

**Era III Leadership:
What Mind/Body Medicine is Teaching Us About Leading Our Organizations**

Michael J. Vandermark, PhD
Vandermark & Associates, Inc.

School of Advanced Studies
The University of Phoenix

Abstract

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In ERA I we operated our organizations like machines. In ERA II we came to understand our organizations are alive with human energy, yet we still claim to fully understand and control them. ERA III is that time in the evolution of organizational leadership when we let go of the need to fully understand and control all people and events in our organizations. It is a time when we join others in disciplines such as medicine, biology and physics who have adjusted to accepting the unexplainable mysteries and miracles of life as part and parcel to their work. This research project was designed to 1) investigate mind/body phenomena as reported in studies published in peer-reviewed, scientific publications, 2) create a meta-analysis of the possible link and usefulness of mind/body research - to include quantum mechanics - as foundations to 3) discuss and present implications related to mind/body research and how knowledge derived from mind/body medicine may be of use to the discipline of organizational behavior and leadership.

The purpose of this paper is to present evidence from the disciplines of mind/body medicine and quantum physics that may be useful as we consider future iterations of leadership and organizational theory. Three eras of leadership are introduced, with emphasis on the third era – Era III – a time when we learn to apply theories and principles we simply do not understand.

Era I

For purposes of this paper, Era I occurred around the time of the Industrial Revolution, from about 1760 to roughly 1900. In terms of the phases of modernity, Era I is best aligned with classical modernity (Osborne, 1991). The era marked the transition to new manufacturing processes and included a shift from hand production methods to machines, new chemical manufacturing and iron production processes, improved efficiency of water power, the increasing use of steam power, and the development of machine tools (Landes, 1969). However, the introduction of mechanized factories had a negative effect on employees. Factory owners who believed in Social Darwinism and Rugged Individualism did not care much about those who worked in their factories. Many believed that if the workers wanted to improve their lives they had to do it on their own. Because no particular strength or skill was required to operate many of the new factory machines, the workers were considered unskilled. This meant they were easily replaced and treated like cogs in a wheel. (“What was the effect,” n.d.).

Era II

Era II, in the context of this research, is presently occurring. Organizations are investigated and treated as living organismic systems (Ackoff, 2006). Effective employees are typically thought of as being competent, high-spirited, involved, team-oriented, and dedicated to the vision of the organization. Successful organizations call upon up, down, and lateral collaboration in the spirit of innovation and change in order to effectively compete or provide essential services.

Rather than being seen as a cog in the wheel, employees are recognized for their humanness and are often rewarded for their critical thinking, problem solving, and higher order cognitive skills. The organization is understood as a living, breathing, collectively intelligent and contributing organism. Leadership is characterized by a number of rational, understandable, and somewhat predictable behaviors along a scale ranging from authoritarian to servant or stewardship-oriented (Block, 2002; Greenleaf, 2002; Kouses & Posner, 1995; Northouse, 2007).

Era III

The third era is yet to be defined by specific dates. Understandably, even the notion of a time when leadership or organizational theory is derived or built upon theories of quantum physics and mind/body medicine may seem absurd to some. Nevertheless, inroads have certainly been developed by authors such as Wheatley (1992) and more recently by Peshawaria (2014) who poses these – more likely than not – baffling questions:

- What if we could communicate with each other over great distances without using the internet or telephony, just by beaming our thoughts?
- What if we could acquire knowledge without reading or listening to someone speak?
- What if we could alter physical reality with just our thoughts?
- What if we could affect our own genes with our thoughts?
- And what if we could break steel or stone just by concentrating our mental energy on it?

The idea of applying leadership and organizational behavior principles and practices built upon theories we *simply do not understand* may certainly be a long time coming. Arguably, the third era may be decades, or even centuries away.

Notwithstanding the argument of the feasibility of Era III concepts within the arena of the scientific study of leadership and organizational functioning, let us continue the exploration of

the emerging research in the disciplines of mind/body medicine. Specifically the work of Dossey (1993), who describes Era III [in the medical community] as a time when applying theories and concepts related to consciousness may appear non-sensical. Dossey (n.d.) writes,

The recently developing Era III goes even further by proposing that consciousness is not confined to one's individual body. Nonlocal mind - mind that is boundless and unlimited - is the hallmark of Era III. An individual's mind may affect not just his or her body, but the body of another person at a distance, even when that distant individual is unaware of the effort. You can think of Era II as illustrating the personal effects of consciousness and Era III as illustrating the transpersonal effects of the mind. (para 3).

Dossey's comment serves as an introductory framework for Era III *leadership*, that is, the notion that consciousness is not confined to one's body and that one's mind may affect not only one's body but the bodies of others represents a rather significant paradigm shift, especially for non-scientific thinking individuals holding to far more traditional beliefs regarding consciousness and the nature of the human brain and mind. Pugh (1978) humorously reminds us of the paradoxical nature of the mind with his comment, "If the brain were simple enough that we could understand it, we would be so simple, we couldn't" (p. 92). An interesting adaptation of Pugh's comment – in light of leaders within organizations – might be "If *leadership* were simple enough that we could understand it, we would be so simple, we couldn't."

Non-Locality

In layman's terms, non-locality may be imagined as an entity popping in and out of existence, as in the case of electrons circling the nucleus of an atom. Or perhaps the notion of "bending" space and time as demonstrated by Einstein's work within the context of relativity. Non-locality is a hard-to-grasp concept for non-physicists, to be sure. Chopra (1991) elegantly

reminds us that quantum physics [including non-locality] is not only stranger than we think, it is stranger than we can think. Dossey (1994) adds that the mind steadfastly refuses to behave locally, and that brain-like tissue is found throughout the human body. Dossey states, “it is difficult if not impossible to follow a strictly local view of the brain” (p. 74). The work of physicist Peat (n.d.) contributes to the phenomena via these remarks,

And here it should be added that even if quantum theory should eventually prove to be a passing theory, non-locality has been experimentally demonstrated as an essential aspect of the universe and must remain an essential part of any future theory (para 3).

In order to further advance the notion of Era III *leadership*, an elementary discussion of mind/body medicine follows, to include scientifically-founded examples of one’s mind affecting one’s body, and of one’s mind affecting the bodies of others – even across dimensions of space and time. I conclude with examples of how Era III leadership may be in its earliest development stages today. I also add beginning thoughts regarding Era III as it unfolds throughout upcoming decades, and perhaps centuries.

My Mind Affects My Body

Does one’s mind affect one’s body? Are the mind and body integrated, and if so, what is the nature of the integration? Goleman and Gurin (1998) as well as Bishop (1994) argue the answer is certainly *yes* to the question of the mind affecting body and elaborate on the nature of the interaction, even to the point of suggesting the body and mind are one in the same. Following are a number of examples supported by scientific research strongly suggesting the human mind affects the human body. Arguably, in the view of some, the human mind **is** the human body.

Effects of Strong Emotions

Rime, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, and Philippot (2011) report that throughout a six-year period - including 170 studies - 87 percent of sudden deaths happened within one hour of an emotional event. According to Pert (see Vickers & Cervine, 2011), the human body is bathed in molecules of emotion – an experience of mind - to the point that even the decision of where to point one's eyeballs and look at something is a function of one's emotional state at the time. And extreme emotions can cause extreme stress and physiological upset within the human body.

Fatal Heart Attacks

In a review of studies examining the frequency, date and time of fatal heart attacks, Kelly-Hayes (1995) mentions a study by James Muller at the Harvard Medical School. Muller reported the most predictable day of the week for heart attacks to occur is Monday. Interestingly, the highest occurrence rate is between eight o'clock a.m. and nine o'clock a.m. The lowest occurrence occurs at five o'clock p.m. One need only consider the nature of activity on Monday morning at eight o'clock, the day of the week when one prepares for returning to work, and – in some cases - the onset of enough stress to the point of heart attack.

Predictors for Heart Disease

According to the American Heart Association, the four most common predictors for heart disease include 1) high cholesterol, 2) diabetes mellitus, 3) high blood pressure, and 4) cigarette smoking. However, in a thought-provoking study by Jenkins (1978), most people experiencing their first heart attack, none of the major risk factors for heart disease are present. Instead, psychological experiences related to stress and other mental experiences take the lead.

Coronary Lesions

In a study of far advanced coronary artery disease, Ornish et al (1998) discovered the effect of a low-fat diet, yoga, and group therapy on patients whose diagnosis was severe enough to disallow them for re-operation. One of the rather startling results of the program included a reversal of artery lesions, an outcome asserted to be impossible in primates.

Widower's Immune Systems

Schleifer, Keller, Camerino, Thornton, and Stein (1983) studied the reactivity of lymphocytes within the immune system of men whose wives died of severe breast cancer. The study uncovered that the death rate of the surviving spouse in a year-long bereavement was 2-8 times higher than the average age-matched married population.

Joyless Striving

In a Massachusetts statewide study on heart attacks, Bunker et al (2003) discovered that none of the major predictors for heart attack as outlined by the American Heart Association reliably predicted heart attack. The first predictor however, "job satisfaction" and the second predictor, "overall happiness" were key. They coined the phrase "joyless striving" to capture the essence of the effects of the mind on the body, in terms of their research.

Social Isolation and Stress

Russell (1987) studied emotional stress and sudden death. Of the 2,320 male survivors of heart attacks, those with social isolation and high life stress were 4 times more likely to die suddenly. Interestingly, in a review of the records of 7,000 people in Alameda County, the death rates were highest for those with the lowest degree of social interaction.

Breast Cancer

Butler et al (2001) summarized a 10-year study involving 86 women afflicted by breast cancer. The intervention included group therapy and lessons in self-esteem. Results indicated that nearly all of those participating in the intervention lived an average of twice as long as those given medical treatment only.

Placebos

Placebos have been the focus of much attention throughout the decades. In a chemotherapy reaction study by the American Cancer Society (n.d.) examining the impact of placebos, the research uncovered that placebos can actually change body chemistry, to include protein in the blood and blood cell count. Remarkably, a portion of the study focused on chemotherapy-related hair loss uncovered that one-third of those receiving only a placebo lost their hair anyway, most likely due to the belief by the patient that actual chemotherapy was being administered.

The Psychological Profile of Medical Students

In a 10-year study of medical students, Dahlin, Joneborg, and Runeson (2005) discovered the psychological profile of patients who developed cancer was similar to the profile of medical students who committed suicide. Consider suicide as an outcome – in most cases – related to severe major depression as an *experience of mind*.

Multiple Personality Disorder

Ross (1989) reports a study of personality disorders, these days most commonly referred to as dissociative identity disorders. The study uncovered that the disorder can lead to a change in eye color, a shift in dominant handedness, a change in reaction to allergies, different prescription glasses for each of the alter-egos, and for female subjects, different menstrual periods for each of their identities.

Effects of Spirituality and Faith

Spirituality and faith have long been discussed in terms of psychological and physical well-being. Plante and Sherman (2001), in a Duke University Medical Center study, uncovered the following about people who attend church regularly.

- Less cardiovascular disease
- Less emphysema
- Fewer incidences of cirrhosis of the liver
- Lower blood pressure
- A reduction in hospital stays by more than 50 percent.

The researchers go on to say individuals with weak church or synagogue attendance had a mortality rate 2-3 times higher than those with strong attendance. The study mentioned that Catholic nuns, Buddhist monks, and other aesthetic clerics enjoy particularly long and healthy lives. At the time of the publication of their research, 33% of all medical schools and the majority of nursing schools offer classes on health and spirituality.

Optimism

Seligman (2006) conducted a study focused on the effects of optimism. His subjects included women having had mastectomies. Of those who held to optimistic thinking - an experience of mind - 75 % were alive five years later. However, of those who held to a pessimistic habit of thinking - 35% were alive five years later.

Meditation

Travis (2014) discusses a study on meditation conducted by the US Department of Health and Human Services in 2007. To summarize, a meta-analysis of 300 scientific studies on meditation ranging from 1970 to 1987 and involving over 160 independent universities and

research institutions from 27 countries uncovered that meditation affects all areas of an individual's life: mind, body, behavior, and environment. Further, transcendental meditation has been shown to have a statistically significant positive effect on the following: creativity, stress reduction, academic performance, memory, perception, self-confidence, longevity, reduced heart disease, cancer immunity, relationships, work productivity, and job satisfaction. Regular practice of transcendental meditation by 2,000 people throughout the United States uncovered an overall hospitalization rate 56 % lower than the general US population. Meditation has been linked scientifically to outcomes including 87% fewer hospitalizations for cardiovascular disease, 55% fewer for cancer, and 87% fewer for diseases of the nervous system. Twenty-four studies cited in the *Journal of Counseling and Development* indicate meditation reduces all categories of drug use. In terms of the workplace, a classic experimental study conducted by the Academy of Management led to the following experiences for those who participated in the experimental group:

- Better relationships with co-workers
- Better relationships with supervisors
- Improved job satisfaction
- Greater improvements in general health and employee effectiveness
- Greater decrease in sleep fatigue, job worry and tension

My Mind Affects Your Body.

While the notion of one's mind affecting the body of another seems inconceivable to some, a substantial body of knowledge is developing based on significant scientific studies related to that phenomenon. Following is a discussion of the work of Sheldrake (2009) in the area of *morphic resonance*, a phrase coined by the researcher to describe the transmission of formative causal

influences through both space and time. Additionally, the study of Byrd's (1988) investigation of the impact of prayer and recovering patients is presented.

Morphic Resonance

Sheldrake (2009) reports interesting examples of how within-species information is transmitted from one member of an animal species to another (same species) in seemingly impossible ways. Also reported is how the same phenomena occurs within the human species. That is, information is transferred from one individual to another across boundaries of space and time, with literally no formal traditional communication process noted. A curious Sheldrake example is the Tarytown experiment. Researchers examined the difference in success rates among two groups of geographically separated participants who completed crossword puzzles on Sunday (group 1) and the same puzzle on Monday (group 2). The puzzle was published on both days in major newspapers throughout the UK. Researchers sought to discover whether or not those who completed the puzzle on Monday would outperform [in a statistically significant manner] those who completed the puzzle on Sunday. There was no contact between groups. Theoretically, in terms of Sheldrake's morphic resonance process, information related to the puzzle by those completing it on Sunday would in some way be transmitted to those completing the puzzle on Monday. Interestingly, those who completed the puzzle on Monday outperformed the Sunday group. Statistical significance attained. Sheldrake reports numerous experiments of like kind.

Impact of Prayer

Byrd's (1988) ground-breaking study of the impact of prayer on recovering patients occurred in a coronary care unit in a San Francisco hospital. Byrd conducted a double-blind study in which 192 patients were prayed for by home prayer groups, 210 were not prayed for. The results

of the study indicated zero incidents of cardiac arrest or need for CPR in the prayed-for group; 12 requirements for CPR in the non-prayed-for group. The prayed-for group became three times less likely to develop pulmonary edema, as well as five times less likely to require antibiotics and diuretics. Probably the most interesting outcome of the well-known study is the death outcomes. While deaths in the non-prayed-for group totaled three, deaths in the prayed-for group were zero. Byrd reports the study has been validated by leading critics of mind/body phenomena.

Byrd is also completed similar studies on non-human entities including plant seeds. Remarkably, prayed-for seeds - in identical conditions - produce stronger, healthier plants.

My Mind Affects Your Body Across Dimensions of Space and Time

The Princeton Studies

For nearly 30 years, Drs. Robert Jahn and Brenda Dunne led a group of scientists at Princeton University. The laboratory, known as the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory (PEAR) flourished for nearly three decades under the aegis of Princeton's School of Engineering and Applied Science. PEAR completed hundreds of studies focused on the interaction of human consciousness with sensitive physical devices, systems, and processes, and the development of complementary theoretical models to enable better understanding of the role of consciousness in the establishment of physical reality.

One category of studies conducted by PEAR is the remote-perception classification. From the PEAR (n.d) website:

In another class of studies, the ability of human participants to acquire information about spatially and temporally remote geographical targets, otherwise inaccessible by any of the usual sensory channels, has been thoroughly demonstrated over several hundred carefully conducted experiments. The protocol required one participant, the "agent," to be stationed at

a randomly selected location at a given time, and there to observe and record impressions of the details and ambiance of the scene. A second participant, the "percipient," located far from the scene and with no prior information about it, tried to sense its composition and character and to report these in a similar format to the agent's description. (para 7)

In the context of this paper, the work of Jahn and Dunne open the door to intriguing ideas related to transmission of information within and between large organizations.

Model of the Mind

Dossey (n.d) implies a model of the mind based on two criteria. First, if the mind is non-local (as in Sheldrake's morphic resonance experiments), it must be *omnipresent*. Second, if the mind is not restricted to a particular point in time (as in PEAR's remote perception experiments), it is reasonable to imply the mind is *infinite and eternal*. Omnipresent, infinite, eternal. Qualities not mentioned often in discussions of leadership or organizational theory these days, at least not yet.

Implications for Leaders and Organizations

Given the discussion of mind/body medicine and the proposed model of the mind by Dossey, consider how this research may ultimately impact organizational and leadership contexts. Below I propose four (somewhat elementary) emerging states of awareness and newer behaviors that, arguably, may be linked to lessons learned in the mind/body medicine and quantum physics disciplines.

Unified Mind and One-Ness

Consider the emerging trends of sharing "fields" of energy and information via large group processes such as Open Space Technology (Owen, 2008), Future Search (Weisbord & Janoff, 2005), and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008). Rather than a traditional diagnostic action research-driven approach to organizational leadership and problem-

solving, these large group methods call for replacing linear thought with principles and practices drawn from self-organizing systems, as well as chaos and complexity models. Perhaps it is reasonable to consider the presence of morphic fields within organizations per Sheldrake, or even the possibility of one large group - or a person in it - perceiving information from another source, one who is outside the boundaries of space and time, as discovered by the Princeton researchers.

The “Spiritual” Workplace

These days, it probably seems ludicrous to many to embrace mysticism and so-called *miracles* in service of our organizations. Nevertheless, it may also be reasonable to draw attention to the growing awareness of our spiritual - not religious - nature as human beings. Inasmuch as creativity and innovation are hot topics in organizations today, might the day arrive - in Era III - when structured and mechanical approaches to decision-making and problem-solving - per Era I and II - are replaced with increased focus on intuition and a “coming to know” in the absence of physical or at least rational evidence? Recall earlier questions posed by Peshawaria (2014):

- What if we could communicate with each other over great distances without using the internet or telephony, just by beaming our thoughts?
- What if we could acquire knowledge without reading or listening to someone speak?

Morphic Resonance and Social Fields

In the third era, perhaps corporate culture will be understood as a series of inter-species habits that can be transmitted through space and time per Sheldrake’s (2009) implications. Or that *corporate memory* becomes recognized and understood? Could the time eventually arrive when leaders and organizations throughout United States recognize their buildings have memories? And might they act accordingly? Is it possible Senge’s (1990) *learning organization* does not stem as much from applying the principles and practices of systems theory and of

learning to learn, as it does from the transmission of formative causal influences through space and time? And perhaps the day will arrive when employees ritualize and honor the power of corporate buildings and of other fields of energy surrounding them.

Quieting the Corporate Mind

Taking into consideration the substantial body of overwhelming evidence in the area of meditation and its positive effects on individual's lives, perhaps in the third era meditation will occur in corporate settings as readily and easily as it does for many individuals outside of the workplace. Maybe the day will arrive when meditation instruction is seen not only as an investment employee well-being, but as a strategic imperative for an organization's success.

Era III Leadership

In what ways will leadership theory, principles and practices change as Era III approaches? I suggest one method of considering the question is to consider a few more. I close with these important leadership considerations based on - at least for now - this rather elementary introduction to the field of mind/body medicine and quantum theory, from the perspective of organizational behavior and leadership.

- Will future leaders be able to let go of the very leadership and organizational behavior paradigms we treasure and believe in?
- Will future leaders be daring enough to introduce provocative thought and new concepts based on what is presented here and elsewhere?
- Will future leaders pay attention to what is occurring in other disciplines, to include medicine, biology, and physics?
- Will future leaders reevaluate the essential nature of the human being?

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