



THE FOUR ROOMS OF CHANGE

A Brief History of the Four Rooms of Change

The Origins of a Theory

The year was 1964 and a new generation of Swedish film directors including Ingmar Bergman and Vilgot Sjöman were making films which stretched the boundaries of acceptability of what could be shown on screen. Sjöman, who went on to direct the highly controversial films *I Am Curious (Yellow)* in 1967 and *I Am Curious (Blue)* in 1968, had just made the film *491*. The reaction from some elements of Swedish society was of disgust and outrage which then led to the film being banned. The ban, in turn, then triggered a violent debate as there were other elements of the society that insisted that the films be released and that any form of film censorship was unacceptable. [In fact, the film *491* was later released after certain scenes were cut.] It has been even suggested by some social commentators that Vilgot Sjöman's film may have led to the foundation of the Christian Democratic Party in 1965.

The Swedish Film Institute was provided with some funding to conduct some research in the matter of the 'possibly brutalizing and harmfully exciting' effects of films. Harry Schein, the Film Institute's director asked Professor Arne Trankell who was a Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Education, Stockholm University for his help in conducting some research and Trankell, in turn, recommended a young and relatively inexperienced post-graduate student of Psychology, Claes Janssen. The question soon became; why are some people so passionately for film censorship and others equally passionately against it? Was there some psychological explanation of this conflict which had erupted within Swedish society?

This research question ultimately led to Claes Janssen's 1975 thesis in the field of individual and collective self-censorship and defense mechanisms and his first book titled 'Personal Dialectics: Self-Censorship, Outsider's Experiences and Integration'. Essentially the 'Outsider Scale' captured the idea that there are two alternative ways that people tend to experience themselves, their relationships with others and the world around them. Claes found that there are two very distinct – and conflicting - perspectives or views of reality. People at one end of the spectrum are willing to censor reality in order to feel and be seen as normal while people at the other end of the scale prefer the truth and will take the risk of being seen as odd or abnormal.

The Outsider Scale took its name from a book 'The Outsider' from Colin Wilson which was published in 1956. The central idea of the book is that the health of a society can be measured by how it treats its 'outsiders'; that small proportion of people who do not fit in. Wilson argued that cultures which incorporate and tolerate outsiders get to enjoy their knowledge and creative contributions whereas cultures which alienate, rejecting and repress them, risk losing the contributions of their visionaries and innovators. Wilson also saw many outsiders as failures since they didn't fulfil their full potential and gave up on the task of creating meaning in their lives life by being overly active or overly passive. Wilson estimated that 1 in 20 people were outsiders.

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

Drottningatan 55
SE-111 21 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: +46 8 677 00 30
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

200 South Peyton Street
Alexandria Va 22314, USA
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Clarion Learning P/L

13 Wakefield Street
North Manly NSW 2100, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9939 7017
Fax: +61 2 9939 7016
info@clarionlearning.com.au
www.clarionlearning.com.au



THE FOUR ROOMS OF CHANGE

Further Research with the Outsider Scale

Claes Janssen found that people who were extremely unwilling to censor reality would often describe themselves as 'outsiders'. By working with the Outsider Scale, he was able to show that a far greater proportion of people had an 'outsider experience' than Wilson had initially estimated. Claes demonstrated that closer to 1 in 8 people were 'typical outsiders' as his research with the Outsider Scale showed that the experience that Wilson had described was, in fact, a character trait with an approximately normal distribution. In the book, Colin Wilson talks about a 'heightened sense of unreality' as an experience common to outsiders and this forms the basis of one of the questions in what Claes was to name the 'Outsider Scale'.

Now realizing that he had discovered a personality construct, Claes went on to test and validate his theory by correlating the Outsider Scale with a huge number of other constructs and psychometric instruments including creativity, authoritarianism, gender-role identification and the four dimensions of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

The YES-NO Conflict, Lipton Tea and the Four Rooms of Change

Claes Janssen became convinced that the polarization between those people that are willing and those unwilling to censor reality in order to feel and be seen as normal is or might be at the root of most conflicts within and between individuals, groups, organizations and social systems. Claes – who was now an Associate Professor at Stockholm University - then set about finding a way that people might be able to resolve what became known as the 'YES-NO conflict' within themselves. Initially Claes began working with the assumption that this process of personal integration or change would be made up of three distinct stages; firstly denial or pseudo-adjustment, then confusion or maladjustment and finally inspiration or creative change. Colin Wilson might have described the process as moving from a state of boredom, to a sense of unreality and finally a heightened sense of existence.

But something was not quite right.

After struggling with what Claes later described as his 'exhausting' theory of integration or transformation, he decided to visit the famous Scottish psychiatrist and psychotherapist R.D. Laing. Laing was based in London having studied at the Tavistock Clinic from 1956 to 1964 and was known for his views on the causes and treatment of mental dysfunction, anchored in existential philosophy. After listening to Claes Janssen describing both his theory and his concerns, Laing replied 'You have to make them one somehow'. As fate would have it, several frustrating years later Claes returned to London and was waiting, engrossed in thought on a platform in the London Underground when he looked up and saw a poster advertising Lipton's tea. 'Contentment.' it said 'a state of satisfaction with something.' Ah! You could say that this was moment in which the theory of the Four Rooms of Change was conceived.

Contentment was the missing link and the theory was finally whole.

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

Drottninggatan 55
SE-111 21 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: +46 8 677 00 30
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

200 South Peyton Street
Alexandria Va 22314, USA
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Clarion Learning P/L

13 Wakefield Street
North Manly NSW 2100, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9939 7017
Fax: +61 2 9939 7016
info@clarionlearning.com.au
www.clarionlearning.com.au



THE FOUR ROOMS OF CHANGE

Building the Theory through Consensus, Productive Workplaces

Claes spent much of the following decade teaching at Stockholm University as well as exploring and perfecting the theory while developing a method of building the theory of *Fyrarummaren* or the Four Rooms of Change with a group through consensus; an approach which is still used today. The approach involves asking the group to imagine both a 'typical No-Answerer' and a 'typical Yes-Answerer' and how they might be perceived. Once the people in the group recognize that anyone might be viewed in that way depending upon the situation we find ourselves in, they are able access their own experience of the YES-NO conflict within their personal and professional lives and make a real connection with the Four Rooms of Change.

In 1979 Claes Janssen was introduced to an American OD consultant named Marvin Weisbord at a conference in the United States. Claes sketched out his theory of the Four Rooms of Change for Marvin who immediately saw its potential application in organizations and began using the theory to support his OD work. In 1987, Claes' theory was published for the first time in English in Marvin's book 'Productive Workplaces: Organizing and Managing for Dignity, Meaning, and Community'. Later Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff were to use the theory as one of the key theoretical foundations of their Future Search methodology. In fact, a Future Search Conference is often described as a journey through the Four Rooms of Change.

Today the books *Productive Workplaces*, *Discovering Common Ground* (1992), *Future Search* (2000) and *Don't Just Do Something, Stand There!* (2007) remain a common way for English speakers to hear about the theory. In the early 1990s an unauthorized – and erroneous – version, known as the 'Change House', spread through the executive education sector. But – of course - the best was still to come.

Bengt Lindstrom and the Organizational Barometer

Bengt Lindstrom is a Swedish OD consultant who had been working with the Outsider Scale and the Four Rooms of Change since the early 1980s. It was only in 1993, when Bengt was asked to conduct some work in English for an international organization that he realized that he would need to track down the originator, Claes Janssen to gain his permission to work with a translated version of the tool. Initially unsure of whether Claes would still be alive, you can imagine Bengt's joy when he discovered that not only was he alive but also actively working with the theory. When Bengt asked Claes about the Personal Dialectics and the Outsider Scale he famously replied, 'I've got something better than that.' It was the Organizational Barometer.

Originally designed as an anonymous survey, Bengt worked with Claes to redesign the tool as a real-time organizational diagnosis which incorporated both data gathering and feedback into a single elegant solution. Thus removing the need, as Bengt says, 'for consultants to sit and write a report about something we know almost nothing about'. In 1997, the first certification program was conducted in Stockholm, Sweden and soon afterwards in 1998, certification in English in the US began.

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

Drottninggatan 55
SE-111 21 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: +46 8 677 00 30
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

200 South Peyton Street
Alexandria Va 22314, USA
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Clarion Learning P/L

13 Wakefield Street
North Manly NSW 2100, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9939 7017
Fax: +61 2 9939 7016
info@clarionlearning.com.au
www.clarionlearning.com.au



THE FOUR ROOMS OF CHANGE

Ulla Janssen and the Children's Four Rooms of Change

In the year 2000, Ulla Janssen used faces to introduce the Four Rooms of Change to the kids in her class at the Vasakolan Primary School in Strangnas, Sweden. Rather than attempt to change destructive behaviours, working with the Four Rooms of Change helped the children to develop emotional self-awareness, self-regulation and empathy for others. Teachers report that the classroom climate has improved with pupils more concentrated and focused on their schoolwork and - most astonishingly - bullying has disappeared and the tendency to bully has almost disappeared.

Several years later and after that first group of children who been introduced to the Children's Four Rooms while at the Vasakolan Primary School had moved on to secondary schools, a reunion was organized. It was at this reunion that the children expressed their sense of loss now that the Children's Four Rooms was no longer used at school and talked passionately about their desire to keep using the tools. In fact, several of the children had started using the Four Rooms at home with their families and they shared how sad they were that friends from their new school had missed out on the experience. Inspired by this conversation, the team at Ander & Lindstrom Partners worked with the children and developed Classroom Barometers for use in both primary school and secondary school environments.

More recently the 'Four Rooms of Change in Schools Project' has expanded into other schools in Sweden, Finland and now to Australia where in 2011, Swinburne University will be conducting a study into the impact of the Four Rooms of Change on Emotional Intelligence in kids from both primary and secondary schools in the State of Victoria. The results of the research are due to be published in early 2012.

Customization and Globalization

Today, there are over 200 active users of the Four Rooms of Change tools across the world. Further customization of the Organizational Barometer has been carried out with specific applications of the tool now available for work groups, classrooms, families, sports teams, leadership groups and gender and cultural diversity work.

Over the past decade, a number of organizations from both the corporate, not-for-profit and public sector - including IKEA, Unicef and the City of Malmö – have brought the Four Rooms of Change and its associated tools into their organizations by running internal certification programs. Users from within the global network are discovering how the Four Rooms can be used to support specific areas of organizational transformation such as the implementation of LEAN processes and thinking and post-merger and acquisition integration processes.

Today, Claes Janssen is still actively involved in the process of research and development into further applications of the Four Rooms of Change.

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

Drottninggatan 55
SE-111 21 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: +46 8 677 00 30
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Ander & Lindstrom Partners

200 South Peyton Street
Alexandria Va 22314, USA
info@andolin.com
www.andolin.com

Clarion Learning P/L

13 Wakefield Street
North Manly NSW 2100, Australia
Tel: +61 2 9939 7017
Fax: +61 2 9939 7016
info@clarionlearning.com.au
www.clarionlearning.com.au