

## **Exploring a Non-profit Organization's Character, Soul, and Spirit through a Behavior Conditioning Model**

**Dr. Dana Brooks Hart**  
**Ms. Mary K. Wilhelm-Chapin**  
**Ms. Helen E. Stepowany**  
**Dr. Thomas C. Curnow**

Utica College  
1600 Burrstone Road  
Utica, NY 13502, USA.

### **Abstract**

*Non-profit health and human service organizations are besieged with change mandates by government, stakeholder, and constituent groups. An organization's identity can become blurred or misaligned with its mission during times of change. In this study we uncovered stakeholders' perceptions of the organization's character, soul, and spirit that define its' unique identity and maintain alignment with the core mission and vision. An appreciative inquiry approach was used to capture the stories of stakeholders who described the journey of a 30-year old organization serving individuals with intellectual disabilities. The shared beliefs and values across seven behavior change conditions were aggregated through a Delphi technique to form the organization's holistic community model. The study results offer a replicable framework and process for organizations to align their strategic planning and change interventions with stakeholder perceived identity as a community.*

**Keywords:** Organization assessment, behavior conditioning, appreciative inquiry, developmental disabilities

### **1. Introduction**

In consideration of the Olmstead Decision of 1999 and ongoing Medicaid reform activities affecting persons with disabilities, we were asked by Pathfinder Village (PV), a non-profit organization located in upstate New York, to conduct an organization assessment that would "allow us to assess the positive effect of our village community philosophy and culture on the individuals we serve" (H. Stepowany, personal communication, December 29, 2011). The organization's interest in a study was threefold: affirmation of the value of current practices, determination of alignment among stakeholder groups, and transcription of the collective voice of the organization. The goal of the study was to solicit the Village's stakeholder's perception of the value of the village and "sense of community" of four stakeholder groups: residents with disabilities, staff, senior leaders and board members, and families or guardians.

Ultimately, Pathfinder Village's senior leaders sought to affirm their mission "...that each life may find meaning"<sup>®</sup> and to gain greater clarity on what constitutes "community" for the men and women who live at Pathfinder Village and for their stakeholders. The study was also undertaken in preparation for the projected external social, economic, and political changes that would transform the disabilities service environment and redefine what community means for people with developmental disabilities. The Behavior Conditioning Model (BCM) developed by Hart (2013) offered a comprehensive framework for capturing and aggregating stakeholder's stories to uncover and develop a PV model that could guide future initiatives. An appreciative inquiry approach was used to capture the stories of participants reflective of the day-to-day rhythms of the community environment.

The resulting PV model represents the elements of behavior conditioning evident within the organization that frame the conditions for development and sustainability of PV character, soul, and spirit centered around its mission, vision, and values.

## **2.0 Rationale**

Traditional organization assessment focuses on making an evaluative judgment on an organization's strengths and weaknesses to a prescribed standard. This approach is limited in its ability to capture "what makes the organization tick." The organization's energy, traditions, and behaviors may be marginalized in a checklist of attribution pluses and minuses. Traditional assessments typically focus more on document assessment review and less on conversations with the stakeholders, as often time and cost constraints mitigate the dialogue with stakeholders (Marshak & Grant, 2008). Pathfinder Village's community setting and approach did not lend itself to the traditional assessment format, nor would the traditional format provide a description of the collective voice of village stakeholders (Van de Ven, 1976). We present a study based on a non-prescriptive approach to uncovering the conditions that define the organization in its own terms and actions. The approach captured the perceptions of the collective behaviors that underlie the organization's stated mission, vision, and values.

Organization development and change has historically been approached using problem solving techniques coupled with set guidelines and standards (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). The accompanying organization assessment is often prescriptive using scaled survey tools or comparative quantitative analysis of practices (i.e. Baldrige Quality Assessment, ISO 9002). In 1987, Cooper rider and Srivastva (as cited in Bushe and Kassam, 2005) proposed that when exploring an organization's culture, a focus on creating new knowledge and models can elicit positive and sustained organizational transformation. Furthermore, Bushe and Kassam (2005) stressed that a focus on how people think and move forward from a stated point in time allows for "self-organizing change processes" (p. 161). Hence, our approach to the study was centered on discovering the stakeholder's perceptions of the strengths of the organization. These strengths were described in stories about the traditions, current practices, and vision for the organization. The study design used an appreciative inquiry approach.

The Behavior Conditioning Model (BCM) was selected as a framework for the assessment due to its organic nature and comprehensive approach to understanding the character, soul, and spirit of an organization. In this case, organic means non-prescriptive and non-deterministic. Comprehensive refers to the inclusion of the multiple conditions in behavior change theory research, from readiness to change to development and integration of new behaviors. The BCM is based in the development of an individual's character, soul and spirit through the interaction of seven elements of the behavior change model. These elements emanated from a prior literature meta-analysis of over 135 journal articles on behavior change models and theories. The resulting model provided a framework to explore the organization from an individual and a collective lens.

Healthy organizations do as healthy individuals do and so turned to focus on individual perceptions in selecting an approach for developing a comprehensive organizational assessment (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, & Smith, 1999). We were interested in a tool that would allow us to include every individual who wished to participate and share their story about the role Pathfinder Village had played in their lives. Thus, the tool had to be easily adapted for interviews with senior leaders, family members, staff, and residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The organization's mission "...that each life may find meaning"<sup>®</sup> was central to the interview questions as it encapsulated the organization's identity-character, soul, and spirit.

The assessment of an organization's character, soul, and spirit was based on the qualitative interview data collected. We believed that an appreciative inquiry approach would heighten the stakeholder's perception of the "sense of community" at Pathfinder Village as defined by its collective character, soul, and spirit (Gray, Stensaker, & Jansen, 2012). Integrating the comprehensive Behavior Conditioning Model with the appreciative inquiry approach provided an organization assessment that uncovered the core conditions of the organization's pathway to success.

## **3.0 Study Method**

Based on the BCM, a set of interview probes was developed to guide the conversations around the elements that contributed to Pathfinder Village's character, soul, and spirit (Hart, 2014). Four sets of parallel questions were developed, one specific to each stakeholder group: senior leaders and board, staff, residents, and family members or guardians.

For example, the question for senior leaders “How does the organization think?” Was adapted to “How does the organization define staff learning?” for staff and “What do you do to learn?” for residents. Multiple questions and probes were constructed for each of the BCM conditions.

The stakeholder inquiry was conducted over the course of nine months. An Internal Review Board (IRB) application was approved prior to the commencing of the study. All senior leaders, staff, residents, and family members were invited to participate. Sixteen of the 64 (25%) residents participated, four with the assistance of adaptive computer technology. Thirteen senior leaders, 77 staff members, and 22 family members or guardians were interviewed (N=128). Four interview teams comprised of an interviewer and a scribe conducted the face-to-face interviews at the Village. Interviews with the board members, family members or guardians, and the Village founder took place off-site or via telephone. The interview protocol included audio-recording and note taking by the interviewer and scribe. Two interview teams conducted their first four interviews together to provide uniformity of inquiry. Audiotapes were reviewed within 24 hours with notes verified and augmented at this time. Quotations were also transcribed for future coding and interpretation. Interviews were discussed among the research team throughout the data collection phase with adjustments made to the language of the probes and questions to reflect emerging themes and topics. The continual adjustment led to a model built by consensus within each stakeholder group guided by participant language.

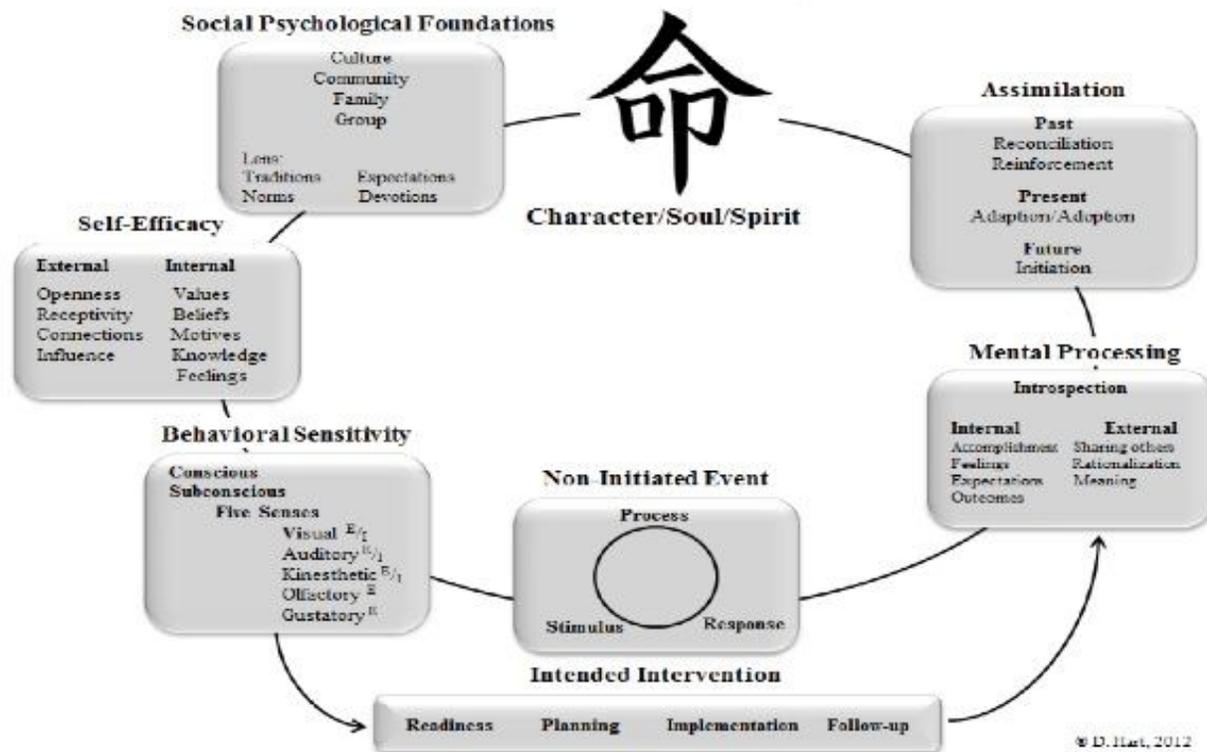
The interviews were semi-structured based on a set of interview questions unique to each group. The initial questions were broad so that the participants would share their thoughts on each element of the Behavior Conditioning Model (BCM). Participants were encouraged to share stories and elaborate on their responses through the use of an appreciative inquiry approach. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes, with the majority lasting 45 minutes in length. An ethnographic analysis was used to capture a holistic representation of the interviews. Sentences and phrases were examined for themes such as community, future, individuality, and vision. These themes were mapped by stakeholder group to the Behavior Conditioning Model. Based on the collective responses the research team and senior leaders developed the Pathfinder Village Model. The PV Model was printed and disseminated to shareholder and community leaders in the fall 2013 (Figure 2).

### **3.1 Study Framework: Behavior Conditioning Model**

The literature on effective behavior interventions and behavior change is replete with studies in behavior change theories and interventions. The BCM was developed through a study of 135 peer-reviewed journal articles on effective methods for individual change associated with healthcare interventions (Hart 2014). The resulting model sought to capture a comprehensive framework centered on the development of an individual’s character, soul, and spirit. Hart (2014) defined character as “the demonstrable consistency of external behaviors recognized by self and others” (p. 120); soul as “the internal thought process consistently descriptive of one’s introspective beliefs and values” (p. 120); and spirit as “the energy emitted from the mind/body connection to the environment” (p. 120).

The BCM consists of seven elements: social psychological foundation, self-efficacy, behavioral sensitivity, non-initiated event, intended intervention, mental processing, and assimilation. These elements are a synthesis of the prevailing constructs in behavior change theories (see Bandura, 1995; Burley & Freier, 2004; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992) contributing to the development of an individual’s character, soul, and spirit. The elements provide a structure to understand those internal conditions imposed on behaviors that individuals subscribe to, both consciously and unconsciously, to make sense of their world.

## Behavior Conditioning Model



**Figure 1.** Behavior Conditioning Model. Adapted from “Conceptualizing a Theoretical Model of Behavior Conditioning Theories,” by D. B. Hart, 2014, *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5, p. 120. Reprinted with permission.

The model displays the elements in a counter-clockwise cycle; however each exists and interacts simultaneously, defining and developing the individual’s character, soul and spirit. The BCM offers practitioners an explanation of the cognitive and emotional factors that may affect the readiness for change and the success of planned change (Hart, 2014).

### 3.2 Study Approach: Appreciative Inquiry

Cooper rider’s appreciative inquiry approach differs from traditional change models in that it does not prescribe or adhere to a single change process model (Bushe & Kassam, 2005). The appreciative inquiry approach uses questions to express in words “what is” and “what can be” (Bushe, 2011).

In his own words, Bush suggested that “appreciative inquiry seeks these new images in and among people’s best intentions and noblest aspirations, attempting a collective envisioning of what the group could be at its very best” (Bushe, 2011, p. 89). The appreciative inquiry approach was integrated with the BCM structure to capture stories and examples rich in the language and emotion of the participants.

### 3.3 Study Findings

The seven BCM elements provided the structure for data interpretation forming a collective model of PV stakeholder perceptions. Beginning with the defining of the organization’s identity described as its “character, soul, and spirit” and working through the seven elements evident in behavior change literature as essential to growth and development of that “character, soul and spirit”, interview data was mapped to each element. The idea was to capture the experiences of the participants to see how they interpreted each of the seven elements with respect to the organization to create a comprehensive snapshot of Pathfinder Village’s past and current practices. The resulting BCM maps of each stakeholder group visually illustrate the primary (most often talked about) conditions of the organization. The universal thoughts and characteristics were synthesized into the final Pathfinder Village community map (Figure 2).

#### **4.0 Character, Soul, and Spirit**

The three concepts of character, soul, and spirit were defined by the stakeholders in their own stories of Village experience. Of significance in the data analysis was the focus on each individual's contribution and engagement. One parent noted "Pathfinder offers complimentary exploratory paths, unlike any educational service organization. Often their staff flexibility in creating meaning supersedes the activity or route taken" (Parent interview, personal communication, December, 2012). "We seek meaningful level playing field where the notion of disability disappears. We are all humans with same sensitivities, caring nature, and focus on 'we'" (Staff interview, personal communication, December, 2012). The researchers found from the preponderance of stakeholders (70%) that the soul traits aspired to by staff members and promoted by parent or guardians connected directly to the mission of "...that each life may find meaning"®. An additional analysis of the Individual Service Plans (ISP) and the Individual Educational Plans (IEP) substantiated the level and extent of engagement. The dimension of spirit was recognized by over 90% of participants as a sense of belonging and gift giving (The Kennedy Willis Center at Pathfinder Village [KWC], 2014). A significant finding was the evidence that within the Village all residents, staff members, and leaders are equal and contributors in their own way.

#### **4.1 Social Psychological Foundation**

The social psychological inquiry consisted of exploring the perceptions of stakeholders' engagement within the Village and external community. A number of internal and external communities were mentioned by participants as adding value to the daily lives of all in a synergistic manner. The community setting was described by many as a commonwealth of small residential homes (seven) in a setting resounding of a family atmosphere, social engagement and learning, and community outreach and contribution. One leader described the organization's growth stating "our evolution from isolation to protectionism to community engagement, involvement to interdependency has allowed residents and staff to enhance their independence" (Leader interview, personal communication, December, 2012). A staff member shared her experiences with others noting "we try to churn up meaningful interactions with everyone we talk to regardless of their connections to the Village" (Staff interview, personal communication, September 2012).

#### **4.2 Self-efficacy**

The focus on developing each individual (including staff) to his/her fullest potential was a resounding mantra of staff and leaders. Through educational, vocational, athletic, social, and artistic activities inside and outside the Village borders, residents are encouraged to engage and contribute to the greater regional community. One resident told the story of receiving a staff shirt to wear while working in the bakery: "It is expected we all will contribute and we do. I just got a staff shirt. I wear it every day" (Resident interview, personal communication, June 2012). Inquiry on how the organization builds and promotes "self-efficacy" was exemplified through stakeholders' community engagement, reciprocity of service, and sharing of event facilities.

#### **4.3 Behavioral Sensitivity**

The research team sought to understand the intricacies of the relationships among the stakeholders to capture and demonstrate behavioral connections and linkages to maintain the organization's sustainability. Responses from senior leaders focused on engagement in planning and development, support within the leadership team, and upholding agreements. Staff members shared their desire for visible leadership, uniform policies, and active engagement in organization practices and decisions. Parents and guardians shared their appreciation for the happiness and holistic experiences, degree and amount of communication, and availability of the staff members and leaders. Residents expressed their appreciation for the family structure of the houses, the connections with other residents and staff members, and support of their accomplishments. These were the key indicators perceived as valued to the creation of a positive experience for all (KWC, 2014).

#### **4.4 Non-initiated Events**

The organization's name resonates with the sense of creating life paths and pathways of growth and development. The founder shared the story of creating the organization mission, structures, and the naming of the village: "my husband and I were on a perilous washed out road in Peru with a native driver barely forging our way over a mountain pass. As we came out safely, I likened the experience to what the lives of our residents must feel on a daily basis. The journey of the 'Pathfinder' became the naming convention that we adopted to assure that each life may have a meaningful and safe journey" (Leader interview, personal communication, May 2012).

Interviews confirmed that the daily life of the Village routine structures and processes support the effectiveness and efficiency of meeting all stakeholder expectations. The Village was founded to offer an ever-expanding environment to residents and staff. Whether through Village facility and programmatic expansion or networks with regional partners, the environment has expanded and provided a “worldly” inclusion into educational, social, travel, arts, physical, mental networks in multiple regional, state, and national linkages. Of particular note, the data summary indicated that 90% of the stakeholders named 150 unique community linkages and experiences as critical to inclusive Pathfinder Village relationships. In the first six months of 2016, 18,000 in Village activities were recorded documenting such engagements. Additionally, 80% of the participants believed the school and post-secondary activities were the second most important valued PV enterprise (KWC, 2014).

#### **4.5 Intended Intervention**

Pathfinder Village had four key planned and executed interventions during the nine months that the research was conducted. The value of the initiatives was discussed with 77 staff members and 22 parents or guardians. The majority of participants repeated several positive comments:

- 80% indicated that the K-12 school with lifelong learning programs was critical to Pathfinder Village success.
- 80% agreed that the business partnerships were strong in the community yet, noted their awareness of the difficulty of sustaining resident work opportunities.
- 75% believed Pathfinder Village leaders were dynamic in their leadership as advocates of Village initiatives addressing governmental policy, fundraising, and personal and business relationships (KWC, 2014).

Recent introduction of a research based residential support model received mixed reviews. Over 90% of the participants commented that the care philosophy was unclear. However, 50% stated that the initiative ‘straining sessions had good value and would impact the organization over time (KWC, 2014).

We proposed that future initiatives be reviewed for alignment with the Pathfinder Village Model developed through this study. By examining new initiatives based on the seven elements, the organization’s leaders can continue to make strategy adjustments aligned with their core mission and values.

#### **4.6 Mental Processing**

Mental processing refers to the thoughtful dialogue of experiences as a discernable integration practice among staff, residents, families, and senior leaders. The importance of reflection on activities and events was referred to as an “endearing feature” of Pathfinder’s learning process. All stakeholder groups described the importance of traditional storytelling and dialogue among the community. The interview data provided a range of responses and may be an area for further development, particularly when undertaking a new initiative. Over 50% of the respondents believed stronger emphasis and time scheduling would add value to everyone’s education. Continued focus and inclusion of reflection as a part of the organization’s practices was reported (KWC, 2014). In the words of one leader, “We uniquely stress how to process events, activities to reinforce positive behaviors for both staff and resident’s learning” (Leader interview, personal communication, December 2012). A staff member articulated his thinking as “we are always coming full circle with our dreams, actions, and reflections. I believe this is our charge to facilitate...” (Staff interview, personal communication, September 2012).

#### **4.7 Assimilation**

The assimilation element refers to the process of mind full connection to the past, present, and future patterns of behavior to one’s perception of character, soul, and spirit. For the purposes of creating the Pathfinder Village Model, this element represents how the organization’s leaders and staff engage in new strategies, processes, and tactics to guide changes in the organization’s operations. The critical learning’s from element inquiry came from vivid discussions of past experiences and how they assimilated into present day practices. The responses from the 128 interviews indicated that storytelling was the most valued method for preserving the admired qualities and processes of the organization. Contributions to the organization, communication of stakeholder engagement, and significant emotional events each represented 15% of the remaining responses detailing how experiences became core values and beliefs of the organization (Carswell, 2012).

## 5.0 Discussion

The results of the study were summarized in two documents: *Pathfinder Village: a Report on Study Findings* (Leadership Institute, 2013) and *Research Study of Pathfinder Village: Understanding Stakeholder Perception of the Impact of the Pathfinder Village Community, Philosophy, and Culture on the Residents and Families Served* (KWC, 2014). These documents presented the study process and approach in two ways. The study overview presented the results in a format primarily for parent or guardians and staff. The second was a quantitative report presented to senior leaders and Board of Directors. While the consistency of the message and value proposition was inherent in both documents, the senior leaders sought a different synopsis for their use and application to future engagement with external stakeholders and benchmarking of best practices. Highlights of the documents were organized in the dimensions of the modified descriptors of the Behavior Conditioning Model.

Analysis of the perceptions gathered throughout the interviews yielded themes that were consistently expressed by leaders, parents, residents, and staff. Interview responses were synthesized both within each group and between groups to create a model of behavioral conditions or practices specific to Pathfinder Village. Through triangulating the data from the stakeholder groups, the research team created the following statements descriptive of patterns of behavior substantiating the themes:

- The more aligned the stakeholder groups were towards a visionary project, the greater the speed of adoption and the resultant sustainability.
- The Behavior Conditioning Model elements guided inquiry frameworks for uncovering key conditions of the organization's behavior.
- The concept of change is a non-sequitur in conversations of organization development. The participants described the Village as an "evolving setting naturally adapting to our vision." (Staff Interview, personal communication, July 2012).

The emerging themes in the data from the families, residents, and staff members led us to continue to explore the processes (how) and rationale (why) that were descriptive of Pathfinder Village life. For example, an organizational initiative in restructuring the school was discussed as an "evolving move" to enhance student and staff engagement. The patterns of language and behaviors gave us valued information on the consistency of data and internal message and execution of Village direction.

The resulting Pathfinder Village Community Model offers a unique value in understanding how the Village has evolved. It offers a guide for personal as well as organization exploration and assessment. Through the model emerging from the stakeholders, we believe that the Village wealth can be further promoted as a unifying life enhancing process for all who touch the Village. The model depicts the core elements constantly in focus as the Village members enrich their community (Leadership Institute, 2013).

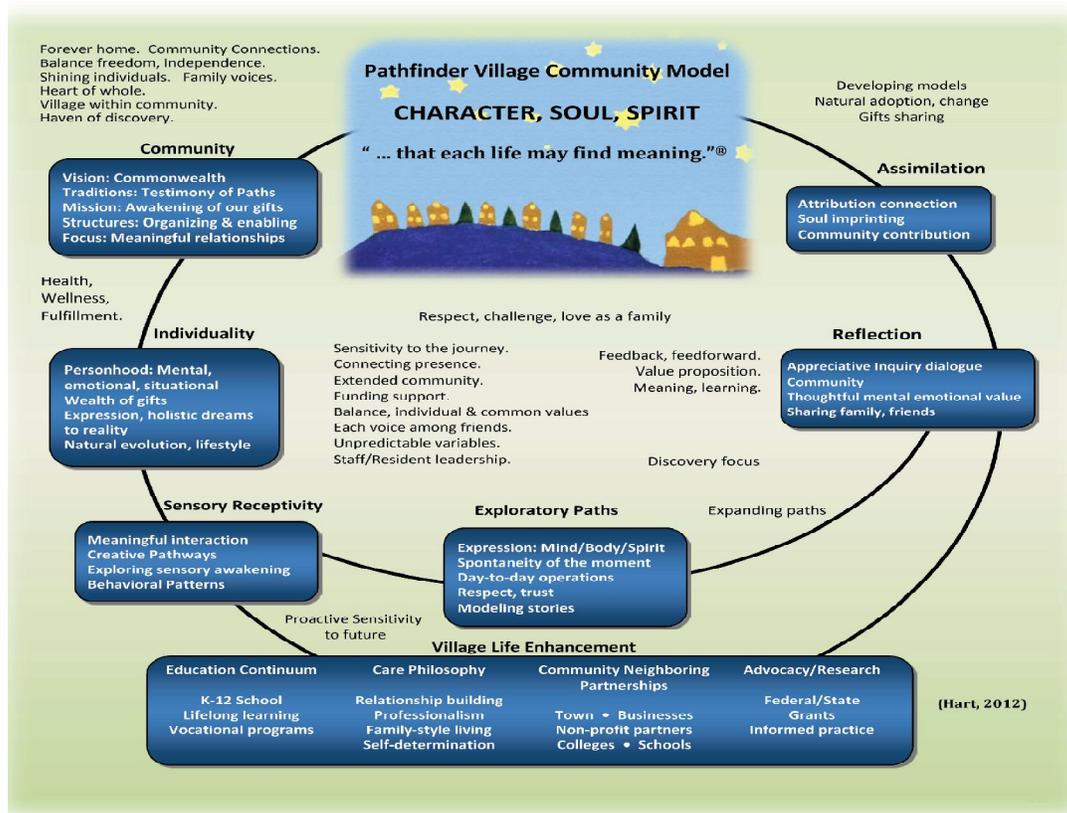


Figure 2: Pathfinder Village Community Model. Adapted from “A Research Study of Pathfinder Village: Understanding Stakeholder Perception of the Impact of the Pathfinder Village Community, Philosophy, and Culture on the Residents and Families Served,” by The Kennedy Willis Center at Pathfinder Village, 2014. Reprinted with permission.

While the PV Model evolved from the initial BCM structure, seven new elements to the model emerged as themes from the collective voices of the stakeholders.

### 5.1 Affirmation of the Value of Current Practices

The eagerness and energy with which most participants discussed Pathfinder Village was surprising with each interview. New stories were shared each time the question was asked indicating that Pathfinder Village had touched the lives of many in subtle and not so subtle ways. One staff member cried as she shared how she had worked at Pathfinder previously and had left for a higher pay rate and felt like she had returned home, indicative of the employee relation practices that exist at Pathfinder. The phrase “one of the families” appeared in 74 interview transcripts. Highlights from the interviews were:

- A parent/guardian member spoke of “the village is the family to our son; we are a part of the extended family” (Parent interview, personal communication, May 2012).
- A resident advisor defined the family concept as “we are all equal with varied gifts contributing to the “we” as a kindred spirit” (Resident advisor interview, personal communication, August 2012).
- A leader explained that “the common quest of care, safety, and fellowship permeates all of our lives in and out of the community-indeed we are a spiritual family” (Leader interview, personal communication, November 2012).

Key to the continued success for Pathfinder Village is the use of the energy generated during the joint creation of the Pathfinder model to ignite interest in intended interventions. The use of the common language and identified common perceived value touch points of the stakeholder groups may also be helpful in sustaining the organization through change. Uncovering the evolutionary elements that have enlivened “...that each life may find meaning”® can be a transcending guide to a sustainable future.

## 5.2 Determination of Alignment among Stakeholder Groups

The findings provided a consistent depiction of the Village life as a great equalizer in enabling and fostering individuals with developmental disabilities, family members, staff members, and leaders to actively engage in a supportive community that has endured for more than 30 years. Conversations centered on residents without mention of disabilities. Further review of the perceptions through dialogue with these stakeholders verified the themes and constructs that depict the evolutionary flow of Village processes.

The Pathfinder Village model provides a synthesis tool to guide further dialogue in understanding and measuring the value of the Village life. Key areas of alignment among the stakeholder groups were captured:

- Character, soul, and spirit are revered through discovery of shared experiences, individual understanding, stakeholder roles and value, and the life journey commitment.
- The Pathfinder Village community can be modeled and serve as a guide, a framework for learning, a structure of new initiatives, and an articulation of life pathways for other organizations. An organizational model emerged as a framework to describe the organization's patterns of life – or ways of engagement in the environment. While likened to corporate domains, this study is a grassroots interpretation to meaningful lives.
- Stakeholder groups all spoke the same language of community, values, and beliefs, enriching partner connections, safety, freedom, honoring individual gifts. The Village was universally mentioned as an equalizer of personal worth, engagement, and contribution.
- The interview approach of appreciative inquiry coupled with the design and development research method uncovered behavioral conditions and evolving patterns with similar construct domains as in the behavioral conditioning model.
- Organizations can achieve sustainable excellence through internal belief systems guided by tradition, visionary leadership, and evolutionary innovations.
- Through ongoing appreciative inquiry stories, event sharing, and collective activities, the organization's stakeholders can meaningfully define and assimilate the key elements that guide recognizable life (Leadership Institute, 2013).

“...that each life may find meaning”<sup>®</sup> is a resonating collective voice that is supported through an evolutionary Pathfinder Village model.

## 5.3 Transcription of the Collective Voice of the Organization

Founded with the vision of providing a “freeing environment” through which individuals with intellectual disabilities could experience community living, friendships, and a life shaped through self-determination, the planned community model of Pathfinder Village offers the opportunity to broaden the concept of “least restrictive environment” for the greater disabilities community. Least restrictive environment must not be defined as where a person receives services; it must be about the positive, meaningful life outcomes that a person with a disability is able to experience. A resident remarked that as family “we are on the same journey and make stories together...” and another referred to the excitement of new experiences and interests that grow naturally at home and in the community” (Resident interview, personal communication, June 2012). The research team sought to first collect the individual stakeholder group perceptions of the community life, and then through coding and element review decipher the collective voice capturing all stakeholder perceptions.

Cameron and Quinn (2011) stated “A major problem in many organizations facing the need to change their cultures is that no language exists, no key elements or dimensions have been identified, and no common perspective is available to help the conversation even get started” (Overview section, Para. 4). They go on to propose congruence of an organization's culture is necessary to achieve high performance. The combined appreciative inquiry approach with the model captured the key elements of the organization in each condition of the behavior change framework in the words of the stakeholders. The resulting model is representative of the culture that has sustained Pathfinder Village and led it to high performance.

## 5.4 Benefits of the Behavior Conditioning Model as Organization Assessment

The adaption of the Behavior Conditioning Model for use as an organization assessment instrument provided a framework that was understandable to all stakeholder groups. Conversations framed by the model were fluid, allowing the participants to speak with passion about the positive and negative aspects of their lives at the Village.

The model in conjunction with the appreciative inquiry approach provided a means to explore the resource conditions and perceptions of an organization's capability to change. These perceptions were mapped for the organization by the stakeholder groups and framed as a collective model. The comprehensive nature of the data offered insight into the organization structure, processes, and norms that meld to create the organization's culture (Kochikar & Ravindra, 2007). The Behavior Conditioning Model framework provided a structured approach to creating questions that could be analyzed as single factor elements as well as correlated to understand the process by which the Village creates daily engagement value, stakeholder value, and organizational meaning. The questions were used as an initial exploration by which supplemental inquiry questions were designed to obtain relevant data without compromising the stakeholder context and milieu. For example, a question to a senior leader could be, "How do you implement the strategic plan?" Whereas a question to a resident was, "How do we create the future?" or a staff member, "What is your belief of how the future of Pathfinder should unfold?" The BCM acted as a guide to provide a sequential process for the interviewers to standardize an inquiry approach, use appreciative inquiry probing, and solicit meaningful responses that could be assimilated and analyzed (Nasim & Sushil, 2011).

### **5.5 Study Limitations**

The Pathfinder Village model provides descriptors of the organization's unique connections. This planned residential community demonstrated a level of consistent, individualized development not found in other types of settings; however, continued exploration into affirming the unifying constructs as well as the manner in which all stakeholders learn and grow in a collective community is recommended. Further observations may offer the opportunity to identify the operational elements that continue to influence this image of the Village. Additional case studies utilizing a similar study process and design are needed to identify the application of the BCM framework as an organizational assessment tool.

### **6.0 Conclusion**

Organizations undergo incremental, substantial, and transformational change throughout their existence. Research on organization development and organization change continues to explore the internal and external factors that contribute to an organization's sustainability. This case study explored the conditions of a small human service organization supporting the needs of individuals with disabilities. The study focused on capturing the voices of four stakeholder groups to uncover their perceptions of the value of the organization. The integration of the BCM elements centered on an organization's character, soul, and spirit provided a structure for stakeholder collective dialogue that clarified and verified the organization's mission and vision. The resulting Pathfinder Village model integrates perceptions of current behaviors, and future expectations presented in an organic and reflective manner. The Pathfinder Village model connects the behavior conditioning elements that are appreciated and evident in the organization from multiple perspectives. The model provides a picture of the organization's conditions for continued success and future growth. The BCM captured these conditional elements that are inherent in the stories, practices, and decisions that enable the stakeholder voices to be heard.

The study results also offer an opportunity for leadership of Pathfinder Village to formally adopt the core elements of the Pathfinder Community Model as the lens through which strategic planning, staff and organizational self-assessment, and support operations can be aligned and prioritized. In addition, the conditions confirmed as part of this study offer a common language that can be incorporated into training content for new and current staff members, for organizational messaging to donors and referral sources, and as a foundation for the ongoing storytelling that will unify the community as a whole on its continued journey to assure "...that each life may find meaning"®.

The seven elements that comprise the Pathfinder Village community model are naturally occurring, unifying constructs that address fundamental needs for individuals with disabilities in their pursuit of a meaningful life characterized by friendships, learning, employment, community contribution, and personal growth. These elements provide a framework through which the quality of life for a person with a developmental disability can be assured. As such, these seven elements should be a consideration in the design and delivery of effective supports for any person who lives with a disability. A further opportunity exists for other organizations to replicate the process in development of their own "model" aligned with their vision, mission, and values. The BCM structure coupled with appreciative inquiry approach provided an adaptable system of inquiry to facilitate creation of a model land process that is organically formed and owned by constituents.

## References

- Bandera, A. (Ed.) (1995). Exercise of personal and collective efficacy in changing societies. In *Self efficacy in changing societies*. (pp. 1-45) Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Burley, T., & Freier, M.C. (2004). Character structure: A gestalt-cognitive theory. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 41(3), 321-331.
- Bushe, G.R. (2011). Appreciative inquiry: Theory and critique. In Boje, D., Burnes, B., & Hassard, J. (Eds.) *the Rutledge companion to organizational change* (pp. 87-103). Oxford, UK: Rutledge.
- Bushed, G. R., & Kassam, A. F. (2005). When is appreciative inquiry transformational: A meta-case analysis. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 41(2), 161-181. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/236325361?accountid=14214>
- Cameron, K. S., & Quinn, R. E. (2011). *Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework*, (3rd ed.). [E-reader Jossey-Bass]. Retrieved from <http://library.books24x7.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/assetviewer.aspx?bookid=40994&chunkid=1&rowid=2>
- Carswell, P. (2012). Strategies for organizational learning in healthcare. *Organization Development Journal*, 30(4), 25-31. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1394399715?accountid=14214>
- Gray, B., Stensaker, I. G., & Jansen, K. J. (2012). Qualitative challenges for complex filing organizational change research: Context, voice, and time. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 48(2), 121-134. doi: 10.1177/0021886312438866
- Hart, D. B. (2013, October). Creating Leadership Character. *Leadership Excellence*. Symposium conducted at The CP of NYS 2013 Annual Conference, Saratoga, NY.
- Hart, D. B. (2014). Conceptualizing a theoretical model of behavior conditioning theories. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 5(13), 118-127.
- Hultman, K., & Hultman, J. (2015). Organization development as identity change. *Organization Development Journal*, 33(3), 39-54. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1705410778?accountid=14214>
- The Kennedy Willis Center at Pathfinder Village. (2014). *A research study of Pathfinder Village: Understanding stakeholder perception of the impact of the Pathfinder Village community, philosophy, and culture on the residents and families served*. Edmeston, NY: Author.
- Kochikar, V. P., P., & Ravindra, M. P., P. (2007). Developing the capability to be agile. *Organization Development Journal*, 25(4), P127-P134. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/198006692?accountid=14214>
- Leadership Institute. (2013). *Pathfinder Village: A report on study findings*. Utica, NY: Author.
- Marshak, R. J., & Grant, D. (2008). Transforming talk: The interplay of discourse, power, and change. *Organization Development Journal*, 26(3), 33-40. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/docview/197996895?accountid=14214>
- Nasim, S, & Sushil. (2011). Revisiting organizational change: Exploring the paradox of managing continuity and change. *Journal of Change Management*, 11(2), 185-206.
- Prochaska, J. D., DiClemente, C. & Norcross, J. C. (1992). In search of how people change: Applications to addictive behaviors. *American Psychologist*, 47, 1102-1114.
- Senge, P., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R., Roth, G., & Smith, B. (1999). *The dance of change: The challenges of sustaining momentum in learning organizations*. New York: Doubleday.
- Van de Ven, A. H. (1976). A framework for organization assessment. *The Academy of Management Review*, 1, 64-78. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/docview/230026891?accountid=14214>