

COMMENTARY ON COMPLEXITY AND SELECTION

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Complexity is not indeterminacy, nor is it chaos. The study of complexity does not entail that lawfulness or predictability are values that have to be left to the history of science. The assumption of determinism and lawfulness in relations between external variables and individual behavior must inform the study of complex systems in the same way that it informs the study of the behavior of individuals.

The concept of complexity implies high ambitions of a scientific approach even though it still remains to be seen if it is possible to bring the same degree of precision and elegance to studies in complexity that we demand from studies of individual behavior. A necessary first step will be to provide a coherent selectionist account of complex systems.

The contingencies described in the present article—interlocking or otherwise—are contingencies for individual behavior. Many of the interlocking contingencies described by Glenn and Malott (2004) may be understood as rules, and the behavior controlled by these contingencies as rule-governed or verbally governed. Rules in any organization are culturally selected, and the contingencies controlling the selection of rules should be of interest. Behavior analysis has the advantage of a conceptually coherent and empirically viable scientific method.

This article represents an important approach in many ways. First; it brings together a scientific approach to organizational behavior management and the selection of cultures in the context of complex systems. This gives us, in addition to a extremely interesting field of exploration, access to a field of science where we share interests with other researchers engaged in sciences such as physics, biology, ecology and economy. This may give us an important impetus to move the science and philosophy of behavior into new areas. Second; the culturally selectionist perspective brings a new understanding of changes in organizations and systems. It elaborates on the connection pointed out by Skinner between natural selections, selection by consequences and the selection of cultures. Third; I think the field of behavior analysis will capitalize on joining the field of complexity, misinterpreted as it has been to represent a simplistic and mechanical approach to human behavior.

REFERENCE

- Glenn, S. S., & Malott, M. E. (2004). Complexity and selection: Implications for organizational change. *Behavior and Social Issues*, 13, 89-106.