based on this initial face value analysis, I wish to make the case that RIL's change approach might legitimately 'fit' into the same ontological frame as Lewinian theory and Kotter's 8-steps. Before I deepen my analysis and investigation of how RIL's approach to change may have deviated from conventional wisdom, I seek first to demonstrate that the comparison is a valid one.

In Table 5-1 and Figure 5-6, I have summarized important aspects of RIL's PSC program in high level academic terms. RIL's PSC program was inspired by a desire to proactively re-engineer their organization for the challenges to come. It is important to point out that RIL's transformation program is far reaching and implies a shifting of their underlying cultural assumptions (Dyer, 1986; Johnson, 1990; Schein, 2010). The scale of change being attempted at RIL unambiguously qualifies as what Johnson (1990) calls "second-order" change as it impacts organizational, cognitive, and cultural components of the company. As discussed at the outset I prefer Johnson's construct for this analysis but acknowledge the validity of others such as Hailey and Balogun's (2002, p.161) typology where the moniker revolutionary change might be apt or Buchanan's (2017, p.345) spectrum of change, where the metaphor might be "deep change." The distinction is important as we are investigating a change attempt which implies a need to shift underlying cultural assumptions in an organization. The change envisaged at RIL is pervasive and requires some shift in deeply held cultural and behavioral routines.

Table 5-1 Summary of RIL's transformation program

Key Questions	Summarized Explanation
Why change?	Multiple, complex inter-related causations illustrated by Figure 4-3
What is the purpose or goal of the change program?	RIL's goals are articulated in the vision and mission statements shared earlier in this section. RIL's program did not stem from a crisis or problem but to address the prospective need to establish more formal management systems while simultaneously developing a new cadre of leaders capable of shouldering a greater proportion of accountability for running the company. A general modernization of "HR systems" might be said to be a secondary goal, through which the company's reputation might be improved.
What philosophical approach to change is followed?	Linear, episodic, and top-down. The decision, waves, milestones, and outcomes for the program have been decided upon and "pushed" into the organization by its owner and EC. There was a distinct beginning and end to the first phase of systems implementation. As shown in Figure 5-6 the change program fits neatly into the philosophical domain of Lewinian theory and, in principle, Kotter's 8-Step model.
Major tactics	RIL's transformation has two primary phases: the first has been to implement systems and processes using a rapid deployment approach; the second has been to build the capabilities of its management team to fully leverage the new management systems.
Current status of change program	The program is now three years old, and while not complete, it has sufficient maturity to warrant observations about what has worked well and what has been less effective.
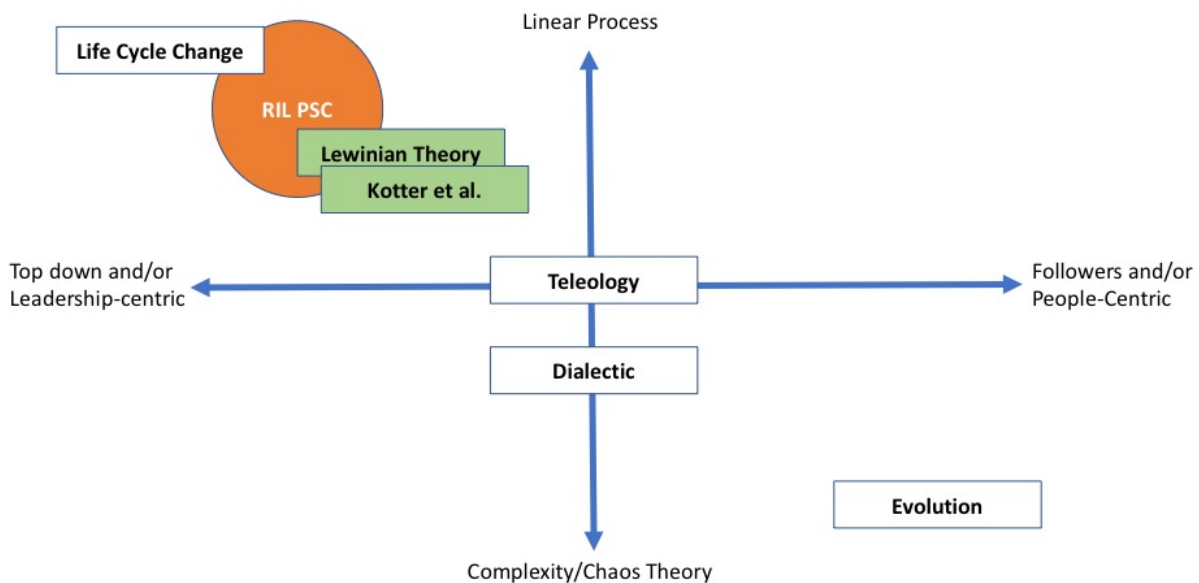
Figure 5-6 Illustration of major philosophical perspectives toward organization change (Source: Author, based on Van de Ven & Poole [1995] and the literature review [2017])

RIL's transformation program has been unambiguously a top-down-driven initiative. In Van de Ven and Poole's (1995, p.514) typologies of planned change, RIL's approach fits the description of "life-cycle (regulatory change)," which is "prescribed, has anticipated beginning and ending points, and requires (or assumes) organizational compliance." Since there are diverse ontological perspectives on how change may occur, I have plotted RIL's change program on a grid in Figure 5-6. My purpose with Figure 5-6 is to show where RIL's PSC attempt fits relative to the major philosophical perspectives (the X and Y axis), Van de Ven and Poole's typographies of change, and, finally, the classic Lewin-inspired change frameworks, including Kotter's (Cummings, Bridgman, and Brown, 2015, p.69). The illustration clearly shows how RIL's change program sits in the same space as Lewinian theory and Kotter's 8-Step framework. Consequently, at least at the philosophical level, it seems reasonable to assert, all else being equal, that Kotter's framework should apply to RIL.

RIL have employed a soft systems thinking and design approach (Checkland, 1981). As an engineering-based organization with the historic and cultural underpinnings described in Chapter 4, this is perhaps not a surprise. Their approach fits snugly into the systems thinking and design construct for human activity systems as envisioned by Checkland (2000). Particularly given RIL's historic prowess toward rapid project execution with tight deadlines in their refinery business, Checkland's enticing description of this approach resonates:

> It is not difficult to envisage the situations in [organizations] in which the thinking about problems and problem solving [can] be significantly helped by the models underpinned by hard systems thinking, namely the models that see organizations as coordinated functional task systems seeking to achieve declared goals and that see the task of management as decision making in support of goal seeking (2000, p.54).

RIL took just such an approach to their transformation program. The design and implementation of the four waves of R-HR and RMS were completed very rapidly. The systems were well designed and certainly implemented in an impressive timeframe, all centrally conceived, approved, and rolled out by MDA and his EC team. Communications during the rollout largely consisted of telling the recipients what they were expected to do and how to use the new systems.[24] The consequent depiction of a division of RIL's transformation into two phases was a natural occurrence and one accepted by owners and senior executives. These two phases are shown in the materials and, as such, are not a reflective conclusion but a conscious component of the plan. The difference, and a highly salient one, is that, where RIL management were extremely confident and qualified to deliver the systems and design phase using their prowess at project management and relying on organization compliance, the second

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[24] The materials shared in this previous section support this but it is worth amplifying the sentiment toward this change implementation by sharing a further field note captured Nov 20, 2015 following a meeting with MDA and J Bersin when it was represented that for Jio "the plan is to engineer a fool proof system that employees can follow on their iPad which leads them through key aspects of how to deal with onboarding a customer and fixing a technical glitch." While this was in the context of a consumer business, subsequent discussions followed within the RIL EC about how to develop management data dashboards which allowed a few senior leaders to manage large chunks of RIL's business empire. The bias here was of a desire to rely on well-designed systems to reduce employee judgment and risk of failures.

necessary phase of capability building and behavior shift was a "known unknown" (Luft, 1961).

In returning to the relevance of the trajectory of RIL's PSC program, the question arises: Are the results of this empirical study impacted by success or failure? On the one hand, if RIL's program is widely acknowledged as successful, this study of its tactics may carry greater weight. On the other hand, whether RIL succeeds or fails, if this study can accurately identify the reasons for that failure and how they could have been remedied, then perhaps the actual outcome of RIL's program might be less relevant.

Since I have demonstrated here that, in principle, existing derivatives of Lewinian theory exemplified by Kotter's 8-Steps, are designed to have utility in these philosophical and tactical circumstances, let me now explore how these compare to RIL's actual approach and how there are major differences.

5.4 Preliminary Comparison to Contemporary Change Frameworks

As is well-researched in the family business literature domain, family firms in their first and second generations often are built around one central figure (Kelly, Athanassiou, and Crittenden, 2000; De Massis et al., 2008; Sonfield and Lussier, 2004). This provides the advantage of allowing this powerful figure to use his or her influence to make far-reaching proclamations that are rarely challenged.

Equally, the organization is accustomed to following MDA's decisions and is, largely, content to limit its definition of leadership to one of project management execution. There is also some evidence that management, in such circumstances, is ill-equipped to take on broader accountabilities, using existing space and ambiguity less to showcase competence to lead and more to maximize personal agendas. Followers, that is to say largely everyone in RIL besides MDA, are willing to accept and follow his wishes. The explanation for why may be for further research beyond this study. My speculation is that it is linked only in part to the Indian cultural setting and the suggestion that employees define their roles narrowly to obey. The problem with this explanation is that it does not fit my observations or the rationalizations given by younger employees or MDA's most senior colleagues. This is something I will discuss again in the following

chapter. Suffice to say, for the comparison to contemporary change frameworks, that followers in RIL do not need consultation, persuasion, or coercion. If they are convinced MDA wishes to change direction, they are willing to comply. This means that, relative to existing models for linear or teleological change attempts, the literature devoted to understanding "readiness for change" for some family-owned businesses may be misplaced (Holt et al., 2007; Van de Ven and Sun, 2011).

RIL also feels a strong commitment to long-serving employees. I mentioned this previously in my illustration of what MDA said around never wanting to fire anyone. This appears to be a trait consistent across many family businesses (Aronoff and Ward, 2011; Levinson, 1971). A deep-sense of loyalty to long serving staff might therefore be said to be in conflict with change programs which imply a rapid change of a workforce. Many contemporary OD strategic-change frameworks implicitly assume a utilitarian view (Zajac and Bruhn, 1999). In other words, when a company embarks on PSC, the goal of that change is considered more important than the fate of any individual employee. In fact, the often-cited adage in organizational change— "To change a company, one needs to change the people or change people!"—conjures this utilitarian construct.[25] Saving the company, if you will, is worth the sacrifice of a few employees.

The sometimes raw, entrepreneurial zeal of a small family business could also be said to be present at RIL. Several scholars have researched how the ability of family businesses to be opportunistic and strategically flexible is often an advantage (Hall, Melin, and Nordqvist, 2001; Holt, 2012; Kraiczy, Hack, and Kellermanns, 2015; Sharma, 2011). An inherent tension might be said to exist between a family firm's natural proclivity to prioritize opportunity and management systems whose objective purpose is consistency and reliability (Aronoff and Ward, 1995; Miller and Breton-miller, 2005; Wilkins and Dyer, 1988).

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[25] Based on authors experience in managing change prior to working with RIL.

What is noteworthy about these tensions is that they appear to be consistent traits of successful first- and second-generation family businesses. Aronoff and Ward (2011), in their book *Preparing Your Family Business for Strategic Change,* note that family businesses typically experience five phases of maturity during their lives (2011, p.7). For a family business to survive and enter what they term "Liberation—creating a culture of change, a process of strategic management," the authors identify a number of inhibitors that they suggest are unique to family businesses (2011, pp.12–13):

1. A mystification and institutionalization of operating beliefs that served the company well in the early stages of growth but that may no longer be relevant
2. Deeply entrenched values (including loyalty to long serving staff)
3. An autocratic/paternalistic management style

These findings are consistent with those predicted in the family-business grey literature referred to earlier (e.g., Dyer, 1986; Hatum and Pettigrew, 2004; Hilburt-Davis and Dyer, 2007; Holt and Daspit, 2015). Consequently, my position on these tensions is that they represent potentially common challenges for a family business to navigate during strategic change.

5.5 Comparison with Kotter's 8-Step Framework

I have referred to Kotter's change framework as an illustration of a popular and well-cited OD change framework that fits in the same philosophical space as RIL's transformation program (Appelbaum et al., 2012; Kahn, 2012; Weick and Quinn, 1999). I would also underline, I look to Kotter in large part given the absence of either family centric or Indian based change frameworks. Consequently, I propose to contrast RIL's tactics for change with those suggested by Kotter. My purpose is to illustrate how RIL's change program may be distinctive but is not necessarily compromised by comparison to prevailing wisdom.

There are three ideological assumptions implicit in Kotter's work: (1) a perspective of the chronology of events, including to some extent the need for a compelling case to change and related sense of urgency; (2) an assumption of needing to persuade a constituency of leaders, then followers, to participate; and (3) a utilitarian approach to

achieving the change program's goals that imposes some consequence on those who do not comply (Barry, 1989; Harsanyi, 1985). I have illustrated these assumptions in

Table 5-2. The observations are supported by a review of Kotter's work: *Back to the Future: Revisiting Kotter's 1996 Change Model* by Appelbaum et al. (2012). Throughout their review, the authors underline these assumptions: "…Change that is rushed may not allow time to adapt, and create initiative fatigue, encouraging decay" (2012, p.767, in turn referencing Buchanan et al., 2003); "no one person is capable of single-handedly leading and managing a change process in an organization..." (2012, p.767); and "…uncommitted employees or those who have lost their commitment over time are more likely to resist the change-based path. As a result, this can lead to a decrease in perception of change-based momentum" (2012, p.774). This last point stops short of stating that the remedy is to remove the disaffected employees, but Kotter himself makes this implication clear when he says, "confront supervisors who undercut needed change" and "if the situation really is hopeless and the employee needs to be removed… do so early" (2012, p.120).

Table 5-2 Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change

Kotter's 8 Steps	Establish a sense of urgency	Create a guiding coalition	Develop a vision and strategy	Communicate a change vision	Empower broad-based action	Generate short-term wins	Consolidate games and produce more change	Anchor new approaches in the corporate culture
Steps are considered sequential and evenly paced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Inferred participative presumption	These first five steps of Kotter's framework are, to various degrees, built on the presumptions that (1) no one leader can impose change and (2) followers must be persuaded to join the movement.							
Inferred coercive or consequence component					Each of these steps in Kotter's work takes the positive tone of "encouraging the right behaviors"; however, the implication is that those who don't comply face consequences.			

Kotter's model was built in the early 1990s based on research into U.S.A.-based MNCs like General Motors, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Eastern Airways (Kotter, 2012; Kotter, Lawrence, and White, 2007). While his book suggests that over 100 case studies were used, it is hard to identify the specific list. The available evidence suggests that Kotter's work focuses on explaining how large, institutionally owned U.S.A. MNCs attempt to avoid obsolescence after decades of success. Consequently, I think it reasonable to suggest that Kotter was not attempting to describe change in a family business, and certainly not one in India.

5.6 RIL Transformation Program Summary

RIL's transformation program has taken a top-down, episodic approach to PSC, consistent with Lewinian derived theory (Burnes and Cooke, 2012; Lewin, 1951). Consequently, at a philosophical level at least, a comparison to contemporary OD models, such as Kotter's 8-Step framework seems reasonable. The danger of this comparison is that it may distract from my primary goal in this research which is to investigate RIL's enablers and barriers to change. However, solely as a means to make the case that RIL may have employed distinctive tactics in achieving their PSC results, and in the noteworthy absence of any family-centric change frameworks, I have shown how inadequate Kotter's framework is to describe RIL's experience.

RIL have approached change in two distinctive phases. Initially MDA and a small cadre of close confidantes undertook a comprehensive design thinking exercise. During this first phase, remarkable diligence and skills were exhibited in the construction a complete "eco-system" for employees to inhabit. RIL's skills at project management and the direct involvement and decisiveness of their owner saw this phase well managed and swiftly implemented. When MDA launched the new "eco-system," he gained extraordinary levels of immediate adoption. In simple terms, he asked his people to move and they did so without objection, resistance or complaint.

Following this first phase of PSC, RIL have accepted the need for a shift in the management capability necessary to sustain the new systems. While employees have adopted the new systems, they have done so somewhat mechanistically. This is to say,

that owners have acknowledged that the new systems have not resulted in all of the benefits anticipated. In particular, managers have shown a rather compliant and slavish pursuit of the new processes but an absence in decision making skills and willingness to be accountable for increased responsibilities. In short, the owners are now navigating a second phase of PSC which is now focused on the capabilities of managers to develop new skills, exhibit hitherto undesired levels of accountability, and, perhaps most importantly, build trust that they can faithfully shoulder responsibilities delegated.

As I compare RIL's PSC program tactics with existing frameworks, I make the observation that there are at least three areas where they are incongruent. First, Kotter's model assumes the need for a compelling case for change and a chronological order or sequence of tactics. In RIL's case the compelling case for change was MDA's desire to get the company ready for challenges that lay ahead. The traditional example of the proverbial "burning platform" of poor business or competitor threat was missing. Second, Kotter's framework emphasizes the need for significant levels of engagement and persuasion before change can be introduced. In RIL's case, that has not occurred, and yet followers have been willing to adopt the imposed changes. And, thirdly, there is an assumption of a utilitarian approach in Kotter's model which is in conflict with a commonly held family business value, namely loyalty to long serving employees.

Finally, let me touch again on the question of the impact of RIL's Indian cultural backdrop to their change tactics. Hofstede (2015) and Sinha (2014) both discuss the social pact of a faithful servant doing as they are told and benevolent owner, in exchange, owing a duty of care. While there is little doubt that the tendency of Indian society to expect paternalistic behaviors from its successful entrepreneurs will have had some influence over RIL's change tactics, I can also show that many Indian businesses have not exhibited these behaviors. For example, Infosys, Cognizant, WiPro, and HFDC Bank have all undertaken large scale redundancy programs in India in the past few years (Singh, 2017; Tripathi, 2014). Consequently, while I will further discuss and expand on the influence of Indian national culture on my research findings in the following chapters, my initial explanation is that RIL's approach has deviated from

existing, admittedly Western derived, change frameworks for reasons other than purely the influence of national culture.

6 - Fieldwork: participant observation and interviews

"The scientist is not a person who gives the right answers, he's one who asks the right questions." — Claude Lévi-Strauss

Having explained RIL's transformation tactics and how they have departed from those suggested by conventional OD frameworks, I set out in this chapter to explore and explain this in more detail. In this chapter I share my cumulative fieldwork, including participant observation and field interviews. The context of the previous two chapters has been essential to explain RIL's cultural paradigm prior to departing on a PSC journey and the design thinking and execution approach they used to achieve change. Let me now turn directly to address my research question, "What are the enablers for and barriers to PSC in a large, owner-centric, family owned business." Here, I will share the data I have compiled, how it has been analyzed, and my findings.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. First, I share my more detailed participant observation analysis of the main enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL. Then I provide the data from my field interviews, which tested, and in some cases, challenged my early observations. Finally, I present my findings and answer to the research question.

6.1 Comparison of RIL's PSC Approach to Contemporary Change Frameworks

In observing RIL's PSC program, the company has consistently exhibited behaviors that stem from its cultural assumptions (illustrated in Figure 4-2*)* and are linked to its family ownership. I have summarized my observations of how RIL's culture and value system has impacted their PSC program in Table 6-1. Let me elaborate on each of these:

Table 6-1 Observed cultural and value influences within RIL's PSC program

	Observed Cultural and Value Influences
1	Emphasis on speed and top-down, imposed change (authoritarian approach)
2	Loyalty to long-serving employees trumps desire for change adoption (individual justice approach)
3	Entrepreneurial flexibility, demanding a constant re-evaluation of any decision-making process to ensure maximum value is extracted (value versus consistency)

6.1.1 Speed and Imposed Change

RIL, as illustrated by Figure 4-2, has succeeded based on a strong cultural belief in decisive ownership, superior project-management skills, and commitment by the management and employee base to execute. These attributes have been honed over many years with great success and are observed as follows:

1. Ownership centrality: RIL has a strong and powerful central figure in MDA. A common justification for an action by management is simply "MDA has asked us to implement X." However, many managers at RIL are unable to articulate the business case behind the action or explain why the action is being taken. One good example of this was when, in Feb 2014, I met with leaders from the fledging Jio telecoms business who told me they wanted to install the hydrocarbons reward and grading system. I asked whether they thought that really made sense. Their response was a minute of confusion followed by "MDA has asked us to do so…so give us what we need to execute!" The organization has been built in this fashion and serves to execute on his decisions. This is consistently accepted across RIL.[26]

2. Execution mindset of management: Linked to this first point is the willingness of leaders to defer decision making and define their role in the organization as

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[26] A quote which is shared later that sums this up was given in the field interviews "In RIL there is one leader and 34,999 followers!' The key point here is that MDA operates as the center of RIL's solar system. It is not a difficult observation to arrive at and the evidence is clear almost upon arrival. I provide further evidence in my field interviews.

that of executors rather than decision makers. In February 2014, I asked a member of the senior management team about this, and he said, "David, I was told early on in my career at RIL, your role is to listen… Listen and execute… Hear and do."[27] At RIL, an entire organization has been built to execute owner-imposed directives. This means there is no resistance to change. I believe that related to this was a genuine lack of comprehension of what taking more accountability for decision making entailed. At a leadership event in October 2014, the audience of 300 senior leaders was polled on three questions: (a) Do you agree that migrating to RMS and disseminating decision making will create the best value for RIL over the next 10 years? (85% responded favorably) (b) What is the current default approach to management challenges? (90% responded, "top-down prescription") (c) What is your personal preference toward tackling management challenges? (95% said they preferred to engage employees in discussions in order to crowd source solutions). The incongruence between the three answers, particularly the suggestion in the last answer that management had a natural bias to be empowering rather than prescriptive, seemed a clear illustration that the majority were unable to see their own behaviors and capabilities as a factor in the change journey.[28]

3. Idle hands cause trouble:[29] RIL has its share of intra-company rivalry, but what appeared distinctive was how some managers appeared to be more disruptive in the absence of clear direction from MDA or the EC. This was explained to me as follows: "When we have clear direction from the top, everyone falls silent and marches to the sound of the drum… However, in the absence of the sound of the drum… well, some people compete for attention and use proximity to ownership to promote themselves internally and, to some extent, externally."

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[27] Field notes dated Feb 20, 2014

[28] This was the second leadership event held at Antilia in October 2014. The survey was conducted via an electronic voting tool and the results were captured via a software package and projected directly onto a screen for discussion.

[29] Idle Hands are the Devils Workshop (proverb)

6.1.2 Individual Justice[30] over Utilitarianism

"For as long as I am the Chairman, for those who show their commitment and trust, there will always be a job for you at RIL" (MDA at a leadership event [April 2015]). The view in RIL is that long-serving, loyal employees are owed a debt—a debt created by an individual: (1) choosing to commit his or her career to the company over a decade or more;[31] (2) having done so before RIL became a household name; (3) loyally and diligently fulfilling the unwritten bargain of doing what he or she has been told, and; (4) being unwavering in support of RIL's owners. I observed that there is a hierarchy of what is valued at RIL; this is depicted in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2 Hierarchy of what is valued at RIL

1	Individual Loyalty: When combined with technical competence and perceived diligence of doing what one is told
2	Individual Expertise: Hands-on, detailed expertise in a domain or area of need for the company
3	Collective Leadership Change: Shifting leadership is assuming greater responsibility and proactively solving problems

In late 2014 and early 2015, I discussed this point at length with MDA and his EC. My questions were whether RIL was willing to make room for new leaders who could interact with the new management systems, unencumbered by decades of obedience and deference. The tension between achieving prospective change and staying loyal to stalwarts was obvious. On November 2, 2015, there was a discussion about the viability of reshaping RIL's senior leadership cadre by simultaneously reducing its numbers by 20% and undertaking a capability assessment. The expectation was that approximately 50% of the incumbent leaders, whose average age was above retirement age, would not make the expected benchmark for new leadership competencies. The debate

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[30] I use the term Individual Justice here not as a link to any theoretical framework (albeit it may have some link to individualism as described by Cohen (2006)) but as a means to summarize RIL owner's sense of loyalty to long serving employees. In this sense, I would ask the reader to view this term as descriptive.

[31] These statements are made based on countless conversations with members of the RIL executive, ownership, and leadership ranks. There is a duality between relatively new 'outsiders' who are less charitable. However, for the long-standing leaders and most importantly the owners, the MDA quote from his speech in April 2015 is a good summation. I have amplified all these points in the field interviews which follow.

lingered for two or three months before the focus was shifted with the explanation that incumbents should not be the company's focus. "We need to develop the next cadre of young leaders first, and they aren't worried about status. Let the old timers stay as long as they want. We will use them as advisors, and they will cause us no harm. In fact, we can use their experience to help us" (Paraphrased EC discussion [Feb 2016]).

6.1.3 Entrepreneurial flexibility

In late 2014, crude oil prices dropped precipitously (Husain et al., 2015). In the process, many oil companies worried about how they should respond and, indeed, whether their business plans remained viable. In December 2014, I was present for an EC conversation that can be summarized as follows:

> Our trading team has not been hedging crude despite this crazy fall in prices. Basically, leadership has failed to effectively manage this for us. We will have to intervene and do it for them. It is sad, but equally, they have lost us tens of millions of dollars. It fundamentally undermines our trust in the people. Perhaps it also underscores that we must make sure we are hands on and don't let similar mistakes happen again…[32]

I was intrigued by this exchange, so I investigated. I found that the version of events provided by members of the management team was very different:

> Well, we went to the owners last year and asked whether we should review our crude hedging strategy. All the major firms take the view that hedging flat price crude is prohibitively expensive and have a policy not to. We agreed that RIL should follow a similar path. Consequently, this is a non-issue. We agreed upon a policy. We operated within that policy. Now, obviously, if we had a crystal ball, we might want to do something different. But bear in mind that hindsight is always 20/20.[33]

The story provides a glimpse into the ownership perspective that one should always look to optimize and that any policy, process, or, indeed, previous decision is prone to immediate change. The point, however, is to underline how RIL's owners'

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[32] I have paraphrased this based on my notes (Dec 2014).

[33] This is not verbatim. In part I am using the aggregate sentiment as explained to me by several people.

entrepreneurial flexibility creates an ambiguity for management. Decisions are relative and can be reversed if the circumstances change. This illustration is intended to point to an excuse among some management in RIL that it is sometimes difficult to predict when a policy or process can be relied upon. This is simply a question of degree and differences of expectations. The observation at RIL is that consistency of approach is far less important than profit maximization.

6.2 Summary of Preliminary Participant Observation

So, let me summarize my participant observations and set the scene for my field interviews, which were designed specifically to verify and elaborate on my preliminary findings. I believe the evidence presented thus far in this thesis demonstrates major inadequacies in Kotter's (2012) framework's ability to explain the main enablers and barriers present during RIL's PSC. All the indications I could see suggested that the biggest enabler of RIL's change was MDA himself. Once MDA committed himself to a cause, the rest of the organization was enthusiastic to follow. In fact, the conventional wisdom of developing a coalition at RIL would have been counter-productive (Kotter, 2012; Armenakis et al., 1993; Armenakis et al., 2009; Holt et al., 2007). Management was not accustomed to taking on leadership challenges like reorganizing their departments, let alone more strategic decisions about closing down loss making assets. They simply had not been expected or developed to do so. When left to their own devices, they seemed to become preoccupied with parochial battles.[34]

When MDA imposed a new direction, an almost eerie calm descended on the organization. In this calm, the management team engaged a well-honed execution mindset and went about delivering on MDA's instructions. In translating this to RIL's PSC, it seemed that this is exactly how it had occurred: with MDA imposing a solution and the management team faithfully committing to its execution. What is remarkable about this feat is how it has apparently bypassed or leapfrogged contemporary concepts

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[34] This took the form of competing for ownership attention and attempting to curry favor. I have made this statement here and validate it in the field interviews which follow.

such as readiness for change, resistance to change, and several of the more minor aspects of Kotter's framework (Holt and Vardaman, 2013; Starr, 2011; Walinga, 2008).

After rapid initial adoption, certain tensions have become apparent—tensions that MDA and his EC have acknowledged and are working to remedy.[35] The second phase of RIL's PSC has exposed challenges in helping the management team embrace the new management systems while also experiencing the tension of owners wishing to retain entrepreneurial optionality. In some ways, this might be said to have exposed a paradox, given the espoused desire to install sustaining systems that will help a more autonomous management team operate the business independently without constant ownership direction. Yet at the same time, the very adoption of these new systems has been imposed, and the existing management team has a "parental rule-based" relationship to them (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Sinha, 2014; Smetana, 1995). This is to say that existing management are being compliant in a way similar to a child who has accepted a parent's direction to tidy his room.[36] I have, thus, described RIL's approach as having two distinct phases: a systems design component, which played to the company's strengths, and then a more difficult behavioral and competence phase.

As one reflects on the family business literature, one reason why RIL's PSC program is challenging becomes clear: it creates an inherent conflict between deeply held entrepreneurial ideals and predictable management decision-making processes. RIL's PSC is directed at installing formalized, predictable systems with a view to delegating the operations of the business to a new generation of management. The two challenges with this strategy are that: (1) it is contrary to the existing owners' disposition toward opportunity, suggesting a trade-off between predictability of management process and entrepreneurial opportunism, and (2) the existing management cadre was not selected based on their ability to run the business autonomously but, rather, based on their prowess in executing, somewhat mechanistically, the owners' instructions. Navigating the second phase of RIL's PSC therefore required the skillful navigation of complex

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[35] These are discussed extensively in the following pages (see page 154)

tensions, not the least of which was the company's strong sense of loyalty to long-serving employees.

My initial conclusions, therefore, were that RIL's PSC program deviated considerably from conventional wisdom, leapfrogging the consensus and coalition building steps. Far from disadvantaging RIL it actually appears to have saved them time and allowed them to gain rapid initial adoption of their new systems. What has emerged after this initial phase has been a rather distinctive "paradoxical" set of tensions between long held ownership beliefs about optionality and flexibility, alongside the management's more mechanistic or obedient relationships with the new systems.

I would underline, therefore, that a close examination of Kotter's 8-Step framework against the tensions at play in RIL leads one to the conclusion that it is not a very helpful guide. Kotter's framework focuses on consensus and alliance building, employee engagement, reducing "resistance to change," and offers little guidance on how to navigate a second phase of navigating paradoxical tensions. Since my observations indicated that RIL had great success with the first phase of change but faced sterner tests in sustaining their change, I argue this is an important gap in existing OD change knowledge regarding PSC in owner-centric family firms.

6.3 Construction of Field Interviews

With the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of the main enablers and barriers present during RIL's PSC, I undertook a series of semi-structured interviews designed to explore my preliminary participant observation conclusions. Participant observation, as a form of ethnographic study, can result in rich and insightful findings purely based on a researcher's field notes. However, many ethnographic scholars recommend undertaking interviews at the end of a study to clarify and deepen a researcher's findings (Agar and Hobbs, 1982; Burgess, 1984; Skinner, 2014). Among the questions I wished to explore, was whether RIL's change program was achieving its stated

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[36] This observed compliance and the 'blind adoption' of new management practices based on faith and authority of owners is a key point which I will explore in greater detail through my semi-structured interviews. It appears linked to motivation theory and the work of Ryan & Deci (2017; 2000)

purpose. Another question was whether there was widespread agreement on the PSC program's objectives. However, my main aim was to gain participants' detailed input in identifying the main enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL. While I had explored this subject in informal conversations with many people at RIL over the years, I wanted to ask them some more direct questions and record these for analysis. In this regard, I should underline that I was concerned with avoiding what Silverman (2013, p.31) and others refer to as the "interview culture" of the twenty-first century in which researchers have been accused of "manufacturing" data to "fit pre-determined research questions."

In building my semi-structured interview protocol, I used the observations presented in Table 6-1, Table 6-2, and Table 5-2. My intent was to construct a general conversation guide that initially took participants through a review of RIL's PSC goals, successes to date, and challenges before asking them some specific questions about organizational-change tactics. The outcome was the interview guide found in Appendix C. This guide took several iterations to perfect, with input from Cranfield University doctorate supervisors and faculty and three refinements made during the first 10 interviews.

6.4 Interview Sample and Methodology

I have provided a breakdown of the 26 interview participants in Figure 6-1. My position within RIL allowed me to target key actors for interviews. I used my insights from having worked with the company to identify 30 targeted respondents representing a diverse cross section of RIL's ownership, leadership, management, and individual contributor ranks. I purposefully selected individuals with different vantage points both in tenure and area of accountability. I completed 26 interviews between March and April 2017 (Appendix D contains a full listing.) These were conducted, as often as possible, in respondents' preferred locations, mainly at Reliance Corporate Park in Navi Mumbai, India. All the interviews except one were recorded. In preparing my analysis, I have listened in detail to all the interviews several times and transcribed 19 that I felt were most helpful. I considered adding further respondents but found that, after the first 20, additional interviews provided little further value. I employed a three-step open, analytical, and selective coding protocol using "constant comparison" consistent with the Glaserian methodology of grounded-theory method (Urquhart, 2013, pp.32–34). I have

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attached the details of my interview coding process in Appendix F but share detailed summaries of results later in this chapter. Collectively, the tables and appendices, show the descriptive, selective, and analytical codes that I used, how I grouped these as enablers (positives) and barriers (negatives) to PSC, and, finally, how I arrived at the discovery of inter-connected paradoxical forces. I will come back to this analysis later in the chapter.
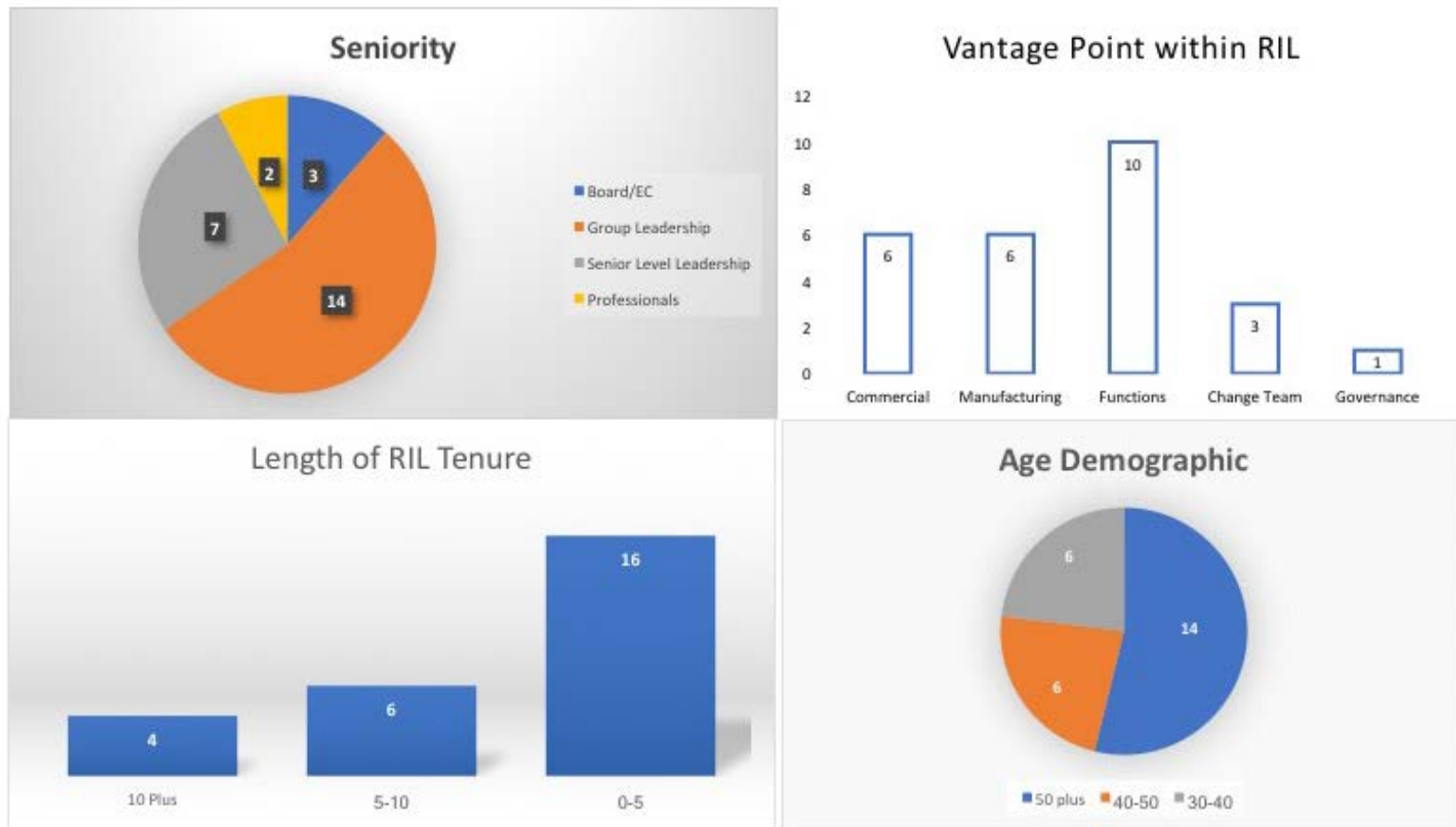
Figure 6-1 Field Interview Demographic Data

I was conscious of the dangers of social desirability bias (Furnham, 1986). While some risk of inflated optimism remains, I used a mixture of direct and indirect questioning to reduce this (Fisher, 1993). Moreover, I believed that the rapport I had developed over my 3.5 years at RIL helped with respondent candor. The anthropologic, embedded observer holds certain trust advantages over a visiting stranger as a qualitative researcher (Dewalt, Dewalt, and Wayland, 2011; Gans, 1999; Skinner, 2014).

I have divided my analysis and reporting of the findings from my field interviews into two sections. In the first section, keeping with the narrative storyline, I will share the general feedback I received in conversation with respondents. I will present these simply as exchanges with respondents as we worked through my interview guide. This section maintains my commitment to Silverman's (2013) mantra of sharing complete dialogues between researcher and respondent.

In the second section, I will share my detailed coding of the interview transcripts. I have used Grounded Theory Method (GTM) to analyze the findings from my field interviews. In this section, I will share the outcomes from my coding, and findings.

6.4.1 Purpose and Trajectory of the RIL Transformation Program

As I began my interviews with the cross section of RIL sponsors, leaders, and employees, I tested whether there was alignment between espoused and understood aims. I received very consistent and congruent descriptions concerning the ultimate purpose of RIL's change program. In sharing respondents' comments, I have replaced their initials with a number representing the sequence in which I interviewed them. The number in parentheses represents the subject's relative seniority using the demarcations shown in the top left pie graph of Figure 6-1 (e.g., 1 is board level and 4 is lower management):

> DO: By way of a quick intro, here's the first question: What is the purpose and what are the aims of Reliance's transformation program?

P2(2). When I joined, we had an EC meeting, and I actually asked the chairman, "What [are] the benefits [of the] realization framework?" …MDA made it very clear, and there were about 30 people in the room when he said it, that the only benefit we will get from doing BT [Business Transformation] at that time (referring to the systems elements and process integration) is it would build the foundation that will give us sustainability for the long term. The reason for that is, he said, a lot of the knowledge, the inherent knowledge, and the connectivity that we have [at] Reliance is sitting within people's heads. So, somehow, we have to turn and take all of that capital and embed it within our processes, so it becomes sustainable and actually becomes less people-dependent. So, it was actually very interesting because it was recognizing a point of strength to date but also recognizing that same point of strength, over time, will become an issue if it's not managed.

All 26 respondents agreed that the purpose of RIL's PSC was to install management systems that would help transition management of the firm from the existing owner/directors, disseminate decision making across a wider footprint, and, in the process, invest in helping developing leaders to gradually take on greater responsibilities. I next asked, "Has RIL made progress?" With the given caveat that RIL's transformation program is a work in progress, a consistent theme of my interviews was one of optimism. Again, all 26 respondents were consistent in striking an optimistic tone, exemplified as follows:

DO: As you reflect on the last three years, what has gone well and, in particular, why do you think this was the case?

P19(1): It's hard not to focus here on just my area; [Finance]. We have really benefited from the processes and the fact we have stuck with them for over three years. I would say this has been invaluable… the consistency… the routine. We are now really seeing great benefits from this: Conversations are deeper, the CFOs in the business are more engaged in the right conversations, there is more collaboration. I would also point to the establishing of the risk committee and other forums. We can say—in fact, I have said to MDA—pick any meeting at random, and I will show you the minutes, what was discussed, the decisions made, and the actions. This is really valuable and very positive. It is ordered, logical, disciplined. Of course, we needed time to get used to this. But people now

speak up; the contributions have increased. These systems are critical for us to be able to manage at scale.

DO: As you reflect on the last three years, do you feel any change?

P10(2): There has been much change. Especially on the HR side… quite a few changes. The processes are defined in a much better way. Involvement of people in performance management, for example. These were not there in the past. We were completely lacking in the engagement of employees, especially these town halls, and this survey… These are new concepts in RIL completely. These are the very good things which have happened.

These responses demonstrate a pervasive sense of confidence across management ranks from different vantage points, that the investment in transformation at RIL was delivering positive results. The examples of progress were consistent with my own observations that RIL had excelled in the design thinking and systems design aspects of organizational change.

6.4.2 Enablers and Barriers to PSC at RIL

As I continued my interviews, I asked two general questions concerning what had gone well and what had been problematic for RIL during its change journey. My objective was to uncover respondents' views that were untarnished by my own observations. To help respondents, I started by simply asking, 'What has gone well, and what has been challenging?' and then dug deeper into why they thought this was the case. I found respondents were better able to identify enablers and barriers when they were prompted to remember successes and stumbling blocks. I have summarized their answers in Table 6-3, arranged in categories of "why," "what," and "how."

Table 6-3 Summary of respondents' enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL

Enablers		Barriers
Led from top Non-negotiable	<u>Why</u>	Poor/inconsistent cascading of information Executives/owners selective in delegation
Transparent processes Consistent management framework	<u>What</u>	Rigidity of new systems Misconceptions of the tools Perceived conflict with immediate business needs
Bypassed fiefdoms and politics Went fast/bold Modelled from outside	<u>How</u>	Poor actors not managed Leaders want to minimize errors Managers defer rather than risk failure

In answering the question of what was the greatest enabler for RIL's transformation, participants' main response was MDA's directive approach. Prior to 2013, there was some turmoil internally as RIL tried to develop its own transformation roadmap. This attempt ground to a halt and created some paralysis:

> This transformation started with business process reengineering. So, they wanted to copy Shell, then Exxon. So, a number of RIL agents started to work furiously at copying down these systems. And it spread throughout the organization. And it paralyzed the organization. You couldn't make any progress because the organization was stuck. It was preoccupied with designing a new organization. The main obstacle was that everyone was preoccupied with looking at these reorganizational attempts through a lens of "What does it mean for my own personal power and influence?" So, it wasn't about outcomes for the company but how to maximize my personal power and influence [P19(2)].

Five of the respondents specifically referred to importance and need for owner intervention and direction. They believed that MDA was the only person capable of bringing the organization in line. One respondent put it pithily: "At RIL, there is one leader and 34,999 followers [referring here just to the Energy business headcount] …

When the leader speaks, everyone… then acts" [P11(3)]. Connected to this was the strong belief that an RIL-designed solution would not have succeeded. What was needed was a proven external model that was at arm's length from RIL and its various management "fiefdoms," including its HR function. Using BP's framework to impose a top-down, non-negotiable set of systems was considered important. "It was not that the BP systems were cutting-edge or, indeed, without flaws; it was that they indisputably worked, came from a respected counterpart, and were considered independent from RIL's existing politics" [P19(2)]. In every interview, however, respondents to some degree emphasized the power of MDA's influence.

The barriers experienced during RIL's change program are listed in the right-hand column of Table 6-3. Every respondent agreed on two areas: (1) that cascading of communication through the management ranks to employees was poor and inconsistent and (2) that aspects of the change program were undermined by a perceived trust deficiency. Both of these points are related to whether RIL leadership/management can operate in a more autonomous, system-driven environment, although the latter also is linked to existing ownership's willingness to "let go." I seek to separate this observation from a desire to be involved in the PSC program design in a more classical 'participation' context – this was instead lamenting the absence of management desire or capability to explain to employees what was expected of them in the new "eco-system." One respondent summed up the distinction by saying "Leaders did a poor job of explaining to employees how to use the new tools and how to get the most out of them. Equally, given our history, people really wanted and expected to be told prescriptively "What" was expected of them. We just aren't very used to self-direction and reading between the lines" [P22(2)]. However, there was a contrast between new and established RIL personnel in how they related to this point. Existing RIL employees (seven of the ten with over five years of tenure, plus one of those with less than five years' service) took the view that delegations were people-specific rather than position-specific and that the owners should make a case-by-case determination of who might be up to the task. New members of the RIL leadership, particularly those with MNC experience (10 of the 16 with less than five years' service, but notably, all 10 who had worked previously with multi-national companies), took a more utilitarian tone:

DO: The follow-up question is, what could we have done better, or where did we struggle with aspects of the transformation? I'm really interested to understand why you think this might have been.

P20(2): So… what is challenging is… you are asking the frogs to clean the pond. In the first place, these are the same frogs that made it dirty or whatever, yeah. I think, when it comes to change management, you have to have a change in mindset on new leadership.

6.4.3 Kotter's Change Framework and Inherent Tensions

After my discussion with respondents on the enablers and barriers to RIL's PSC, I focused the remainder of my interviews on using the contrasts with Kotter's model to help deepen my understanding of how RIL's approach was required and necessarily different given the presence of strong philosophical beliefs linked to the company's *familiness*.[37] In Table 5-2, I identify three implied philosophical assumptions in Kotter's framework. The first is the number of steps and sequential order. There are two points of difference: (1) RIL appears to have skipped some steps (there was no attempt to build an alliance or to solicit participation in the change once MDA had decided to impose a solution), and (2) the RIL approach was prosecuted by a very small group of owners (MDA and his two cousins) and members of the executive team (the EC plus perhaps five or 10 trusted lieutenants). In testing these observations, I found consistent support across all 26 respondents as follows:

DO: How has RIL's owner-centricity impacted the change plan? How do you respond to the observation that the chairman can impose change and the organization is compliant with that… obedient?

P2(2): I wouldn't agree with those words. I mean, as I said, he doesn't force it on anybody. I think he is a visionary. He has a way of getting people energized and excited by what they could do. I wouldn't do what I do if I didn't think this was exciting stuff. That's the first piece. There is entrepreneurial spirit in Reliance; it brings the best out of the people. But

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[37] See definition in literature review. I use *familiness* to describe the RBV of the family firm which creates a unique mix of capabilities. In this context, the familiness concept helps us address the question of whether RIL's enablers and barriers to PSC stem from their family ownership.

the other point is also the other big strength that Reliance has… I'll tell you what it is… You take the biggest thing on the planet—you break it down into small, logical chunks, and you deliver those small, logical chunks. That means that you actually are taking complicated things and making them simple. Where you have to be careful in that situation is not to correlate activity with progress. So, maybe, what gives you your unique strengths can also be your area of weakness and opportunity because you can't have the best of everything without getting some of the unintended consequences of other stuff that goes with it.

This exchange was fascinating as the respondent seemed to be (a) agreeing that MDA does and did set the direction for the organization relative to the PSC program, but (b) wanting to position this in softer tones than prescription or order-giving, and (c) then explaining how tasks are broken down into lists which were designed to be followed compliantly.

DO: I have three questions here about typical change frames and how they appear to be different at RIL. The first is about the need to build an alliance and consensus: to get people participating in the change. Is it different here?

P18(2): Yes, I've thought quite a bit about this. A lot has [been] sustained, but some things haven't. A reflection, therefore, was, would more have sustained had we spent more time building commitment upfront? My current view is it would not have done so. My sense is that the strength of the tone and desire to follow the lead set at the top is more powerful than any other influence. So, as the tone at the top is set, others [fall] in line. Building participation would have had far less impact [than] any individual action signaled at the top. So, as I think of other change programs, you can think about tipping points. But here, it is less so. It probably would have been wasted.

I think we had the experience of the juxtaposition between trying to marry a participative approach versus top-down. The notion that the bottom will rise up and take the initiative seems overstated here. There is a resistance in Reliance to any formal change work as well. We don't believe in that. People say, "What's the point?" The boss tells people what to do, and everyone is quick to follow.

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This second exchange unveils more of this inter-related, perhaps symbiotic, relationship between owner-centric power to direct and followership dependence on being told what to do. The intriguing thing here is the clear suggestion that any approach (such as prescribed by Kotter) to engage and empower before launching change would have failed at RIL. Conventional wisdom in OD literature is that participation in strategic change is essential to reduce potentially fatal resistance from employees (Anderson and Anderson, 2002; van Dijk and van Dick, 2009; Gowler and Legge, 1979; O'Connor, 1993; Pihlak and Alas, 2012; Powell and Posner, 1978; Starr, 2011). At RIL, this concept does not seem to apply. The explanation for this may be a manifestation of RIL's *familiness*. One of my interviews seemed to illustrate this quite strikingly:

> DO: But does this work for behavior-change programs? Take the analogy of a teenage daughter being told to clean her room: She does it only on the days she is told to. It's not her free choice to do so. So, isn't that similar to behavior change in an organization? Doing it because you're told is unlikely to be sustainable.

> P17(1): In RIL's hydrocarbon [business], they have a different dynamic. There, after 30 years of trusting MDA's judgment, they say… if he is saying this is the right thing to do… it is the right thing to do! Not that I'm doing it just because he's saying so. Having watched him for many years… he has not driven us wrong… so if he says it's the right thing to do… we will do it!

> So…it's a little different [from] self-actualization… but people just rationalize… The first time he asked us to do something, it was brilliant… the second… brilliant… the third… brilliant… so the fourth time… sure, we'll do it. Who am I to say it's not possible or not brilliant? So, it's not that I'm doing it because if I don't, I'll lose my job. It's because I've watched before and seen the results. So, hah, let's go for it!

Many other respondents made similar observations. The rationalization at RIL of top-down-imposed change is different from other institutionally owned businesses, in which the leader, while a respected professional, is understood to make some mistakes. While RIL sees its leadership as fallible in some respects, MDA is afforded a unique status. All RIL employees assign him a status close to infallibility. In some of my interviews, I used the example of the teenage son/daughter (shown above) to try to illustrate what I saw

as the danger of blind obedience without ownership of an action. After my interviews, I revised this analogy to something closer to strong faith in a respected elder (a theme I will expand on in Chapters 7 and 8).

I had expected that new leaders in RIL with MNC backgrounds, who had experienced change elsewhere, would advocate for greater participation in the transformation program design. Interestingly, this was not the case. They all pointed (consistent with my earlier point) to what they saw as a deficiency of leadership acumen to communicate the "what was expected" to employees. Where I did find a slight deviance was from two of the 20 year veterans when they said:

> DO: But is this about communication? Because, it seems, when MDA says "jump," people do. So, isn't that an advantage for RIL?

> P22(2): Yes… if MDA is clear… it gets done. But let me say this… When we framed all this for HR, we didn't involve the employee. I remember in 2010, when I met with MDA… I said to MDA… whatever we do… let's involve some stakeholders… some employees. They must bring it back to them. We always made it top-down. So that person who is at the end of this… he reacts… like a child. Even if it is good, he won't take it. And that reaction… The line managers didn't know how to manage. So, this took time. Communication was the only key. If (only) we had done more focus groups and broken down the resistance…

> DO: But, how do you think the changes here, until the last three years of the program, affected the team? Do you think there's been a change to how employees have been working as a consequence of the transformation?

> P2(2): I think there's two or three things… I think for a lot of people, transformation has happened around them. I'll tell you why. A lot of the transformation emphasis was on fixing the processes, systems, and data… and… everything else will fix itself. If you force people to work a certain way, they can't work any other way. But at the end of the day, there is no getting away from the hearts-and-minds piece of it. You can get compliance from people, but you can't get the extra piece unless you really get them engaged and on board [in their] hearts and minds.

This last observation does seem to suggest that, based on my field interviews at least, the Indian national cultural influence might be less than one may have expected. Should newer, more Westernized (or indeed Western executives), have been more skeptical of the case or need for change, then one might have speculated that national culture made long standing Indian employees more deferential (the construct of social determinism introduced in the previous chapter) (Moore, Gunz and Hall, 2007; Prashar, 2017; Sinha, 2014). The indication from my field interviews did not suggest this to be the case.

In both the above exchanges, the discussion suggested that RIL was advantaged by an ability to gain fast implementation and adoption of the change program but that some component of the workforce was left disoriented. Part of this disorientation emanated from the top-down imposition of change, but most of it resulted from the existing leadership cadre being insufficiently skilled or willing to engage employees in important contexts. This is an important distinction. There was not a suggestion that the purpose for change or tools of change were inadequate. There was much praise in fact for the job MDA and his small team did to launch and sustain the explanations of what was expected. The criticism was more focused toward those members of the existing management team that were passive and 'zombie-like' in their compliance. These individuals extracted ire from some colleagues for being present but not participating. The sense given was these were individuals who were not really leaders, never professed to be leaders in fact, but had over the years found themselves in positions that carried leadership titles. They saw themselves as individual contributors, as executors on instructions, as did the owners. This was an accident of cumulative history. However, it created some complications in disseminating messages to 242,000 people. MDA and his EC tried to deliver this themselves. In large part, they succeeded.

The third aspect of Kotter's framework that RIL appeared to challenge was what I had framed as individual justice versus utilitarianism.[38] My observation was that RIL placed a higher value on employee loyalty than on behavior change. This was how I framed my

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[38] I hope to avoid a debate on the semantic form of utilitarianism and hope the reader will allow me to use this description to depict two philosophical dispositions; one that looks at justice from an individual's perspective, the other that attempts to maximize the whole. My position here is to suggest that the two arrive at radically different outcomes during PSC.

question in most of the interviews: around what RIL prized and why. The responses differed based on the respondents' backgrounds. Those who had worked for MNCs took a view that was more consistent with Kotter:

> DO: Let me ask again about *familiness*… Family businesses have some advantages…. some being speed of decision making… dispensing with formality… less agency cost… There is a strategic flexibility… opportunism… Family firms have an allegiance to loyal employees more so than MNC… So, how does family ownership… play a role at RIL?

> P1(3): If I limit myself to… put[ting] aside the processes… Let's look at leadership… Some of these guys need to be ventilated… They need to be vacated, and we need new blood… new people. There was a humongous amount [of deadwood] … Loyalty played a huge role. No question, loyalty played a huge role.

> DO: There is also, I think, a coercive step or consequences for those who don't get onboard for the change, but my observation is RIL is reluctant to follow that path. What is your view?

> P20(2): I think the company's quality of taking care of people is a big positive. There is an emotion there, a bond. In a multi-national, there is no emotion. Every quarter, I have to announce earnings. I have to show I'm doing something for the shareholders. So… I think this is a good quality.

> But the problem is… the issue I see is… you can have this emotion… but we must also get fresh blood in. You can still take care of them… but keep them out of line management. You are getting people in from outside, yet the incumbent is still there. The new guy will not be able to make changes or make decisions they were hired for because the existing guys will not allow them. I think this is a conflict between heart and mind. So that is the issue as I see it.

The contrasting views rationalized the company's loyalty to long-serving employees and saw this as a core value of RIL that was not necessarily inconsistent with the stated desire to install management processes and devolve decision making.

DO: Most change programs have some implicit consequence or coercive component. Here, it appears we struggle with this. Loyalty is highly prized, perhaps above competence or leadership capability. How do you see this?

P19(1): Well, here is the thing. In large institutionally owned firms, the board hires a new guy who has no vested interest in the way things are. No relationships. It's easy for him or her to be dispassionate and cut loads of people, sell this or that, restructure. Here, it's much different. MDA and the existing LT have grown up with many of the existing workers. They can't forget that these are the people who wanted to work for RIL when no one knew who we were. They fixed problems that allowed us to be here today. These things matter, particularly in India. So yes, we have a different relationship with long-serving employees. We find it hard to decline someone who says, at 58, I'd like to work for two more years. What is it to us to let them stay? It's a small price.

DO: There is also, I think, a coercive step or consequences for those who don't get onboard for the change, but my observation is RIL is reluctant to follow that path. What is your view?

P22(2): Loyalty and obligation to employees are very strong here. In my first few years of working at RIL, I found some people who weren't very good… so I wanted to get rid of them. But I was told… by MDA's father… that they are part of a very big family. They have people who rely on them. They may be the only wage earner. So, never, ever try to take someone's job. Give them some other job to do. Try them somewhere else. Don't try to sack a person.

While my summary of the relative value of employee traits in Table 6-2 was supported by my interviews, the connection with RIL's ability to circumvent Kotter's change framework emerged after analysis of the interview transcripts. The patronage of employees over many years contributes to MDA's ability to impose Collins' BHAGs on the organization with little or no resistance (2011). The reverence with which MDA is held is, in part, fueled by this deep bond with long-serving employees.

The final area I tested during my interviews was the presence of potentially inherent conflicts in the purpose of RIL's transformation goals. Respondents in this area all acknowledged the presence of a tension between informal, personality-driven decision

making and formal, systems-driven operations. However, the explanation was consistently one of timing.

> DO: My final question is about whether [a] family business is generally comfortable with informality and dislikes formality and constraining systems… If this is true, as we reflect on RIL's adoption of RMS and HR processes like DoA… is there an inherent conflict?

> P21(2): I don't think [so]. It does work. It's about timing. [There] should not be any problem.

> DO: How do you see the tension between RIL's entrepreneurial zeal and its ability to change instantly and be opportunistic versus the relative formalities of the RMS and R-HR systems? What conflicts arise here?

> P19(1): You see, there is… an agency issue. MDA is owner and CEO. He looks at opportunities very differently than a regular CEO. He is restless [to capture] all the value he can. He has also been able to take very long-term bets. We are not bound by quarterly earnings. We can be far-sighted. Jio is a huge example of this. So, it is obvious that there is a clash between this way of thinking about RIL and, perhaps, what the transformation is intended to put in place. Yet, I think this is a gradual thing. Maybe it takes another two to three years. That is okay. The investment in RMS and HR is still right. It helps us. We can navigate the short term and do things as MDA would like. I agree that, ultimately, there may be some compromise down the road as the management team operates the business more and MDA steps back. The foundations are now there to help them do that. It is fine, though, that we should manage the immediate needs of J3 and Jio hands-on. These are once-in-a-generation big bets that can't be left to others.

The purpose of this section of my thesis was to provide the reader with a continuation of my narrative on RIL's transformation program and present the reader with complete sections of dialogue where we discussed what, why, and how RIL had achieved change. I also represent that these exchanges provide strong support for my initial observations (summarized starting on page 142). The enablers and barriers to PSC in RIL deviate from conventional OD wisdom in salient ways. Let me now conclude this

chapter on field research data and analysis by sharing my GTM coding and analysis of the field interview transcripts.

6.5 Analysis of Interviews using Grounded Theory Method (GTM)

When the 26 interviews were reduced to the analytical scrutiny of GMT open coding analysis, I found 11 themes shown in Table 6-4. I have shown these themes supported by relevant extracts from respondents. Table 6-4 (spread over five pages) supports the argument for paradoxical forces being at play. This table was constructed from column (d) outwards but is presented (left to right) from highest abstraction to lowest. In column (d), you will find examples of the most often repeated explanations for what represents RIL's primary enablers or barriers to PSC. My abstraction to open coding is shown in column (c). Columns (b) and (a) provide the explanation and link to analytical coding (second level coding). The final column (e) simply illustrates the source, diversity, and depth of support across respondents for each theme.

Table 6-4 Results of Field Interview Coding - Analytical Coding Results (1 of 5)

(a) Code	(b) Coded Summary	(c) +/- Forces	(d) Exemplary Quotations	(e) Source
1. Entrepreneurialism	Distinctive attributes of entrepreneurialism including decisiveness, opportunism, perfectionism, restlessness, and strategic flexibility.	Enabling: -Decisiveness -Strategic flexibility -Long-Term View -Risk Tolerance Barriers: -Connection to Informality - Restlessness (continually striving to improve)	"We are good at speed. Mostly when driven from the top. If we get a push, people will work hard and get it done. If it is not driven from the top, I think we may be more deficient than many other companies. I'm not saying the most efficient but when the top are engaged hands on, a lot of things happen." "I think what he is trying to believe is…Reliance has been very very successful since its inception…and when you're small you do things differently. Lot of entrepreneurship…flexibility….speed…sense of urgency in decision making" "Really, you see, the issue is one of our restlessness, the continuous focus on whether it is perfect. Whether there is a better way. I think this is the double-edged sword of being able to be decisive in an owner driven company. MDA is owner and CEO. He looks at opportunities very differently to a regular CEO. He is restless for capturing all the value he can. He has also been able to take very long-term bets. We are not bound by quarterly earnings. We can be far sighted. Jio is a huge example of this."	COO Refining and Marketing – Indian National – 20 Years' service Head of Manufacturing – Indian National – 2 Years' service CFO – Indian – 8 years' service.
2. Executional Excellence	A distinctive ability to execute on key decisions; this included aligning the organization around key goals, simplifying tasks, and technical prowess to solve or invent solutions.	Enabling: -Speed Barriers: -Limitations on managements accountabilities	"We've been very good at constructing the processes and implementing them. They've also been good at simplifying in places. They've been able to institutionalize it. Project execution….driven…fast." "You see the leaders of yesterday have successfully demonstrated this flexibility. Speed to market. You see they are successful because they can say this and [click of fingers] a factory gets built. A multi-national it takes 3 years of discussions to even start."	JV CEO – Indian/USA – 16 years. Manufacturing Site Head – Indian – 25 years' service
3. Systems Design	An embraced capability to design systems solutions to complex problems and focus on project managing their implementation	Enabling: -Project management -Problem solving -Technical prowess Barriers: -Limitations on management capability	"a big strength that reliance has…I'll tell you what it is… you take the biggest thing or the planet you break it down into small logical chunks and you deliver those small logical chunks. That means that you actually are taking complicated things and making them simple. Where you have to be careful in that situation is not to correlate activity with progress." "We can get lost in making projects about the systems implementation and lose sight of the other…more people related pieces. RIL has real strength…breaking down tasks…designing them…making really fast decisions and implement without compromise. RIL is a very smart organization…it looks at the whole and then breaks the task down. "	Head of RMS – Indian – 7 Years of service Head of G&I – Indian – 7 years' service

Table 5.6 – Continued (2 of 5)

(a) Analytic Code	(b)Coded Summary	(c) +/- Forces	(d) Exemplary Quotations	(e) Source
4. Reverence	Expressions of trust and faith in RIL's owner with associated commitments to follow. Affiliation and affection which seem unusual in a commercial organization.	Enabling: -Instant followership -Instant organizational alignment Barriers -Lack of management ownership -Sustainability beyond existing owner	"if he is saying this is the right thing to do…it is the right thing to do! Not that I'm doing it just because he's saying so. Having watched him for many years…. he has not driven us wrong…so if he says it's the right thing to do…we will do it!" "When MDA says this is the way it is….people accept. Many people are happy to be a RIL soldier. If the general says take the hill…I am happy to follow. In a MNC, with a surplus of intellect or choice, there is an argument." "But speed is an advantage. It is extraordinary. It's pseudo religious. MDA is godlike in a way. Infallible. To be obeyed. You don't question it. MDA has gleaned a lot of respect and he gets some of it from Dhirubhai. He has also built his own mystique."	Board Member – Indian – 3 years Manufacturing Advisor – Australian – 8 years' service Manufacturing CLO – Dutch – 8 years' service
5. Paternalistic	A strong commitment to employees Expressions of strong bonds from owners and leadership toward employees which transcend traditional measures of performance and skill utility. Desire to respect long serving employees wishes regarding employment	Enabling: -Contributes to Reverence - Genuine care for employees creates commitment Barriers: -Undermines accountabilities -Slows renewal of talent -Source of ambiguity in the organization	"The other thing which was probably a trait of owner run organizations, is the owners are acutely conscious that they have built from scratch a massive business and relied on certain personalities, individuals to do so. So, there is a huge sense of family loyalty which would come to the fore. So, whenever we would try to propose or present something, these allegiances would come to the fore and derail us." "I have a slightly different view. I do agree that leadership skills come at the end. That is accepted. But the loyalty and trust factor, this comes because of technical prowess. Technical leads to trust which then drives loyalty. In time, it may be that he is not the best person but if they remain loyal we are reluctant to do anything with them. So, it's not just loyalty, its loyalty which comes with some technical skill, some prior usefulness. Something proven in the past." "You know, he doesn't like to fire anyone. This is difficult for many entrepreneurs. At some point of time though you need to take a professional approach. Ok…this is my rope and I'm going to let it go so far…but then I have to yank the chain at some point. He does it verbally, in a sometimes even abusive way, but never follows it through."	Manufacturing Advisor – Australian – 8 years' service COO Refining and Marketing – Indian National – 20 Years' service COO Petchems – Indian – 3 years' service

Table 5.6 – Continued (3 of 5)

(a) Analytic Code	(b) Coded Summary	(c) +/- Forces	(d) Exemplary Quotations	(e) Source
6. Informality	The desire to be unconstrained by process or policy, to be opportunistic, and fear of bureaucracy	Enabling: -Decision making flexibility -Opportunity maximization -Reduces bureaucratic drag Barriers -Undermines management confidence -Fuels management prevarication -Hard to sustain at scale	"The difference between corporate and family is through a lens. If you are the owner you understand no decisions or few are irreversible…so why…if you're opportunistic…would you be constrained by policy…which is what you got here. Very different thinking to an MNC." "So, my perspective…when you look at any company…there is a formal and informal structure. Most companies would have 70% formal and 30% informal. Exists everywhere. Here at RIL it was the other way around. It works because of the first/second generation ownership. But looking forward this is a recipe for disaster. MDA recognizes this. He is trying to put more structure in to prevent this. He knows he can run it but without him he needs to reverse this informal to formal balance." "DoA's here do feel counter to the general entrepreneurial flexibility and desire for tight control. People seem to accept that the DoA's are there but we are not sure if we should follow them. So, we defer or check first. All seems very conflicting. The very hands on control versus the vision for empowerment. Some individuals' though sit outside the system."	Head of IA – Dutch – 7 years of service CHRO – Indian – 14 years' service Head of Leadership Academy – UK – 3 years' service
7. Management Abdication	Management's deferral to owners for decision making; a narrowness of expectations of management accountabilities.	Enabling: -Contributes to Execution capability Barriers: -Major obstacle to new management system adoption -Unlikely to change through RIL's historic systems approach	"This said…you see the thing is here…people have a culture where they just look up. They always look up for a decision. They do not do it on their own. They wait for instruction. I'm not saying that's right or right…it was probably helpful in the past. They are used to looking up for everything" "I do believe we would not have made as much progress as we have today if you had to try and build consensus and coalition. I don't think you could have progress. Even the most senior people in RIL ultimately look at MDA and say…hey boss…. tell us what to do. They are preconditioned that way." "it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Going back to what has always worked for them in the past. If you are a manager who tried to be pro-active but are slapped down, you give up and just wait to be told. The circle completes itself…you hire outside people who are abused to exercises judgement but are then beaten down somewhat. So, they end up joining the others."	Head of Manufacturing – Indian National – 2 Years' service Manufacturing Advisor – Australian – 8 years' service CIO – Indian – 3 years' service

Table 5.6 – Continued (4 of 5)

(a) Analytic Code	(b) Coded Summary	(c) +/- Forces	(d) Exemplary Quotations	(e) Source
8. Organization Ambiguity	Lack of transparency of decision making and organizational accountabilities. Duplication of some management job holders.	Enabling: -Linked to entrepreneurship and informality (i.e. necessary byproduct) Barriers: -Linked to management abdication - Obstacle to new management system adoption	A person may not leave the company but their influence can be significantly eroded. If there is a person who is favored by the family and is considered good by them…they have immense influence and power. Different orbit of influence Those that don't become quite toothless. Or useless. They won't be asked to leave but they may leave on their own. So, like Collin's they may be on the bus but asked to sit or made to sit at the back. "The major one is the conflicts and lack of consistency in behaviors at the top of the company. DOA's for example are all well and good but when you are told to 'check with me first' before taking a decision it sends mixed messages. We have to do more to build trust…learn to let go." "Another aspect is that we sometimes think Ownership mindset is about expecting everyone to be able to juggle the 500 balls which 2 or 3 at the top can do. This is unrealistic. We are expecting too much of people and in the process inadvertently giving them the impression that their best is not good enough. So, they stop trying. We have to strike a better, healthier balance between what we expect from a professional management cadre of leaders. Delegation for example doesn't really work at RIL. Here is a good illustration of how hard we find it to let people make mistakes. We don't tolerate mistakes. It is hard for us."	CIO – Indian – 3 years' service COO Petchems – Indian/USA – 3 years' service CFO – Indian – 8 years' service
9. Information Constraints	Communication inconsistently cascaded, management as a sponge not conduit for employee engagement, some questions of trust deficits.	Enabling: -Protects sensitive information -Supports centralized decision making Barriers: -Obstacle to employee engagement -Obstacle to management accountability	"We always made it top-down. So that person who is at the end of this…he reacts…like a child. Even if it is good. He won't take it. And that reaction …. The line managers didn't know how to manage. So, this took time. Communication was the only key." "We struggle with taking people along with us. We don't take the time to explain why. The problem with this is that it's hard to sustain things if people don't understand why. The knowledge of the why, the reasons, are held in a small group at the top of the organization. Therefore, after the initial surge of activity, we lose a little steam because the why is not understood. Our biggest weakness is an inability to cascade messaging and communication." "But when you get closer to the top it's a lot more difficult because there is a lot of history. History in terms of the wrong information. There is a desire to keep information tight. Protecting a black box."	Head of Manufacturing Site – Indian – 22 years' service Head of IA – Dutch – 7 years' service CEO JV – Indian/USA – 14 years

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Table 5.6 – Continued (5 of 5)

(a) Analytic Code	(b) Coded Summary	(c) +/- Forces	(d) Exemplary Quotations	(e) Source
10. Conflict Avoidance	Strong desire to avoid confronting poor employee performance, remove ineffective management, enforce retirement age.	Enabling: -Source of loyalty and reverence Barriers: -Slows rate of building new management capabilities - Increases labor costs - Incongruence with new management systems	"Actually, look there is a bit of an issue here as there is no consequence for poor performance. Here we can see people who deliver aren't that differently treated than those who don't. See people possibly calculate that since their unlikely to lose their job, so you really can't coerce anyone in that sense. So how can you cause somebody to do something if there is no consequence …well I think people do want to please the Chairman." "Even though Chairman talks that we want young leaders. Because when you want young leaders you will have to get rid of old leaders. Otherwise just tell young leaders that you have come in the same position as old leaders without the responsibilities and clear accountabilities, it doesn't work, and it has not happened." "The 3rd thing, is the underestimation of the courage of the Group Level leadership to have conversations with people face to face. They don't know where to start and they just can't bring themselves to confront."	Head of RMS – Indian – 7 years' service Head of JMD Site – Indian – 20 years' service Manufacturing Advisor – Australian – 8 years' service
11. Patronage	Management tendency toward ingratiating behaviors, protection of territory and fighting for ownership attention	Enabling: -Linked to informality and personality driven decision making Barriers: -Obstacle to formal systems adoption	"XXX tells a very good story…he tells this story of a chap who he asked what he does and he said…I do what HRM tells me…XXX then said so what do you do each day…he said I wait for HRM to call. XXX said does HRM call every day….. he said no. So, XXX said what do you do then when he doesn't call…and he said… wait for him to call!" "The other thing this drives in our company…because you see that…everyone almost waits saying let's see what MDA thinks first. It paralyzes the organization. For fear of not being in tune with wherever MDA may be thinking." "We put a lot of trust and a lot of ownership in one or two individuals…we could label them the unicorns. These unicorns….if we allow them to continue…the narcissism gets out of control…preening themselves…peacocking…. different rules apply to them and it becomes destructive."	Manufacturing CLO – Dutch – 8 years' service COO Petchems – Indian/USA – 3 years' service Head of Analytics – Indian – 3 years' service

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From Table 6-4, column (c) what clearly emerges is the juxtaposition of simultaneous or linked enablers and barriers stemming from common themes. The GTM coding of interview transcripts brought this vividly to life. Decisiveness, for example, was closely linked to informality. The two were paired in that one implied the other. This had come through in the interviews. I have shown these linked themes in column (c). These were not difficult to extract from the transcripts because in most cases, the respondents would either give the themes in the same answer to a question or in the paired response (i.e. their positives could be matched with their negatives). Given this, I took a second step of listing the analytical codes and linked enablers and barriers in two columns which I share as Table 6-5. Two things then became clear: (1) there were a series of positive (enablers) and negative (barriers) descriptors for each of the themes, and (2) when one listed these in two columns, a further level of abstraction was possible, allowing a grouping of the 11 themes into three more pervasive paradoxical forces. Table 6-5 shows this second step of grouping and the emergence of the three powerful paradoxical tensions. This representation, I submit, is logical and robust under scrutiny. For example, where RIL has succeeded in ruthlessly driving project execution in the past, it has developed a management cadre who are content to abdicate decision making to the owners. Where a reluctance to formalize how the organization design works has retained flexibility, it has created ambiguity of individual accountabilities. Where paternalism has fueled loyalty and faithful followership, it has resulted in some difficulty in refreshing the management ranks.

Table 6-5 Discovery of paradoxical manifestations of *familiness*—page 1 of 2

Analytical Code	Enablers:	Paradoxical PSC Tension	Barriers:	Analytical Code
Entrepreneurialism	-Decisiveness -Strategic flexibility -Long-term view -Risk tolerance		-Connection to informality -Restlessness -Perfectionism	Entrepreneurialism
Reverence	-Instant followership -Instant organizational alignment		-Lack of management ownership -Sustainability beyond existing owner	Reverence
Management Abdication	-Contributes to execution capability	Leveraging Faith versus Persuasion	-Major obstacle to new management system adoption -Unlikely to change through RIL's historic systems approach	Management Abdication
Information Constraints	-Protects sensitive information -Supports centralized decision making		-Obstacle to employee engagement -Obstacle to management accountability	Information Constraints
Systems Design	-Project management -Problem solving -Technical prowess		-Limitations on management capability	Systems Design
Executional Excellence	-Speed		-Limitations on management's accountabilities	Executional Excellence

Table 6-5 Continued: Discovery of paradoxical manifestations of *familiness*—page 2 of 2

Analytical Code	Enablers:	Paradoxical PSC Tension	Barriers:	Analytical Code
Paternalism	-Contributes to reverence -Genuine care for employees creates commitment	Individual Justice versus Utilitarianism	-Undermines accountabilities -Slows renewal of talent -Source of ambiguity in the organization	Paternalism
Conflict Avoidance	-Source of loyalty and reverence		-Slows rate of building new management capabilities - Increases labor costs - Incongruence with new management systems	Conflict Avoidance
Organization Ambiguity	-Linked to entrepreneurship and informality (i.e., a necessary by-product)	Formality versus Informality	-Linked to management abdication - Obstacle to new management system adoption	Organization Ambiguity
Informality	-Decision-making flexibility -Opportunity maximization -Reduces bureaucratic drag		-Undermines management confidence -Fuels management prevarication -Hard to sustain at scale	Informality
Patronage	-Linked to informality and personality-driven decision making		-Obstacle to formal systems adoption	Patronage

The identification of paradoxical forces as the prime enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL explains why: (a) RIL *can* achieve PSC differently (and potentially faster, by leveraging its strengths as a powerfully owner-centric family-owned business), and; (b) why RIL *must* pursue PSC differently (its organizational strength is rapid execution, but its weakness is a management cadre who view their roles narrowly and defer decision making to the owner and a handful of trusted lieutenants.) These dynamics provide an opportunity for RIL to achieve change in a fashion that gives it an advantage over non-family, non-owner-centric businesses. However, if the intended change is to be sustained, careful navigation and focus are required to help management embrace the change with intrinsic motivations rather than obedience. It is my contention that these distinctive forces are the manifestation of paradoxical aspects of *familiness* during PSC. The role of paradoxes in management research is receiving increasing attention from researchers. This is especially true in family businesses. Ingram et al. (2016, p.162) put it as follows:

> Paradoxes—"contradictory yet interrelated elements that exist simultaneously and persist over time" (Smith and Lewis, 2011, p.382)—pose a double-edged sword for leaders of family firms. The challenge of paradoxes lies in their critical differences from traditional organizational problems. Instead of seeking a clear, "either/or" decision using formal logic to weigh the pros and cons of each side, paradoxical tensions demand paradoxical thinking, a more fluid and holistic mindset that leverages the distinctions and synergies between elements in search of both/and solutions. In family firms, it is "likely that the capability to see both sides of paradoxical problems is a strong driver of business adaptability and innovation" (Schuman, Stutz, and Ward, 2010, p.32). Indeed, without paradoxical thinking, narrow responses to paradoxical tensions can prove counterproductive. If only one side of a tension is emphasized, demands for the other will intensify, fueling anxiety and even decision-making paralysis (Lewis, 2000). Yet paradoxes may also fuel creative problem solving that energizes family firm innovation (Ward, 2009).

The presence of paradoxes, therefore, should not be a surprise. Irava and Moores (2010) provided specific illustrations of the paradoxical nature of *familiness* in family-owned businesses. They found six paradoxical tensions that they posited were distinctive manifestations of *familiness* in a business: reputation, experience, decision-

making, earning, relationships, and network. As I coded the responses from respondents, I distilled my abstractions to three primary paradoxical forces. As shown in Table 6-5, I have labeled these paradoxical forces, **leveraging faith versus persuasion**, **individual justice versus utilitarianism**, and **informality versus formality**. The most impactful of these forces is the ability to move the organization quickly by leveraging the reverence with which MDA is held by employees (what I have called "*faithful adoption*").

In Table 6-6, I have summarized the findings from the analysis of my field interviews. Here I have distilled down still further the coding shared in previous tables and listed them as statements alongside an explanation of the enabling and barrier dimensions. In this table I am trying to step back from the grounded theory building of coding which used constant comparison, to reflect what I am left with and give examples of how they manifest themselves during RIL's PSC program.

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Table 6-6 Summary of paradoxical forces at play during RIL's transformation process

	Familiness Paradox	Examples of Enabling Dimension	Examples of Barrier Dimensions
1	**Leveraging Faith vs. Persuasion**	Imposing occasional BHAGs on the organization is effective, increasing speed and reducing the chaos of self-invention. Long-serving employees accept "big bet" decisions as inherently right when convincingly sponsored by MDA.	Communication and engagement with employees is less effective the further they are distanced from MDA. Long-serving managers are ill-equipped to explain and champion new strategies. Management relate to changed processes with "leap of faith" not "intrinsic" motivations.
2	**Individual Justice vs. Utilitarianism**	Major source of reverential followership and faith in MDA's wisdom.	Creates blockages in management pyramid—progression is slow for high-performing new talent and confusing for senior new hires Stalwarts are a source of weakness in communicating and engaging others in the transformation processes.
3	**Formal vs. Informal Systems**	New systems help emerging leaders feel confident in transparent operating parameters. Owners proactively intervene to avoid unintended errors.	Transitionary period sees old, informal, people-centric approaches juxtaposed with new formal systems (with resulting paralyzing affect). Stalwarts continue to upwardly delegate decision making.

In this section of the thesis, I have shared the process by which I deconstructed the 26 field interviews using GTM open coding. In Appendix F, I provide further detail on the specific steps I took to assign open coding descriptions, form analytical group code headings, and then form linkages between what appear as very clear paradoxical enablers and barriers to RIL's PSC program. Let me now explore the implications of these paradoxes, how they are inter-connected, and how they create distinctive opportunities and obstacles for RIL. The discovery of these paradoxes has important implications for both RIL and other large family businesses. I argue that, for RIL, the nucleus of any PSC framework or plan should be these paradoxical forces

6.5.1 The Phenomenon of "*Faithful Adoption*"

An outcome from the first paradox, Leveraging Faith versus Persuasion, is RIL's ability to shift employees instantly to adopt a new strategy, system, or process. When MDA chooses to "leverage his followers' Faith" he can attain near instantaneous compliance. I am referring to this phenomenon as "*Faithful Adoption,*" which I define as:

The power of a business owner to gain instant compliant adoption from his/her followers to a new strategic direction on the basis of followers' extraordinary levels of faith in the owner's judgment.

RIL being a family owned firm and MDA's strongly owner-centric influence are key factors. Hence, I have started my definition with the qualification of family business owners. Second, MDA has developed a relationship with his employees such that they have enormous levels of faith in his judgement. This faith is such that employees are simply willing to do as "MDA wishes." Third, the adoption of MDA's wishes is compliant. This is to say that employees may not understand the reasons for a change or strategic goals, but do so based on more extrinsic motivations.

While this extraordinary power affords certain advantages in rapidly aligning leaders and employees toward a single objective, it leaves a gap in comprehension, though not necessarily commitment. The paradoxical tension is between speed of alignment toward

a common purpose and challenges that emerge from managements' (or followers') purely extrinsic set of motivations, particularly with "second-order" change.

6.5.2 Individual Justice versus Utilitarianism

The second paradox is in RIL's deeply held belief in individual justice (Cohen-Charash and Spector, 2001; Udehn, 2002, p.5). It is my contention that Kotter's change framework takes a utilitarian view. In RIL's case, a conflict arises between traditional utilitarian forms of managing change and a deep sense of loyalty to employees. Every respondent in my interviews pointed to RIL's reluctance to put the objectives of its change program above obligations to long-serving employees. As depicted in Table 6-2, RIL owners and senior leadership hold this commitment to individuals as a higher priority than collectivist goals. This creates a paradoxical tension with the stated desire for the leadership cadre at RIL to change its behaviors.

6.5.3 Formal versus Informal Systems

The third tension is between formal and informal systems, which exist as a clash of past and present cultural assumptions. RIL's transformation sponsors see the need to install more systematic forms of management. However, there is a desire to retain the advantages of strategic flexibility. This nimbleness of decision making contravenes, or at least blurs, the lines of the more disciplined processes of RMS and R-HR. In the process, some members of the management cadre find the rules for when a process should be applied ambiguous, and, consequently, they defer decision making. The paradox creates a vicious cycle in which owners want management to step forward and take ownership of decisions, but management sees the decision-making rationale as too unpredictable and chooses a more passive route.

6.5.4 Inter-Connectedness of Paradoxes

Let me explain why I have listed these paradoxes in this order; one to three. The paradoxes are inter-related. This is to say; each paradox not only has a relationship that present positive and negative aspects (enablers and barriers), but also, they work together. The first paradox, between leveraging faith versus persuasion, at its most powerful, can result in the ability to impose change on the organization using "*faithful*

adoption." In doing so, MDA bypasses the persuasion normally associated with change programs. This is enabled or fueled by the other two paradoxical tensions.

The second paradox is that of individual justice versus utilitarianism. Here RIL's staunch commitment to Individual Justice (the second paradox) fuels a sense of faith in MDA. It reinforces a sense that employees are treated fairly and will not be sacrificed when business cycles go against the company. However, at the same time, MDA makes it difficult to change capabilities in his management ranks. This paradoxical tension came across strongly in my field interviews. The point here, however, is that the commitment to individual justice is a component that seems to support *faithful adoption*. There is, thus, a symbiotic relationship between these two paradoxes.

The third paradox also supports RIL's ability to move the organization rapidly. It enables *faithful adoption* by giving permission for the owners to dispense with protocols, previous decisions, and be unencumbered by process. The lack of formality takes a form of ambiguity, within which the management team become accustomed to taking direction from the top. If you will, the lack of certainty promotes a need for management to seek direction on major matters. I have illustrated this inter-connectedness in Figure 6-2.
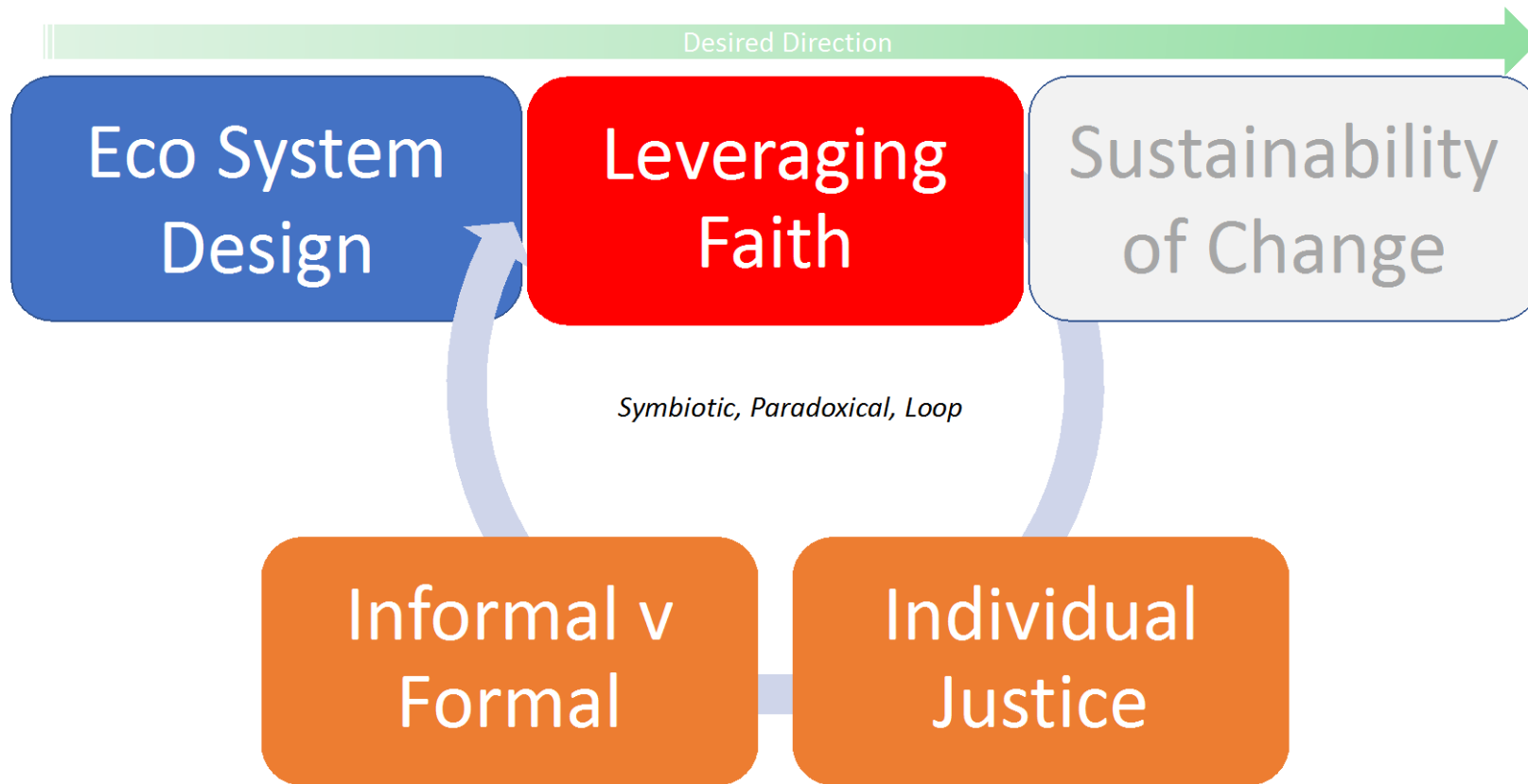
Figure 6-2 Sequence and Inter-Connectedness of Discovered Paradoxes in RIL's PSC

6.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have addressed my research question: What are the enablers for and barriers to PSC in a large, owner-centric, family-owned business? The answer is they are the paradoxical tensions of leveraging faith versus persuasion, individual justice versus utilitarianism, and informal versus formal systems. An outcome of these paradoxical forces is the phenomenon of **Faithful Adoption**. *Faithful adoption* is a powerful force which allows MDA and RIL to rapidly shift its entire workforce toward the adoption of new work process or a new strategy. However, this force comes with paradoxical tensions which need to be navigated to ensure sustainability of any imposed change.

RIL's distinctiveness as a family business has a major bearing on its PSC and is simultaneously an advantage and an obstacle to its PSC journey. I have shown how RIL's strong owner-centricity and compliant management cadre have installed and are sustaining new managements systems designed to disseminate decision making. RIL's change program has been undertaken in two distinct steps. The first focused on a systems design and project execution mentality. In this phase, RIL rapidly built a "new house" for employees to occupy. When RIL imposed these new systems, they achieved near instantaneous adoption. The second phase of PSC has been directed at helping management and owners adapt to their new environment. This phase has been much more complex and unfamiliar for the company.

I shared my participant observations and my preliminary findings that RIL was able to leverage a powerful sense of faith in MDA. I compared this with the powerful force of extreme reverence that religious or political leaders can hold over their followers. While this leveraging of RIL's strongly owner-centric capability helped accelerate early adoption of the imposed PSC, it has led to distinctive challenges related to the long-term sustainability of the new management systems. I presented evidence that, while existing management found it easy to follow new instructions when directed, including using the new management systems, building their resolve to continue and to find

intrinsic motivations independent of RIL's owner has been an unfamiliar challenge for the company. Additionally, the organization has shown a desire to place individual loyalties before the goals of the PSC program. This complicates its ability to renew management ranks with individuals with a greater appetite to work differently. Finally, there was also an observed tension between a desire to retain flexibility through informality and the very systems of management being installed at RIL. This tension was between owners' concerns that management would become prisoners of the new systems and management's capacity to reassure owners that they could strike an effective balance between following processes and challenging rules where value would otherwise be sacrificed.

I deepened my understanding of these preliminary observations by conducting a series of 26 semi-structured interviews. I split the findings from these interviews into general and more specific findings. As I mentioned at the outset, I have been influenced by Silverman's (2013) suggestion to share respondent/researcher conversation so that readers can draw their own conclusions from the dialogue. After providing respondents' general answers to my questions, I explained how I analyzed the transcripts using Glaserian GTM, framed the analytical codes, and then found links between enabling and obstructive forces (Urquhart, 2013). This coding complemented my preliminary observations and led to the discovery of the three paradoxical forces as the primary enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL: leveraging faith versus persuasion, individual justice versus utilitarianism, and informal versus formal systems.

Consequently, my research demonstrates: (1) that PSC in this large family owned business does follow a distinctive path, (2) that PSC in RIL is not adequately predicted, explained, or helped by conventional OD change frameworks, such as Kotter's 8-steps, despite being philosophically aligned, (3) that the enablers and barriers in RIL for PSC are of a paradoxical nature which present an opportunity to achieve PSC in a different and potentially advantaged fashion, (4) that my case study into RIL demonstrates that rapid change adoption can be achieved using the phenomenon of *faithful adoption*, (5) that there is no apparent challenge of 'resistance to change' in RIL which in of itself is a fascinating finding and, finally, (6) that the forces that create the ability to employ *faithful*

adoption also create distinctive challenges for RIL which are currently not predicted or explained by existing empirical research.

7 – Discussion and Presentation of a Grounded Theory Method (GTM) Explanation of PSC at RIL

"I want to transform RIL while I can, before it becomes a problem, proactively, because I believe I am the only one who really can…." MDA, December 2013[39]

"*If you build it…they will come…"* James Earl Jones, Field of Dreams, 1989.

Having presented the findings from my case study participant observation and field interviews, I turn now to discussing their links to existing literature. Since there was little existing research into any form of change in a family owned firm, this is primarily an exploration of how my findings compare to the summary of SLR literature I provided in Chapter 2. I will follow this with a discussion on how my findings relate and are linked to the conception of *familiness*. Since I have demonstrated in Chapter 5 that RIL's path to change is not adequately explained by contemporary OD literature (see Table 5-2 and summary below), I will also offer in this chapter a new GTM explanation for how PSC has occurred at RIL. Finally, I will review possible explanations for what enables the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption* in the form of a discussion of where my research might promote further investigation.

I have therefore divided this chapter into four sections: (1) I will discuss how my findings support or contradict existing family business literature; (2) I will draw a link between my findings and the pre-existing concept of *familiness*, a family business derivative of resource-based view (RBV) theory (Habbershon and Williams, 1999; Irava and Moores, 2010; Wernerfelt, 1984); (3) I will present a theory of how PSC is occurring at RIL using a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 2009; Urquhart, 2013), and (4) I will outline future research opportunities that present themselves.

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[39] Field notes – December 6, 2013 transformation meeting.

7.1 Findings and Existing Literature

I have summarized my findings from Chapter 6 in the Table 7-1. RIL has been able to achieve early success with its transformation program by breaking it down into two distinct phases: (1) a design phase where a new eco-system was constructed and then imposed on the organization, followed by; (2) a second phase where owners and management attempt to navigate some of the paradoxical tensions which stem from the discovered paradoxical forces.

Table 7-1 Summary of Empirical Research Findings

Question	RIL Finding
What is the main enabler to PSC in RIL	The phenomenon of **Faithful Adoption.** This powerful force enables RIL to nearly instantly shift its business, management systems, or processes.
What are barriers to change at RIL	The three paradoxical forces which simultaneously enable *Faithful Adoption* but also undermine it, namely: Leveraging faith versus persuasion, individual justice versus utilitarianism, and informal versus formal systems
Is Change in RIL Adequately explained by existing OD literature	No, there are three fundamental problems with existing OD literature, namely: (a) The suggested sequence (b) The focus on establishing coalitions and reducing "resistance to change" (c) The utilitarian assumptions

If I contrast these findings with what I found in my literature review, you will recall there was little existing research that directly addressed the question I have been investigating. What I was able to do in my SLR was piece together, from grey literature and indirect references to change, a picture of the likely strengths and weakness for a family firm attempting to navigate change. Let me share that table again here as Table 7-2.

Table 7-2 Clues found to enablers and barriers to change in a family firm from SLR (see Table 2-9)

Obstacles	Advantages
The strong bias toward Owner/CEO centricity: with an emphasis on patriarchal cultural paradigms and less participative forms of management.	Decisive and powerful decision making enabled by powerful and authoritative owner/CEO
Risk aversion: with a strong set of beliefs around core business principles	Strong desire for organizational members to please owner and comply with their wishes
A lack of formality to decision making: a tendency for management systems to be informal and flexible	Ability to take long term view of business needs and avoid compromises dues to public shareholders and earnings reporting pressures
A pre-disposition to appoint family to key positions and avoid the appointment of outside professionals	Ability to unify organization around strong core family vision and values
Incredibly strong emotional bonds to historic operating details and behaviors passed down from founding generation	

The comparison between these two tables requires some adjustment in unit of analysis. The grey literature focuses on the "family system" or specifically the business owner. My research has looked at the change program itself as the currency of enquiry. Nonetheless, in Table 7-3 I have combined these tables and drawn points of connection.

Table 7-3 Comparison of RIL Findings to Grey Literature Predictions Found in SLR

	Enablers		Barriers
(a)RIL Findings	**(b) SLR Literature**	**(c) RIL Findings**	**(d) SLR Literature**
Faithful Adoption	Decisive and powerful decision making enabled by powerful and authoritative owner/CEO	Navigating Paradoxical forces: Leveraging faith v Persuasion Individual Justice v Utilitarianism Informal v Formal	The strong bias toward Owner/CEO centricity: with an emphasis on patriarchal cultural paradigms and less participative forms of management.
	Strong desire for organizational members to please owner and comply with their wishes		Risk aversion: with a strong set of beliefs around core business principles
	Ability to take long term view of business needs and avoid compromises dues to public shareholders and earnings reporting pressures		A lack of formality to decision making: a tendency for management systems to be informal and flexible
	Ability to unify organization around strong core family vision and values		A pre-disposition to appoint family to key positions and avoid the appointment of outside professionals
			Incredibly strong emotional bonds to historic operating details and behaviors passed down from founding generation

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In Table 7-3, I have taken the license to combine the SLR literature advantages alongside my discovered enablers in RIL. Equally, I have shown the SLR literature obstacles alongside my discovered paradoxical barriers from RIL. This combination lacks some precision as I have already explained. However, my purpose here is to discover to what extent we might reasonably argue that some aspects of my research may be approximately congruent with existing literature, however vague that literature may be.

Between columns (a) and (b) I have drawn points of clear connection. Existing family business literature documents that pervasive decision making power might exist in owner-centric family firms (see Section 2.1.2.3). This seems to be the case in RIL. MDA has exerted clear authority and decisiveness. Also, *Faithful Adoption*, to some extent is fueled by a desire from followers in the organization to "please the owner." This connection is less direct as my research suggests that in RIL while there may be some of this at play, followers have more of a reverential respect for MDA's entrepreneurial prowess and therefore make an assumption of infallibility. In making the decision to launch the PSC program at RIL, MDA did appear to take a long-term view and was not compelled to make the changes by some outside force. This seems consistent with the fourth SLR literature observation. Finally, in rallying the organization to immediate comply with his requests to change, MDA did unify the organization.

Between columns (c) and (d), I have undertaken a similar exercise. Here there were five predicted obstacles from SLR literature, matched against the three paradoxical forces found in RIL. Two of the obstacles seem to clearly match to RIL findings, one to a lesser extent and the final two were not obviously present. The strong CEO centricity is interesting as it is shown here as an obstacle. Yet, given my RIL investigation, it seems it could equally be a positive. Consequently, I have shown this as connected to both sides of the table. The lack of formality connection was found in RIL and I have connected this accordingly. In so far as the strong emotional bonds, I found this to be related to the individual justice and loyalty to long serving staff finding from RIL. Finally,

I could not find obvious connections for the final two SLR literature predictions of risk aversion or appointment of family members.

In this section, I have compared the findings from my systematic literature review. This took the form of a wealth of authoritative advice, mainly found in grey literature, and focused toward practitioners. The unit of analysis for this grey literature was exclusively the family system: the trinity of family, business, and ownership (Gersick et al., 1997). While this literature provides no commentary on the mechanisms of PSC in a family-owned business; the comparison to my findings does seem to have some predictive relevance. This raises my confidence: (a) that findings like those from this RIL case study have been observed by other researchers in different companies and contexts; (b) there is some reason to believe that RIL, as a family firm, may not be an outlier in experiencing these paradoxical tensions during PSC, and; (c) that the enablers and barriers found in RIL's PSC most likely do stem from their family ownership.

7.2 The Link to *Familiness*

Throughout this study, I have built the case that the main enablers and barriers present in RIL's PSC may stem from the company's family ownership. In Chapter 4, I provided RIL's family credentials and discussed how the firm operated with MDA at the center of RIL's "solar system." I reinforced the strong owner-centricity of RIL and how followers in the organization are willing to take a "leap of faith" based on the wishes of their revered leader. However, the question remains whether the linkage to family involvement and influence with RIL can be distilled further.

In my literature review (see page 27), I provide an explanation, history, and definition of *familiness* as a useful and pre-existing construct in family business literature designed to explain how the presence of family ownership in a business creates distinctive capabilities. The *familiness* construct is a derivative of RBV and was initially postulated by Habbershon and Williams (1999). Since its introduction, research into *familiness* has increasingly matured. Most relevant for this study is Irava and Moores' (2010) development of a theory of six paradoxically positive and negative forces using Barney's (1991) three-level construct of a firm's resources.

I will use Irava and Moores' framework here and build upon it. In Table 7-4, I have summarized their findings in column two. They found that in case studies of four different sized family owned businesses, that distinctive paradoxical capabilities were present. They posited that these were the manifestation of *familiness*, this is to say, the result of the distinctive RBV mix of resources and capabilities which emanated from the involvement and influence of family members in the firm's ownership and management (I have previously shared their explanation of these categories as Table 2-1).

Table 7-4 Dimensions of *familiness* compared to RIL's PSC findings (adapted from Irava & Moores, 2010, p.138)

Barney's Categories of Firm Resources	Irava and Moores' Dimension of *Familiness*	RIL Findings
Human	(1) Reputation	
	(2) Experience—Insights and skills	
		(Individual Justice v Utilitarianism))
Organization	(3) Decision-making	(Leveraging Faith v Persuasion) (Formal v Informal)
	(4) Learning	
		(7) *Faithful Adoption*
Process	(5) Relationships	
	(6) Networks	

I have taken their work and added my RIL case study findings in column three. Where Irava and Moores found six dimensions of *familiness* I make the case here for the inclusion of a seventh; *Faithful Adoption*. It is not my purpose here to validate Irava and Moores' work but instead to show a link between their respective findings and my own.

The case I make here is that Barney's three dimensions of the firm lend themselves to the observation that in my findings, I found "Human" related distinctiveness in the form of RIL's value of individual justice. This is distinct from conventional utilitarian forms. It is also suggested by my SLR as a common trait of family firms. At the "Organization" level, I found distinctiveness in the form of RIL's leveraging of the faith of the organization and taking an informal, opportunistic approach. Again, these are supported as family owned firm traits. One could also make the case that the informality shown in RIL is a process distinction. I have shown it at an organizational level as the company has been constructed in large part to execute against this opportunistic mind-set.

Irava and Moores' six dimensions complement rather than contrast with my findings. This is to say, that I conducted a narrower investigation into RIL during a change program, asking what were the enablers and barriers. Irava and Moores asked broader questions of their case study participants designed to capture the totality of *familiness*. I propose their findings are missing a seventh distinctive capability of *familiness*; *Faithful Adoption*. I have thus presented this in Table 7-4.

Consequently, I represent that this pre-existing concept of *familiness* fits the findings from this study on at least three levels: (1) my findings are unambiguously forms of a unique package of capabilities within RIL consistent with RBV theory; (2) *familiness* is the family business construction of RBV, and RIL is unambiguously a family-owned-and-operated company; and (3) the main enablers and barriers to RIL's PSC program were found to be paradoxically linked forces stemming from a strongly owner-centric, patriarchal, entrepreneurial culture that flows from Dhirubhai and now MDA.

7.3 Offering a Theory of PSC for a Large Family Business

After comparing the path of RIL's transformation program to conventional models, I am convinced that a more accurate framework, purpose-built for this family business, would serve RIL and potentially other family-owned businesses more effectively. The opportunity is to build a model that leverages the enablers found in RIL while minimizing the barriers. The family-business structure is the most prevalent global commercial organization, with family-owned companies facing the same challenges of adaptation

and change as their non-family-owned counterparts (Cornell University, 2006; Dawar and Frost, 1999; Family Firm Institute Inc., 2017; Olenski, 2016; Steiger, Duller and Hiebl, 2015). And yet, no in-depth analysis or explanation of how PSC occurs in family businesses has been attempted. Consequently, this case study into RIL's transformation program provides an opportunity to develop a family-business-based theoretical construct of how change may be achieved.

Here, I turn to Glaser and Strauss' (2009) GTM technique for developing theory from data, which lends itself to the task at hand. GTM prioritizes the development of theory as an explanatory vehicle derived directly from the collection of qualitative data. The authors' pragmatic approach is exemplified when they discuss the balance between verification versus something that "fits or works" from a set of data:

> …we suggest that [a researcher's] main goal in developing new theories is very purposeful systematic generation from the data of social research. Of course, verifying as much as possible with evidence as accurate as possible is required while one discovers and generates theory—but not to the point where verification becomes so paramount as to curb generation (2009, p.30).

The final step in developing GTM is selective coding, which involves, as Glaser and Strauss (1990, p.142) put it, "getting the story straight, developing a clear storyline, and translating these into an analytical story. Central to these procedures is the selection of a core category." My review of RIL's PSC process presents the core category of *faithful adoption*. I defined *faithful adoption in section* 6.5.1, as the ability of a family-business-owner to gain near instantaneous compliance with a prescribed PSC request. This mechanism is enabled because of its distinctive *familiness* and the complex, but powerful, relationship between owner and employees. I submit that *faithful adoption* has been the pivotal dynamic of *familiness* during RIL's PSC program.

Following Glaser and Strauss' GTM, and taking guidance from Urquhart (2013), I have developed a theoretical depiction of RIL's PSC journey, shown in Equation 1. I have titled this "Two-Step Change" and shown how embracing the enabling components of *familiness* fundamentally change the order and challenges of achieving PSC in RIL.

What emerges from the data is a simple, two-stage theoretical view of change. Because RIL has a distinctive ability to immediately shift its organization to align with new strategic goals, it can achieve near-immediate *faithful adoption* of a carefully designed new 'eco-system' of management processes. I have labeled this first phase "Build it." However, while RIL can achieve rapid progress in this first phase, a second phase, which I have labelled "Live in it," is required. This second stage is critical to sustaining second-order planned change; without it, the risk of reversal is very high. Consequently, I have depicted this linear path as a basic equation, with the second phase either amplifying or eroding the investments in the first.

Equation 1 Two-Step Change: A Theory—The impact of *familiness* on planned strategic change

Possibility created by *Familiness*
Change as Two Steps

Navigating
Paradoxes

Step 1
Build it

Step 2
Live in it

Imposition

•New Eco-system
•New Systems & technology
•New Policies
•New Processes

+

**Faithful
Adoption**

•Focus on Owner's wishes
•**Compliant** participation
•Challenges with higher cognitive
 adoption
•**Quantity** over quality
•Emergence of Parallel systems

✕

**Transitioning to
a New Normal**

•**Finding the personal valance for
 followers**
•**Shifting the emphasis from the
 Owner**
•**Quality** and quantity
•Promoting new leaders but
 respecting loyal workers
•Building owners trust in letting go

=

Outcomes

•Utility and sustainability of Step 1
 investments are dependent on:
• (1) Owners commitment to Step 2
 transition
• (2) Willingness and capability of
 leaders to navigate formal and
 informal ambiguities

7.3.1 Build It – Imposition

In the first step of the Two-Step change model, an exercise in design and systems thinking is employed. In RIL's case, their PSC focus was toward sustainability of management decision making beyond the existing tenure of owners and executive directors. Their goal was to "systematize" as far as possible the desired management operating apparatus for the next generation of management. RIL's approach has been to install a new management "eco-system" of interrelated policies, processes, and practices into which its employees can move. Eco-system seems an apt description as RIL's first phase of change focused on creating "a system or network of interconnecting and interacting parts" (Pipek, Wulf and Johri, 2012, p.264). I have aggregated the various aspects of RIL's activities in installing RMS and R-HR as a distinct first phase of change which was intended to provide managers and employees with a completely new environment for making decisions and going about their work (Checkland, 2000; Hamel and Zanini, 2014; Sangiovanni-Vincentelli, 2002). I have described the natural appeal to RIL of taking this approach, referencing Checkland's (2000) description of systems thinking linked to the company's underlying cultural assumptions (Dyer, 1986; Schein, 2010).

7.3.2 Build It – Faithful Adoption

I have shown imposition and faithful adoption as a joint step. This said, they are sequential in the sense that owners can design and impose a PSC program and expect *faithful adoption* by declaring that it is the owners wish. The criticality of any change being unambiguously championed by the owner cannot be understated. The change would not succeed if championed by a more junior executive or even a closely related executive director. RIL has been able to rely on the willing compliance of a malleable workforce who, over the years, have come to unquestioningly regard MDA's judgement and wishes as being in their, and the company's, best interests. Because RIL's initiative was visibly sponsored by MDA, the entire organization was aligned almost instantly to this new "eco-system." Consequently, *faithful adoption* allowed RIL to be confident that

all employees at all levels were positively disposed to using the new system--MDA, as he had done before, asked people to jump, and they jumped in unison.

For *faithful adoption* to be effective, followers in the organization must see, unambiguously, that the PSC being imposed is an initiative for, by, and from the owner. It must be a priority and there must be visible signs of the owner's passion and conviction to ensure *faithful adoption*.

7.3.3 Compliant Adoption

The "Build It" phase provides great opportunity for family firms to leapfrog the latency of conventional change frameworks and the necessary negotiations in traditional multi-national non-family firms. Where an institutionally owned firm may need to negotiate across a dispersed power base of stakeholders and potential rogue actors, RIL can avoid this. Consequently, in the instance of a crisis, where speed of action is primary, and one can reduce change adoption to more quantitative measures and actions, RIL is considerably advantaged over a GE, GM, BP, or Unilever. If RIL needs to shift its business radically away from or toward a new opportunity, then so long as the owner(s) is visibly behind the move, and, critically, his or her tenure is not part of the crisis, then family firms can be nimbler and more agile. Consequently, while not the entire picture based on RIL's "second-order" PSC, in some circumstances this first stage of change could be sufficient for a family firm to achieve an important goal.

The achievement of change using *faithful adoption* is, however, a compliant one. This is to say, that individuals' relationship to the change is intrinsically through the owner and not directly with the change itself. What I mean by this is, that since followers are adopting the change without a deep understanding of the reasons behind the change but instead because of a faith in the company owner, the relationship is contingent on the owner themselves. This does not mean the relationship is less strong or committed. Employees and managers at RIL appear deeply committed. The complication here is twofold (as I have shown in Figure 7-1)
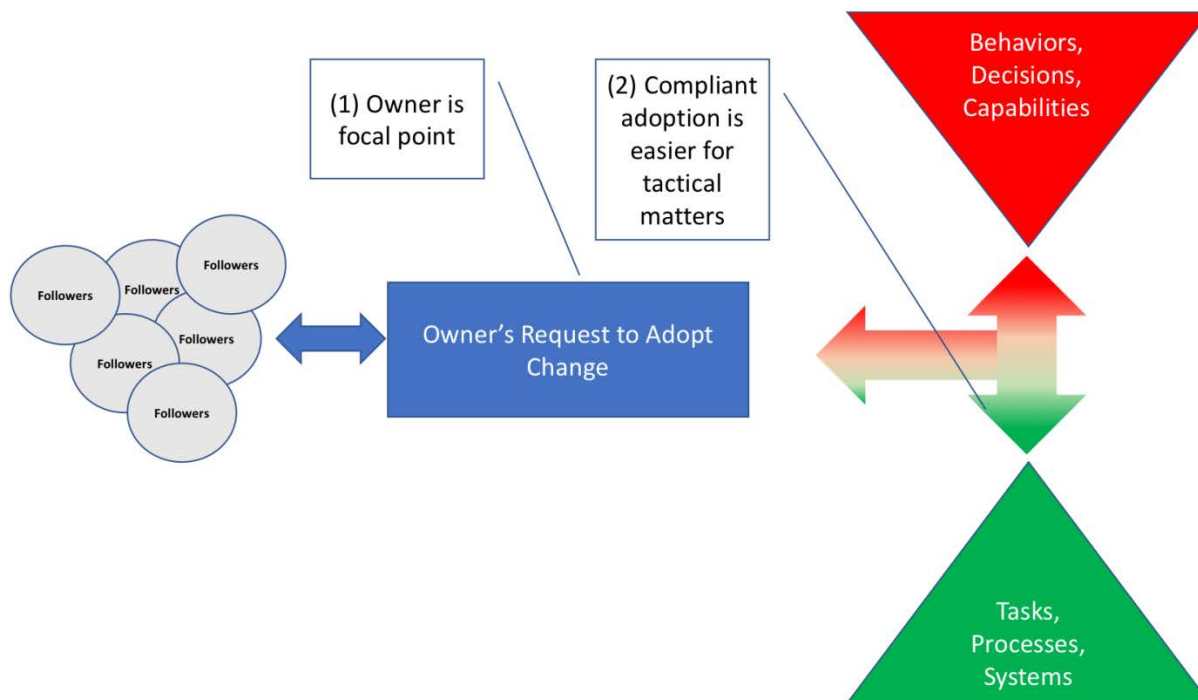
Figure 7-1 Consequences of Compliant Adoption

The first challenge is simply that followers are focused on the owner's disposition toward the change. If the owner changes their view or expresses some frustration with the change, then followers resolve to abide by new processes weakens. Of course, the same can be said in reverse, that an owner can ensure continued faithful adoption by expressing their full support for changed systems.

The second challenge is with the cognitive processes required to achieve the full potential of a PSC program. In RIL's case, the changes are designed to delegate and empower a cadre of managers in readiness for the existing owners to move on to other challenges. The problem here is that if followers' relationship with the changes is compliant only, there is a "zombie" like effect when it comes to decisions and judgment. These second-order activities require managers to comprehend the end purpose of changed processes, to be equipped with broader leadership capabilities. A compliant adoption makes this challenging, at least for some in the organization, as this need for deeper thinking and ownership of the new systems is masked. The follower, if you will,

is given the excuse of blind compliance without the overt challenge of needing to change their own behaviors.

7.3.4 Navigating Paradoxes

It is at this point that we start to feel the impact of the discovered paradoxes. Arguably this is only a challenge for second-order change. In RIL's case, the desire is to shift the reliance away from informality and build sustainable, scalable decision-making processes. Consequently, a second stage of change is required; "Live in it." The migration to this second phase is where the paradoxical tensions of *familiness* in PSC manifest themselves.

In some ways, it is a shift from quantitative aspects of adoption to more qualitative measures. By this I mean that rather than declaring success at the 'checking of boxes' stage, we are more concerned with why actions are completed and whether they would sustain absent owner direction and cajoling. Followers in RIL are willing to take the leap of faith because MDA has asked them to. However, if the goal is to wean the organization away from a reliance on MDA's intimate involvement in the business operations, sustaining the PSC requires a shift of management's relationship to the changed "eco-system." They need to engage for the sake of doing so, in a growing belief that there is personal valance in doing so, not solely because of observing MDA's wishes. I have shown this tension as the inverted triangle between stage 1 and 2 in Equation 1. Equally, this is illustrated in my Figure 7-1.

7.3.5 Live in it – Transitioning to a New Normal

The path to sustainability in this model is through a second stage where management and employees adjust their relative relationships to one another and the new decision making "eco-system." The risk of a perpetual loop or vicious circle exists. An outcome which might be aptly named "stuckness," to borrow a term coined by Higgs & Rowland (2010) to describe de-railers during general organizational change attempts. A solution to breaking this perpetual loop is for owners to identify and groom trusted leadership successors while being conscious of how they interact, overrule or circumvent legitimate attempts of management in using the new management "eco-system."

Specifically, in RIL, this stage has required the company to be patient in developing a new cadre of leaders in whom the owners have built trust while consciously managing a duality of old and new decision-making apparatus. This is a delicate balancing act, particularly given the desire to accommodate long-serving, loyal workers. In RIL's case, the path has been to: (1) invest in external talent who are more accustomed to working independently and are more willing to challenge the status quo, within acceptable boundaries; (2) invest in developing leaders currently two or three levels down in the organization who show the willingness to be proactive and seize the opportunity of greater autonomy, while; (3) allowing existing leaders the space to make their own decisions about staying with the company without threat of redundancy but consciously reduce their direct influence on operations, and; (4) operate parallel systems where the new "eco-system" of management decision making arrives at in principle decisions which can be vetoed by the owner and executive directors. Theoretically, this final step allows a safety net while building mutual confidence in the new systems to deliver sensible outcomes.

In reflecting on how the second stage of this model applies more generally, I suggest the tensions will be consistent. Where a family owned firm, like RIL, seeks to realign organization, cognitive, and cultural attributes, and uses *faithful adoption* as a first step, a second stage in the PSC journey will be required. In this second stage the owner(s) will be required to confront the dual challenges of identifying a new cadre of leaders capable of developing fundamentally new relationships with owner(s), where they are equals in believed competence of decision making effectiveness, while simultaneously allowing owner(s) a transitionary period to prove that the outcomes of a designed new "eco-system" do not compromise entrepreneurial effectiveness. These challenges are complicated by the strong desire to respect and allow space for existing long serving leaders to stay, albeit these can be mitigated by reducing their influence over critical business operations.

7.3.6 Two-Step Change Outcomes - Summary

In the "Build It" phase, RIL has shown its ability to leapfrog several of Kotter's suggested steps. This implies that RIL, because of its distinctive capability of *faithful adoption*, was

advantaged over non-family firms that, following the conventional wisdom of OD change frameworks, would invest considerable time upfront, engaging and developing support prior to launching a PSC initiative. However, after the first phase of change, the challenge of sustaining early adoption arises. This is distinctive from the conventional-change concept of resistance to change as defined by OD scholars (see Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Coetsee, 1999; Holt et al., 2007; Walinga, 2008); the journey to sustainability for RIL has much more to do with transitioning management from extrinsic motivations to intrinsic ownership of their new management systems. Arguably, if the change initiative within a family firm was not of a "second order"—impacting the trilogy of organization, cognition, and culture—then the extrinsic motivation sustained by an ever-present owner might be sufficient to achieve lasting change by sheer perseverance—or, more aptly, stamina (Johnson, 1990).[40]

The challenge for RIL has been, and to some extent remains, shifting management motivations from a compliant relationship through the company's owner, to a more personal one directly with the changed processes. This is complicated by the inherent cultural conflicts identified and discussed in Chapter 4. To ensure that RIL's change program is sustained, management needs to become less dependent on owner direction and more independently "conscious of the value of the activity" (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This is a complicated challenge for a business that has historically not invested in such engagement with employees and lacks a level of capability to reposition relationships from directive to persuasive. What is helpful in this pursuit is the very purpose of RIL's changed systems, which encode and make transparent the expectations and boundary conditions within which they have an increased freedom to act. However, a paradoxical force undermines management's confidence in these new systems: the owner's desire to continue to maximize opportunity. In exercising entrepreneurial flexibility, management is faced with excuses to become passive and wait to see "which way the wind blows" before committing to an action.

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[40] MDA expressed a similar sentiment when he explained in March 2014 "I need to lead this hands on, if I do, and people know I am behind this, they will follow. I can use my shear 'bull-force' to ensure what needs to happen actually happens."

7.4 Two Step PSC: Theory as a Process

The data from RIL's transformation program points to distinctive components of *familiness* that allow for a fundamentally different path to achieving organizational change than that currently provided by OD literature. Kotter's change framework has been used to illustrate its philosophical congruence but practical incongruence with the findings from studying RIL. The manifestation of the paradoxical strengths and weaknesses of *familiness* creates tensions that do not exist in non-family-owned organizations, but it also creates opportunities. These dimensions of *familiness* have been shown, in this chapter, to considerably shape RIL employees' behaviors and attitudes toward organizational change.

In developing a GTM explanation of what the RIL data tell us, I have offered a family-specific theoretical framework for how PSC occurs in a large family-owned firm. Glaser and Strauss (2009, p.33) make it clear, in their explanation of GTM, that its emphasis is on "theory as a process; that is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product." Consequently, I offer my findings and abstraction of theory based on my study of RIL's transformation program in the spirit of starting a new dialogue.

Family firms have been underserved by research into this important area of PSC. Existing work is exclusively in the general OD domain and is focused on mainly large, generic U.S. corporations. Since family businesses are arguably both essential to our global economic fortunes and the most prevalent form of commerce around the world, my hope is that this study and the theoretical formations herein will prompt greater interest in the field.

7.5 Areas for Future Research

As I close this discussion chapter, I am conscious of some clear opportunities for further research. I would like to discuss some of these here, as follows:

(a) What characteristics are necessary in family business leaders to allow the use of faithful adoption, or does this phenomenon apply to all family firm owners?

(b) What drives followers in an organization like RIL to offer an owner their faithful adoption?

(c) In the faithful adoption of PSC, does motivation theory have any application in explaining the compliant adoption of changes and the subsequent shift to a more personal conviction?

(d) Is there utility in exploring the accountability and responsibility literature to help explain role perceptions and in particular the willingness of non-family members in RIL to accept a supporting role?

(e) Does the research into RIL's PSC imply that "first-order change" could be achieved by a family firm in one step?

(f) Do the findings in this RIL case study have relevance for other family firms, in Indian, or elsewhere?

(g) Aside from Kotter's work, how do other philosophically congruent general OD change frameworks compare against my RIL case study results?

In my studies into RIL, I was particularly fascinated by the dyadic dynamic between MDA and his employees. My empirical research has unearthed what are RIL's enablers and barriers during PSC. In the process, I have discovered the powerful phenomenon of *faithful adoption*. I have touched upon "why" and "how" this exists. There is a danger of my observations at this point becoming more speculation than grounded research. However, I do wish to share some early thoughts on these questions in the form of areas for future research.

7.5.1 Leadership Characteristics

In this case study, I have shown the powerful influence MDA has over his organization. In Section 6.5.1 (page 173), I defined the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption* as the combination of the reverential power of a talismanic owner with the reverence, or faith, of their followers. It therefore seems natural to pose the question "Is this power fueled by certain unique individual traits or is it perhaps a combination of factors including Indian national cultural factors?"

In Western literature there is a great deal of research dedicated to the power of heroic, charismatic, and transformative leaders (Bass and Avolio, 1993; Bass and Bass, 2009; Conger and Kanungo, 1987; House, 1976; Michaelis, Stegmaier and Sonntag, 2009;

Podsakoff, MacKenzie and Bommer, 1996; Wansink, et al., 2008; Zohar and Tenne-Gazit, 2008). Max Weber is often quoted as one of those who identified the extraordinary power bestowed on some leaders "[they] comprise especially magical abilities, revelations of heroisms, power of the mind and speech" (Etzioni, 1975, p.12). Transformative leadership ideal types have received a great deal of attention from researchers who have largely agreed on the observation that they can move their followers to higher performance levels:

> The theory of charismatic/transformational leadership suggests that such leaders raise followers' aspirations and activate their higher order values (e.g., altruism) such that followers identify with the leader and his or her mission/vision, feel better about their work, and then work to perform beyond simple transactions and base expectations (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber, 2009, p.428).

Consequently, the prospect emerges to link the existing leadership literature to my findings from studying RIL. Wansink et al., (2008), for example, discuss how vision (or entrepreneurial prowess), when combined with risk-taking (particularly when this is perceived as self-less or altruistic), and loyalty, result in actions often painted as heroic (see also Nice 1984; Mahan & Clum, 1971; Lau, 1998). In RIL, MDA's characteristics and behaviors might very well be matched to these same traits. In other words, it may be that MDA's reverential power of *faithful adoption* is fueled, at least in part, by his personal characteristics.

There is also a well-established strand of research into the construct of owner-centricity in family business research, as I outlined in the introduction to my literature review (see pages 29-34). Perhaps contrary to what one might expect, this dynamic does not appear to result in an autocratic, joy free work environment, but instead the sentiment of employees is more often of unquestioning loyalty bordering on devotion. Paraphrasing again from Lansberg (1988) this is because the long-serving managers see personal ties with the owner as something immensely valuable and even for those with less direct ties, stories of great generosity and genuine caring for individual employees take on mythical proportions (p.129).

In India the caste construct and historical beliefs that reinforce the distinct roles expected of different strata of society may also play a role in supporting the unquestioning power of a successful businessman (Sinha, 2014). As Sinha puts it, "…a born-rich person or those from famous families would enjoy a higher status and would claim superiority in even those domains where he or she is not necessarily superior" (2014, p.55). This is a historic view of India and while it may play a part, as evidenced in my research into RIL, the national cultural influences may be more an amplifier than a root explanation.

An area of enquiry that therefore follows my research is how do these existing concepts influence and relate to my findings. Is the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption* available only to certain leaders and in certain cultural context?

7.5.2 Followership Characteristics

Probably the most intriguing component of my findings for me was the willingness of followers in RIL to take a leap of faith, to suspend or dispense with any skepticism or doubt and do as they have been asked. I found and still find this fascinating. After years of dealing with organizations struggling with persuading employees of the benefits of a change program, here I found an organization with a complete absence of resistance. The explanation I found during my research was a simple one; because they had faith in MDA's judgement. They trusted him. However, this deserves further research in my view.

There is emerging research, again in mainly a Western context, into the field of followership in organizations. As Uhl-Bein et al (2014, p.83) remark in their recent review of followership literature, "we have known that followers and followership are essential to leadership. However, despite the abundance of investigations into leadership in organizational studies, until recently little attention has been paid to followership." They go on to suggest that they believe this is largely because ". . . this is due to confusion and misunderstanding about what followership constructs are and how they relate to leadership. The confusion happens because we have not understood leadership as a process that is co-created in social and relational interactions between

people." Popper (2011) has undertaken work which might have application to some of my findings. In his paper *Toward a Theory of Followership*, he makes the point that there are multiple dimensions to followership. He starts by explaining how individuals may seek leaders to fulfill a missing need (using Social Identity Theory) (Hogg and Terry, 2000). He goes on to discuss the distinctions of affiliation between stronger and weaker follower personalities and how these could be found simultaneously within one organization. However, the most helpful aspect of Popper's work relative to my research project, is the observation that a heterogeneous population of followers can be moved simultaneously by a single leader. His suggestion is that certain leaders can make an appeal to followers strong enough to move them en masse. I have shown a summary of his theory as Table 7-5 and highlighted the pervasive power of projection and wishful amplification of a leader's capabilities and intent.

Table 7-5 Popper's Contextual Theory of Followership (2011, p.33)

Major Variables and Concepts Predicting and Explaining Followers' Perceptions of Leaders in Different Contexts

Context/situation	Dominant explanation/prediction basis	Major variables/processes for prediction/explanation	Major concept of the leader as seen by the followers
Weak psychological situation	Psychodynamic	Projection, regression	The leader as a protective parent
Close leader (leader in everyday life)	Attribution theories	Attributions of leader's *behaviors*	The leader as expert or mentor
Distant leader	Attribution theories	Attributions of leader's *Traits*	The leader as visionary
Homogeneous social networks	Social psychological theories of identity	Prototypes	The leader as a narrative embodying the desired characteristics of the social network
Heterogeneous population	Personality theories, models dealing with interpersonal differences	Intrapersonal variables	The leader as a response to specific personality needs

Popper's theory seems to have great explanatory power. Followers in RIL are a diverse group. The long serving members do have close relationships with MDA and the views expressed by Lansberg (1988) seem apt about the bond that was likely forged through the early crucibles of building RIL. Others, however, are relatively new and, with a workforce of 240,000, proximity for the majority is now very distant to MDA. Consequently, when Popper points out that greater distance (in terms of direct interaction) from a transformative leader can enhance and exaggerate their powers one starts to picture the potential transference or projection multiple that might apply at RIL. The snowballing impact of a combination of stories of past glories, acts of kindness and generosity, and, of course, entrepreneurial prowess could have an extraordinary magnifying effect on socially constructed realties. A simple explanation therefore for MDA's power is that RIL employees have projected a deeply reverential and near super human image unto him. Like a deeply respected and revered father, so long as his requests are not too frequent and are seen overall to have benefited the organization, employees will make the default assumption that his instructions are naturally and automatically in their own best interests. In subsequent work, Popper has speculated on how this power is analogous to religious worship and the emergence of deities (2015). In Chapter 6, when analyzing the reaction of respondents in my field interviews, I made a similar comparison, albeit more toward charismatic social or religious leaders.

In an Indian social and culture context, there is also the possibility that blind obedience to a superior is linked to those complex factors I discussed in section 4.7. As Kakar explains it:

> In India, this automatic reverence for a superior is a nearly universal pyscho-social fact (p.138). …The principle of hierarchal ordering of social dependencies extends beyond home base in the extended family to every other institution in Indian life, from the *jajmani* system to corporate business, from *guru-chela* relationship in religious education to department staffing in an Indian university, from village *panchayat* to highest reaches of government bureaucracy. (Kakar, 1981, p.119).

The tacit deal, it has been said in India, is that those who see themselves as subservient either through caste or other status, consciously prostrate themselves before their believed superiors. They believe in exchange for their unquestioning devotion, the "boss" or superior is honor-bound to "take care of them" as a generous benefactor (Sinha, 2014). While this cultural context undoubtedly will have had some bearing on my study into RIL, the evidence from my observations and field interviews was far less pronounced than might have been suggested from this text.

7.5.3 Possible Application of Motivation Theory

Existing motivation theory is well researched and may help explain the compliant nature of followers' initial relationship with change at RIL. The "yang" to *faithful adoption's* "yin" is the dynamic I illustrate in Figure 7-1. Within the deep reservoir of motivation research sits Ryan & Deci's (2000) work which focuses on explaining how employee motivation in an organization can be viewed on a spectrum (shown as regulatory styles—see Figure 7-2). Against these they plot the associated reinforcing mechanisms which help support and maintain these motivations (shown as associated processes). On the far left of this spectrum, they show "Amotivation," a state of apathy where completion of a task requires no incentive or censure. At the far right is "Intrinsic Motivation" where an individual undertakes the task solely through their own volition. In the middle, between the dotted lines, we see the nuanced categorization of motivations from "External Regulation" through to "Integration." In these four descriptions, we see the relative criticality of external incentives or coercion for sustaining the desired activity.
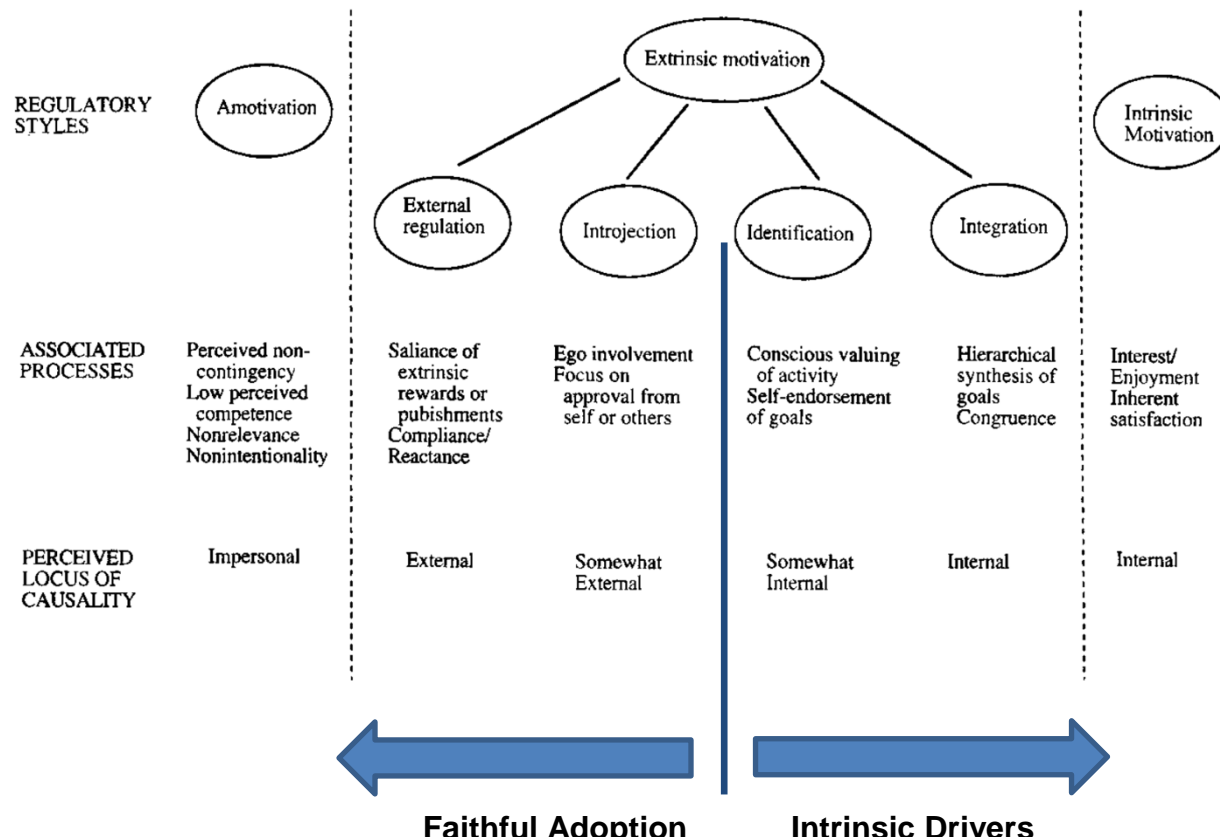
Figure 7-2 Taxonomy of human motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.61; spelling errors are from original text)

RIL owners face the challenge of ensuring that their management team independently embraces and takes accountability for operating the business using the new management systems. After all, the very purpose of RIL's change program is to gradually shift operational responsibilities from existing owners to a cadre of trusted operating leaders. Consequently, addressing the question of how RIL managers relate and why to these new systems is important. Using Ryan & Deci's motivational typology may be a helpful tool in explaining the different relationships that RIL employees might have with the change program and how the dynamic I described in Figure 7-1 might be navigated.

7.5.4 Accountability and Responsibility Theory

While again a Western conceived construct, somewhat related to motivation theory literature is the work on accountability and responsibility in organizations (Bergsteiner and Avery, Gayle, 2003; Frink and Klimoski, 1998; Guidice, Mero and Greene, 2013; Tetlock et al., 2013). The question of whether followers in an organization chose to limit or resist programs to empower them has been explored using these theoretical frames. Consequently, it may be of interest to apply accountability theory to the dyadic owner--non-family employee relationship and ask the question whether these existing constructs help uncover explanations for followers' behaviors (see for example Guidice et al [2013]).

7.5.5 First Order Change and *Faithful Adoption*

I have speculated earlier in this chapter that it is primarily the need to navigate "second-order" strategic change which creates paradoxical challenges for RIL (Johnson, 1990). An intriguing question is whether the discovery of *faithful adoption* might allow a family firm similar to RIL to achieve more tactical change far more rapidly than their counter-parts. It could be of great strategic advantage to know if family owned firms are competitively advantaged in adopting new software or more process orientated systems.

7.5.6 Does Two-Step Change have application outside RIL

Perhaps the most obvious question following my research into RIL is whether the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption* and Two-Step Change has wider utility. The only way to test this is to encourage further research into PSC in large family firms. My advantage (and to some extent disadvantage) in conducting this enquiry was the absence of existing research. This journey into the unknown has afforded me the ability to create a GTM explanation for change in RIL. However, other than the general OD frameworks, I have had no points of direct comparison with focused studies into change in a family business. My greatest aspiration for this investigation is that it may inspire other attempts to explain and define how PSC occurs in family firms. I will be fascinated to see whether my findings are replicated.

7.5.7 General OD Change Framework Comparison

My work has not set out to systematically test the utility of general OD change frameworks against the results of my RIL case study. As I have underlined previously, I have placed the focus of my investigation on discovering the enablers and barriers to PSC in RIL.

In Figure 2-1 I provided a high-level summary of what I have referred to as general OD change frameworks. My reference here has been to the considerable body of work that has followed the pioneering work of Kurt Lewin (1951) in the 1940s and 50s. In preparation for this doctorate project, I conducted a scoping study in early 2016 which identified a host of organizational change related frameworks and theories (Oxley, 2016). Indeed, a cursory Google Scholar search for "organizational development change frameworks," returns a dizzying 1,910,000 results (in just 0.12 seconds).

A question for further investigation may be to now return to the general OD literature to see whether existing research, conducted outside the family business domain, may provide greater explanatory power than that provided by Kotter's 8-Steps model.

7.6 Summary

In this chapter, I compared my findings from the RIL case study to the existing family business literature. Despite the lack of empirical studies of PSC in family firms, the existing grey literature provides a level of confidence that the main enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL likely stem from its family ownership and family involvement.

I then looked at the RBV-inspired construct of *familiness* to explain the presence of distinctive paradoxical enablers and barriers to PSC within RIL. I explained how Barney (1991) and Irava & Moores' (2010) frameworks seem complementary to my own research. I then offered a seventh distinctive capability of *familiness* to the six previously suggested by Irava and Moores.

Given the established inadequacies of existing contemporary OD change frameworks to describe and predict the path of PSC observed in RIL, I developed a GTM explanation. My purpose here has been to provide a framework that leverages the distinctive

capabilities of *familiness* and identifies the distinctive barriers. I have presented this framework as "Two-Step Change," with a focus on using the concept of *faithful adoption* and then identifying the challenge of sustaining PSC by developing new management capabilities (including shifting from extrinsic to intrinsic motivators) and building confidence among owners that systems will not unduly limit the company's entrepreneurial opportunism.

Finally, I presented a discussion of seven possible areas for further research that emerge from my findings. These are important as the question particularly of why followers in RIL are prepared to take a leap of faith has not been covered in depth in my study and yet it is a fascinating question. I have speculated on some possible avenues which might help explain this more thoroughly.

In conclusion, in this chapter I have: (1) shown how my findings compare with existing literature. The outcome is one of demonstrating that the existing grey literature has had some predicative power. However, the overall picture is one of a reinforcement that our lack of understanding of how family businesses experience change is long overdue for attention, (2) I presented my finding of the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption* as a seventh manifestation of *familiness*. This is a useful frame in which to think about PSC in a family firm as my findings fit nicely into this RBV derivative for family businesses and also help continue the broader discussion of 'fleshing out' the definition of *familiness*; (3) I shared my GTM explanation of Two-Step change. This working theory is a very useful way to more accurately describe how change has taken place at RIL. It also more directly explains the points of advantage and tension for family firms; and (4) I speculated on the mechanisms which enable *Faithful Adoption* while looking at the existing, mainly Western developed, management theories that might have utility. While I am reminded of Hofstede's (1993) warning of the dangers of blindly applying Western management research to other cultural settings, in the absence of an alternative they remain a useful lens with which to asks initial questions. Equally, we might look at Indian specific cultural research and ask the question just how powerful an influence has that been in shaping the behaviors of followers at RIL during this PSC program?

8 – Empirical Research Conclusion

> "*With all things being equal, the simplest explanation tends to be the right one.*" William of Ockham (c. 1287–1347)

This report has investigated whether PSC in a family owned business may be influenced by the widely-published literature which points to the distinctiveness of family owned businesses from their non-family counterparts. I have demonstrated that in RIL's PSC program, its inherent *familiness* is a major influence as both enabler and barrier. I mentioned four goals for this research project in my introduction, and I return to these now. In Chapter 5, I recorded, analyzed, and explained the motivations and objectives behind RIL's PSC program. In Chapter 6, I provided a detailed discussion and analysis of the distinctive enablers and barriers to RIL's PSC journey. In the process, I explained why contemporary OD change frameworks are inadequate guides to explaining how RIL can achieve its PSC goals. In Chapter 7, I showed the links between the enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL and its family ownership. I used the existing construct of *familiness* to explain how the paradoxical forces within RIL can be seen as the manifestations of *familiness* during a PSC attempt. Finally, I presented an empirical data driven theory of how PSC can be achieved in RIL by leveraging its distinctiveness and mitigating the barriers. I called this theory "Two-Step Change."

In this chapter, I will provide a final summary of my findings. I will also address the question of why these findings are important and who might benefit from them.

8.1 Final Comparison of Findings to Kotter's 8-Step Framework

Throughout this case study, I have used a comparison to Kotter's widely accepted 8-step framework for achieving PSC as a contrast to RIL's approach. In doing so, I have been careful to underscore that the focus of this research is to identify, understand, and explain RIL's approach to PSC. I have not intended to make any critique of Kotter's framework beyond identifying where family businesses, like RIL, may experience opportunities and challenges during PSC which Kotter simply does not consider.

In Figure 8-1, I provide one final summary of RIL's distinctive path and show how it has meaningfully deviated from Kotter's framework. This table combines the data and analysis shared throughout Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7

Figure 8-1 Summary Comparison of Kotter's 8 Step Model Against Findings in RIL Case Study

My first, qualifying, point is that both Kotter's framework and RIL's PSC program follow the same philosophical underpinnings; they are both concerned with "second-order" change and assume this can be achieved by a top-down, pre-conceived path, within a finite time frame. Consequently, I make the point that this is an "apples to apples" comparison. However, this is where the similarities largely end.

In the second column of Figure 8-1, I have summarized Kotter's articulation of how PSC can occur. What one first notes with Kotter's 8-Steps, is the considerable effort focused on gaining a consortium of senior stakeholder support for the change. The perspective, quite reasonably perhaps for institutionally owned multi-national companies, is that no one individual can successfully impose change on the organization. Linked to this, Kotter provides advice on how to gain "followership" support for the "proposed" change before its actual implementation. One illustration of this is the emphasis he places on creating urgency. The impression being that pointing to a "burning platform" creates the impetus for change. I'm reminded here of the story of the two men running from a bear…except we might say that in Kotter's change framework the choice is to run toward the changes as the past is a scarier prospect. These early steps are aligned with much of contemporary OD research about the importance of gauging an organizations' "readiness for change" (Armenakis and Harris, 2009; Holt et al., 2007; Walinga, 2008) and avoiding "resistance to change" (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Coetsee, 1999; O'Connor, 1993). In this sense, Kotter's framework follows the classic "unfreeze, change, re-freeze" formula accredited to Lewin (Burnes, 2004; Cummings, Bridgman and Brown, 2015; Lewin, 1951).

Kotter's framework also implies a utilitarian approach to those who may resist change; the detractors are, ultimately, to be confronted and dealt with. Finally, Kotter's framework assumes management must be persuaded and that a combination of more traditional reward and censure must be used in combination with appeals to rational self-interest. I make this case because, logically, the time taken by Kotter's model to invest upfront in persuading

followers of the "individual valance" of embracing change, assumes managers will always behave as "actors of free will " (Fama, Eugene, 1980; Jensen and Meckling, 1976; Miller and Miller, 1950). This is to say, Kotter takes the view that individual employees in large institutionally-owned firms are to be assumed to act predominantly in their own self-interest.

If we now contrast the second column of Figure 8-1 with the third, where I have shown the findings from studying RIL's PSC, we see some stark contrasts. RIL started with a systems design and rapid implementation of a designed "eco-system." The observation is that at RIL one person, MDA, did have the power to impose PSC on the organization. The systems design and implementation phase was very short at just 18 months. In this period, the organization compliantly accepted MDA's direction to use the new R-HR and RMS systems. There was no focused effort extended to gain broader leadership support for change, nor efforts to gauge the broader organization's readiness to accept change. In fact, there was evidence such efforts may have been counterproductive for RIL given the nature of their underlying cultural assumptions and narrow accepted role of incumbent management. Yet, RIL gained near immediate adoption of the new management systems. Employees accepted MDA's request as most likely in their and the organizations best interests "…because MDA knew what was best for them."[41] Consequently, RIL did not really invest in an unfreeze phase, their PSC change tactics were focused on change and then, given the paradoxical manifestation of *familiness*, a second phase of sustaining the change.

RIL have been able to achieve this more rapid, near immediate change adoption, by leveraging what I have called *faithful adoption*. This concept is linked to and fueled by RIL employees' powerful reverence for MDA and the inter-related paradoxes I discovered during my field work. In this way, followers in RIL have not behaved as the "actors of self-interest" anticipated by Kotter. Instead, they are followers akin to a religious, political, or social group who have invested enormous trust and faith in a single transformative leader. They are

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[41] Paraphrase of interview respondents in Chapter 6

prepared to take a leap of faith for this leader and in RIL's PSC have done exactly that for MDA.

This sets up a distinctive tension for RIL that is again absent from Kotter's framework. The adoption of PSC using *faithful adoption* creates paradoxical tensions. These include the compliant relationship of employees toward the change and the centrality of MDA in this regard. This tension creates some challenges with the effectiveness of higher-order, cognitive processes intended to be deployed as part of the PSC program.

RIL have now entered a second phase of their PSC and are navigating the paradoxical tensions I shared in Chapter 6. These have manifested themselves as: (1) wanting to demonstrate loyalty to long serving staff, and; (2) preserve entrepreneurial flexibility, while on the other; (3) wanting to build a new cadre of managers willing to take on broader accountabilities and decision-making autonomy, and; (4) leverage the formality of new management systems designed to institutionalize aspects of decision-making.

In concluding the contrasts between Kotter's framework and RIL's actual path to achieving PSC, there is simply a very large gulf between assumptions of a leader's ability to impose change, management's starting position of needing to be persuaded, and, probably most critically for RIL, the post change phase of dealing with the paradoxical nature of *familiness*.

8.2 Final Conclusions from RIL Case Study Findings

This ethnographic case study into RIL's PSC program has provided evidence that the greatest enablers for and barriers to PSC are hitherto unexplored distinctive paradoxical manifestations of *familiness*. The most powerful of which is the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption*.

Following an exploration and explanation of RIL's history and cultural assumptions, this study has provided a detailed report following the researcher's 3.5 years as embedded observer. The richness and depth of data presented here provides an unprecedented and unique insight to: (1) understand RIL as an iconic family owned business; (2) understand its

motivations for embarking on a change program; (3) analyze its tactics for achieving PSC; (4) assess the impact, early outcomes, and how the program has been experienced by key actors in the company; (5) compare and contrast these findings with conventional change frameworks; (6) assess the philosophical congruence of RIL's approach with existing change frameworks; (7) explain why RIL's inherent *familiness* requires a family-centric explanation of how PSC might be achieved, and; (8) offer a GTM theory of how PSC may be achieved leveraging the strengths of *familiness* while navigating the barriers.

In Chapter 6, the paradoxical manifestations of *familiness* were shown as Leveraging Faith vs. Persuasion, Individual Justice vs. Utilitarianism, and Formality vs. Informality. The discovery of these forces is a critical step in helping to understand how the widely-understood distinctiveness of family businesses from their non-family counterparts may play a powerful role during PSC. Given the compelling case to help family businesses who are essential to our global economy and the most prevalent form of business entity in the world today, the absence of research into how they navigate PSC should be a matter of some concern (Cornell University, 2006; Family Firm Institute Inc., 2017). This study begins to fill this critical gap.

In Chapter 7, after comparing the findings from my field work and interviews with existing literature, I offered a GTM explanation of how PSC has occurred in RIL: Two-Step Change, leveraging *faithful adopti*on. This explanation of change is important on several levels. Two-Step change is a purpose-built explanation of how RIL is achieving PSC. It considerably departs from existing frameworks and focuses explicitly on the data gathered from this RIL study. In doing so, it demonstrates how RIL can achieve PSC more quickly than its non-family counterparts. Additionally, it sets a path for navigating the distinctive paradoxical tensions that are shown to be present in RIL but entirely absent from existing OD research. This is to say that the Two-Step Change model provides an explanation and approach to tackle the paradoxical tensions of shifting a workforce who have been willing to take a leap of faith for and while a

talismanic owner is in place, but may be unsustainable should his/her presence be removed.

Undertaking this research has, ultimately, allowed me to "scratch the itch" that I first felt in 2013. RIL have pursued change fundamentally differently to any other business I have previously been associated with. In short, they have skipped several steps, ignored others, gone faster, got results, and unveiled new challenges. It is therefore unsurprising that I could not find explanations for what I was witnessing.

The discovery of *Faithful Adoption* as a powerful force is the key explanation. MDA has the power to shift his organization, toward a new strategy, or new system of management, and his followers are willing to comply. This power provides him with a competitive advantage. He can realign his organization swiftly. However, before he does so, he must be certain and thorough in the design and implementation of comprehensive systems. He must be clear that he is the personal champion of the change. In which case, the organization is prepared to simply do as he asks. There is no resistance, no debate, and no obstacle. His followers will go where he asks them. There may be limits to the frequency and extent to the power of *Faithful Adoption*, but at least in this case study, the ask was large and the response impressive.

The complication with this phenomenon is that it comes with paradoxical tensions attached. When MDA directs his firm to change, they do so compliantly. This creates complications with higher order cognitive processes because followers' relationship with the change is through MDA as an intermediary. This creates certain challenges with followers accepting a need to adapt their behaviors and develop new capabilities. Their contentment is with doing as instructed. This masks the need for some level of personal change.

Equally, in RIL's PSC at least, because the objective has implied a change in deep cultural assumptions, including the formalizing of aspects of their operating model, there are paradoxical tensions with owners' relationship to the change. This is to say that MDA and his EC are also coming to terms with trusting new managers to take on the increased levels of decision autonomy.

This tension may be amplified because it is a prevailing trait of family businesses to be flexible with their decision-making processes. Moreover, this is a habit that a group of 35-year experienced, highly successful entrepreneurs, may find hard to moderate.

These discoveries are by definition new and RIL's experience could therefore be seen as pioneering, at least as a social research enquiry. By uncovering the paradoxical tensions and understanding the full power of *faithful adoption*, this study has broken some new ground. As I have worked with RIL to share my findings, the obvious question has emerged "How do we navigate a path through these paradoxical tensions?" The answer, without wishing to appear glib, is carefully and patiently. RIL has implemented change much faster than comparable companies. However, to achieve maximum value for its investment, it must face the dual challenges of: (1) helping managers have a more personal relationship with the changed systems. Specifically, they need help to adjust to the higher order decision making and judgement aspects. This is because: (a) they have historically not seen it as a part of their jobs; (b) they have not been encouraged to develop or practice these skills, and; (c) the ambiguity of RIL's entrepreneurial culture creates some hazards for progressive managers who misjudge the owners' appetite to abide by declared process.

Secondly (2); a related challenge lies with MDA and his EC. Their continued entrepreneurial zeal and impatience with perceived bureaucracy creates a difficult climate for talented managers to demonstrate competence and build trust. Fundamentally, this challenge is exacerbated by RIL's deep loyalty to long serving employees. The time needed to build a new cadre of more capable managers who can build trust with MDA and his team may be elongated. In the absence of a "clearing of the decks" there may also be a slight messiness as new talent competes with the old guard for territory and influence.

RIL have, however, made great progress in what I have described as this second "live in it" phase of change. They have assimilated the findings from this study and are fast adjusting their talent and development offerings. This ability to assimilate new ideas and make adjustments is, after all, a core attribute for

RIL. I showed in Chapter 4 how RIL's history was one built on a prowess to "make things work." This same attribute has served RIL well as they have been open-minded and willing to fine tune as they progress. One fascinating component of this is the more public perception of RIL as a deeply private and media shy organization. While perhaps they remain reticent in dealing with external parties, the internal organization learning machine seems quite different to public perception.

Finally, the question of how national culture impacts the findings from my research. The first qualification here might be the obvious one; this research is into an Indian family owned business. Consequently, the findings are impossible to remove contextually from India. I have shared my slight dilemma relative to Indian's societal influence on my research findings. First, I did not set out to study the influence of national culture. My focus was addressing very clearly RIL's enablers and barriers to change. I have focused my unit of analysis on the change program itself. I believe I have done that thoroughly. The question of the influence of national culture might therefore be considered simply a contextual matter which may limit generalizability. I am also tempted to make the observation that most Western research projects do not feel the need to qualify their findings against national cultural influence. However, as one delves into Indian societal psychology, it is difficult to ignore completely the research which talks about how some leaders are revered and how the caste and religious context promotes blind obedience. I am greatly persuaded by Sinha's (2014) explanation of how Indian society, while vertical, hierarchical, and spiritually vested in the past, is also modern, progressive, and increasingly global. This pluralistic approach creates some complexity and paradoxical behaviors.

My conclusion to the influence of national culture on my findings from this case study is consistent with Sinha's view. There was no direct evidence in my field interviews that the executives I interviewed felt obligated to comply with MDA's requests. Many of them were either educated in the USA or UK, or had worked for Western multi-national firms. In fact, 17 of the 26 respondents to my field interviews had experienced change programs in Western companies. There

was no doubt they understood and had experience of debating and directing change in other contexts. Their explanation for why things were different at RIL was more related to MDA's entrepreneurial prowess and an implicit acceptance that "modernizing" RIL's management systems was long overdue. Indeed, in some instances they took some credit for encouraging MDA to champion the change initiative.

Conversely, I did observe instances where some staff, particularly in the old manufacturing units, did not see their place to question or even understand the owner's decisions. They were content executing on what they had been told. The irony here, perhaps, might be that these same individuals were both the ones that RIL felt a deep-rooted loyalty toward but also were likely most problematic in inspiring to learn new capabilities. In this sense, they fit the pattern Sinha explained of the cosmic deal where the worker submits themselves absolutely and the employer/owner commits to take care of them.

Before I continue, however, let me share that I have examined as reflexively as possible the evidence captured through participant observation and field interviews. I have considered and debated with Cranfield faculty the possibility of confirmability or social acceptability biases influencing the data. Their existence seems unlikely given the long period of immersion in RIL and the rapport developed with participants. This is of course the strength of a 3.5-year ethnographic study. The possibility of distortion is reduced by taking this more anthropologic approach. While one can never be entirely certain of the motivations and biases of participants in a social research study, in this case I am confident that the data reported, in sum, is a sound basis on which to express a reasonable abstraction (Alvesson, 2003).

Thus, my conclusion is that Indian national culture and belief system clearly played a role in promoting MDA's ability to use *Faithful Adoption*. However, my view is that this amplified the phenomenon rather than created it. The evidence I saw at RIL was individuals both with traditional Indian and more progressive global views of the role of management, being equally "persuaded" to comply with the *faithful adoption* request. The composition of their dispositions and

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rationale for doing so might have been quite different. This is what I think Popper (2011) refers to in his work on mass motivation of very different followers to a common cause.

Consequently, if I return to my findings and restate them in this context, I might present them as follows:

1. The main enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL are the three inter-related paradoxes reported in Chapter 6.

2. RIL has been able to use the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption* to gain near instant compliance with their desired changes.

3. *Faithful Adoption* is built on and relies on some deeply held beliefs which have been shown to be common themes of many family businesses (for example: loyalty to long serving staff, informality, a strong central figure, a patriarchal culture).

4. The same traits that are shown in (3) are also amplified in Indian cultural beliefs. These have probably enhanced the impact of *faithful adoption* in RIL.

5. Since I am unable to separate RIL from its cultural context and there is no conclusive evidence that suggests followers were mainly motivated to follow the PSC change directive because of Indian-centric cultural beliefs, I submit that these may not have been the primary drivers for *Faithful Adoption* but one of the ingredients.

8.3 Implications of Findings

My research into RIL's PSC program should provide enormous pause for all family owned businesses contemplating change. The results of my investigation into RIL's PSC program indicate that large family businesses are very likely to experience change fundamentally differently to their non-family counterparts. Additionally, the discovery of the phenomenon of *faithful adoption* suggests large family owned businesses' can achieve change through a previously undiscovered path. There are consequently very good reasons for family businesses to reevaluate their PSC tactics and be especially wary of conventional change frameworks which ignore their distinctive *familiness*.

The key ingredient for the existence of *faithful adoption* appears to be a family firm with a strong central figure. This construct has been referred to as owner-centricity (Dyer, 1986; Kelly, Athanassiou, and Crittenden, 2000; Aronoff & Ward, 2011). Owner-centricity has been shown to be common in many successful first- and second-generation family owned firms. Dyer (1986) and Aronoff & Ward (2011), for example, talk about the characteristics of successful entrepreneurs, who lead from the front, and are willing to bet everything on their ideas. These same traits seem to lead to a need for "hands-on" control of their organizations. These are the ingredients that lead to strong owner-centrality, with the founding entrepreneur being intricately involved in nearly all aspects of their business. In organizational terms, these forceful traits are said to translate into patriarchal and paternalistic cultures. Dyer (1986, p.24) posits that these cultural paradigms are the most common form of successful family business enterprises. Consequently, it is in specifically this cultural shape of family-owned business that we will most likely find the phenomenon of *faithful adoption*.

Since my research was conducted into PSC in a large Indian family owned business, it perhaps follows that the most direct implications of my findings are for other Indian family businesses. For Indian family owned businesses, RIL does represents a clear "black swan" example worthy of note (Taleb, 2010). There are many large Indian owned family groups. The majority of mid and large capitalized companies on the Indian stock exchange today are family controlled (Bhattacharya, 2010; Kant, 2017; Rajakumar, 2007; Ward, 2000). Many of these businesses will be confronted with challenges requiring some form of organizational change. In the absence of this study into RIL, these businesses will have been forced to rely on work that promotes philosophical stances and assume values which are at best incongruent with those consistently shown as present in family businesses. This would result in Indian family businesses being faced with conflicts between achieving change via an artificial set of values or abandoning their change ambitions. However, at worst, the existing change frameworks may push family business down a path which could seriously damage their businesses. As we saw from some of the field

interview respondents at RIL, the chaos caused by pre-2013 attempts to engage management in conversation about restructuring were terribly counter-productive. Consequently, my research into RIL's PSC program and the resulting findings provide for the first time an alternative to the existing change frameworks whose focus has been largely on Western institutionally owned multi-national companies. Large Indian family owned businesses can now look at the research into RIL as more direct and relevant to their own circumstances. For those with strong central figures and paternalistic cultures, my "Two-Step" change framework will prove far more helpful in allowing them to achieve large scale change successfully. Moreover, the knowledge of the conflicts caused between individual justice and utilitarianism and formality versus informality, have great power to help explain the barriers to PSC within their own organizations.

The size of a family business may have some bearing on my findings. The nature of RIL's change did constitute "second-order" change (cognitive, organization, and culture). The implication is that smaller businesses may not have the organizational complexity of RIL and may not therefore have the same obstacles to change. The research into how change occurs in small versus large businesses does suggest that it is larger companies that struggle disproportionally with achieving PSC (Haveman, 1993). At the early stages of any business, the process of evolving, adapting, and changing is organic with fewer obstacles (Van de Ven et al., 1984). Equally, there is clearly something to be said for the observation that at the start-up stage of a business, the distinctions between family and non-family businesses are blurred, with many entrepreneurs relying on informal help from family members. However, my research does imply that most family firms, as they move beyond the start-up phase, will exhibit distinctive dynamics during PSC. This is because of the unique bundle of resources and behaviors that family firms demonstrate relative to their non-family counter-parts. These have been reinforced by the cumulative research from scholars into Socio-Emotional Wealth and *Familiness* which shed serious doubt on the wisdom of applying general organizational change theories to any family business (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007; Habbershon and Williams,

1999). The question is likely less whether family firms experience distinctive dynamics during change but more too what degree or how pronounced this may be. Popper's (2011, 2015) work on followership theory, suggests that the power of *faithful adoption* may be amplified by larger employee sizes. He notes that greater distance from a strong central figure can create a powerful mystique surrounding them which exaggerates their abilities. Consequently, I submit while my findings will have greatest impact for large family businesses with strong central figures, there is every indication that small and medium sized family firms will also experience PSC distinctively. *Familiness* will still exist and will still create different enablers and barriers to PSC than non-family firms. My findings should demonstrate that PSC in all forms of family owned business is under researched. While it does seem likely that the paradoxical findings from RIL and *faithful adoption* may also be present in small and medium sized family firms, the degree and impact can only be appraised following further investigation.

Since my research has been constructed on a large family owned business in India, the natural next question is whether my findings have implications for non-Indian firms. At the heart of this question is whether the societal expectations and national culture of India has created a backdrop against which the power of *faithful adoption* is inexorably woven. I am afraid this is a question that I cannot address systematically in the confines of this thesis. However, I would offer three observations which I believe provide a sensible means to think through this question. First, my empirical investigation into RIL's change program yielded no direct evidence that India's national culture was the primary driver for the phenomenon of *faithful adoption*. This suggests that the phenomenon is likely to exist in large family owned business in other geographies. However, not unlike the discussion above about company size, the question will be whether India's national culture has amplified its force such that in RIL it was capable of moving over 200,000 employees. Second, India's national culture, while unique in many ways, does have some similarities to other particularly Asian societies. It is possible, therefore, that we could see equally high levels of *faithful adoption* power in, say, Korean family owned

companies. Third, in my findings I used the cumulative predictions from mainly Western based researchers (see again Table 2-9) to trace the influence of family ownership on RIL's PSC program. In Table 7-3, I mapped my findings back to these Western scholars' predictions and found a close match. In reflecting on this exercise and returning to the question of whether my findings have implications for non-Indian family businesses, the general response must surely be yes. Western scholars have essentially predicted that family firms will behave differently during attempts to change. The RIL case study demonstrates that their predictions seem largely accurate. Consequently, family firms, whether in the USA, Europe, or elsewhere, should view my research as supporting the belief that their distinctiveness is currently not well served by general OD change frameworks. In short, all family firms should view my research as being good reason to rethink how to successfully and efficiently achieve PSC.

Finally, I mentioned during Chapter 6, that MDA's power was akin to a religious or political leader. An intriguing question that may follow my findings is whether the ingredients present in a large, owner-centric, first- or second-generation family firm could also be present in other organizations. One of my research collaborators, Dr Paul Lockey, made the observation that he felt the phenomenon may also exist in the Catholic Church (see section 9.6). While my initial reaction to this suggestion was one of skepticism, it does bear some further examination. Could a charismatic leader of a religious or political organization also inspire their followers to adopt change without significant cognitive critical thought? One can see Dr Lockey's point when reading articles discussing the infallibility of the Pope (Kurtz, 1983). However, I believe the power base of religious and political organizations are likely to stem from different followership motivations. Scholars have suggested the utility of Social Identity Theory, Self-Identity Theory, and Network Theory as explanations for both the power of religious and political organizations to mobilize followers to action (Amiot and Jaspal, 2012; Hogg and Terry, 2000; Perrucci and Pilisuk, 1970). My conclusion, therefore, is that similarities here are interesting but not obviously connected.

8.4 Contributions

This empirical research project makes several contributions to existing literature. First, my SLR demonstrates a distinct gap in our existing understanding of how change may take place in a family-owned firm. Second, my research into RIL's PSC program gives us major pause to reflect on the adequacy of existing general OD frameworks to explain change in a family business setting. In unpacking the implied philosophical assumptions in Kotter's 8-Step model for PSC and contrasting these with those present in RIL, I have pointed out the fundamental incongruences between the two.

Third, my findings from studying RIL's PSC program have uncovered the existence of three previously unrecorded paradoxical forces that represent the primary enablers and barriers to the company's PSC program. The discovery of these forces provides an important insight for academics and practitioners who wish to assist large family-owned businesses in achieving strategic, second-order change. Fourth, I define and explain the phenomenon of *Faithful Adoption*. This powerful force has allowed RIL's owners to nearly instantly gain compliant adoption of a complex and far reaching transformation program,

Fifth, as indicated at the outset, I have focused, throughout this project, on studying the "change program itself." In doing so, I have considered how RIL could optimize its PSC program by leveraging rather than ignoring the presence of paradoxical forces. The outcome is a new model of how PSC can occur in RIL that I have called Two-Step Change. This model focuses on using the paradoxical forces as potential sources of competitive advantage while providing guidance on how RIL can mitigate the associated barriers to sustainability.

Finally, my research has been undertaken in an ethnographic tradition. I was embedded in RIL for over 3.5 years. Consequently, I represent that my research method is also a contribution. In my SLR, I show that the diversity of research methods into family firms was limited (page 44). Moreover, the level of time commitment and privileged access to RIL I suggest is something of an antidote to what some critics of qualitative methods have described as superficial or

'manufactured' data gathering (Alvesson, 2003; Blaikie, 2009; Hammersley, 1990; Silverman, 2013). Commentators have pointed to the sometimes prohibitive time commitment required to undertake high quality ethnographic work and consequently the practical attraction of less time consuming approaches (Blaikie, 2009; De Massis, et al., 2014; Schein, 2010). Through a combination of serendipitous circumstances, the data I gathered through observation and interviews represents a level of depth and richness that, certainly for a large Indian business, is unprecedented.

Furthermore, where there is sometimes criticism of ethnographic research is that it does not build or contribute to theory (Hammersley, 1990). Some methodological scholars argue that the anthropologic richness of description is alone a valuable contribution (Blaikie, 2009; Clifford, 1983; Willis, 2002; Silverman, 2013). However, in this case I have gone significantly beyond a rich description of RIL's change program. I have employed a GTM approach to offer a theory of how PSC occurs in a large owner-centric family owned firm and shown how this is distinct (Kotter, 2012; Hammersley, 1990; Eisenhardt, 1989). Consequently, in sum, the combination of ethnographic data and GTM analysis represent significant contributions designed to greatly enhance our understand of what, why, and how a large family business is achieving change and why this is important.

8.5 Limitations

This research project has been conducted on a single large Indian family-owned business. Case study research is sometimes criticized for a perceived lack of generalizability. While this study admittedly stems from and relates primarily to findings within RIL, there is considerable support for the generalizable utility of such research from noteworthy academics within the qualitative research community (see Buchanan, 2012; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 1989; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2014). The researcher has been a fully embedded, active participant in RIL's transformation program for over 3.5 years. While this research has been fully transparent and the researcher has been careful to exercise a reflexive perspective, replicating these results will be complicated by the rarity

of the event and the ethnographic approach involved. Finally, another challenge of an ethnographic study is the verifiability of observations and data interpretation. To partly counter this, the researcher has used practitioners and a panel of academic advisors, listed in the Chapter 9, to help challenge and triangulate this research.

8.6 Further Research

I share in Chapter 7 page 198 seven areas for possible further research that flow from this study. They were:

(a) What characteristics are necessary in family business leaders to allow the use of *faithful adoption*, or does this phenomenon apply to all family firm owners?

(b) What drives followers in an organization like RIL to offer an owner their *faithful adoption*?

(c) In the *faithful adoption* of PSC, does motivation theory have any application in explaining the compliant adoption of changes and the subsequent shift to a more personal conviction?

(d) Is there utility in exploring the accountability and responsibility literature to help explain role perceptions and in particular the willingness of non-family members in RIL to accept a supporting role?

(e) Does the research into RIL's PSC imply that "first-order change" could be achieved by a family firm in one step?

(f) Do the findings in this RIL case study have relevance for other family firms, in India, or elsewhere?

(g) Aside from Kotter's work, how do other philosophically congruent general OD change frameworks compare against my RIL case study results?

However, my main aspiration from this research is to inspire further enquiries into how change in family owned business may occur and how we may best assist family business owners in successfully navigating it. I hope that this research has made a powerful case for deeper exploration of how PSC may be distinctive within family-owned firms. The presence of the three paradoxical

forces in RIL's PSC program provides many potential further topics for investigation, including: (1) how these concepts might apply to religious or political organizations that are attempting strategic shifts; (2) to what degree national culture plays a role in influencing change in large family owned business and whether that is greater or less than no-family firms.

9 – Impact Statement

"The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where only one grew before" — Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929)

It seems there is quite a debate about what and how academic research in management should be linked to practical application. The question of whether academic rigor and practitioner impact are simultaneously easily accommodated has generated a good deal of discussion. In this chapter, I will briefly review the pertinent aspects of the so-called double hurdles of quality and relevance, before exploring how these might apply to this research project. Finally, I will share the preliminary results and ongoing plans for the dissemination and measurement of impact related to the findings presented in this thesis.

9.1 Academic Research and Business Communities

In the exchanges between scholars which followed David Wilson's (the then Chairman of the British Academy of Management) comments in 1998, we find a good summary of the differences of opinion on how to achieve relevance and rigor in management research (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998). Generally, the theme is of the academic community pointing to shifts in social, economic, and technological trends, which cause concern of a growing "relevance gap" between academic and practitioner communities.

In this literature, the academic community is painted as being proponents of pursuing research from a "mode 1" perspective which "follows the more traditional model, whereby knowledge production occurs largely because of an academic agenda, predominantly driven through, and categorized by, associated adjacent disciplines, developing knowledge stocks largely residing in universities, guarded by elite gatekeepers" (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998, p.347). The observation made is that much academic work is undertaken and pursued in the exclusive pursuit of "fundamental knowledge" divorced from application.

Where this, somewhat, insular perspective may have served the "hard" natural sciences well, observers point to the inherently "soft" make-up of social science as creating a more symbiotic need of proximity to practitioners. Tranfield and Starkey sum up the distinctive nature of management research when they observe:

> ". . . the most striking feature on which there is consensus within the discipline is that management research operates no single agreed ontological or epistemological paradigm. It is a heterogeneous and fragmented field utilizing knowledge and research methods often drawn from associated disciplines in the social sciences" (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998, p.345).

They go on to conclude, as a consequence of the distinctiveness of management research, that in any research undertaken, it is and must always be interested in addressing "what are the implications for management?" (1998, p.346).

While Tranfield and Starkey's views on the nature of management research are echoed by many (Aram and Salipante, 2003; Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001), the implications of social, economic, and technological trends of the last 70 years are less clear. At a high level, these trends are summarized in Table 9-1. I have shown these forces as discrete to business or academia except for the implications of digital disruption where the impact appears equally great to both communities. Arguably, any division here is somewhat artificial as all are connected to some extent to changes in political and social sentiment, resulting in a push for greater perceived accountability of government-funded institutions and a need to justify expenditure in terms of some return on investment (Briner, Denyer and Rousseau, 2009; Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001; Starkey and Madan, 2001).

Table 9-1 Impact of Social, Economic and Technological Trends said to Promote Greater Practitioner – Academia Collaboration (distilled from Bessant et al., 2003; Rynes, Bartunek and Daft, 2001; Starkey and Madan, 2001; Tranfield and Starkey, 1998)

Business	Academia
Intensified competitive pressures and lowering of global barriers in the business world, promoting greater urgency to identify ways to make organizations more effective.	Changes in funding models creating a need to find new sources of income (including the REA requirements in the UK)
A post-1980s just in time/lean paradigm encouraging organizations to seek specialized knowledge on demand.	1980 Bayh-Dole Act allowing universities to retain property rights to inventions
	Emergence of for-profit and corporate universities as threats to traditional higher education institutions
The pervasive disruption from digital technology and the internet.	

In response to these forces, and management research's nature, some authors have pointed to Gibbons et al.'s (1994) framework of moving from a traditional mode 1 form of research (focused on fundamental academic-driven research without regard to application) to mode 2. In mode 2, research embraces a more inclusive approach where it is inspired and conducted in partnership with practitioners, who in turn have a role in evaluating the application and utility of the research findings. Tranfield and Starkey (1998) depict this in the diagram in Figure 9-1. This depiction shows the interactive and iterative aspects of the mode 2 research framework, and also shows the potential pitfalls of over intellectualization (lack of impact) and bias from political forces (lack of rigor).

Some have criticized the mode 1, mode 2 framework as overly simplistic and exaggerating the challenge to existing academic contribution (Pettigrew, 2001; Weick, 2001). From these authors' views, while the challenge of impact and rigor is accepted, the urgency and need for significant change from academia to counter the threats posed in Table 9-1 are misguided.
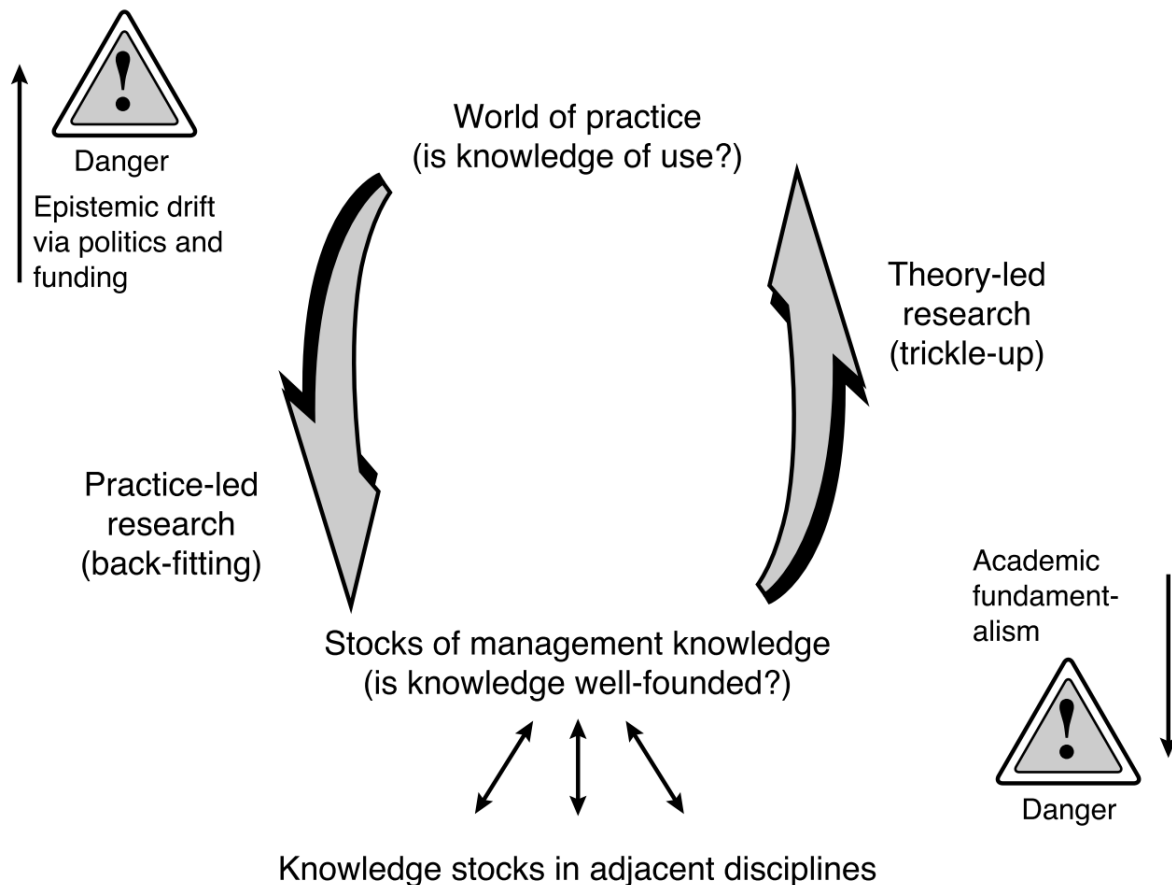
Figure 9-1 Mode 2 Framework for Management Research (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998, p.350)

9.2 Cranfield DBA Purpose and Requirements

Writing this chapter on the impact of my research into PSC in RIL should not only be informed by the challenge for academia to demonstrate greater partnership with practitioners, but also about how a Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) may differ from a PhD in this regard. Equally, it may be of interest to the reader to summarize here what Cranfield University's guidelines are before proceeding to review my impact and dissemination statement.

The DBA might be said to have evolved in part because of the perceived divide between academia and business. Several authors point to the DBA's emergence through the 1990s as an answer to government and professional pressure to provide more business-focused doctorate level education (Bareham, Bourner and Stevens,

2000; Neumann, 2005). Equally, Briner et al.'s (2009) work to promote evidence-based management is strongly aligned with the target demographic of DBA programs and the opportunity afforded to educate influential professionals on how best to interact with academia. Consequently, the emergence of DBA programs appears to address the first two of Starkey and Madan's (2001, pp.20–21) seven recommendations for academia, which are: (1) restructuring academic institutions to improve knowledge exchange and dissemination; and (2) the creation of problem/topic on-going research forums and networks.

Turning to the specifics of Cranfield's DBA program expectations, there are clear indications of how DBA students are expected to approach their research with business impact in mind. The Cranfield DBA handbook describes the objectives as follows (2015, p.26):

> 1. To provide a detailed review of their engagement with practitioners and policy makers so far and how this has shaped the research;
>
> 2. To provide a detailed plan for future engagement, dissemination, and exploitation of the research, including means of engagement, expected outcomes, and means of recording these outcomes; and
>
> 3. To discuss how a) this engagement will continue to shape the direction of the research and promote the impact of the research findings, and b) how this impact will be evaluated.

In this context of demonstrating practitioner and academic engagement and impact, the remainder of this chapter will focus on summarizing the results to date and the plans for future exploitation of the results of this research project.

9.3 Planned Engagement Approach

Reflecting on the differing views relative to practitioner engagement, I have taken a pragmatic view; the nature of my research project and the requirements of the Cranfield DBA program are in alignment in that my investigation of RIL's PSC program provide an immediate practitioner partner and beneficiary, while the results of my systematic

literature review (SLR) identify a gap in existing research. A simple balanced approach has therefore been identified based on: (1) working in partnership with RIL stakeholders to first deliver and then leverage the research findings directly for their purposes; and (2) finding academic outlets to publicize the results with a desire to raise awareness on the potential inadequacies of existing organization development (OD) change frameworks to guide family firms toward a successful PSC outcome. While, perhaps, being in danger of oversimplifying the differing views on the merits of the so-called mode 2 approach to management research, the most important point to emphasize is the need to ensure that practitioner involvement does not compromise the rigor and quality of academic contribution. The concern is that too much practitioner involvement may result in biased or superficial academic work. I have accepted this as a known risk, and I have attempted to mitigate it by ensuring a well-balanced and reflexive approach (Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson, Hardy and Harley, 2008). Let me illustrate the approach taken using Tranfield and Starkey's (1998) model of researcher/practitioner partnership. Figure 9-2 shows the path I have employed in this adapted frame. As illustrated, the primary research beneficiaries are shown at the top (1), with the identified representatives of the family business academic community at the base (4). In between are the dual goals of rigor (3) in academic enquiry and impact (2). Before sharing the status of impact and dissemination among these groups, let me first describe them in a little more detail.

1. Targeted Research Beneficiaries

   (a) **Reliance Industries**
   (b) **Targeted Family Business Academics**

2. Practitioner Partnership in Research

(a) Reliance Industries
   (a) Board Member
   (b) Executive Director
   (c) Head of HR
   (d) CLO
   (e) Head of PM/OD
(b) BP PLC
   (a) Head of HR
   (b) Head of L&D

IMPACT   RIGOR

3. Academic Rigor and Objectivity

(a) Cranfield DBA Advisory Panel
(b) Cranfield Supervisor(s)
(c) Family Business Academic Community

4. Leveraging Existing Knowledge and Expertise

(a) Authoritative Family Business scholars
(b) Authoritative Organizational Change and OD scholars

Figure 9-2 Planned Research Engagement Approach (adapted from the Tranfield and Starkey model).

9.3.1 Targeted Research Beneficiaries

The nature of my research project lends itself to provide RIL with some direct utility. Consequently, a primary goal has been to work closely with RIL stakeholders in establishing how this research might help RIL improve the efficacy of their PSC program. In late 2016, I established an RIL stakeholder group including two board members, CHRO, and CLO (see Appendix G). The purpose of this group was twofold: (a) to support my research efforts, particularly during the field interview phase; and (b) to help identify opportunities for leveraging my findings within RIL. Since this chapter focuses on impact, I will provide a report on the status of (b) below.

Alongside this targeted practitioner forum, I have focused on developing relationships and fostering discussions with noteworthy academics from the domain of family business. This engagement has been more federal in its approach. That is to say, my efforts to share my research findings across the academic community have taken the

form of collating inputs from diverse geographies and are largely based on "one-to-one" correspondence. This engagement has primarily included:

(i) Engaging family business academics in reviewing my research: I have been fortunate in gaining some sponsorship from Dr. Gibb Dyer and Dr. Kavil Ramachandran, both of whom have reviewed and given input to my research over the past three years. This feedback has not only enriched the quality of my findings but has also led to their help in disseminating my thesis more broadly to influential colleagues.

(ii) Requesting advice from the editor of the *Family Business Review*: In late 2015, I identified the *Family Business Review* as the primary academic journal for my focus of research. I contacted the editor, Dr. Pramodita Singh, to request her mentorship and advice throughout my studies. She was kind enough to agree. Subsequently, our correspondence has led to significant exposure of my research findings.

(iii) Submission of my preliminary research findings to family business conferences: By referral from Dr. Singh, I targeted the 2017 Family Enterprise Research Conference (FERC) as a key outlet for my preliminary research findings (https://fbf.unca.edu/conference-details).

While I have focused pragmatically on these two populations as the primary potential beneficiaries of my research, I have not dismissed the possibility of its utility for other large family-owned businesses and consulting companies with specialist family business practices. For these other audiences, I have been less targeted and primarily followed up more reactively on interest shown because of my social media and blog dissemination efforts (reviewed below).

9.3.2 Practitioner Partnership in Research

In addition to the RIL business executive sponsors, I have been fortunate to have access to technical expertise in the RIL and BP Human Resource departments (see Appendix G). I have used this resource as a reflexive partner and practitioner interpreter. The goal here has been to ensure that (a) my research findings are challenged by a constituency of professionals and subject matter experts directly

proximate to the phenomenon being studied, and (b) that my research findings have a practical impact. Again, I share the status of this effort below.

9.3.3 Academic Rigor and Objectivity

As previously mentioned, a key concern in conducting this research project and the associated engagement plan has been to ensure academic objectivity and rigor. In this regard, I have used two distinct audiences to challenge the academic rigor of my work: the Cranfield DBA panel and objective third party academics from relevant fields of study. These are again listed in Appendix G.

In some ways, the line here is blurry between leveraging this audience's knowledge as anticipated in (4) of Figure 9-2 versus how I intend it here. However, I see these as distinctive roles that I specifically asked this audience to play. My intent has been to encourage this population to challenge me to ensure rigor and quality is maintained in the gathering of research and reporting of results. This is anticipated as a balanced tension between the academic thoroughness and the presumed pragmatism of the practitioner contributors.

9.3.4 Leveraging Existing Knowledge and Expertise

As with each of the audiences illustrated in Figure 9-2, there is again some overlap here with those individuals identified in 9.3(2) & (3) above. The distinction however was to invite suggestions from this audience on possible explanations for the phenomenon being studied, but mainly to request their guidance on where to look, who to ask, and what additional documents to review. Their names are once again listed in Appendix G.

9.4 Status and Results of Engagement

At the time of writing this chapter, dissemination and exploitation of my research findings are ongoing. When I prepared my original impact plan in late 2016, the Cranfield DBA academic panel endorsed the high-level plan shown in Table 9-2. This anticipated a phased approach aligned with the maturity and validation of my research. In simple terms, I anticipated focusing early on in engagement related to confirming the relevance and importance of my planned research and then gaining access to the

necessary data. This activity began in 2015 as I embarked on the formal DBA program with Cranfield. In early 2017, having completed my literature review and begun the iterative process of writing up my participant observations and preparing for field interviews, I started a reflexive discussion with academic and practitioner partners. Now, in late 2017, I have moved toward discussions with key stakeholders on how to exploit my findings for RIL, academia, and potentially third parties. In this context, the first two phases shown in Table 9-2 are largely complete, where the final phase is a work-in-progress.

9.5 Reviewing the Three Planned Phases of Engagement

Let me now review the activity undertaken in each of the identified phases of engagement and the outcomes that have been achieved to date. I will align this review with the four constituencies identified in Section 9.3.

Table 9-2 Phasing of Planned Engagement

Phase	1	2	3
Engagement Focus	Testing Proposed Research Relevance & Gaining Access	Reflexively Testing Empirical Research	Broader Dissemination of Research Findings
Timeframe	*2015 through 2016*	2017	*Late 2017 and into 2018*
Constituencies	RIL Executive Sponsors DBA Supervisors DBA Academic Advisors RIL/BP Practitioners Reflexive Academic Advisors Specialized Consulting Practices Family-Owned Business Conferences		

9.5.1 Phase 1

We are regularly reminded that academic research needs to be clear not only on the phenomenon being studied but why it is important and how the planned research contributes. In my early engagements, I mostly focused on soliciting the opinions of RIL sponsors regarding their views of the potential relevance and impact of my planned research, but also academia to understand whether they might agree that I was addressing an important gap in understanding. I have summarized the activity I undertook in this regard in Table 9-3.

Table 9-3 Summary of Engagement to Date

Practitioner or Academic	Relevance to Research Project	Stakeholder	Quote	Nature of Interaction
Practitioner	Relevance	Mr. H Meswani	"We have invested considerable efforts to modernize and professionalize our organization over the past three years. These transformational efforts are crucial to our ability to ensure our success in the decades ahead. I am very interested to see whether David's proposed research provides new insights on how family-owned businesses experience organizational change. As India's largest privately-owned enterprise, many of our ventures are pioneering either in scale or geography. Understanding whether we are also breaking new ground in our change efforts would be of great interest. However, the key question is whether we can make our transformational efforts more effective. Any insights in this regard would be most welcome."	Discussion based on my research proposal, Sept 2016
	Importance	Mr. A Zainulbhai	"Well . . . we've discussed the importance of agility, the ability of owners to be able to drive change through their organizations will be essential not just for RIL but for many of India's large promoter-led groups. It is critical we understand how to help these owners achieve change, and do so rapidly. I have grave doubts that the traditional, somewhat dated frameworks from Western academics are likely to be that effective for family firms. They are by their nature very different animals."	Discussion during my field interview April 2017

Academic	Relevance	Mr. A Prashara	"Exploring whether the current transformation we are endeavoring at Reliance is uniquely impacted by our proud family heritage would be of great value. We want to do all we can to ensure we deliver the benefits of this transformational program. Any aspects of our current change tactics and processes that could be refined or improved based on a deeper understanding of the behaviors of our leaders and employees would be extremely useful. Particularly if these somehow are not well documented by existing general organizational development literature."	Discussion during my problem formulation assignment for Cranfield DBA, Oct 2015
	Gap in existing understanding	Dr. D Buchanan	". . . it seems to me that you make a compelling case for an interesting gap in our knowledge of the ways in which such organizations operate, in particular with regard to managing change – and succession in a family-owned enterprise could in many circumstances be a transformational shift . . . ."	Email exchange following review of SLR, July 2016
		Dr. G Dyer	"I looked over your paper—I liked what you did. One thing that I would emphasize is that planned change in family firms generally involves intervening in three systems: family, business, and governance (Hilburt-Davis and Dyer, 2003)."	Email exchange, May 2017
		Dr. K Ramachandran	"This is an interesting area that needs further research, especially because of the socio-cultural implications of the various factors effecting change. Your literature review is exhaustive and has been done systematically"	Email exchange

As both the research sponsors and intended primary beneficiaries of my research, RIL stakeholders were an important audience to consult. As the table illustrates, I received strong support from key RIL stakeholders. There was a clear recognition that RIL's efforts to transform its organization was both of critical importance, requiring essentially the best advice and input possible, but also that it was treading a distinctive path. Mr. Zainulbhai, the Chair of RIL's HR, Remuneration and Compensation Committee, summed this up in his comments, which are shared in Table 9-3. The overwhelming response was positive, supportive, and has resulted in high levels of collaboration throughout my empirical research.

I also received strong support from members of the family business research community as well as Cranfield University faculty regarding the potential academic contribution which could be achieved by exploring PSC in a family-owned business. Among those who were kind enough to share their input, based on reviewing my literature review and research proposal, were Dr. Gibb Dyer and Dr. K. Ramachandran. These two academics have published extensively in the family business domain, and consequently, their encouragement spoke loudly to the potential academic impact of my research.

9.5.2 Phase 2

As I entered the empirical phase of my research, I had regular contact with RIL and BP practitioners with whom I discussed my participant observations and preliminary findings from field interviews. I also maintained a more formal quarterly engagement arrangement with RIL executive sponsors, with whom I shared my progress and solicited feedback. Alongside these efforts, I requested feedback from Cranfield faculty and my academic advisory panel to obtain their views on the objectivity and rigor of my work. I have summarized the collective feedback I received during this phase in Table 9-4.

Table 9-4 Phase 2 Engagement Activity and Outputs

Practitioner or Academic	Relevance to Research Project	Stakeholder(s)	Summary	Nature of Interaction
Practitioners	Validation of Findings from those proximate to case study subject	RIL Sponsors	Concerns to ensure confidentiality about sensitive RIL data and anonymity of those participating in field interviews. Desire to discuss preliminary findings in RIL HR Board Meetings. Request to build actions to support findings into RIL HR team 2017/18 Operating plan.	1:1 meetings quarterly between Jan and July 2017
		RIL CHRO	Reflexive challenges and suggestions on RIL Culture Map and RIL Organization Chart. Request for summary of findings for leadership presentation. Support for findings and candor of interview responses.	Day-to-day interaction (2013–2017)
		RIL CLO	Support for "Two-Step" Change model. Focus on how to adjust RIL talent, succession, and leadership development activities to support extrinsic to intrinsic journey. Suggestion that findings should be required reading for all promoted GLL or senior external hires.	Day-to-day interaction (2015–2017)
		RIL Head of Perf & OD	Focus on implications for RIL performance and reward mechanisms. Discussions on how to embrace rather than resist the duality of organizational constructs running in parallel.	Day-to-day interaction (2014–2017)

		BP GHRD	Review of empirical findings and support for conclusions. Specific observations about design and systems thinking being applied to impose a new "eco-system."	Quarterly interaction (2013–ongoing)
		BP CLO	Review of empirical findings and support for conclusions.	Review of empirical draft (June 2017)
Academics	Academic Rigor, Reflexive Partners	Cranfield Supervisors	Strong support for focus of research, methodology, and impact (Buchanan, Pilbeam, and Vyakarnam). Suggestions to consider: Van De Ven and Poole Typologies of change, Kotter's 8-Step framework, Johnson's "Second-Order" change & change web.	Monthly Skype and iterative feedback on thesis (Sept 2015–ongoing)
		Cranfield DBA Panel	Consistent support for all DBA deliverables including "satisfactory" progress through all required stage gate panel reviews.	Four formal panel reviews (Sept 2015–ongoing)
		Personal Advisory Committee	Strong support for underlying research, importance, and academic contribution. Suggestions to explore related topics, including Succession, Family-System, Institutional Theory, Socio-Emotional Wealth, *Familiness*.	Reviews of each DBA deliverable and specific review of early drafts of this thesis

If I return to Figure 9-2 and the essence of the challenge to make academic research relevant for practitioners, the partnerships I have fostered with RIL and BP sponsors, leaders, and subject matter experts, summarized in Table 9-4, should instill great confidence. RIL executive sponsors have remained engaged in this project and committed to utilizing the findings. This is exemplified by the regular meetings I have been granted with RIL board, owners, and executive leaders to review my work and discuss the preliminary findings.

However, the partnership with both RIL and BP in undertaking this research project has also been as partners in the research itself. This has been important for three reasons: (1) members of the RIL HR team have experience and expertise, which has been extremely valuable in gaining insights into how and why things work as they do at RIL. Their collective perspective has been hugely impactful in helping guide my research and providing explanations for some of the more mysterious behaviors; (2) BP are interested observers in RIL's transformation program and subject matter experts in so far as their own recent efforts to transform BP post the Macondo tragedy.[42] My partnership with respected members of the BP HR community has helped provide objective observations of how RIL have pursued PSC distinctively; and (3) a challenge of ethnographic work is the ability to replicate the work. Consequently, the active engagement of practitioners who are also living the experience of RIL's PSC program provides a measure of verification and challenges my own views. In turn, this should mitigate any risks of the researcher losing objectivity.

From an academic standpoint, as mentioned previously, my goal has been to use Cranfield's DBA program support and my own independent academic advisor panel to ensure rigor. I have listed the names and positions of the objective academic panel I formed early in my DBA program to assist me in this regard in Appendix G. Together, these experienced and widely published academics have been invaluable guides and

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[42] BP's Macondo crisis refers to the tragic events of April 20, 2010 when the Transocean Horizon suffered a well blow out. Because of the Bly report that followed, BP completely restructured its business and culture.

reflexive partners. Since Table 9-4 does little justice to their contribution over the past three years and their role in my resulting thesis, let me provide a few more specific examples of their contribution:

> "I am reading with curiosity, intellectual and informative . . . you have a good style . . . one suggestion is to have a separate chapter to discuss the whole methodology with the steps you have followed at every major part. That will add academic rigor to the thesis. . . . I enjoyed reading the change exercise about which I had no clue. You have really captured the essence very well." Dr. Kavil Ramachandran

> "I've had a chance to read through your paper. I didn't read it word-for-word, but I did more than browse. Mostly because it was interesting so I found myself reading more than I had intended. I don't have lots of nit-picks, I have mostly good things to say about this work. . . . . I will be surprised if your faculty don't respond very positively to this work David, it is very well done. . . . I see you getting at least a couple of articles out of this, perhaps one just about RIL itself and one on your revised model of change in a large-scale family-owned business." Dr. Mike Crant.

> "My main observation is that this version has a much stronger, more confident voice, which seems to me to answer previous concerns. . . . This reads like a more considered work and, dare I say, is more 'academic' in style. In addition, you have maintained the personal voice and the richness of the case study, which was your intent. So, I think that this has worked well. As always, the structure looks good in this form, but need to see how it looks when it is written out longhand . . . I don't think you need to lose the 'serendipity and first-person narrative'. That is where most of your key information came from, so it's not appropriate to deny or disguise that . . ." Dr. D. Buchanan

> "I read your article–you have done a very thorough search of the literature. As you think about a dissertation, however, I'd encourage you to narrow your research question. If you want to focus on 'managing change' in general in Indian family firms, that is a topic that is probably too broad, since there are a variety of different kinds of change problems that you would need to examine." Dr. Gibb Dyer

The collective time invested by Cranfield faculty and my DBA advisory panel, combined with the encouraging reviews they have provided, gives me great confidence in being able to defend the second of the dual hurdles – academic rigor. With each exchange came a valuable critique of my work. With each exchange, my work was revised, updated, edited, and recirculated with a view to solicit further input. The purpose here has been to relate a small part of the extensive exchanges that have taken place over the past three years, designed to ensure academic objectivity and rigor. It is my submission that this has been achieved.

9.5.3 Phase 3

In the final phase of my engagement plan, I had focused more on exploiting my findings. In Section 9.3, I set the dual goals of helping RIL improve the efficacy of their PSC program and addressing the gap in the existing academic understanding of how PSC may occur differently in family-owned firms. In Table 9-5, I provide a status update on both these primary goals and the status of broader avenues of potential impact.

My empirical findings matured during the first half of 2017 and received endorsement from my Cranfield DBA academic panel initially in June 2017. Consequently, I began discussions with RIL sponsors and key members of the RIL HR leadership in July. To the extent impact can be achieved by presentation and raising awareness, these goals have been achieved. Key stakeholders have been given a copy of my draft thesis and a summary presentation. I have followed this up with email exchanges and phone calls. Among the responses from RIL sponsors was the following from Shri Adil Zainulbhai:

> I have worked closely with David these past three years and have been supportive of his doctorate research project . . . recently we have discussed his findings. I am impressed with the quality of analysis and depth of thinking that has gone into the thesis. The finding that RIL, as a family business, has achieved transformation in a distinctive way, which challenges conventional wisdom, is most revealing. This surely has value for other large family-owned businesses and for other businesses that might want to attempt radical transformation. It's a great addition to the knowledge on what it takes to transform large organizations (Sept 2017).

Table 9-5 Phase 3: Status of Exploitation of Research Findings

Exploitation Goal	Dissemination Channel	Beneficiary	Description	Current Level of Impact
Improved Efficacy of RIL PSC	Pre-existing Relationship	RIL Sponsors	Presentation of findings to RIL sponsors took place July–August 2017. Presentation to board committee took place in November together with recommendations.	High
		RIL CHRO	Reviewed draft findings in June 2017. Working collaboratively to develop proposals for presentation to board.	High
		RIL CLO	Partner in development of Two-Step Change model; collaborative effort to develop proposals for presentation to RIL board in Nov	High
Gap in Academic Understanding	Abstract Submission	FERC	Abstract submitted to Family Business Conference at North Carolina University. Abstract was accepted. Conference sponsored by Family Business Review represented by Pramodita Sharma, Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice represented by Franz Kellermanns, Journal of Ethics and Entrepreneurship represented by Christine Sutton, and Journal of Family Business Strategy represented by Torsten M. Pieper.	Medium

	Abstract Submission	British Academy of Management DBA Symposium	Abstract focusing on my SLR and research proposal was submitted and presented at the annual DBA symposium held at Cranfield University in October 2016.	Medium
	Journal Article Submission	Journal Editor	Awaiting completion of VIVA before pursuing publication	Low
Family Business Community	Cranfield Faculty	Conference Presentation(s)	Schedule to record iTunes Podcast for Cranfield family business and entrepreneurship school, October 2017.	Medium
	Blog	Egyptian Family Firm	Invitation from CFO of Egyptian family-owned poultry business to address board on basis of preliminary research findings published on personal blog http://www.davidroxley.com/kotters-change-framework-doesnt-work-large-family-businesses/	Medium
Consulting Community	Blog	Exploitation of Findings	Invitation from UK consulting firm to collaborate on marketing findings to small- and medium-sized family firms in the UK and Europe (June 2017).	Medium
	Direct Contact	PWC, KPMG, McKinsey	Awaiting outcome of VIVA – Preliminary discussions with Ken McCracken of KPMG's family business practice.	Low
Other Potential Avenues				
Religious	Advisory Panel	Invitation to Present	Invitation to present results to University of St Thomas faculty.	Medium

Education
- Build findings into SLL & GL programs
- Focused SLL and GL new hire induction & 24 months coaching

Performance & Reward
- Build into objective and reward measures
- Link rewards to proactivity and using new management systems

Talent Processes
- Definition of potential reviewed & adjusted
- Current assessment for promotions revised to include implications from findings

Embracing Leadership Legacy
- Enhance and formalize non-executive advisor path for existing leaders
- Selective foundation assignments for approved projects

Management Capabilities

- Extrinsic to Intrinsic Drivers

- Capabilities to navigate duality of formal & informal systems

Loyalty to Long Serving Staff

Awareness of Formal and Informal Tensions

- Transparency of veto

- Investing in explanation

Targeted Delegation

Transition to Output Management from Input Focus
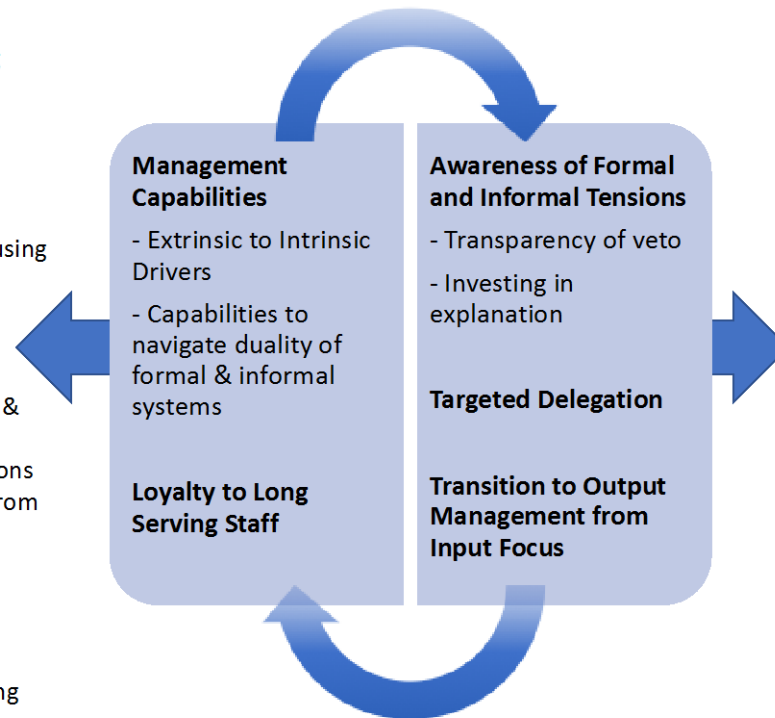
Ownership & EC Coaching
- Engage EC coach to articulate formal and informal dualities
- Make transparent for management how to navigate the dual systems

Minimum Required Capabilities
- Agree top 100 executive positions required to run new management eco-system
- Individually verify/re-appoint each role
- Exercise greater oversight in those areas where capabilities need supplementing

Trust Formal People Systems
- Use formal systems to appoint, reward, and develop leaders with **operational** authority

Informal Reward and Recognition
- Segregate informal recognition systems for long standing, loyal lieutenants to be linked to **non-operational** activities
- Ensure recognition and reward is de-coupled from operational leadership

Figure 9-3 Phase 3: Preliminary RIL Outcomes from Review of Findings (Source: RIL CLO & Author)

In preparation for a RIL board presentation and to develop a set of proposals for the HR function's 2018/19 operating plan, I worked with the RIL CHRO and CLO to identify actions which would help RIL succeed in navigating the paradoxes of *familiness* through stage two of their PSC. Our goal was to address the question; given my findings (see 7.1), how could we help managers develop a more personal relationship with the changed systems, and in particular, build skills to deal with the higher order cognitive process? How could we help them also build trust and confidence in the owners' that they were worthy to be allowed to operate with some greater autonomy. This sat alongside the challenge of persuading MDA and his EC that they too may benefit from some help to become more conscious of when and how to intervene in the new systems without unnecessarily undermining them.

Figure 9-3 summarizes this dialogue. This illustration is split in two, with the left of the diagram showing management-related possible actions and the right focusing on how owners and executive directors might maximize the utility of their PSC investment. The outcome of this dialogue has taken two distinct forms. First, the RIL HR team have agreed to develop specific talent and leadership development offerings in 2018 which will seek to educate and prepare high potential managers to have a more personal relationship with the PSC change profiles. This would be quite comprehensive as it includes an effort to help these managers cope with the paradoxes identified in this research project. However, it is also focused on helping them build relationships with the ownership team. This is planned via project engagements and job enhancements which give them an opportunity to develop trust with MDA and his EC.

The second impact has been to reopen a dialogue we began with MDA and his EC in 2014 about their roles in this change program. This had been shelved due to some doubts about its need. Through the presentation of this work, MDA and his leadership team have offered to consider some personal coaching and development to help them understand the dualities and tensions implicit in this change. This is a complex and sensitive area as there is no obvious breakdown

which is directly impacting business today. However, the presentation of this work has restated the case for tackling the unconscious actions of owners and EC which may cause paralyzing effects on the management ranks.

A second primary goal was to address the gap in the existing research related to how family firms may experience PSC distinctively. The intention here is to publish these findings such that it can receive critiques, embellishment, and further development. I anticipate that this phase of exploitation and impact will stretch beyond the timeframe required to complete this thesis. However, in February 2017, I was successful in having a five-page abstract summary of this research accepted in conference proceedings at North Carolina University. I have attached as Appendix H the accepted abstract, together with details of the event. This followed the publication of an earlier abstract focusing on my research proposal and literature review, which was presented at the British Academy of Management DBA symposium held at Cranfield University in October 2016.

Post-presentation of this thesis at VIVA, my plan will be to fully exploit the research findings by publishing the findings in a peer-reviewed journal. In this regard, I have initially targeted the *Family Business Review* and had preliminarily discussion with its editor, Dr. Pramodita Singh. It is anticipated that in partnership with Cranfield supervisors, we will submit a manuscript during the spring of 2018.

In addition to the primary targeted beneficiaries, there is reason to believe that the broader family business community can benefit and has an interest in this research. I have maintained a blog throughout the last three years. In June 2017, I published a post which was designed to preview my research findings and test interest. I received over 1,500 "hits" via LinkedIn and directly to my website (https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/why-kotters-change-framework-doesnt-work-large-family-david-oxley). Several of these responses resulted in requests to present my findings to family-owned businesses considering change. Remy Youseff, the CFO for an Egyptian-based family-owned poultry business currently attempting PSC, requested I present to his owners later in 2017. I was

also contacted by two consulting businesses interested in marketing my research in Europe (one of which included a conference call with Ken McCracken a senior partner at KPMG - something I will continue after completion of my VIVA). In November 2017, I recorded a podcast of my findings for the Cranfield family business and entrepreneurship school. In summary, early indications suggest a high level of interest in my research among family businesses and the community who advise them.

Finally, somewhat unexpectedly, it has been suggested by one of my DBA academic advisor panel members that there may be utility from my research in religious, and potentially, political organizations. In an email exchange with Dr. Paul Lockey in July 2017, he remarked, "I am fascinated by your thesis and its key ideological component: change in family business. The crux of ideas in your doctoral document is applicable in many areas, including the university and church." While I do not intend to actively pursue this avenue, the suggestion is intriguing.

9.6 Ongoing Engagement, Dissemination, and Exploitation Plan

As indicated in the previous section, I anticipate further efforts to fully exploit my research findings during the next 12 months. I have provided here a status report based on the efforts and results to date. However, the following work remains:

(a) Concluding RIL PSC Engagement: During the remainder of 2017 and early 2018, I hope to fully complete my goals of sharing my research with RIL and helping them adjust their PSC tactics to achieve maximum utility from their transformation investments.

(b) Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication: I seek to achieve publication of my findings in an appropriate journal during the summer of 2018.

(c) Family Business Community: I seek to engage a larger audience of family business owners to equip them with the insights related to contemporary change frameworks and the possibility of achieving PSC distinctively by leveraging familiness.

These goals will be achieved by a variety of means: (1) I will maintain my blog with a view to further dissemination and identification of possible avenues for impact; (2) I have already identified partners within a handful of major consulting firms who I believe would be interested in exploiting my research for their clients; (3) I have discussed with my Cranfield supervisors contributing to family business workshops and executive education classes; and (4) I am optimistic of pursuing the existing invitations to directly assist other family-owned businesses and am confident others will emerge over the next year.

9.7 Assessing Impact

In this chapter, I have focused primarily on addressing the challenge of raising confidence in the likely practitioner impact of my research while assuring its academic rigor. In this regard, the initial evaluation must be positive — my findings have been accepted and embraced by RIL and my academic stakeholders have reassured me of the quality and objectivity of my methodology.

In addition to providing utility to RIL, I set the goal to address the gap in the existing academic literature. While this remains a work in progress, the acceptance and presentation of my preliminary findings at reputable academic conferences demonstrates good interim progress. Clearly, while a five-page abstract does not do justice to my research findings, editors have nonetheless graciously acknowledged that the submissions have academic substance. I will seek to enhance this impact during 2018.

9.8 Conclusion

In this impact chapter, I have evaluated the meaning of impact as it is generally assumed for management research. By impact, the main inference in the literature is of an artificial divide between academic contribution and practical business application. While some authors question the tactics by which impact can be achieved, generally all support the desire to pursue the dual goals of rigor and impact while managing the associated risks. In reflecting on this

challenge against my research into PSC in a large family-owned business, I have demonstrated and evidenced here my efforts to ensure:

(1) Practitioner engagement in the research

(2) Academic reflexivity

(3) Dissemination of the research results

(4) Exploitation of my findings

(5) A status report of what has been achieved to date and what remains

As stated earlier, the nature of the DBA program at Cranfield University is, by design, based on the premise of bridging the gap between practitioners and academia. In this thesis, I have identified a research problem which has at its heart the invitation and acceptance of a large company wishing for insights and explanations currently unavailable. The efforts here have been to record those faithfully while acknowledging and mitigating potential risks to academic rigor and quality.

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APPENDICES.

Appendix A - SLR Search Strings

Target Word/Phrase	Search Strings
Planned Change	("change agent" OR "planned change" OR "change management" OR "organi?ation change" OR "Managing change" OR "Embracing Change" OR "Continuity in Change" OR "Integrated Change Management" OR succession OR professionali?ation OR reorgani?ation OR re-organi?ation OR "organi?ational innovation" OR "organi?ation design" OR "culture change")
Family	(Family OR Families OR Household* OR "sole proprietor")
Business	(Business* OR Firm* OR "family group" OR organi?ation)

Appendix B – SLR Evaluation Criteria

	Escalating Selection Criteria	At least one of below	
1	To be included, the study must possess at least one of the following	Provide a theory of how change (planned or other) occurs in a family firm	
		Discuss a case study or example of how change occurs in a family firm	
		If the study does not directly discuss change it may still be included if it discusses:	
		Succession as a planned process	
		Professionalisation as a planned process	
2	If document passes 1 then, the paper must further;	Offer a theory or model of how planned change occurs in a family firm – ideally contrasting this with a pre-existing theory from general literature	
		If the paper focuses on succession or professionalisation, provide some evidence in the form of case studies or other qualitative work	
		Where the paper doesn't offer a theory or model of planned change, it must at least describe empirical research or a case study of a planned change program in a family firm	
3	Exceptions	If none of the above applies, does the paper make a valuable point about leaders of followers in a family business attempting a form of change (ie role of non-family managers)	

Appendix C - RIL Planned Changed Interview Guide v8

I am investigating RIL's transformation program. I would like to interview you in this regard. This is for my Cranfield University DBA studies and is not an RIL exercise. I would like to record our discussion. I will prepare a transcript afterwards. I am happy to share transcript with you. I wish to use themes that emerge for my thesis/research. I guarantee confidentiality and anonymity. Further, I will ask permission to use any direct quotes.

Standardized Participant Data (for transcript/David to complete)

Date of Interview ……………………………………………………………………………

Venue for Interview ……………………………………………………………………………

Title/Role at RIL ……………………………………………………………………………

Length of tenure at RIL ……………………………………………………………………..

Nationality ……………………………………………………………………………

Non-India Work Experience ….…………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………

Interview Questions (responses to be recorded – some field notes to be kept extemporaneously)

1   What is the purpose/what are the aims of the RIL transformation programme?

2   Where has RIL's transformation been successful and why do you think that is?

3   Where has RIL's transformation been less successful and why do you think that is?

4   Org Change research talks of the importance of building a guiding alliance and making aspects of change participative, how have you experienced RIL's approach in this regard?

5   Many change programs have a coercive undercurrent, suggesting consequences for those who do not adopt the change; how have you seen RIL tackle getting the detractors on board?

6   RMS and the HR changes impose process, policies, and formality…such as the DoA's… into RIL, how does this fit with RIL's entrepreneurial DNA?

7   Just before we finish, can I ask, what other important aspects of the transformation programme have we not discussed?

Appendix D - RIL Semi-Structured Interview Listing

#	Date	Initials	Reserac Code	Seniority	Level Category	Vantage Point		Age	Tenure	International	Change Exp	Male/ Female
1	24-Mar-17	XX	1	XXX	3	Change Team: HR	Change Team	36	3	Yes	Yes	M
2	3-Apr-17	XX	2	XXX	2	Change Team: RMS	Change Team	55	4	Yes	Yes	M
3	4-Apr-17	XX	3	XXX	4	Functions: HR EE	Functions	30	3	Yes	Yes	M
4	4-Apr-17	XX	4	XXX	2	Business: E&P Operati	Manufacturing	45	2	Yes	Yes	M
5	4-Apr-17	XX	5	XXX	2	Business: S&T	Commercial	55	1.5	No	Yes	M
6	5-Apr-17	XX	6	XXX	3	Functions: HR IT/Anal	Functions	35	2	Yes	Yes	M
7	5-Apr-17	XX	7	XXX	3	Functions: HR Petcher	Functions	50	5	No	No	M
8	5-Apr-17	XX	8	XXX	3	Change Team: HR	Change Team	38	3	Yes	Yes	F
9	6-Apr-17	XX	9	XXX	2	Business: Petchems	Commercial	55	2.5	Yes	Yes	M
10	6-Apr-17	XX	10	XXX	2	Business: R&M	Commercial	55	20	Yes	No	M
11	7-Apr-17	XX	11	XXX	3	HR: Manufacturing	Manufacturing	50	8	Yes	Yes	F
12	7-Apr-17	XX	12	XXX	3	HR: G&I and PMS	Functions	35	6	No	Yes	M
13	7-Apr-17	XX	13	XXX	4	HR: Change	Functions	30	3.5	Yes	Yes	M
14	7-Apr-17	XX	14	XXX	3	HR: P&R	Functions	45	3	No	Yes	M
15	10-Apr-17	XX	15	XXX	2	Functions: IT	Functions	50	2.5	Yes	Yes	M
16	10-Apr-17	XX	16	XXX	2	Operations: Academy	Manufacturing	60	8	Yes	Yes	M
17	10-Apr-17	XX	17	XXX	1	Board	Governance	60	3	Yes	Yes	M
18	11-Apr-17	XX	18	XXX	2	Functions: HR	Functions	45	2	Yes	Yes	M
19	11-Apr-17	XX	19	XXX	1	CFO	Commercial	45	7	No	Yes	M
20	12-Apr-17	XX	20	XXX	2	Manufacturing: Head	Manufacturing	50	1.5	Yes	Yes	M
21	12-Apr-17	XX	21	XXX	2	Manufacturing: JMD	Manufacturing	60	20	No	No	M
22	12-Apr-17	XX	22	XXX	2	Manufacturing: JMD	Manufacturing	55	20	No	No	M
23	13-Apr-17	XX	23	XXX	2	CHRO	Functions	50	14	No	Yes	M
24	13-Apr-17	XX	24	XXX	1	JV CEO	Commercial	55	7	Yes	Yes	M
25	13-Apr-17	XX	25	XXX	2	Business: E&P	Commercial	45	3	Yes	Yes	M
26	28-Apr-17	XX	26	XXX	2	Head of IA	Functions: IA	45	4	Yes	Yes	M

Appendix E - RIL Criticism

Title	Summary	Author	Date/Publisher
The Polyester Prince: The Rise of Dhirubhai	Unauthorized biography of Dhirubhai Ambani. Suggests, among other things, that RIL manipulated government regulations for its benefit, conspired to bring down its competitors, and used Byzantine accounting structures to hide profits. The book was banned in India.	McDonald, H.	1998. Allen & Unwin Pty., Limited (Australia).
Storms in the Sea Wind: Ambani vs. Ambani	Story of how after Dhirubhai's death, his two oldest sons fought for control of his empire. Suggests underhand tactics by both to wrestle control of the business.	Srinivas, A.	(2005) Roli Books.
Ambani & Sons	Updated version of *Polyester Prince* that includes the battle for control after Dhirubhai's death. Focuses on accusations of underhanded dealing, manipulation, and unfair competition.	McDonald, H.	(2011) Roli Books.
GAS WARS: Crony Capitalism and the Ambanis	Tells story of RIL's interests in deepwater gas reserves off the southeast coast of India. The author paints a picture of a family that manipulates the government and others in pursuit of nefarious goals.	Thakurta, P.G.	(2014) Amazon Digital Services.
"An unloved billionaire: Why Mukesh Ambani, India's richest man, needs to reform his empire"	Article rebuking MDA for not being more transparent about his accounting practices and shaking off the questionable practices of RIL's past.	Editor	(2014) *The Economist*, pp. 23–25.
"Reliance Industries -- Reimagining Ambani"	Suggests that despite RIL's attempts at greater transparency, there is still much to be wary about and points to several common criticisms largely related to RIL's past.	Editor	(2014) *The Economist*, August, pp. 1–9.
"The Unhappy Prince: How Reliance Buried a Book"	Article on how RIL is said to have blocked the publication of *Polyester Prince* in India. Talks about the various strategies used and the company's wide reach.	Gosh, S. and Thakurta, P.G.	(2016) The Wire, pp 1-37

Appendix F - Interview Opening Coding Process and Support

<u>Paradoxical Manifestations of *Familiness*</u>

The coding followed the process described by Cathy Urquhart (2013) in her book *Grounded Theory for Qualitative Research.* This is a Grounded Theory Method (GTM) coding protocol and, of the different interpretations, I followed a Glaserian approach. I took the following steps in preparing this table:

1. Open coding of the transcribed interviews--this involved marking against each line of text a descriptive code. Generally, I coded at the sentence level, however occasionally this was more or less detailed (Urquhart, 2013, p.58). I chose descriptive codes directly related toward explaining enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL. I typically started with words the respondents had referred to or were part of the frame that I used in the participant observation section of my field notes.

2. I then used "constant comparison" to reduce the number of descriptive codes—challenging myself to ensure each phrase was distinctive. In this step, I collapsed the codes and attempted to move them from descriptive to more analytical headings. In choosing these categories I gave preference to the codes most frequently occurring (see Table 6-4 for more detailed examples of quotes and coding)

3. Analytical coding families: Urquhart references Glaser's (1978, 2005) coding families to arrange or group codes into more selective analytical codes. One coding family offered by Glaser is "process." While helpful, I deviated as suggested by the GTM process, to instead use my pre-existing frame of enquiry of "enablers and barriers to PSC at RIL." I consequently separated the codes from step 2 into positives (left and column) and negatives (right hand column) (Urquhart, 2013, p.59).

4. Selective coding--groupings of enablers and barriers: From step 3, I arranged the enablers and barriers based on what I observed as the common driver. I asked the question, "What is the cause of this enabler or barrier?" In addressing this question, I did refer to my field notes and the participant observations. Urquhart encourages this when she says "…you can generate your own coding paradigms. Grounded theory, in my view, is, above all, about being faithful to what your analysis of the data suggests rather than shoehorning the data into some preconceived analytical framework."(2013, p.36).

6. Paradoxical codes: The final codes I arrived at as the main enablers and barriers to PSC in RIL follow logically from the field work and narrative analysis reported in Chapter 7. My findings point to paradoxical forces which create potential advantages for RIL but also distinctive challenges. I have captured these are follows:

(a) **Leveraging Faith versus Persuasion:** describes the leap of faith followers/employees in RIL are prepared to make based on their deep trust and reverence for MDA's judgement. This faith does not involve any persuasion or negotiation. Management follow somewhat blindly. Hence, my attempt to convey by *faithful adoption* unquestioning followership. It is not hard, I believe, to move from this description to *faithful adoption* as the primary theoretical code and the positive incarnation of *familiness* during PSC. The greatest number of my coding results were grouped here. Equally, the consequences of this approach to PSC implementation gives rise to management's extrinsic motivation and thus the question of sustainability. I explore this in Chapter 7.

(b) **Individual Justice over utilitarianism** is well described in my Chapter 7 text.

(c) **Formal versus Informal Systems** is also covered well not only by my Chapter 7 text but a good deal of existing family business literature including Aronoff & Ward, Dyer, and Lansberg (Aronoff and Ward, 2011; Lansberg, 1988).

Appendix G - Stakeholder Listing

(1 of 2)

Category	Constituency	Stakeholder	Title	Anticipated Involvement
Primary Beneficiaries	RIL	Adil Zanulbhai	Non-Exec Director RIL and Chair of HRN committee	Leveraging Research Findings within RIL
		Hital Meswani	RIL Executive Director	
		A. Prashara	RIL CHRO	
		David Selchen	RIL CLO	
	Academia	Pramodita Sharma	Professor & Daniel Clark Sanders Chair and Editor Family Business Review, University of Vermont	Filling Gap in Existing Literature
		Kavil Ramachandran	Executive Director, Thomas Schmidheiny Centre for Family Enterprise, ISB	
		Gibb Dyer	O.L. Stone Professor of Entrepreneurship, Department of Organizational Leadership and Strategy, BYU	
Practitioner Partnership in Research		Ashwani Prashara	RIL CHRO	Partners in designing research and interpreting results
		Helmut Schuster	BP Group HR Director	
		Rita Vanhauwenhuyse	BP CLO	
		David Selchen	RIL CLO (seconded from BP)	
		Arvind Subramanian	RIL Head of Performance Management and OD	
Academic Rigor and Objectivity	Cranfield Faculty	Mark Jenkins	Chair of Cranfield DBA Panel	Reflexivity of research and rigor in process
		S. Vyakarnam	Cranfield Supervisor	
		Colin Pilbeam	Cranfield Faculty	
		David Buchanan	Cranfield Faculty	
	Objective Third Parties	Gibb Dyer	O.L. Stone Professor of Entrepreneurship, Department of Organizational Leadership and Strategy, BYU	
		Paul Lockey	University of Thomas, Associate Professor School of Theology	
		Kavil Ramachandran	Executive Director, Thomas Schmidheiny Centre for Family Enterprise, ISB	
		Tony O'Driscoll	Global Head: Strategic Leadership Solutions, Duke Executive Education	

Category	Constituency	Stakeholder	Title	Anticipated Involvement
Leveraging Existing Knowledge	Practitioners	David Selchen	RIL CLO	Contributing ideas for possible investigation or application
		Helmut Schuster	BP GHRD	
		Rita Vanhauwenhuyse	BP CLO	
		Arvind Subramanian	RIL Head of Performance Management and OD	
	Academics	Kavil Ramachandran	Executive Director, Thomas Schmidheiny Centre for Family Enterprise ISB	
		J. Michael Crant	Mary Jo and Richard M. Kovacevich Professor of Excellence in Leadership Instruction Mendoza College of Business University of Notre Dame	
		David Buchanan	Emeritus Professor of Organizational Behaviour, Cranfield University	
		Tony O'Driscoll	Global Head: Strategic Leadership Solutions, Duke Executive Education	

Appendix H – FERC Accepted Abstract

Family Enterprise Research Conference (FERC) 2017 – Accepted abstract (http://news.unca.edu/articles/unc-asheville-family-enterprise-research-conference-june-2017)

Distinctiveness of Planned Change in an Indian Family-Owned Business

1.What is the purpose of this project?

This research project: (1) addresses a lack of understanding of how planned organizational change may be distinctive in a large family owned firm; (2) takes advantage of access to Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), one of India's most iconic firms, as it undertakes a major transformation program, (3) appraises the adequacy of general organizational development (OD) change frameworks to explain change in a large Indian family owned firm and; (4) shares findings from RIL's program for the potential benefit of other Indian family-owned firms.

2.What is the gap in the literature that this project is hoping to address?

A review of the literature on planned change in family-owned businesses suggests:

1. There is widespread support for the idea that organization change in a family business may occur differently to non-family businesses (Barresi, Coppolino and Marisca, 2012; Canterino et al., 2013; Hatum and Pettigrew, 2004b; Holt and Daspit, 2015).

   However, …

2. The limited (five case studies) research undertaken to date provides only descriptive accounts of intra-family tensions and disagreements which derail change attempts (see Chapter 2). And …

3. The more widespread grey literature exhibits a strong bias toward commentary at the 'family-system' (Gersick et al., 1997b; Hilburt-Davis and Dyer, 2007) rather than, as in OD literature, organizational level of analysis. And …

4. No coherent attempt has been made to test the efficacy of existing OD change concepts in a family owned business setting (Chapter 2).

3.Why is addressing this gap important?

Contemporary business, in general, is exhibiting increased anxiety in the face of disruptive forces (Volberda, 1996). Those most adept at navigating change are believed more likely to survive (Oppenheimer, 2016). Indian businesses face the added challenge (and opportunity) presented by a liberalizing economy and reduced barriers to global competition. Since many large Indian businesses are family owned, the importance of understanding in detail the barriers and enablers they face in successfully shifting organization focus cannot be overstated (Bhattacharya, 2010; Sugden, 2016).

4.How does the project address the gap in the literature?

Using RIL's current attempt at transformation as a case study, this project will provide (a) a description of what RIL are trying to achieve, (b) the organizational development change tactics being employed to aid them in this regard, (c) the obstacles in the form of management dilemma's or paradoxes that have emerged, (d) how these obstacles may be traced to the company's family ownership or how Habbershon and Williams (1999) '*familiness*' construct impacts organizational change and (e) a grounded theory explanation of how these paradoxes might be effectively navigated.

5.What are the implications of this project for research and for practice?

I will answer the question of how academically, and practically, planned change should be thought of in a large Indian family owned firm. The immediate implication provides direct utility to RIL, increasing confidence in their ability to achieve their stated aims. However, the further goal is to (i) address the believed gap in scholarly literature as it pertains to the adequacy of existing OD organizational change frameworks and (ii) provide a theoretically generalizable framework for other large Indian family owned firms who may be contemplating change.

6.What is the methodology used in this research project?

This is an ethnographic study into a single nested case study (Yin, 2014). I have been embedded in RIL since 2013. The resultant research will be a culmination of observations, interviews with owners, leaders, employees, and Human Resource leaders undertaken during this period. I have been granted privileged access to all RIL's transformation plans, executive steering meetings, senior HR project meetings, town-halls, focus groups, and more informal team meetings. RIL's status in India has also resulted in considerable external commentary in press, periodicals, television, and Indian academics (Sabarinath, 2014).

7.What are some of the results?

The preliminary findings point to at least four paradoxes, which are believed to be directly linked to RIL's 'familiness.' These paradoxes are outlined in

Table 9-6 Confidence in the link to family ownership is heightened by the similarities between these observed paradoxes and the characteristics prophesized by Holt & Daspit (2015) in their untested prediction of likely family-business specific 'readiness for change' dimensions.

Table 9-6 Planned change paradoxes arising from preliminary research

	Paradox	RIL Organizational Change Dilemmas
1	Individual allegiances versus utilitarian	A strong allegiance to long serving staff which undermines many inferred coercive components of traditional organization change techniques.
2	Past success as an indicator of future	(i) An overriding cultural paradigm to link self-worth through technical prowess and interrogation of details which handicaps delegation, empowerment and talent development. (ii) A bias toward speed of decision-making undermining long-term planning and key management's confidence in preparing for the future.
3	Ad hoc versus systematic	The desire to retain flexibility and agility over decision-making undermines attempts at systematic forms of management.
4	Patronage versus empowerment	(i) Compliant execution is preferred to the risk of novice mistakes made as attempts of empowerment. (ii) Perceived proximity to the executive directors and chairman (informal organization) is more powerful than the legitimate (formal) organization hierarchy undermining attempts at systematic delegation.