THE ROLE AND RELEVANCE OF DISCOURSE AND DISCURSIVE PERSPECTIVES IN ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how "discourse," as a process concerned with the production and consumption of talk and text, has been embraced within the field of organizational change and development (OCD). We present six ways of thinking about the role of discourse in OCD (namely: "discourse as component," "discourse as process," "discourse as analysis," "discourse as method," "discourse as mindset," and "discourse as style"). Although the advent of dialogic OD has raised awareness of discourse, we demonstrate that it remains a marginal and under-utilized area of interest. We conclude by making a case for a more expansive role for discursive modes of analysis and engagement within OCD.

Keywords: Discourse; social constructionism; dialogic; discourse analysis; organizational discourse; generativity

INTRODUCTION

Discourse matters. It matters because it is an intrinsic, inevitable, and unavoidable facet of organizational life (Keenoy, Oswick, & Grant, 1997; Mumby & Clair, 1997). Organizing requires the deployment of verbal interaction and written communication (Oswick, Keenoy, & Grant, 2000; Watson, 1994). Hence, processes of organizational change and development (OCD), as forms of organizing activity, are only made possible by and through "discourse" (i.e., via the

production and consumption of talk and texts) (Ford & Ford, 1995; Grant, Michelson, Oswick, & Wailes, 2005). Yet, notwithstanding some established techniques which overtly refer to "consultation" (Marshak, 2020; Schein, 1969) and "dialogue" (Bushe & Marshak, 2009), the role and status of discourse has not received extensive or enduring attention within the extant OCD literature (Bushe & Marshak, 2014; Oswick, 2013). In this contribution, we want to address this oversight by exploring the role(s) that discourse plays as part of OCD practices and processes. We also want to discuss the scope for extending and amplifying "discourse-sensitive" and "discourse-based" forms of OCD.

There are three main parts to this chapter. First, we discuss the formation and emergence of a discursive perspective on, and within, the field of OCD and outline the different ways in which discourse has been put to work within OCD. Second, we elaborate upon what we see in the growth and development of discourse within OCD. In particular, we identify four discernible temporal phases (i.e., as a transition from discourse being of marginal interest, to being a discernible area of activity, to being a significant area of inquiry, and then to being simultaneously an "important" and "neglected" area of research and practice). Third, we explore the vital and crucial role that discursive modes of engagement and inquiry could play in enhancing OCD research and practice (i.e., where it *could* go). Finally, we conclude by sketching out the prospects and potential for discourse-based OCD approaches and processes (i.e., where it *should* go).

THE EMERGENCE OF DISCOURSE IN OCD

More than two decades ago, Alvesson and Kärreman (2000a) observed that: "One of the most profound contemporary trends within the social sciences is the increased interest in and focus on language" (p. 136). We would contend that interest in discourse and language in the social sciences has itself been driven by developments within a wider set of academic disciplines (e.g., from philosophy, the liberal arts, and the humanities). In particular, constructivist and postmodern challenges to normal science and positivism have given rise to what has frequently been referred to as the "linguistic turn" (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000b). So, how has the linguistic turn impacted upon OCD? And, what forms of discursive engagement in OCD has it stimulated?

The Discursive Imperative in OCD

Early seminal work, in philosophy and the social sciences, which either implicitly or explicitly embraced the linguistic turn and focused on discourse (see, e.g., Austin, 1962; Bakhtin, 1981; Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Derrida, 1976; Foucault, 1980; Geertz, 1973; Goffman, 1959; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) began to stimulate research within management during the 1980s (see, e.g., Astley, 1985; Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Rosen, 1985; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). Work adopting a discourse perspective expanded through the 1990s and early 2000s (Grant,

Hardy, Oswick, & Putnam, 2004). This included work on particular facets or subsets of discursive inquiry, such as stories and narratives (Boje, 1995; Czarniawska, 1997; Gabriel, 2000) and more micro-conversational work (Cunliffe, 2002). It became a legitimate and established area of inquiry referred to as "organizational discourse" and "organizational discourse analysis" (Grant, Keenoy, & Oswick, 1998). Having gained a foothold in organization studies, "organizational discourse" then spread and diffused across cognate areas, including strategy and organizational change (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Morgan & Sturdy, 2000; Sillince, 1999). So, in effect, a body of work within the field of OCD that embraced a discursive perspective really started to emerge in the mid-to-late 1990s.

Contributions within the field of OCD have engaged with a variety of discursive approaches. This has included work on change conversations (Ford, 1999; Ford & Ford, 1995), metaphors of change (Marshak, 1993; Palmer & Dunford, 1996), change narratives (Brown, Humphreys, & Gurney, 2005; O'Connor, 2000), the role of dialogue in change (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Gergen, Gergen, & Barrett, 2004; Kellett, 1999), textual analysis of change (O'Connor, 1995), and rhetorical strategies and change (Bednarek, Paroutis, & Sillince, 2017; Finstad, 1998).

Within the extant ODC literature the use of discourse appears to be bifurcated. On the one hand, there is a body of work which draws upon discourse as a sort of "phenomenological tool." It is positioned as being "research" and, as such, it is academic in orientation. As a form of scholarly endeavor, it attempts to be relatively impartial and objective in nature and seeks to "analyze" processes of organizational change and change practices. As Phillips and Oswick (2012) have asserted: "Connecting organizational discourse analysis to an organizational change perspective highlights how the production and dissemination of texts influence the way in which organizational change takes place" (p. 451). The enactment of "organizational discourse analysis" typically requires the use of recognized discursive techniques – such as "conversation analysis" (Heritage, 2006), "critical discourse analysis" (Fairclough, 1992, 2003), and "narrative analysis" (Reissman, 1993) – to apprehend, interrogate, and/or critique change processes and practices. The outputs resulting from this type of work predominantly appear in peer-reviewed, scholarly change journals (such as: *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *Human Relations*, *Journal of Change Management*, and *Journal of Organizational Change Management*).

On the other hand, there is a stream of literature which is far more applied and practitioner-oriented (see, e.g., Brown & Issacs, 2005; Owen, 1992; Weisbord & Janoff, 1995). Rather than using discourse as a means of dispassionately analyzing change processes, the primary aim of this body of work is far more "pro-change" in its focus. It is unashamedly concerned with improving the quality of OCD process(es), and broadening the repertoire of effective OCD techniques, by embracing discursive perspectives and meaningfully integrating them into change activities and change interventions. This sort of work has typically appeared in practitioner-oriented publications (e.g., *OD Practitioner* and *Practising Social Change*) and it has also resulted in a number of "discourse

oriented" books aimed at ODC practitioners (see, e.g., Block, 1981; Bushe, 2020; Marshak, 2006, 2020).

It is important to stress that the two avenues of engaging with discourse outlined above should not be seen as clearly delineated or mutually exclusive. There are some works, such as Kotter's (1996) book on change leadership and Bunker & Alban's (1997) book on large group interventions, that cross over from an academic audience to a practitioner audience and vice versa. There is also the liminal space between research and practice that is occupied by "scholar-practitioners" who traverse the two bodies of literature. The purpose of separating out the perspectives is simply to highlight that, for some, discourse is a mechanism for interrogating processes of organizational change while for others it is a means of enhancing them.

Thus far we have drawn a tentative distinction between the processes by which authors of academic and practitioner texts have engage in the production and consumption of discourse and discursive techniques. However, as we shall see in the next section, there are arguably other articulations of the interface between discourse and OCD.

Perspectives on Discourse in OCD

Academic and practitioner-oriented published work has contributed to an increase in interest in discourse within the OCD community. However, beyond the rather overt and tangible production of written texts on the topic, there are also more subtle and less obvious ways of thinking about how discourse is positioned and constituted in relation to OCD. We would contend that there are six different perspectives (see Table 1 and the discussion below). The first three – discourse *as* component, discourse *as* analysis, and discourse *as* mindset – are primarily academic in orientation, and the latter three – discourse *as* process, discourse *as* method, and discourse *as* style – are mainly practitioner oriented.

Discourse as component. With this perspective discourse is seen as a pervasive, embedded, and everyday element of organizational change. Put differently, every instance of OCD activity involves some degree of verbal and written communication and, as such, there is always a discursive component. When this perspective is embraced it is possible to dismiss discourse as being less important than action, and it can be largely disregard as simply being a channel for communicating important initiatives. Oswick, Keenoy, and Grant (1997) have noted that "dialogue, discussion and debate are depicted as the 'poor relations' of action" (p. 5) and they go on to suggest that "such inferiority is signaled in commonplace sayings – such as 'Talk is cheap' or 'Easier said than done' – and epitomized in the maxim: 'Actions speak louder than words'" (p. 5). Somewhat paradoxically, the pervasiveness of discourse as a component of change can lead to an inverse conclusion (i.e., that discourse is of crucial importance). This inference can be drawn if one accepts that discourse is fundamental to "how managers 'construct' meanings (i.e., interpretations of an organization) and disseminate them to others in an effort to influence those others about a new strategic direction" (Sonenshein, 2010, p. 477). When viewed in this way,

Table 1. Perspectives on Discourse in OCD.

Positioning of Discourse	Role of Discourse in OCD	Implications for OCD
Discourse *as* component	Discourse is present as an integral and unavoidable facet of OCD activity	All OCD approaches, methods and processes involve some element of discursive activity (i.e., talk, text, interaction and/or communication)
Discourse *as* analysis	Discourse is deployed as a collection of linguistic and language-based tools and techniques for analyzing and interrogating a variety of OCD phenomena	Discourse analysis can be used to undertake research into OCD processes and draw generalizable inferences that can have a downstream impact upon OCD practices
Discourse *as* mindset	Discourse is inextricably linked to a social constructivist view of OCD problems and solutions	OCD is viewed as discursive and treated as a generative, meaning-making process (where reality is socially negotiated) as opposed to being a positivist, scientific endeavor (where a single, objective reality is uncovered)
Discourse *as* process	Discourse is a significant and discernible part of specific phases of the OCD process	Certain key stages of OCD are largely discursive (e.g., contract setting, data gathering and data feedback) and others are non-discursive (i.e., intervention and implementation)
Discourse *as* method	Discourse is an obvious and central feature of a bundle of recognized OCD techniques and approaches	Some approaches are explicitly discursive (i.e. dialogic OCD techniques) and others are not primarily discursive (i.e., diagnostic OCD techniques)
Discourse *as* style	Discourse is a viewed as a behavioral choice whereby OCD initiators choose to engage in meaningful dialogue and conversations with OCD recipients	The style of leadership adopted during OCD initiatives is interactive (i.e., inclusive and participative in nature) rather than being non-interactive (i.e., informed by a more directive and autocratic style of leadership)

discourse is more than a device for communicating change, it is an integral part of the process by which it is formulated and executed. As we will demonstrate later, these contrasting framings have a profound impact upon how academics and practitioners engage with, and enact, OCD.

Discourse as analysis. This way of thinking of discourse positions it as a mechanism for analysis. It is consistent with the earlier description of much of the discourse-oriented academic work discussed earlier where "organizational discourse analysis" is seen as constituted through a bundle of discursive techniques and linguistic tools which are used to rigorously analyze change phenomena. When this type of inquiry is deemed relevant and focused it can lead to subsequent improvements and refinements to changes processes. However, there is an inherent risk that the work undertaken can become detached and abstract. In effect, it can become a philosophical exercise rather than being focused, applied and directly relevant to change practice. There is also a risk that

organizational change is relegated as merely the means to discursive ends. Put differently, there is danger that the research focus becomes inverted whereby studying organizational change activity is undertaken in order to better understand discursive processes rather than utilizing discursive processes to better understand organizational change activity.

Discourse as mindset. Mindsets have been described as "relatively enduring ways of seeing the world" (Oswick & Oswick, 2022, p. 4) and as "guiding beliefs and assumptions" (Marshak, 2006, p. 5). Although primarily a cognitive phenomenon, mindsets shape and influence, and are shaped and influenced by, interaction and action (Marshak, 2020). Within OCD there are arguably dominant mindsets (Bushe & Marshak, 2014). The first is positivistic and typically associated with more traditional forms of OCD. It is based upon an objective view of the world where there is a fixed, knowable, and relatively tangible reality that can be uncovered through scientific inquiry. By contrast, more recent discursive forms of OCD, that use the discursive methods discussed below, work on the underlying assumption that reality is subjective and socially constructed (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). Hence, reality is produced via the co-construction of meaning (i.e., via discourse). In effect, discourse is the generative process by which OCD problems/opportunities are formulated and OCD solutions are socially negotiated. Hence, discourse is inextricably linked to the notion of a "generative mindset" (Bushe & Marshak, 2015, 2016) to the extent that discourse is synonymous with processes of generativity. The inherent problem with this perspective is that not everything is socially constructed and aspects of materiality (e.g., physical space or material conditions) can get somewhat overlooked, or underplayed, when there is an overreliance on discursive practices in OCD interventions.

Discourse as process. Rather than a pervasive component of change, discourse can be perceived at a slightly more aggregated level with certain phases in planned change processes being predominantly discourse-based or action-based. So, for example, the "contract setting" phase in OD interventions could be described as a largely discursive endeavor inasmuch as it involves different parties engaged in talk to reach an agreement. Equally, "data feedback" in the diagnostic process might reasonably be described as being primarily enacted through talk (i.e., discourse) and, within Kotter's (1996) eight steps for leading change, "communicating the vision" (step 4) is unequivocally discursive in nature. By contrast, the actual process of "intervention," although possibly having a discursive component, could reasonably be presented as "taking action" (i.e., construed as mainly "doing" something rather than "saying" or "writing" something). The delineation of discursive and non-discursive stages in change means that discourse is often seen as a precursor to action (e.g., meetings or briefings) or something which occurs after action (e.g., reviews or debriefings). As Marshak (1998) observes: "Not only is action valued over talk, but talk must stop for action to start" (p. 17). Hence, the resultant "hard" demarcation of discourse and action, combined with the tendency to privilege action over talk, means that "discursive phases" of the change process are often subordinated, marginalized or, at least implicitly, portrayed as less important than action-based ones.

Discourse as method. This perspective is consistent with the earlier description of the practitioner-oriented literature in the field of OCD. Here discourse is constituted as a repertoire of discourse-based OD methods. This grouping includes a number of established techniques and methods, such as: appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003), future search (Weisbord & Janoff, 1995), open space technology (Owen, 1992), and world café (Brown & Issacs, 2005). These ways of thinking about discourse have undoubtedly enhance OD practice. However, a considerable amount of attention has been devoted to drawing a firm distinction between these newer discursive changes processes and traditional "non-discursive" ones (Bushe & Marshak, 2014, 2015). And, we would argue that the resultant dichotomization of OCD approaches is unhelpful and, at least to a certain extent, constrains practice by subliminally encouraging practitioners to choose between the more traditional and contemporary approaches rather than to integrate them (Oswick, 2009; Oswick & Oswick, 2022).

Discourse as style. This perspective on discourse is directly linked to behavior. In particular, it relates to the behavior of the change agent and, to a lesser extent, the behavior of senior managers acting as change advocates. The style of change leadership, like leadership more generally, can be either quite directive and autocratic (i.e., largely one-way communication) or more inclusive and participative (i.e., as two-way or multi-channel communication). A strongly didactic style of change leadership results in limited dialogue or discursive exchanges whereas an interactive style of change leadership necessarily produces a greater degree of discursive involvement and engagement. Consequently, forms of change leadership which are open, inclusive and encourage dialogue are perceived to be discursive in nature (i.e., discursive leadership). That said, given the contingent nature of leadership, we might expect that rather than adopting a consistently directive or inclusive style of leadership most leaders will continuously shift between these styles on a "situational basis" (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988) during OCD interventions. As a result of situational dependency, discursive leadership behavior can become a little "stop-start," stilted and a somewhat punctuated part of the OCD process.

THE GROWTH OF DISCOURSE IN OCD

Notwithstanding the different ways in which discourse plays a part in OCD, there is also arguably a temporal dynamic to the adoption of discourse. Several authors have identified phases or stages in the chronological development of OCD. For instance, Marshak, Grant, and Floris (2015) have posited that there have been three discernible epochs in OCD that resonate with wider historical developments within the mechanical sciences, biological sciences, and the "soft sciences." They suggest that: "The dominant way of thinking about organizations and organizational change in the first half of the twentieth century was as a machine, with an engineering emphasis on productivity, efficiency, and changes to fix or improve 'the machine'" (p. 77). By the mid-century the biological sciences, and in

particular open systems theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1968), started to gained prominence, and this "shift to a biological model created a greater emphasis on adaptation, congruence, and alignment with external (and internal) factors and forces" (Marshak et al., 2015, p. 77). Following these developments, they assert that: "In the latter part of the twentieth century an 'interpretive' orientation, based on newer theories and approaches in the 'soft sciences,' emerged to raise different questions about organizations and organizational change" (p. 78). For Marshak et al. (2015), the "soft sciences" were seen as including linguistics, culture studies, and constructivist and postmodern perspectives. And, most significantly from a discourse perspective, they contend that: "...the interpretive orientation focuses on how the current organizational reality is socially constructed, maintained, and changed through such variables as culture, internal politics, and multiple forms of discourse (narratives, stories, conversations, metaphors, provocative questions, symbolic action, etc.)" (p. 78).

A somewhat different account of developments within the field is offered by Tsoukas (2005). He proposes three temporally-embedded ways of making sense of organizational change and change management. First, there was behaviorist view which is "the oldest and, to a large extent it still underlies lay accounts and managerialist explorations into the topic" (Kotter, 1996; Nadler, 1998). Second, the cognitivist view became prominent in the mid-1980s and early 1990s (Huff, 1990; Huff & Huff, 2000). Finally, during the late 1990s and early 2000s, the discursive view gained traction (see, e.g., Fairclough, 2005; Grant et al., 2004; Holman & Thorpe, 2003; Tietze, Cohen, & Musson, 2003; Westwood & Linstead, 2001).

In their discussion of diagnostic and dialogic forms of change, Bartunek, Putnam, and Seo (2021) also provide some chronological insights which help us to understand how discourse has developed within OCD. They indicate that diagnostic forms of OD began in 1950s and this was accompanied by "some dialogic work, though it was not recognized as such" (p. 51). Then, following constructivist work outside of the field in the 1960s and 1970s (i.e., the formation of social contructivism in the social sciences), some dialogic OD work starts to emerge in the 1990s and during the 2000s the concept of dialogic OD is formally introduced (Bartunek et al., 2021).

Although the above accounts of the historical formation of organizational change and organizational development differ in terms of their characterization of early developments in the field, there seems to be a general consensus about the arrival of discourse perspectives in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Rather than looking at OCD as a whole, if we focus just on discourse there is arguably an underlying pattern with regards to the positioning and adoption of discursive perspectives over the years. More specifically, it we concentrate on the period from the 1980s onwards, we believe there are several discernible phases of activity during which interest in discourse has grown.

For us, the four phases can be described as (1) phase I – "discourse *as* an invisible and marginal change variable"; (2) phase II – "discourse *as* a discernible area of interest in change"; (3) phase III – "discourse *as* a set of significant change methods"; and (4) phase IV – "discourse *as* simultaneously an important and

neglected change factor." Table 2 summarizes these developments and in the following subsections we elaborate on the key phases.

Phase 1: Discourse as an Invisible and Marginal Change Variable

If we look at mainstream OCD textbooks from the 1990s through to later editions which appeared up to the mid-2000s (e.g., Cummings & Worley, 2005; French & Bell, 1999; Harvey & Brown, 2001; Hayes, 2002; Senior & Fleming, 2006) none of them offer any explicit coverage of discourse (or discursive issues). In short, discourse is completely ignored. To illustrate this, refer to take Cummings and Worley's (2005) textbook; terms like "discourse," "narrative," "conversations," "dialogue," "talk," and "texts" do not appear in the subject index or the glossary of terms.

The absence of any overt acknowledgment of discourse in OCD textbooks produced up to the mid-2000s is not entirely surprising. However, what is a little more unexpected and concerning in these texts is that ODC techniques and processes which have strong and obvious discursive connotations – such as "confrontation meetings," "survey feedback," and "process consultation" – are discussed as a series of action steps and maneuvers. The discourse that takes place is not explicitly addressed at all. There is no discussion of interactional processes, issues of meaning-making, the co-construction of insights, consensus testing, or generative dialogue. It is as if these episodes of interaction are primarily

Table 2. Phases in the Growth and Relevance of Discourse in OCD.

Stage and Characterization	General Period	Phase Description	Supporting Evidence
Phase 1 – Discourse *as* an invisible and marginal change variable	Early 1980s to early 1990s	Little or no explicit interest in discourse or discursive methods/techniques within the OCD community	Discourse not covered in OCD textbooks and no clear practitioner emphasis on work which is discursive in nature
Phase 2 – Discourse *as* a discernible area of interest in change	Mid-1990s to mid-2000s	Some limited work with a discursive emphasis starts to emerge within the OCD community	Academic publications appear with a combined OCD-discourse focus and some implicitly discursive approaches developed by practitioner-scholars
Phase 3 – Discourse *as* a set of significant change methods	Late 2000s to early 2020s	Noticeable upsurge in interest in discursive approaches and techniques in OCD community	Publication of seminal work on dialogic OD (Bushe & Marshak, 2009) and concomitant rise in subsequent work
Phase 4 – Discourse *as* simultaneously an important and neglected change factor	Late 2010s to present	Although discursive and dialogic approaches are popular – they are still not as widely used as traditional approaches by OCD community	Citation levels for discursive/dialogic change and survey of change approaches (Hastings & Schwarz, 2022)

"action-based interventions" without any concomitant "discourse-based process"!

The omission of discourse in OCD textbooks is indicative of a problem highlighted earlier; namely, talk and text are taken-for-granted as a pervasive, but marginal, feature of all OCD activity. Although the marginalization described here, as Phase 1 of the evolution of discourse in OCD, is presented as arising within academic circles, we would argue that it also carried over to practice. During this phase, practitioners might have been slightly more sensitized to discourse because when, for example, running "fishbowl sessions" or facilitating "confrontation meetings," it was impossible to completely ignore the interaction unfolding in front of you. However, although actively managing and facilitating interaction this was, at the time, largely undertaken in a tacit and intuitive way, without any overt or explicit awareness or acknowledgment of the centrality of discourse and discursive phenomena.

Phase 2: Discourse as a Discernible Area of Interest in Change

Although invisible and marginal in OCD textbooks and among the greater majority of OCD practitioners up to the mid-2000s, discourse as a discernible area of interest was starting to appear and gain traction via work produced by academics for consumption by academics. There were some early isolated academic works which appeared in the mid-1990s (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Ford & Ford, 1995; O'Connor, 1995), and this increased through the 2000s (Brown, Humphreys, & Gurney, 2005; Morgan & Sturdy, 2000; Oswick, Grant, Michelson, & Wailes, 2005). On the basis that there is an inevitable lag between scholarly work appearing in refereed journals and then diffusing to a point where it appears in textbooks and informs practice, the early academic contributions that arose in the mid-to-late 1990s and 2000s did not appear in textbooks until much later. The take on discourse in this body of work was very much consistent with the "discourse *as* analysis" perspective described earlier. It was rigorous, used discursive and linguistic tools to interrogate change phenomena, and was very much targeted at an academic audience.

Around the same time as academic interest was developing (in the 1990s), a handful of OD consultants and scholar-practitioners, who had started to reflect on the discursive nature of the practices and processes they employed with clients, produced books for practitioners that captured their experiences (Cooperrider, 1996; Holman & Devane, 1999; Owen, 1992; Weisbord & Janoff, 1995). This work, although limited in terms of volume, was consistent with the "discourse *as* method" perspective insofar as it was aimed at producing grounded techniques, approaches and protocols which were intended to improve the effectiveness and quality of change interventions.

In effect, interest in discourse was tentatively developing from two directions in phase 2: academic research and frontline practitioner experiences. That said, although interest in discursive perspectives on OCD was clearly identifiable, the general level of interest within OCD was still relatively modest during this period.

Phase 3: Discourse as a Significant Change Philosophy and Method

A crucial juncture in the development and diffusion of discursive work in OCD occurred in 2009 with the publication of an article in the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* by Gervase Bushe and Bob Marshak (2009). Their contribution introduced the notion of "dialogic organization development." Almost immediately this work was enthusiastically embraced by OCD academics and OCD practitioners.

For practitioners, sympathetic to discourse-informed OD work, it acted as an umbrella term which unified and gave meaning to a preexisting bundle of OD techniques. In this regard, it cemented the "discourse *as* method" perspective discussed earlier by offering a way of describing and connecting a contemporary set of techniques and methods that purposefully differentiated themselves from earlier forms of diagnostic OD. Hence, this collection of dialogic methods – i.e., appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), future search (Weisbord & Janoff, 1995), open space technology (Owen, 1992), and world café (Brown & Issacs, 2005) – gained a collective momentum within and across a variety of OD practitioner networks. Although Bushe and Marshak defined this cluster of discursive methods as "dialogic," this was a form of retrospective labeling. As Bartunek et al. (2021) state: "…these epistemological distinctions had been evolving since the 1960s, but were not considered dialogic until Bushe and Marshak labeled them as such" (p. 53).

For academics, the significance of Bushe and Marshak's contribution was less focused on it providing a way of characterizing and giving coherence to a preexisting cluster of OD techniques. Instead, it was more to do with introducing a new philosophy and way of thinking about OCD. In this regard, it offered insights that resonated with the "discourse *as* mindset" perspective insofar as it offered some provocative and challenging epistemological and ontological assertions about how we see organizations and processes of planned organizational change. Their work attracted a considerable amount of academic interest which included immediate commentaries and responses (e.g., Oswick, 2009; Wolfram-Cox, 2009). Beyond their seminal work in 2009, Bushe and Marshak have extended and elaborated their initial ideas on dialogic organization development with a series of subsequent contributions (see, e.g., Bushe & Marshak, 2009, 2014, 2015, 2016; Bushe, 2010, 2020; Marshak, 2013a, 2013b, 2020; Marshak & Bushe, 2009, 2018; Marshak, Grant, & Floris, 2015). They also established the BMI (The Bushe-Marshak Institute) in 2019 as an initiative which promotes "dialogic organization development" and offers training and formal certification as "a dialogic OD professional."

In addition to addressing the "discourse *as* method" and "discourse *as* mindset" perspectives, their work has also drawn attention to facets of the "discourse *as* component" perspective by interrogating the interplay between talk and action (Marshak, 1998, 2020). Recent work on the leadership of dialogic change also connects with the "discourse *as* behavior" perspective (Bushe, 2020). A summary of the substantive differences between diagnostic and dialogic approaches are offered in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptions and Entailments of Diagnostic and Dialogic OD.

	Diagnostic OD (Traditional ODC)	Dialogic OD (Discourse-Based ODC)
Original assumptions (Bushe & Marshak, 2009)	"…As a data-based change method presumes the existence of an objective, discernible reality that can be investigated and researched to produce valid data and information to influence change" (p. 350)	"…Assume organizations are socially constructed realities and, as such, there is nothing inherently real about how people organize, no ultimate truth about organizations to be discovered, and no model of the right way to organize independent of the people who make up any particular organization" (p. 360)
Change constructs (Bartunek, Putnam, & Seo, 2021; Weick & Quinn, 1999)	Collecting valid data using objective methods leads to change	Creating safe places and processes that produce generative ideas leads to change
	Change is episodic and goal oriented	Change is continuous and cyclical
View of organizations (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, 2014)	Organizations are like living systems (Bushe & Marshak, 2009)	Organizations can be seen as meaning-making systems (Bushe & Marshak, 2009)
	"Open systems" (Bushe & Marshak, 2014)	"Dialogic networks" (Bushe & Marshak, 2014)
Philosophical influences (Bartunek et al., 2021)	Positivism and modernist philosophy	Social constructionism and critical philosophy
Organizational application (Bushe, 2020)	Complicated technical problems	Complex adaptive challenges
Type of change (Bushe & Marshak, 2015)	Planned and more developmental	Emergent and more transformational
Leadership role (Bushe, 2020)	Performance-oriented, directive, and front-loaded effort	Possibility oriented, supportive; and back-end-loaded effort
Change leadership process (Hastings & Schwarz, 2022)	"…Leaders inquire about organizational reality objectively (i.e. *what is true?*) and design and implement plans top-down" (p. 5)	"…Dialogic processes take the perspective that organizations are meaning-making systems, where leaders are a part of the process of discovering new futures" (p. 5)
Dominant mindset	"Fixed" (Dweck, 2006)	"Growth" (Dweck, 2006)
	"Distributive logic" (Baughen, Oswick, & Oswick, 2020)	"Generative logic" (Baughen et al., 2020)
Illustrative methods and approaches	Traditional action research (Whyte & Hamilton, 1964); structural intervention (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1969); job design (Hackman & Oldham, 1980);	Contemporary action research (Bradbury, 2015), appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987), future search (Weisbord & Janoff, 1995), open space technology (Owen, 1992), world café (Brown & Issacs, 2005)
Main focus (Bushe & Marshak, 2016)	Changing behavior and what people do	Changing mindsets and what people think

It is fair to say that the collection of insights provided by Bushe and Marshak have remained highly salient and topical in OCD. This is apparent from recent academic exchanges and contributions on the role and relevance of dialogic OD (see, e.g., Bartunek et al., 2021; Hastings, 2020; Hastings & Schwarz, 2022; Jabri, 2017; Oswick & Oswick, 2022). The publication of several practitioner-oriented books on "dialogic organization development" in the past two years also bears testimony to the ongoing popularity of this variant of OCD activity (see, e.g., Averbuch, 2021; Bratt, 2020; Lewis, 2021; McKergow, 2020; Stirling-Wilkie, 2021).

Phase 4: Discourse as a Simultaneously Important and Neglected Change Factor

Although discourse has gained traction, we would assert that it has not entered the mainstream in OCD. Rather, we would characterize it as being an important area among what could be described as a loyal, niche community of discourse-oriented practitioners and academics.

One of the ways of exploring the trajectory of discursive forms of OCD, is via the aggregated analysis of published texts. This approach is referred to as "culturomics," and it involves the application of a computational lexicology that studies human behavior, shifts in the popularity of words, and cultural trends via the quantitative analysis of large samples of digitized texts (Michel & Liberman Aiden, 2010). The specific tool that we chose to use for this mode of textual analysis was "Google Ngram Viewer." This application has been previously applied to analyze trends in OCD (By, Oswick, & Burnes, 2014). It plots phrase usage based on an annual aggregated word count. The word search database includes more than 8 million books that have been digitized by Google Inc; it is estimated to contain in excess of 500 billion words, and the last complete year for which data are available is 2019. Words or phrases are included in the analysis if a match is identified in 40 or more books per year and the total citations are expressed as a percentage of the total database. Terms like "discursive OD," "OD discourse," and "discursive organizational change" were not used enough to meet the criteria for inclusion. However, dialogic OD was cited on a requisite number of occasions to be plotted. The results of searching and combining the terms "dialogic change," "dialogic organization development," and "dialogic OD" are presented in Fig. 1 (see below).

Fig. 1 confirms that dialogic OD emerged in the late 2000s and it also shows that interest has consistently and significantly risen over the years. If we extrapolate from this trend we might expect that dialogic OD, and by implication interest in discourse within OCD, to continue to grow in the future. The current trajectory might also suggest that through this growth it is becoming an important area of research and practice within the field (i.e., establishing mainstream interest). However, if we locate dialogic OD within the wider context of organizational change a different picture emerges (see Fig. 2).

In effect, Fig. 2 illustrates that "dialogic OD" (including variants of the term stated above) is a relatively small component of organizational change activity. More specifically, in 2019 dialogic OD (at 0.0000008319%) represented only 1%
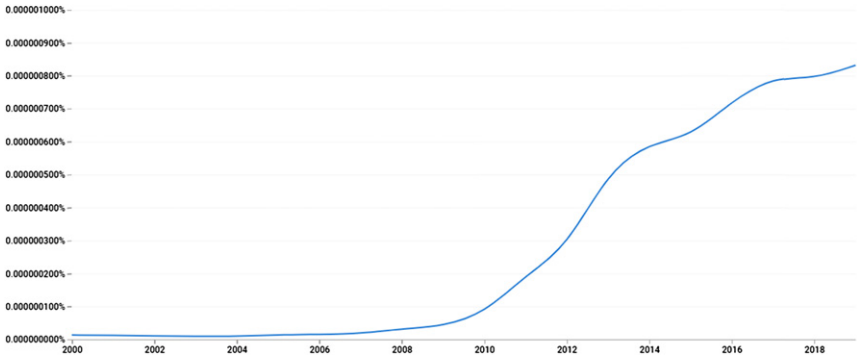
Fig. 1.   Citation of "Dialogic OD" between 2000 and 2019. *Note:* This figure shows the number of times that the term "dialogic OD" appeared as a percentage of the total volume of text appearing in all books published between 2000 and 2019. It demonstrates that the usage of the term has consistently grown since 2009.

of the total citations recorded for organizational change (0.0000816672%). If the analysis is narrowed down to specifically include only "dialogic organization development" as a subset of "organization development" the proportion of citations is still extremely modest with only 1.12% of all OD citations in 2019 referring to dialogic OD.

A further source of corroboration for the claim that dialogic OD has not entered the mainstream in OCD is provided by recent research. Hastings and Schwarz (2022) analyzed 79 cases of organizational change. They classified the cases according to the extent to which they could be described as a form of
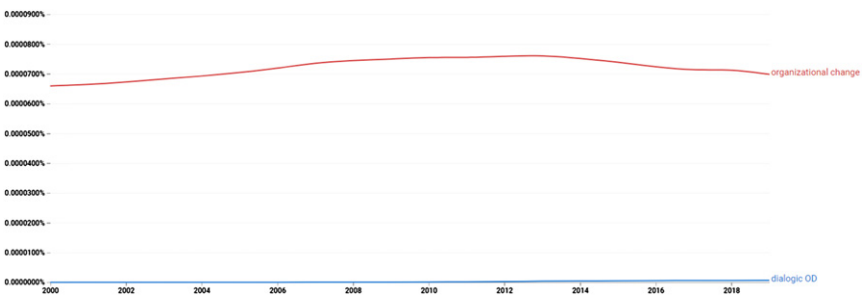

Fig. 2.   Citation of "Dialogic OD" and "Organizational Change" between 2000 and 2019. *Note*: This figure shows the number of times that the terms "dialogic OD" and "organizational change" appeared as a percentage of the total volume of text appearing in all books published between 2000 and 2019. It demonstrates that "dialogic OD" is a far less commonly used term than "organizational change."

diagnostic or dialogic change process. Of the 79 cases, they found that 63 were initiated as diagnostic and 16 were initiated as dialogic (i.e., 80% and 20% respectively). The way in which the initial approach adopted was maintained or altered was also interesting. Of the 63 cases that began as a diagnostic approach, 78% ($n = 49$) remained exclusively diagnostic in their focus compared to only 44% ($n = 7$) of the cases that were dialogic and remained so. Hence, in summary, only 1 in 5 change programs commenced as a dialogic intervention (i.e., 16 out 79 change cases) and then more than half them (i.e., 56%) switched to a diagnostic approach during the change process. This suggests that current practice is still significantly skewed toward more traditional diagnostic change approaches.

Additional confirmation for the marginalization of discursive and dialogic approaches can be found if one consults a recent "special forum issue" of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, titled "Project Forward! We know where change has been, but where is it headed?" (published in the last edition of 2021). The forum contained 10 articles. Of those contributions, which in different ways effectively discussed the future of OCD, only one (i.e., Pavez, Godwin, & Spreitzer, 2021) had any discourse-related content and made any reference to previous academic work which adopted a discursive or dialogic perspective on change. This arguably exemplifies the way in which discourse is a marginal area of inquiry and demonstrates how dialogic OD does not appear on the "mainstream OD radar."

WHY DISCOURSE-BASED OCD APPROACHES ARE VITAL

As a result of its enduring "marginal status" in OCD, the full potential of discourse has not, in our view, been entirely realized. We believe there are good reasons to adopt a more discourse-centric view of OCD. The reasons for doing so are based on a blend of efficiency, practicality and morality.

Arguably, the most compelling reason for embracing a discourse-oriented perspective in OCD is that it makes good business sense. In addition to demonstrating that dialogic change approaches are not as widely utilized as diagnostic approaches (see the earlier discussion), Hastings and Schwarz's (2022) study of 79 changes cases threw up another interesting finding. They found that the perceived success rate for dialogic change processes among respondents was 86%. When the change process oscillated between dialogic and diagnostic change phases the success rate increased to between 89% and 93%. Most significantly, when change process were exclusively diagnostic in focus the success was only 33%. The undeniable inference that can be drawn here is that if you want to maximize the probability of change success you need to engage in dialogic change either in its entirety or incorporate it is a significant component of a hybrid approach. Put simply, failing to employ or integrate dialogic forms of OCD (i.e., to meaningfully incorporate discourse) in a change process will reduce the chance of a successful change outcome by more than half (i.e., from between 86 and 93% probability of success down to 33%).

So, why is discourse such an important factor in ensuring that change is successful? At one level the answer is quite simple. Discourse involves interaction between different stakeholders (i.e., meaning making through the social production and consumption of talk and texts), and having discursive interaction (e.g., via recognized large group techniques) means that change recipients are actively engaged in dialogue during the change process. This in turn means that change recipients feel a sense of involvement and are likely to be more committed to the change. Their involvement also reduces the likelihood of change resistance. Furthermore, as Bushe (2020) has eloquently demonstrated in his recent study of a construction company, involving a range of stakeholders in a generative process of meaning making (i.e., discursive interaction) is important in developing a sophisticated understanding of complex problems and producing elegant solutions. Here the value of discourse as a central feature of organizational change is rather obvious and well understood. However, the evidence presented above suggests that academics and practitioners continue to favor more traditional, diagnostic forms of OCD.

We would assert that the case for taking discourse seriously in OCD is growing. As society changes, organizations are having to respond and adapt, and as organizations change, OCD processes need to change.

Generational shifts mean that the proportion of Gen Ys and Gen Zs has increased and will continue to increase. Indeed, millennials now constitute more than 50% of the workforce. This is significant because as Davidson (2014) points out:

> For traditional employers, Millennials pose new problems. Command-and-control is out. Having grown up with constant feedback from parents and teachers, they want dialogue, not orders, and a world of work that offers more opportunity and less hierarchy, and always new ways of doing things. (p. 19)

We would argue that more discourse-centric forms of change are vital if we are to ensure the demands of millennials for dialogue and involvement are met. Social media and increasing levels of digital connectedness are also having a significant impact upon organizations. Hierarchies are increasingly giving way to networks. And, new forms of organizing are emerging – such as "holacracies" (Robertson, 2016), "humanocracies" (Hamel & Zanini, 2020) and "sociocracies" (Rau & Koch-Gonzalez, 2018) – that have dispersed responsibilities and shared governance. As a result, traditional OCD approaches are becoming less tenable in situations where responsibility for organizational change is more widely distributed and, hence, requires more extensive and sophisticated forms of discursive coordination.

Finally, there is also a moral imperative to foregrounding discursive OCD approaches. The fact that these approaches typically involve a range of stakeholders in non-hierarchical, generative conversations means that they are far more inclusive than their traditional counterparts. And, for us, inclusivity is an essential characteristic of how we move OCD initiatives forward. This is nicely captured in Wasserman's (2015) contribution on the role of dialogic OD in relation to diversity and inclusion. She notes that: "dialogic and communication

perspectives address systemic forces that maintain undesirable prevailing narratives and build the capacity to create more inclusive communities" (p. 329).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF DISCOURSE-BASED OCD

The COVID-19 pandemic has stimulated OD scholars to move beyond doing "more of the same" in OCD research and fundamentally rethink how we theorize about change and what change is for (Schwarz & Vakola, 2021). There is a growing recognition that neither practitioners nor academics can address societal grand challenges alone. It is more imperative than ever for the two communities to engage in collaboration and co-production of knowledge, and especially for academics to think about the practical and policy impacts of their research (MacIntosh, Mason, Beech, & Bartunek, 2021; Mirvis, Mohrman, & Worley, 2021; Shani & Coghlan, 2021). Many have called for collaborations that involve the close interaction of numerous diverse actors throughout the knowledge production and application process, such as "engaged scholarship" (Van de Ven, 2007), "model 2" research (MacLean, Macintosh, & Grant, 2002), and "collaborative advocacy" (Bartunek, Foster-Fishman, & Keys, 1996). OCD is uniquely positioned in the larger management and organization research field to bring academics and practitioners together because of its historical roots in Kurt Lewin's and many OCD pioneers' socially engaged scholarship. Founded on the ideas of action research and action science, OCD has always taken a holistic approach to the theory–practice dialectic.

Within this context and taking into consideration the strong streams of discourse-based OCD in both research and practice, we posit that discursive approaches are poised to help the OCD field better integrate theory and practice, produce relevant OD knowledge, and advance novel theories about organizational change. Practitioner-oriented discourse-sensitive OCD primarily adopts the perspectives of discourse *as* method, discourse *as* process, and discourse *as* style. Although not explicit in their onto-epistemological orientations, these approaches allow practitioners to focus on changing the content and form of words, conversations, narratives, and arguments as the goals and outcomes of change. Research-oriented discourse-based OCD mainly embraces the perspectives of discourse *as* component, discourse *as* mindset, and discourse *as* analysis. These perspectives are influenced by the linguistic turn and provide the theoretical grounding for why language matters and the analytical tools for assessing linguistic matters. Collaboration and integration between the two streams would be natural and mutually enhancing. Dialogical OD practices such as appreciative inquiry can generate abundant texts and insights which can clarify the understanding of the discourse *as* component perspective, feed data to the discourse *as* analysis perspective, and strengthen belief in the discourse *as* mindset perspective. Conversely, theoretical developments on the role of discourse in constructing reality and the relationship between discourse and materiality can shape OD interventions and enable practitioners to adopt radically different perspectives in

addressing human agency, power, and structural changes in organizations and institutions.

We highlight three contemporary developments in organizations and organizing that we believe have the most urgent need for discursive OCD approaches that integrate practitioner and academic work: the pressing societal grand challenges which require changes in critical consciousness, the increasing complexity of organizational structures which leads to various forms of decoupling, and the sea change brought about by disruptive technologies which challenge fundamental assumptions about humans and institutions. Fig. 3 outlines our vision of a beneficial integration of practitioner- and academic-oriented discursive approaches for addressing these three topics.

First, societal grand challenges such as "decent work and economic growth," "industry, innovation, and infrastructure," "responsible consumption and production," "no poverty," "good health and well-being," "gender equality," and "reduced inequalities" (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016) require changes in critical consciousness as well as in structures and systems. These changes are often propelled by society-wide movements with a critical stance. The voices of individual employees, consumers, and community members can be heard and amplified by social media such as Twitter and Facebook, which gives unprecedented change agency to actors who are at a power disadvantage within an organization or who are outside of an organization and, traditionally, conveniently ignored. In a sense, discourse that originates anywhere and from anybody can become a powerful impetus for organizational change.

Critical barriers to development and change are removed not just by enacting policy changes but also by transforming people's understandings, experiences, and sensibilities. Discourse-based OCD approaches are well suited for providing the mindsets, tools, and methods which are needed to make and measure such transformations. For example, George Floyd's murder pushed anti-Black racism to the forefront of conversations in numerous corporations. Expectations for corporations to take on responsibility to eliminate racism and achieve diversity,
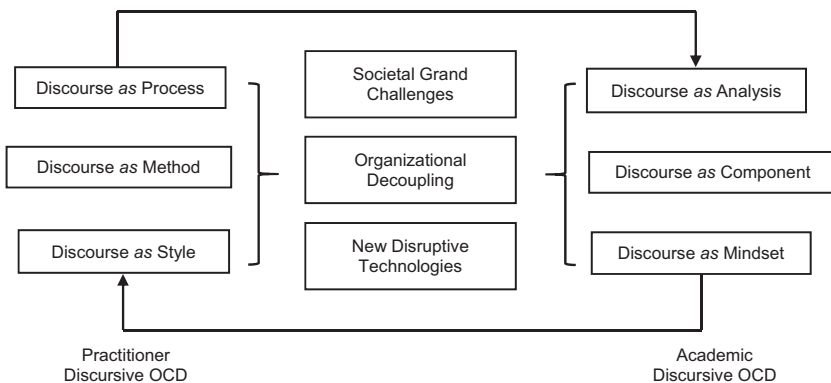

Fig. 3.   Future Directions of Discursive OCD Approaches.

equity, and inclusion (DEI) are growing. Organizations have responded to these expectations by hiring chief diversity officers, implementing training programs, and re-evaluating their policies for hiring, promotion, and compensation. However, these changes in structure, practices, and policies will be window dressing or worse, leading to backlashes, if they fail to change deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about race, the role of racism in creating inequality, and the functions of organizations in perpetuating racism. Without changes in consciousness, people may conform to new rules in their behavior but develop negative narratives, arguments, and meanings regarding these practices and policies. Arguably, this is what happened, for example, to affirmative action in the United States.

The discourse *as* mindset perspective fits this kind of OCD activity because it emphasizes changes in consciousness rather than changes in behavior. Although it is hard to measure changes in consciousness, the discourse *as* analysis perspective can help in this regard, as it can provide tools for gauging changes in assumptions and beliefs. People's assumptions and beliefs manifest in their arguments. People can use novel arguments to infuse new meanings into existing beliefs, and changes in the structure of their arguments can reflect changes in their belief systems (Green, Li, & Nohria, 2009). Close examination of signifiers and their signification processes can provide important clues for understanding which practices have become institutionalized (Li, 2017). The discourse *as* process perspective further points to the importance of discursive engagement throughout the change process. Involving employees through conversations, storytelling, perspective-taking, and voice-sharing are activities that promise genuine changes of consciousness. Moreover, the discourse *as* method perspective can help practitioners to focus on the metaphors, frames, narratives, and arguments they employ to trigger awareness, generate dialogues, and sustain change.

Second, discourse-based OCD approaches are critical for addressing organizational changes in which managerial talk and action are likely to be disconnected. Decoupling between organizational policy and practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) or loose coupling between elements of an organization's structure, strategy, or technology (Weick, 1976) are a defining feature of many contemporary organizations. Brunsson (1991) employs the concept "organized hypocrisy" to describe the use of language pointing to one direction to compensate for action in the opposite direction. "Organized hypocrite" is prevalent in organizations that seek to satisfy the expectations of multiple stakeholders. More recent research points to talk–action inconsistency where managerial aspirations trigger the rise of opposite practices (Winkler, Etter, & Wehmeier, 2017), or talk–action dynamics where promises without actions eventually nudge the organization toward the actual implementation of policies (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2021). In loosely coupled organizations, the meanings of talk and action may be disconnected, and this disconnect may be due to politics, resistance, and/or culture. To manage OCD activities in loosely coupled systems, it is important to understand the dynamics between talk and action. For example, some organizational changes are accompanied by vague and ambiguous managerial talk (Eisenberg, 1984), while others are implemented with ambiguous managerial decisions and actions (Brunsson, 1991). It is important to understand the

functions of such ambiguity in OCD activities and what happens when talk and actions seem to go in opposite directions, and OCD practitioners can exploit the talk–action dynamics to create an opportune situation for unfreezing mindsets.

In loosely coupled systems, diagnostic OD may miss these points because practitioners may treat carefully crafted ambiguous messaging as a problem when it might in fact be the best way to communicate change, and they may identify the gap between talk and action as an obstacle when it might in reality serve important functions for the organization. Dialogic OD can be better suited for loosely coupled systems because it pays attention to symbolic meaning-making and the associated relational, political, and cultural dynamics that complicate the talk–action relationships. In loosely coupled systems, the discourse *as* component perspective can highlight OCD activities as discursive and therefore treat action as a signifier of meaning and not just as a means to an end. The discourse *as* analysis perspective can better discern patterns of meaning-making by taking both talk and action into consideration as symbolic inputs. The discourse *as* mindset perspective can understand talk–action discrepancies as a natural part of organizational realities which are constructed and negotiated among stakeholders with heterogeneous interests and mental schemas. The discourse *as* method perspective leads to a careful examination of the texts, contexts, and subtexts of talk and action to recognize the psychodynamics of actors and their relationships and also to design dialogic processes that can shift existing meanings or generate new ones.

Contemporary organizations have witnessed explosive growth in their administrative structures, adding offices or directors which specialize in every imaginable function. This has undoubtedly increased the loosely coupled nature of organizations. In this context, we expect that dialogic OD will play a more important role than diagnostic OD because a loosely coupled system needs more, not fewer, discursive activities to create meanings that can sustain the organization. We anticipate that discursive OCD approaches will serve academics and practitioners well in their research and actions to improve loosely coupled organizations.

Third, discursive OCD approaches should play a more central role in organizational changes which are triggered by disruptive and breakthrough technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and blockchain. Like previous disruptive technologies, these new technological breakthroughs fundamentally change how people live and work. Perhaps more so than previous technological disruptions, these contemporary technologies challenge core conceptions about humans and institutions. For example, AI blurs the boundary between humans and machines. Although machines have long been substitutes for human labor, machine learning seems to challenge the very notion of what counts as a human. Blockchain uses decentralized, digital ledgers to enable peer-to-peer transactions without institutional intermediaries (Frizzo-Barker et al., 2020). Blockchain relies on "distributed trust," in contrast to traditional organizations with their authority and legitimacy to monitor, validate, and discipline participants (Seidel, 2018). The use and diffusion of public blockchains can render powerful and centralized institutions irrelevant. Virtual assets such as cryptocurrency and non-fungible

tokens which are built on blockchain have no physical existence other than as digital ledgers. In the metaverse, humans interact as avatars, as new technologies such as holograms and augmented reality can reconstruct humans and objects into three-dimensional images.

One of the implications of these new technologies is a need to rethink the nature of materiality. As algorithms become ever more "intelligent" and "performative," they acquire their own "biographies" (Glaser, Pollock, & D'Adderio, 2021), and their affordances will eventually mimic human agency. As materiality comes eerily close to mimicking the behavior of humans with technological materiality modeled after human's discursive capabilities, the discourse *as* component perspective becomes even more important. Such technologies also call for a discourse *as* style perspective which favors a conceptualization of leadership as interactions between equals rather than as a directive and autocratic style. Because of their distinct characteristics, these new technologies are likely to elicit more heterogeneous discourse and potentially more resistance to change and human–machine interactions. Furthermore, since traditional notions of human agency, power, and authority are under question in this context, the discourse *as* analysis perspective can critically evaluate the making of meaning surrounding these new "disruptions" and advance theories about new ways to organize. The discourse *as* method approach fits with this phenomenon more naturally than the diagnostic approach because change is continuous, dynamic, fast-paced, and uncertain, and there is a stronger need to negotiate future possibilities than to objectively determine the problems and solutions.

These three areas for future research and practice share a common theoretical concern, namely, the relationship between the discursive and the material. In addressing societal grand challenges, the material changes in structural and systematic imbalances stand in tension with changes in vocabularies and conversations, and ultimately, critical consciousness. In loosely coupled systems, there are numerous gaps and contradictions between talk and action. In some of the new, disruptive technologies, materiality and discourse have become almost indistinguishable. Whereas traditional, diagnostic OD focuses on the structural, behavioral, and material aspects of changes, the more recent, dialogic OD draws attention to the subjective, linguistic, and relational aspects of change. Ultimately, change involves both the material and the discursive, and the tensions and dynamics between these shape the nature and process of change. More sophisticated conceptions of the discourse–materiality relationship can benefit all three areas. We call for practitioners to develop concrete OD methods that incorporate discourse-based theories, and we call for researchers to advance theories of this relationship based on new societal challenges and organizational dynamics. We believe that discursive OCD will complement the objective, positivistic orientation of diagnostic OD to generate more palatable theoretical and practical contributions to organizational change.

A discourse-centric perspective will broaden the measures of success and reorient the emphasis toward what organizations would regard as meaningful beyond organizational efficiency, such as personal fulfilment, dignity, creativity, and happiness. Discursive OCD will also enable researchers and practitioners to

become more reflexive as they become acutely aware of how subject, object, social reality, and meaning are discursively constructed and of their own role in partaking in such construction. Integrating discursive OCD practice and research will give experiences, voices, and perspectives that have long been silenced or marginalized a better chance of being heard, taken seriously, and relied upon for making change. OCD practitioners and OCD researchers can and should play a more critical role in transforming the world of organizations and organizing by employing discursive methods and analysis, promoting discursive styles of leadership and discursive processes, and advancing theories on discursive components and mindsets.

CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we asserted that interest in discourse, and discursive processes, in OCD has grown over the past couple of decades. The initial interest in discursive approaches was driven by academics who applied different forms of discursive analysis to the study of organizational change (i.e., a "discourse *as* analysis" perspective) along with a more practitioner-oriented stream of inquiry (i.e., a "discourse *as* method" perspective) which culminated in the advent of dialogic OD (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). However, we have also indicated that despite the significant growth of interest in discourse (and discourse-based perspectives), as an area of research and practice, it remains on the margins of OCD activity and a peripheral area of inquiry. In short, it has not been absorbed into the mainstream. We believe that it is important that there is a more extensive and enduring engagement with discourse within ODC. Moreover, this is necessary in order for ODC practitioners and academics to collaborate and co-produce elegant and meaningfully ways of addressing societal grand challenges.

We have made a case for a wider, more extensive remit and role for discourse within OCD. This is based upon everchanging societal and organizational imperatives which require a concomitant shift in thinking within OCD. Most importantly, we feel that it is critical that we avoid simply perpetuating the dominant way in which discourse is applied within OCD where, via a largely unreflexive, surface-level engagement, it is often promulgating as a novel bundle of techniques (i.e., a "discourse *as* method" perspective). If discourse-based OCD approaches are going to realize their potential, and have a meaningful impact upon meeting the challenges of a changing world and a changing world of work, there needs to be a discernible shift among both OCD academics and OCD practitioners (i.e., embracing a "discourse *as* mindset" perspective). For many in the OCD community, this involves reframing and re-positioning their underlying assumptions about discourse. In particular, this requires a reconsideration of the privileging of action over discourse and the relaxing of positivistic tendencies. But most of all, it requires a rethink of the prevailing view of discourse by moving away from seeing it as just a means of "conveying meaning" (i.e., a communication device) and toward seeing it as a way of "constructing meaning" (i.e. a powerful generative device). Simultaneously, and given its generative capacity,

discourse should also be treated as an important and pervasive part of organizational change and this involves taking seriously the "discourse *as* component" and "discourse *as* process" perspectives.

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