

Renewing Research Practice

Edited by

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One Scholar's Garden

A Narrative of Renewal

AS WINTER DESCENDS on my garden, the earth gets crusty, plant stalks wilt, colors fade, and signs of life disappear. Many years ago—I can't recall exactly when—my career and research life had the feel and the look of a garden in winter. I was crusty and critical in my thoughts and my deeds as they concerned my own research and the research of others. While research projects were still progressing (sometimes they have a life of their own), they were not sustained by stalks that felt very generative or alive. Finally, my writing and my expressions of what I was learning from my work felt colorless and dead. The research was not generative in the sense of inspiring new ideas or, more significantly, of having the feel of something important, creative, and alive.¹

This is a tale of trying to bring a research garden back to life. In this sense, it is a tale of renewal, although renewing one's research process and research outputs seems continuous, and not a one-time event. I use the garden metaphor for its potential in conveying research as an earthy, grounded process of trying to coax life out of seeds and soil. In the metaphor, most times I am the gardener, toiling away trying to grow worthwhile research projects that affect the conversation in organization studies. Like most gardeners, I am learning to live with long time horizons, acceptance of only limited control, and the joy of unexpected growth in places that were not tilled or planted by me. The garden metaphor lets me talk about the conditions that enable growth and abundance in the garden, and about the conditions that seemed to encourage the opposite. Of course, looking back, there is never an isolatable set of forces that makes a garden flower. There are good years, and there are bad ones. The more I garden, the more humble I be-

1. I have benefited greatly from the helpful reactions and comments of Monica Worline.

come about what it takes to make a truly magnificent garden that is sustainable over many years.

Rarely in the Garden Alone

Most of my research is collaborative. A glance at my resume would show that few of my research products are singly authored. Even for those single-authored products, their foundation and inspiration derive from collaborations and interdependent work done with others. Since my early days as a graduate student I have always enjoyed the energy, coaxing, and contact made possible by doing research with other people.

Not all of my collaborations have been easy. I seem to have to learn over and over again that every collaboration involves difficult work. My estimates about how long it takes to get a task done collaboratively are usually off by at least a factor of three. Even with people with whom I have collaborated for several years (and there are several), we relearn the difficult lessons of unrealistic time frames, unarticulated assumptions, unmet expectations, different styles in working with graduate students, and misalignment in writing times.

I have and continue to grow tremendously in the collaborations of which I am a part. They are the soil from which I grow my garden. As I reflect on how collaboration has contributed to a sense of renewal (or at least the hope that my scholar's garden is becoming more fertile), three points stand out. First, I feel more alive in some collaborations than I do in others. I take this sense of "life" in collaboration seriously as evidence that I am growing in the collaboration. Second, collaborations have lives of their own—there are seasons in a collaboration process that I am learning to work with and accommodate to as opposed to fight or change. Third, there are certain routines in collaboration that help to avoid perilous detours or bumps in the road. I am learning to at least discuss these routines more explicitly and be conscious of how they are working or not keeping the collaboration alive. I turn to each of these points about renewing in collaboration below and where possible try to provide concrete examples that illustrate my general points.

GROWTH-IN-COLLABORATION

Jean Baker Miller (1991) and her colleagues at the Stone Center at Wellesley College have this idea that human beings experience growth in some connections and decay or at least nongrowth in others. I find their idea incredibly helpful in making sense of my experience in some collaborations and not others. Not all collaborations are the same. In some I feel authentic, challenged, and zestful (Miller's term); in others I feel academic, tested, and pressured. In both types of collaborations, I usually produce something.

However, in the former type of collaboration I literally feel myself growing as a person.

I use three signs as evidence that I am in the kind of collaboration in which I am growing. First, I notice that I shed my "expert" mask and find myself saying "I don't understand," "I don't know," and "help me out" a lot. I feel intellectually vulnerable and emotionally open. Second, when I am in these collaborations, the boundaries between my "professional" and "personal" life are highly permeable; in fact, they almost disappear. In my growing collaborations, I am unafraid to reveal my "wholeness" as a person and my collaborators do likewise. Third, the work in the collaboration is work about life as opposed to work about organizational behavior or some narrow academic topic. While not always conceived of this way, through the collaboration, the research question becomes a question about life, and the collaboration becomes a safe and exciting vessel in which to explore this life question.

I'd like to share two examples of this form of collaboration. One is ongoing, and one just finished. One is with colleagues who are peers; the other is being done with two graduate students (one who is now a professor at a business school). One took almost six years to complete; the other is heading on a similar trajectory in terms of time taken from conception of the original research idea to acceptance of a paper in a refereed journal. It is important to note that this six-year time frame seems how long it typically takes me from conception of an idea to eventual publication of something from the idea.

The first example is a collaboration with Connie Gersick and Jean Bartunek, and it is a collaboration on a research topic about which none of us had done any prior research. We were drawn together by a chance meeting on a panel at the Academy of Management meetings, and through our separate comments on the topic of what is a good research question we recognized a similar resistance to the question, and a framing that focused on relationships as central to defining good research questions. While we did not know each other initially beyond acquaintance, we began a series of phone conversations that eventually moved to a commitment to collect data on the meaning of relationships in professional lives. The inspiration for taking this focus came partially from our sense that our experience as female academics in business schools was very different from that of our male colleagues. Our research became a way to play with and explore this question.

The research collaboration was very much a harbor for making sense of our own career experiences and a place for playing with how we might recreate and refocus ourselves as we were moving forward in our own academic journeys. It was a harbor that survived some storms and some moments of zero movement. However, there were real moments of personal

revelation as we talked with each other and talked about the data that we collected, and as we tried to make sense of the result. We learned about how one's relational landscape shaped the logic that one employed for one's career. We used this research insight to reflect on our own career trajectories. Often the boundaries between "our lives" and the research were paper thin or absent altogether. While I did not always feel that I was "growing-in-collaboration," the majority of the time I did. I felt I could easily admit my ignorance and could laugh at and question what I was bringing to the collaboration. It felt safe to be vulnerable, and the collaboration allowed for the simple fact that life and its demands sometimes got in the way of linear research progress. As I write about this collaboration and its inevitable ups and downs, I am reminded that we never considered the quality of our collaborative connections as a source of energy when we were being trained as graduate students.

A second example of growth-in-collaboration is a project with Gelaye Debebe and Amy Wrzesniewski that focuses on what we can learn from the stories of people who clean hospitals. This is a project that began from a very different place—from an interest in studying a particular occupation and from letting the people we were studying shape the research question that became our focus. This project is also very different from any research I had done in the past both in terms of topic and in terms of method. It is a collaboration in which none of us are subject experts, and despite the faculty-student distinction, hierarchy and status differences interfere less than they have on other faculty-student collaborations of which I have been a part. In this collaboration, our research meetings would vacillate between discussions of what we were learning about organizations and how we were changing how we viewed people in support roles, how we viewed our roles as women and how we might conduct ourselves differently. In this collaboration as in the one described above, we collaborators were conscious that the research was teaching us about life as much as about organizations. Although I was sometimes more uncomfortable because of a sense that as professor "I should know," more often than not, we shared vulnerabilities about our own ignorance about how to make sense of the data, the overall teachings of the research, and how to position it.

SEASONS OF COLLABORATION

I am coming to see collaborations as having their own rhythm that is related to the clocks, pressures, and prods from the persons participating in the collaboration. It is as if each collaboration develops its own pattern of movement that we as collaborators must honor and adjust to. There are seasons of collaborations—springs when ideas are budding, summers when efforts are in full bloom, falls when the flowers of the efforts are most visible yet not re-

ally moving, and winters when the collaboration is dormant. The rhythm of the collaboration is not fully controllable by any one collaborator, which thus requires awareness and explicit conversation about where the collaboration is and when it is likely to move to the next season. I have had the best experiences when there is explicit talk and agreement about the movement of the collaboration, and when people comply with their promises about when the collaboration will be dormant and when there will be activity. Most of my collaborations pass through multiple seasons of growth-withering-dormancy. Part of my growing ease in collaboration I think comes from simply realizing that this is the case.

ROUTINES FOR COLLABORATION

Along with rhythms, I am learning that there are certain routines that help me to avoid some of the pain that is inevitably a part of every collaboration. The first routine involves explicit talk about the kinds of products expected from the collaboration and how we might deal with authorship. I have found it most helpful to think of as many products as there are collaborators and to give everyone a chance to own or "drive" a product as first author. At the same time, I have learned that making authorship talk a normal part of what is discussible also allows for flexibility as the product evolves and drivers may choose to move into passenger seats.

I've also learned about the importance of making space for talking about life (and non-task-related events, ideas, and issues) as an important prelude to doing the work in the collaboration. While I should know the importance of this routine, of course, I mostly forget to apply any of this wisdom to my own life. However, I have watched my colleague Bob Quinn, and his artful sensitivity to the socioemotional needs of any group, and learned from this modeling, about the importance of making this part of collaborative meetings. So far, it seems to have made a difference.

Weeding

Our academic lives afford infinite ways of being choked and drowned by excessive demands. There have been several times when I have seriously considered leaving academe because it seemed the only way to escape the oppressive weight of giant "to-do" lists, promises, and professional obligations that seemed inescapable and brought no joy. I have tried all kinds of solutions along the way—for example, taking a year off after my third year as a full-time academic and going halftime after I got tenure. None of these solutions solved the problem of suffocating demands that I felt I could not escape.

I realize now that this set of suffocating obligations did not just appear overnight. They were the gradual result of not carefully weeding the garden

of demands that composed my professional life. The poor weeding job was sometimes due to my own cowardice about saying "no." Other times, the rapid growth in demands arose from seemingly benign commitments that others made for me (for example, committee assignments, delegated administrative duties) and because I was not paying sufficient attention, they mushroomed into giant, energy-depleting obligations that were difficult to escape. Like uncontrolled weeds, these obligations sometimes grew to such a level that they screened out the light and energy needed for the discretionary activities (for example, research), doing major damage to the activities that brought me joy. Thus, poor weeding not only resulted in having to tend to tasks that I did not care for, but also it sapped crucial light and energy from the activities that sustained and nourished me.

I have become a much better weeder of late. I think this has allowed a lot more light into the garden. First, I have decided, sometimes with regret and other times with guilt, that there are certain activities that I am simply not going to do, at least not for now. One activity is teaching in executive education. While this decision has the feel of being a bad citizen by not "carrying my weight" in a domain that is critically important in my local environment, I realize the drain this would be on my emotional energy store. Thus, I chose for now to say no to these opportunities. Similarly, I have decided to not take on major administrative duties in my local environment. I did my three-year stint as chair of my department and actually enjoyed it (after initial major resistance). I have had several opportunities to take associate dean roles at the school and the university levels. However, for now at least, I have decided that these roles divert my limited energies away from research and working with PhD students, who are my real battery chargers. Third, I am much more limited with reviewing manuscripts than I used to be. I now turn down manuscripts to review unless they are definitely in my research area or I am on the board for the requesting journal. I also have limited the number of editorial boards of which I am formally a part. I am also being much more careful about agreements to write letters of recommendations for graduate students, for promotion and tenure reviews, and for colleagues.

Beyond perfecting my skills in saying no, my weeding acumen also has included withdrawing from certain research projects that were no longer feeding or nourishing me. This has probably been the most difficult part of the weeding process because pulling out of research projects has often meant breaking promises, admitting defeat, implying unhappiness or disaffection, sometimes doing temporary damage (at least) to relational ties that have significance in my life. In addition, it is sometimes very difficult to tell what are weeds and what are vital plants, particularly in the early stages of a project.²

2. Thanks, Monica, for this suggestion.

Despite the difficulty of this form of weeding, it has probably generated the most yields in terms of restoring energy. It has been news to me to learn that one can actually exit a research project and have the research project continue to chug along. My own reluctance to pull out of projects often was the result of an overinflated sense of how important I was to the project's sustainability.

Some collaborations can be major sources of corrosion of the spirit. If a research collaboration is corrosive, it is energy depleting and it severely restricts the supply of energy available for other aspects of our professional lives. Thus, the importance of attending to what projects need weeding because the research collaboration is corrosive is a lesson I keep relearning. I am also learning to take seriously the bodily signs that collaboration is corrosive. Upset stomachs, defensive body language, little energy to connect: all are critical signals that the collaboration needs help at a minimum, or may need to be weeded as a last resort. Using my body as a sensing device to judge restorative or depleting professional situations is also something that we never discussed in graduate school, yet it is part of what I am doing on my renewal journey. I am finding it really helpful.

Breaking Down Fences

In my earlier days there were fences that separated various aspects of my professional duties and neatly walled my professional from my "personal" life. I don't know why I was so insistent about these fences, but at this stage in my career, I am doing everything I can to break them down. The fences, while keeping things nice and tidy at the surface, kept my work and my life fragmented and differentiated, prohibiting the experience of living my work and working my life. I think some of the reintegration that has occurred has fed the sense of renewed energy that I feel as I see so many more pieces of my life as connected to and enriching each other. Some examples might help illustrate what I mean.

One obvious fence that I am trying to eradicate is the barrier that separates the content of what I am teaching from the ideas that I am researching. In the course of seventeen years of doing this career there have only been three out of thirty-four semesters when there has been a close connection between what I teach and what I research. Most of this separation has been my own construction. Most of the classes that I have taught (core MBA, core undergraduate organization behavior, and corporate strategy classes) have some degrees of latitude in what is covered. Moving forward I am challenging myself to fold into core teaching more of the working premises of what I am studying and what I am naturally excited about. By doing this, I start to see who I am and what I care about as part of what I would like to

explore with students in class. I have found this integrative move, even at a small scale, joyful and fun. Following the metaphor, the integration has let sunlight bathe my work. I literally feel its restorative quality. The integration between teaching and research became even more extensive when I more recently taught and designed a doctoral class that centered on my research interests (relationships and organizations) and a new MBA elective on managing professional relationships at work.

A powerful but more invisible fence has been the divider that sustains the premise that what I believe in my research is separate and distinct from what I believe as a human being just trying to get through the day. Thankfully, there has been a gradual meltdown in the false distinction between my research ideas and ideas about life more generally. In fact, the growing fusion between the learning as a "scholar" and the learning as person-wife-mother-daughter-sister has brought major healing and energy to how I think about my work. My work is my life in a very different way than I understood this phrase before. The fence barrier that had protected each separate sphere and kept them from mutually enriching each other has disappeared. I don't believe I ever made a conscious choice to remove this fence. Rather it is an aftereffect of doing research that really matters to me and doing it with people in collaborations that allow me to grow as a human being.

An example of this fusion is in an ongoing project with Peter Frost that plays with trying to describe, honor, explain, and understand compassion in the workplace. We just finished one piece of this work with two graduate students, Monica Worline and Annette Wilson, in which we interviewed people we knew in academe (students, faculty, and staff) and asked them to share stories of witnessing and of experiencing compassion. The interviews themselves were transformative. They challenged us to face the limits of our own compassionate responding, opened us to the possibilities of organizations and professions as sites of healing, and put us face to face with the depth of suffering that is entwined with the conduct of our work lives. In discussions of the interviews and how we were processing them to write, it was sometimes difficult to know when we were talking about our lives or about the narratives told by our study participants. We remarked often about how listening, thinking, and writing about this topic felt like life—with its light and its darkness. For me, this project continues to breathe light into my life, and my life feels like it breathes light into the project. The fence of separation was never desired or achieved in this project. Thank goodness.

Tools for the Tilling

I was trained in a very traditional way. As a graduate student I took lots of methods courses with some terrific teachers and became quite proficient with all the latest multivariate techniques and tools of experimental design. Never once did I question what these tools did to the data I was collecting and to me the data collector. However, I now see a very close connection between the kinds of tools I use to collect, analyze, and write data and who I am becoming as an individual. This point was driven home to me in my colleague Karl Weick's gripping account of the disaster at Mann Gulch, where the firefighters did not drop their tools. Karl's haunting question of why this was so has resulted in his argument that the tools are part of the firefighter's identity. Dropping the tools would have meant letting go of the firefighters' core identity (Weick 1993). I have dropped tools and added tools that allow me to conduct my professional work. I have been much more conscious of the tools that I use as expressions of who I am, what my identity is, and what I can become. As a gardener, this means paying closer attention to the tools that I am using to till the garden.

I am learning that different tools allow for different types of connections with others. I believe deeply in the claim of the self-in-relation theorists that we are cocreated in dialogue with others. As Edward Sampson so eloquently puts it, "We gain a sense of self only in and through a process of interaction, dialogue and conversation with others in our social world" (1993, 106). If this is so, different tools create different kinds of dialogues. Different kinds of dialogues enact me in ways again that I find energy depleting or energy generating. In addition, different tools make me a part of different communities of practice (to use Jean Lave's wonderful idea) and afford different paths of becoming.

Here are two examples of tools I am currently using that are taking me down paths that I treasure in terms of giving me energy and fitting who I would like to become. One tool/perspective was introduced to me through Dave Cooperrider and his colleagues and students at Case Western. I collaborated with Dave on a conference in 1995 that fully immersed me in the possibilities of transformation (personal and organizational) of using an appreciative inquiry lens. It is difficult to put into words what it has meant to me to be exposed to and been a small part of the Appreciative Inquiry community. It enabled me to see a totally different way of being an academic and has given me new hope about how to think about this role as contributing to society.

At the heart of appreciative inquiry, as Dave and Suresh Srivastva have articulated it, is the core premise that "the appreciative mode of inquiry is a

way of living with, being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study. Serious consideration and reflection on the ultimate mystery of being engenders a reverence for life that draws the researcher to inquire beyond superficial experiences to deeper levels of the life-generating essentials and potentials of social existence" (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987, 131).

At the heart of the appreciative inquiry effort was Dave Cooperrider, who in his modest and self-effacing way, truly inspired me to think differently about the ways that organizations and theories of organizations could make a difference. Dave's inspiration came in at least two ways. First, there was his writing and his practice of appreciative inquiry that teaches you about the transformative potential of using the affirmative question. It has changed how I do my research, how I conduct my classes, and how I think about small interventions in my work and family life. It has changed how I think and act, period.

Second, I had the opportunity to collaborate with Dave on an edited book (Cooperrider and Dutton 1999) that came from the conference called Organizational Dimensions of Global Change. In the practice of putting together this book I was able to see the way that Dave used appreciative inquiry as a means of interacting with the authors. In particular, I saw him transform the mundane task of briefly introducing chapters written by authors into a way of affirming and enacting the positive possibilities of the authors and the authors' messages. Prior to doing this book with Dave, I had edited six other books where we wrote introductory texts that summarized authors' contributions. I had never seen the positive possibilities of using this small narrative space as a place to construct the other in the most positive possible light and to see what this did to the readers of the book and the writers of the chapters. The tools that come from appreciative inquiry continue to generate great yield in my garden.

A second set of tools that has taken me into a community of practice that is transforming me is a set of dilemma-dialogue techniques introduced to me in the Nag's Heart conferences developed by Faye Crosby. I went to my first Nag's Heart conference five years ago, and it is one of the most memorable turning points in my professional life. The conference is theme-based and is designed around the simple idea that a conference should be restorative, nurturing, and fun, and should help you with meaningful dilemmas in your professional-personal life. At the heart of the conference is a method that I call the "group dilemma method," where each person has an equal share of the group's time to both share a dilemma and get undivided attention and help from the group on working with the dilemma. This format enacts the dilemma sharer as someone vulnerable, who needs help, and enacts the group as a set of collective helpers. This construction of the foun-

ation for the dialogue is highly generative. Whenever I have been a part of a group that has used this method, we immerse quickly into meaningful dialogue that is instrumentally helpful, emotionally open, and often conceptually reframing. Beyond being really useful for generating ideas that seem to be meaningful to people's lives, this tool enacts a community in a particular way that I find really inspiring. It brings people to the table (literally and figuratively) in positions to provide constructive helping to each other. This is a practice I can live with and that gives me life. Again, did anyone in graduate school talk about which tools put you in touch with what people and with what effects? The more I have changed my toolkit to fit my current and desired identity, the more fully my garden has grown.

Crucial Nutrients

Finally, no tale of renewal from a gardening perspective would be complete without some reference to the nutrients that enable ideas and energy to grow. At least two kinds of nutrients seem critically important: one is the university environment; the other is my family environment. As a conclusion to my narrative of renewal, let me share a few comments on each.

First, I am deeply fortunate to be in the Department of Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management at the University of Michigan. I see no better academic location for my garden. My local university environment has provided critical nutrients for renewal. The University of Michigan truly values interdisciplinary work. As someone who does this kind of work, this is fantastic fertilizer! Michigan is also a mecca for organizational studies. I have the opportunity to codirect ICOS (the Interdisciplinary Community of Organizational Studies) at Michigan that has more than three hundred faculty and PhD students from more than ten different schools as part of its community. I have had the privilege of codirecting it with both Mayer Zald (from sociology), Diane Vincokur (social work), and Michael Cohen (from the School of Information). All three have been inspirational and fun to work with as codreamers of the possibilities born from creating a vibrant organizational community. Each is a humble but terrific scholar who lives the commitment to doctoral education. In a way ICOS has provided an opportunity to be an institutional entrepreneur with a partner who complements and inspires. ICOS has weekly seminars, funds small grants and conferences, and basically builds bridges between intellectual locales for people interested in organizations. (See our website at <http://www.si.umich.edu/ICOS/>.) For a fence sitter, for someone who sees herself as having a very hybrid intellectual identity, ICOS is truly an intellectual home.

The University of Michigan also is a wonderful place for women faculty.

This is an important element in my own renewal process. For years my gender identity was something I buried or worked actively to disassociate from, fearing the consequences of a feminist stereotype (especially in a business school), and at some level, denying that my gender mattered. However, the more senior I become the more central is my identity as a woman faculty member, and the more thankful I am to be at the University of Michigan Business School and the university more generally. Structurally, Michigan is a supportive place for women. Women are in significant positions of power at the university. There are institutes such as IRWG (Institute for Research on Women and Gender) that are seedbeds for excellent interdisciplinary work on gender and issues of diversity. Beyond structure, there is a norm for an extension of informal support to each other that I increasingly realize is rare. For example, when I became department chair of OBHRM in the Business School, women department chairs from other places around the university offered to meet me and share their experiences. Women faculty in the Business School meet for informal dinners once a term. These occasions have brief programs that are designed to facilitate connection and career enhancement. Neighbors, as the self-organizing group calls itself, is a subtle but vital source of emotional and pragmatic support that keeps my garden growing.

Finally, I have a family—a wonderful partner and two daughters—who pour steady light into the garden. Like all families, we have our ups and downs, and they have certainly seen me through the dark days of winter, but their abiding love is a nutrient for which there is no substitute. I have been married to Lloyd Sandelands and we have had children since we started this career, so it has very much been a journey together. I have finally decided that I will not find a solution to the “work-family” tug, ever, and that this is okay. I would not trade having them in my life for anything. We refurbished an old barn into a house several years ago, and for the first time in my life, the physical family place feeds my soul. I have no idea how to factor the love of living space into my own renewal journey, but I believe it is significant.

Concluding Thoughts

Having taken the time to write this piece, I wonder why we rarely think about renewal journeys. I realize I have never considered renewal as an essential part of my own or others' professional life journeys. Yet, upon reflection, it is a stunning gap. It is a gap that can be eased through the sharing of practices, ideas, and inspirations extracted from our own and other's attempts to reenergize. For the chance to reflect and share, I thank you Ralph and Peter.

My reflections remind me of the relational component of our profes-

sional work. “Much more than the meeting rooms and offices where we work, our relationships with individuals and groups constitute the environment in which we live our professional lives” (Gersick, Bartunek, and Dutton 2000, 1026). Exercising care in how we chose our relational environments seems an important professional skill for renewal. For me this means remaining mindful about my collaboration partners and practices as vital contributors to my personal and professional growth. At the same time, it reminds me that I contribute to or take away from others' growth by how I participate with them in collaboration.

Beyond being mindful, this renewal story has inspired some new commitments. I now teach a three-part piece on “building effective relationships” as part of a required course in our doctoral program. I see this sequence as an attempt to encourage reflection about the relational competence needed to survive and thrive in this profession. I have designed workshops to give people space and an opportunity to talk about collaboration dilemmas in our professional practice. I am deeply committed to trying to help in creating safe space to learn and grow in ways that make the collaborations that compose our professional lives more growth enhancing.

The reflections also shed light on the importance of tools for doing our work and for constructing who we can become. They remind us to be careful and reflective about the tools we use to create our professional practice. This realization keeps me open to the identity-creating possibilities afforded by some tools over others. For me this is a radical and liberating frame for thinking about what practices undergird my professional work now and what practices I might like to add in the future.

Renewal means subtracting as well as adding. My weeding skills need constant honing so that I use them to balance my penchant for planting. It seems we would all benefit from supporting each others' attempts to weed our respective gardens. Perhaps the collective soil of the field would benefit from norms that endorsed rather than discouraged weeding.

In sum, the garden metaphor provides a generative way of thinking about how we grow ourselves in growing our work. It reminds us that there are real limits to how much we can control the conditions for growth. At the same time, it reminds us to pause, reflect, feel, and smell the roses that inhabit this privileged place that we call our work home. It helps us see that after winter, comes spring.

JEAN M. BARTUNEK

The Stuff in Jane Dutton's Garden

I'M IN AWE of anybody who can successfully plant a garden even once, let alone "perennially." I think I kept a ficus plant alive for a couple years once. But that was more than twenty years ago. Even my cactus plant died. (From too much water? Too little water? I could never tell.)

So when I first started reading Jane Dutton's chapter based on the image of a garden, of planting and weeding it so it can grow year after year, so the rhythms of fallow and fertile time can be sustained, I felt a little daunted and put off and—well—envious. Maybe *Jane* can have the sense of timing necessary to keep creating a lovely garden, but not me. Maybe *Jane* knows how to nurture something beautiful year after year after year, but that skill is way beyond my aspirations. And besides, I don't feel particularly comfortable in gardens that look perfect, especially when their beauty appears to be almost effortless.

But then I started reading Jane's chapter more carefully, and I let myself recognize that Jane was helping readers to see much more than something pristine and perfect. There is a bunch of other stuff in her garden besides an exquisite sense of timing and beautiful flowers. I found perilous detours and bumps, clocks, decay, a harbor or two, fences, passenger seats, giant to-do lists, corrosion, broken fences, a fair amount of construction, unreviewed manuscripts, a few defeats, life, death, lots of tools and a toolkit for them, ultimate mystery, some tables, Mecca, bridges, an old barn, and some basic arithmetic. Now *this* begins to look interesting. This I can relate to.

I heard recently that at the Animal Kingdom theme park in Florida there's a "tree" that's been created entirely out of ruined tires. The tree looks great. If ruined tires can be worked with to create something lovely, then imagine what can be done with all this other stuff in Jane's garden. Some of

what's buried there may not seem like the usual fertilizer. But it certainly does an effective job.

The stuff buried in Jane's garden evokes several bipolar contrasts for me, and I want to use these as my own tools for digging. The contrasts that stand out for me are cyclical versus linear growth (detours, clocks, decay, fences, and a harbor), community versus individual attention (another harbor, unreviewed manuscripts, weeding, defeats, adding and subtracting), and life versus death (ultimate mystery). It is important to see these contrasts within the context of what has been created from them—the creative, generative, contributions that have been nurtured for years and continue to flower in Jane's garden—but those contributions will not be my emphasis.

*Detours, Clocks, Decay, Fences, and a Harbor—
Cyclical versus Linear Growth*

Jane talks about the experiences that have been renewing for her, focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on difficulties she has experienced in the past and solutions she is finding in the present. Her approach appears at first blush to be linear: after times of great struggle she has finally figured out what she needs in order to find ongoing growth in her work.

In fact, though, when I dig deeper into Jane's narrative, her garden imagery, including the garden's detours, perilous bumps, decay, and clocks, is more cyclical than linear. Gardens need to be redeveloped every year. Renewal can only happen if there's something that needs it. There's a lot of snow every winter in Michigan, and so a lot of germinating that has to take place beneath the surface each year.

It can be easy to assume that cycles are circles. But this is not necessarily the case; spheres are cyclical as well, and Jane's depiction can be understood using spherical imagery. Although Jane encounters some of the same detours and bumps again and again, she has learned better to anticipate them and to develop routines to respond to them more effectively. Thus, she—and her garden—are not in exactly the same place with each new research collaboration. Maybe, in fact, the detours and bumps she experiences contribute to her garden's growth, as she learns to develop ways to deal with them.

At this juncture in her life Jane finds herself trying to break down fences, between her research and her teaching, between her professional and personal life, between her body and her mind. As she removes the fences she's learning that these different spheres of her life do enrich each other pretty well, and thus renew her research life.

Ecclesiastes said that there is a time to tear down and a time to build. Right now this is a time in Jane's life to tear down—at least in terms of

fences. There have been and there will be other times to build fences, when each sphere of her life, her teaching, her research, her professional, her personal life, her mind, and her body will need continued development on its own terms as well. This pattern will be necessary not only for renewal in her research but also for renewal of the rest of her life, so that her research arises out of something deeper in her.

So—Jane experiences cyclical seasons and rhythms in the collaborative research process that she doesn't have control over. She learns that she's helped if she can find some harbors to protect her from the storms she now knows are going to come at some time or another. She has learned the importance of doing enough weeding to secure space for herself. She learns, over and over again, that it's important that she include herself as a person, as well as a researcher, in research collaborations. If a cyclical imagery holds true, she will, as she notes with respect to including herself as a person, need to learn these lessons again and again, but hopefully at deeper and more profound levels of understanding.

*Another Harbor, Unreviewed Manuscripts, Weeding,
Defeats, Adding, and Subtracting—Community
versus Individual Attention*

Jane's chapter is about her own renewal as a researcher. Yet she doesn't come to the garden alone much; she's usually there with others. Moreover, her work gets done in a much larger setting: in a large university and with multiple colleagues, some at her university and some elsewhere as part of her academic profession. What does individual renewal mean in a context like this?

This question invites another image: How much of what Jane's tilling is in an individual garden? How much is it part of a community garden in which many individuals have plots, and what one person plants is intertwined (both metaphorically or literally) with what others do?

Jane talks about how much she enjoys collaborating with others; she feels more alive in collaborations (at least in some of them) than when she's working independently. She also talks about how much she values working at the University of Michigan, how nurturing an environment that is for her. Since Jane works so much with others, her renewal processes are not hers alone; they affect and are affected by those of her collaborators and her larger academic setting.

Thus, if Jane brings all of herself into a collaboration that might stimulate and legitimate more personal sharing by her collaborators, it might stimulate their own more whole expression. If she doesn't, that might put a damper on such sharing.

My experience of working with Jane and Connie Gersick on the research that Jane alluded to was of gradually becoming more comfortable talking honestly and nondefensively about our own lives in conjunction with our study, and learning from both at the same time. Sometimes it was easier for us to talk about ourselves than to challenge each other to get on with the analyses that were awaiting attention before the study could go anywhere. But the study definitely was important for me in terms of learning to meld personal sharing with professional work.

Jane emphasizes the importance for her of weeding things out so that more light can get into the garden. She's doing a lot of weeding—of executive education, department chairing, reviewing manuscripts, recommendation letters, and some research projects, sometimes with a sense of defeat. Much of what she's weeding is requests that come to her from others and that, cumulatively, could probably consume her whole life if she let them. Many women have to learn that it's okay to put limits on such requests in order to have some time for themselves and their own contributions.

This is one area where the community versus individual garden is pertinent, and where I find myself feeling a little twinge as I read. Our profession depends on people who write reviews and recommendation letters and serve as chairs of departments and committees. This work is necessary for the community garden that enables individuals to have our own plots. Some people, like Jane, are asked to do much more of this than others are. What are appropriate boundaries for her, or for anyone, to establish regarding this type of work? How much should individuals think in terms of community even as they think of their own plots?—and vice versa? What's the role of a larger community in nurturing the ongoing growth of its most productive members, while not harming other members who need more assistance to develop?

Ultimate Mystery: Life versus Death

Taking her cue from David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, Jane reflects on how the "ultimate mystery of being engenders a reverence for life that draws the researcher to inquire beyond superficial experiences to deeper levels of the life-generating essentials and potentials of social existence" (Cooperrider and Srivastva 1987, 131). This brief inquiry into the life-generating essentials in Jane's garden has suggested that they are certainly not all what we would likely imagine as life generating. In fact, some of them appear, on the surface, at least, to be pretty awful.

There is excitement and energy in Jane's garden, but there has also been death. Sometimes the garden has been full of colors; sometimes it has been

colorless. Sometimes Jane has loved her work; sometimes she has wanted to leave academia. Sometimes she has felt free; sometimes she has almost suffocated. Sometimes she has experienced corrosive research relationships; sometimes she has experienced research relationships that invigorate her and take her to the limits of her compassionate responding.

A couple days after September 11, 2001, the wife of one of our BC doctoral students, Jegoo Lee, gave birth to their second child. Jegoo wrote me a wonderful note in which he said his wife and he "felt the mystery of nature again." They experienced this mystery even at a time when there was death and destruction around them. It seems to me that Jegoo's comment is quite apt for Jane's garden.

A garden requires both death and life on a regular basis; without one the other won't happen. Moreover, while a gardener can be sure that both processes will occur, he or she can't control the precise circumstances of the occurrence. Growth in the garden or elsewhere, however we may try to help it along, is, ultimately, a mystery of nature in which we are privileged to participate, a mystery of birth that may take place, even in the midst of destruction. Perhaps there have been times when as Jane felt her research life was deadening she didn't recognize the small beginnings of personal and professional growth that were taking place and that are now blossoming. Perhaps at a time when a garden appears most alive it is particularly crucial to look for the seeds of decay and to accept them as inevitable. Perhaps attention to, and acceptance of, both processes is necessary for research and other parts of our lives to renew themselves on a continuous basis.

At the beginning of her chapter Jane talked about her garden in winter; at the end she spoke of smelling the roses. Bette Midler sang, "Just remember in the winter, far beneath the bitter snows, lies the seed, that with the sun's love, in the spring becomes the rose." This is the ultimate mystery: life results in death, and death gives forth life. While I might have started my reading of Jane's chapter feeling envious, I ended it feeling grateful. This chapter, by its deep reflection, by its willingness to explore issues that are not easy to talk about in public, by its honesty, by its creativity, by its expansive imagery, opens the way to appreciation of mystery and renewal not only in Jane's life and work but also in our own.

KEVIN CORLEY

Preparing to Be a Gardener

Renewal in Transition

A BIT OF CONTEXT for my thoughts before I share them. As I write this, I am in the process of finishing my dissertation and looking for my first faculty position. Graduation is less than six months away and there is a bittersweet feeling of losing and gaining at the same time. As I stand here on the threshold of my academic career, Jane's garden analogy really clicks for me. I feel as if I'm about to leave the fertile garden of my doctoral program and research advisor (where the dirt was rich, the history of abundant seasons great, and the potential for future harvests bountiful) and strike out into my own little patch of dirt with a lot of fertilizer (the really smelly kind) and a few seeds. Am I ready to be a gardener? What will my garden grow? Is it too much to hope that my garden plot sits on top of a lucrative gold mine?

The thing about the garden metaphor is that while it is extremely realistic in its depiction of the research life, it is also somewhat daunting. As Jane points out, gardeners must accept long time horizons and limited control (tenure review in only five years?), not to mention back-stiffening work and getting a lot of dirt under your fingernails. I know several real gardeners and it's hard work. Yet every one of them finds it rewarding. That is an interesting balance to think of as I commence my gardening—hard yet rewarding work. How does one strike this balance? What ratio of "yes, I'll do that" to "no, I don't have the time" results in hard but rewarding? Have I been properly prepared to strike this balance?

Jane's chapter highlights for me how little of the academic process I will face in the coming years is learned in the formal aspects of a doctoral program. This is both exciting and frightening. From where I stand now, I can see that the seminars one takes as part of a doctoral program are extremely limited in what they offer (albeit very successful within their limited purpose). Much more is gained through a strong mentoring relationship with an

experienced professor (which I was lucky enough to have) and from social interactions with others in the field (conferences, research projects, and so on). But feeling a distinct sensation that my brain is full after five years of doctoral study and that I couldn't possibly stuff another thing in it right now if I tried, what does it mean that a doctoral program teaches you so little about what is really important in having a successful career?

That is where Jane's thoughts and the others offered in this book provide bona fide insight. I see plainly now that this transition I am preparing for (from doctoral student to assistant professor) needs to be a transition mixed with a healthy dose of renewal. For if renewal is not part of the transition, the conditions will be ripe for the growing of weeds, the building of fences, and the deterioration of the soil which all good research projects depend. Renewal is not just for those with well-cultivated gardens, it is necessary throughout one's career, even near the beginning. Making renewal a part of every transition (whether from one rank of professorship to another, or from one stage of family life to another, or even from one research project to another) helps guarantee those walls and weeds will not appear as quickly and that the garden will remain vibrant and strong.

To those other doctoral students and junior faculty just starting their gardens, I urge you to think about what you would write about yourself and your research colleagues twenty years from now. What do you want your garden to look like? Who do you want to have toiled with you in your garden? Will your garden be recognized for its exotic plant life, for its immaculate pathways, or for its diversity in species? Obviously, the people in this book have done quite well for themselves and they all have taken different approaches to that success. But a commonality among all of them, and one explicitly discussed by Jane, is that they depended on others and were dependable for others in the projects that truly mattered to them as humans. They grew as much as the "plants" in their "gardens" did and they were an integral part of the growth of others. What will you and I do to engender this type of growth in others? What will you and I do to recognize the need for renewal and some focused growth of our own? When we're asked to look back on our careers twenty years hence, what type of legacy will you and I be writing about? To think about these questions now is not too soon, because, after all, in the garden of life, the seed you plant today becomes the tree you rely on for shade and comfort tomorrow.

The Community of Scholars

The "community of scholars" is a good familiar phrase. Most of us will have encountered the phrase while studying philosophy of science. Whether we identify with Kuhn or Lakatos or Feyerabend or Dewey or Campbell or Merton or Lyotard or Foucault, we are all familiar with the concept. We enact our community of scholars daily when we frame our papers for our colleagues, check on citations, write peer reviews, or direct our students to the literature.

The community of scholars is an intellectual enterprise focused on contribution to knowledge. We collectively determine the research agenda. We adjudicate on successful contributions to that agenda. We collectively decide just what we know about organization and management when we endorse the views of our colleagues in our own papers.

A community of scholars is personal. It is a small group of academics, most of whom know each other. There was (arguably) a single community of American organizational scholars, that is, the Academy of Management of the 1970s. As the field grew, attempts to map the developments were rampant (Pfeffer 1982; Astley and Van de Ven 1983; Burrell and Morgan 1979). Today we tacitly accept the fragmentation of the community into the many subcommunities of management and organizational studies.

Because community is personal, our induction into the community of scholars still bears the imprint of apprenticeship and personal mentoring. The formal task interdependent of coauthored research is often the cause (or the effect) of friendships. It is difficult to separate work life and home life. Jane suggests it may not be such a good idea anyway.

The community of scholars is hierarchical. It is characterized by an interplay of individual effort and decision making and community-level outcome and judgment. As authors (or more commonly as collaborating coauthors;

Bozeman, Street, and Fiorito 1999) we do the work of the community. We make the decisions on research design or research reporting. We make these decisions within our own understandings of the community standards. But these decisions always involve a trade-off of resources (time, dollars, access) against the criteria (rigor, relevance) of the community.

Then, we must subordinate ourselves to community judgment in the peer review process. Peer review acts as both a filtering process and a tempering process. In the first instance, peer review is a quality-control mechanism (see Campanario 1998a, 1998b, for a comprehensive review of the literature). Reviewers enforce the minimum standards of the community. They attempt to eliminate manuscripts that are unlikely to represent a contribution to knowledge. It is important to note that rejection of manuscripts reflects resources as well as quality standards. For example, rejection rates in organization and management journals are much higher than in the more affluent natural sciences. Acceptance by peer review signals to the community that a particular manuscript has the potential to contribute to knowledge. Acceptance in a peer-reviewed journal does not indicate a contribution has been made. Our colleagues make that decision when they read and incorporate the new insights and findings in their own teaching, writing, and understanding of organizational life. In fact, we know that a very large proportion of published journal articles are rarely cited; thus, these articles may not have much influence on the body of knowledge.

Peer review has developed as an important tempering process, as well. There is a strong developmental component in the peer review process, which can enhance the quality of journal articles. Beyer, Chanove, and Fox (1995) suggest that this effect may be the most important effect of the review process. Many authors attest to the ultimately helpful input of reviewers, while universally acknowledging the initially negative emotions associated with receiving reviews (Cummings and Frost 1985; Frost and Stablein 1992; Frost and Taylor 1996).

Journal publication is not the only source of knowledge. Within the journal system, special issues have become an important means to open the community to new ideas and approaches, and to consolidate developments. Here peer review plays a lesser role. Annual reviews, handbook chapters, book chapters, and books all have a place in contributing to our knowledge of organization. While peer reviews do play a part in the developing of these outputs, their function has more to do with shaping and sharpening the knowledge being communicated than it is about filtering and eliminating work produced in the community. In a sense, while the journals (certainly the more prestigious ones) constrain what we read by their review processes, other outlets allow more work to be seen, often by a wider audience. This serves to float more ideas and information into the arena than might other-

wise be seen. The burden in the shaping process lies more with the reader than is the case with strongly edited products, but the existence of both sources (those filtered and those shaped) makes for a rich array of stimulants to debate and further research.

When the community of scholars meets the modern university, problems ensue. Perhaps the most important is the clash of ends-oriented and means-oriented rationalities. For the community of scholars, knowledge is paramount. The bureaucratic university tends to focus on the measurable means, that is, publication quantity and quality, rather than the more diffuse end of contribution to knowledge. In the realm of ethics, concern for visible compliance to the means of ethics-review procedures can obscure the end of good research practice.

For the community of scholars, the common good is more important than the individuals who make a contribution. The university tends to individualize. Individual career success, dependent on regular publication, may be divorced from the community concern for the progress of knowledge, which may sometimes come from thoughtful, slowly developing work. As Jean points out, the community also depends on the energy and unrewarded commitment of individuals to take on the tasks of reviewers, editors, association officers, and so forth.

Of course, the community of scholars is more than an intellectual enterprise. The community is a real social group made up of real people living a real life. We don't wish to denigrate the individual scholars. Individual career success is necessary for community success. We feel that by keeping community and knowledge salient, we might more closely align individual and career success. When Jane tells us about tending her garden, we see a scholar who takes the personal and the community seriously.

Jane and Kevin implicitly complain that they didn't learn about the social side of the community of scholars in graduate school. Jane has begun to research it (Gersick, Bartunek, and Dutton 2000) and teach about it formally. Perhaps it is time for all of us to treat the concept of community more holistically. We have some ideas about what that means for the lives we lead. Because community is personal, interactions and judgments are intensely meaningful, especially for junior members of the community (Ashford 1996a). For example, when we read the editor's letter and reviewer comments, the "community of scholars" can become a pretty abstract notion, even when the feedback is intended to be positive! (Murnighan 1996.) The softer connotations of community and caring are not very visible. We must try to remain aware of the emotional impact we have on colleagues.

We will say more about the social side of the community of scholars in our closing comments to this book. At this juncture, we note the heavy price that scholars pay, particularly those starting their careers, as a result of

encounters with their community that they experience as toxic. As ambitious researchers striving to advance knowledge through our efforts, we will surely experience our share of emotional pain as we spend endless hours trying to get a project launched or written up, as we realize that our studies haven't worked out as hoped, or we learn that our manuscript has been rejected. We know implicitly, or through our training, that there is no gain without some pain along the way; that some experiences when we do our research will produce anger, frustration, and disappointment; and that this is part of the normal life of a scholar. Such pain becomes toxic when the way it is delivered or received serves to markedly undermine our self-esteem, to cause us to lose hope, when we are left feeling isolated and disconnected from our colleagues (Frost 2003). We experience toxicity when others treat us with indifference, or give us feedback on our work that is careless of our feelings or is malicious. It comes from the systems that dehumanize our lived experience as academics and from leadership that needlessly politicizes the life of the community.

We share Jane's interest in the contributions of the appreciative inquiry tradition and positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn 2003). We are especially inspired by the work of Ludema, Wilmot, and Srivastva (1997) on organizational hope. In a massive review of the religious and secular literatures on hope, they identify four core qualities: "It is born in relationship; inspired by the conviction that the future is open and can be influenced; sustained through moral dialogue; and generative of positive affect and action" (1017). The research journey is essentially a journey of hope. Intellectually, we are persuaded that science is the social enterprise of a community of scholars. Our own experience and that of our colleagues (for example, as reported in Frost and Stablein 1992) confirms the importance of human relationship in advancing organizational scholarship. As an applied form of inquiry, we experience the community as a hopeful one, dedicated to viewing the future as open to positive change. As scholars with emancipatory leanings, we have found the community to usually be open to dialogue and minority voices. For the most part, our experience of the community has been an arena of positive affect and fondness. Any contribution that we have made owes much to our colleagues in this community of scholars. Hopefulness promotes the renewal of research journeys.