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## Introduction to Linking theory & practice section

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Linking Theory & Practice

# Introduction to Linking theory & practice section

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Change management will always be a central aspect of all facets of managing organizations, for it is through change that organizations move forward and accomplish what they aspire to reach. Academics and practitioners alike have thought extensively and written plentifully about change. A recent search on Amazon.com brought up over 40,000 books with the word change in the title. Few topics are likely to have attracted as much attention; yet, effective change still eludes us. Organizations frequently falter and fall in their attempts to change, whether this change is on a large or small scale. Leaders are tested most on their ability to change others and steer them in a direction toward a vision and objectives. Change is hard and change is difficult, but as the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus famously once said, “change is constant” or more accurately, he proclaimed that “everything flows and nothing stands.”

The article that you are about to experience, derived in part from the authors’ experience with appreciative inquiry strategies, takes a look at a particular slice of the management of change and tries to shed light on how preparation for change critically affects changes itself. Leslie Sekerka and her colleagues raise an interesting question for both academics and managers to ponder. Does the way we talk to people about impending change affect their initial perceptions and attitude toward change itself? To get to an answer, they deployed their investigative skills in a series of conversations with employees from a large medical facility and presented different initial settings that varied in orientation and attitude as well as directed their subjects to view change either from within themselves or from within the organization.

The insights drawn from the article are clear, if not predictable, but they certainly help us open a window into the critical roles that managers are called to play in setting up the right conditions to make change happen. Consistent with the mandate of the Linking Theory & Practice section of this journal, the article speaks to academics and thoughtful practitioners alike, highlighting the value of inquiry and cognition in shaping attitudes and affecting the effectiveness of change within organizations. While it does not give all the answers, it certainly draws attention to the questions and invites others to a rich and promising field of dialogue that can help academics understand better and executives manage better their change efforts.