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D. Christopher Kayes: Organizational Resilience: How Learning Sustains Organizations in Crisis, Disaster, and Breakdowns. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 171 pp. $59.95, hardcover.

The title and subtitle of *Organizational Resilience* should have been reversed. Rather than focusing on organizational resilience, this is a book about organizational learning. If you browse the index, for example, you'll find 55 separate items that refer to sections about learning but only one that refers to resilience. And, as you might expect from this apportionment, the argument is that a significant ''key to understanding resilience'' is how people learn and what happens when they stop learning.

Kayes has been a long-time, articulate student of experiential learning (e.g., 2002) and of dramatic instances when such learning falls short (e.g., 2004). Those strengths are evident again in this volume. The argument is developed along two dimensions: the environment is either routine or novel, and the operational orientation is either performance or learning. Of special interest are those situations in which a performance orientation in a routine environment shifts abruptly or gradually toward a requirement for a learning orientation in a novel environment. These shifts are often incomplete because factors such as preoccupation with goals, unwarranted optimism, and rational decision making make experiential learning more difficult and reinforce a performance orientation.

The author argues that many models of organizational failure (e.g., Janis, 1972; Reason, 1990; Perrow, 1999) are inadequate because they ignore how failing masks breakdowns and recoveries of learning. Because learning is a ''naturally occurring process,'' disruptions of that ongoing process contribute to disasters and make them worse. Illustrations of breakdown include the Air France 447 crash while flying from Brazil to France and Lehman Brothers' experience with the financial crisis; and Kayes devotes 30 pages to describing how faulty intelligence was shaped to warn about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. In each case, what should and could have been learned, wasn't. But what's missing are cases that show how learning is sustained during crises and how lessons learned after a crisis actually make a difference later. The problem with enumerating breakdowns is that it's not obvious what drives them (e.g., stress, sensemaking, habit, perception, overload, decision making), nor is it obvious that breakdowns in learning trump everything else. Resilience is tested in novel environments, as the author says. And learning before and during novel events can promote adaptation in the face of novelty. The solutions by which people can build organizational learning seem to boil down to the creation of independent ''Red Teams'' that scrutinize previous breakdowns, try to cut through denials, and expose finer details of what really happened and

how to prevent a recurrence. Such efforts can promote learning, but variations of this approach, in the form of after-action reviews, have been used for some time, and the associated learning can be situation-specific.

Kayes consistently argues that personal experience is the raw material of learning, with the proviso that ''experience is always embedded in a context of human pattern, routine, or tradition'' (p. 13). Unfortunately, we have to wait until page 131 to find an evocative definition of experience that could have anchored his argument from the start. The definition comes from the philosopher Richard Palmer: ''It is the 'experienced' [person] who knows the limitations of all anticipation, the insecurity of all human plans. Yet this does not render [that person] rigid and dogmatic: but rather open for new experience. . . . Experience teaches the incompleteness of all plans.'' Those are not just pretty words. Instead, they point to a style of learning orientation that also seems closely aligned with organizational resilience (e.g., anticipation, insecurity, plans, incompleteness), a learning style that incorporates John Dewey's emphasis on cognition, emotion, and habit from which Kayes draws much of his inspiration (e.g., p. 8).

At several points in the book Kayes creates openings where deeper connections between resilience and learning could be established, but those opportunities remain undeveloped. For example, chapter 5, titled ''From Failure to the Breakdown of Learning,'' sounds like the occasion for the argument to be presented in detail, but these six pages mainly fine-tune Turner's (1976) four stages of crisis progression, which move from incubation through precursor events and ''learning'' breakdown, to rebuilding. Other missed opportunities include the adoption of useful process labels such as ''shifting,'' ''recovering,'' and ''translating,'' which then tend to be treated as static events. There is precedent in the resilience literature for elaborating processes such as Hollnagel's (2011: xxxvii) discussion of the ''cornerstones'' of resilience, which include anticipating, responding, monitoring, and learning. And there is the opening created in Kayes' brief discussion of Dewey in which he brings in the seldom-discussed concept of ''collateral learning'' but underplays it as a form of learning that could be central in fostering resilience.

A key to Kayes' approach is his repeated use of the phrase ''learning in organizations.'' He is most interested in the human development aspects of learning, which is why Dewey's threefold concern with habit, emotion, and cognition is such a suitable foundation. What gets tricky is the assertion that these three individual aspects all get ''translated into organizational practices, beliefs, identities, and culture'' (p. 14). What remains unclear are the mechanisms by which aggregating, organizing, or translating occur, a central pursuit in organizational research.

Readers may ask themselves whether we even need the concept of resilience if concepts of learning and adaptation seem sufficient (e.g., ''When you learn and adapt you build resilience,'' p. vii). The answer would seem to be ''yes,'' we probably do need the concept of resilience if it is understood in the following way: ''Resilience can be defined as the system's ability to maintain its integrity and its performance, at least partially, while under internal or external variations and disturbances (i.e. pressures, constraints, failures, errors, violations, hazards), whether nominal, extreme, or exceptional'' (Paries et al., 2013: 80). The concept of resilience draws attention to systems as well as individuals, to partial maintenance of integrity and performance, to the opposite of

brittleness, and to disturbances that vary both in scale and source. The ''ability to maintain'' is certainly a product of learning, as is the activity of maintaining during ongoing variations and disturbances. But resilience does not lend itself to a single perspective. The concept is about a bigger picture (e.g., Strachan, 2013), about performance variability and adjustment, and about histories that enable continuing despite adversity.

The primary takeaway from this book is that if you learn from your experience, you'll be more resilient (p. vii). That's an important message, as we tend to overestimate how often we learn and how skilled we are at doing it. And it's an important message that experience, both personal and vicarious, affects how well we adapt. But it's also important to realize that there is more to organizational resilience than is found in this book.

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