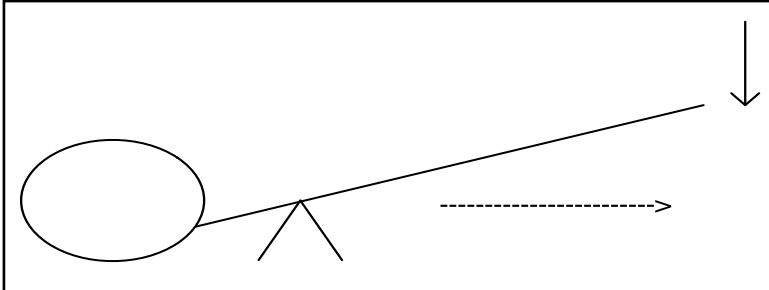


STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS: The 'AMOEBIA'

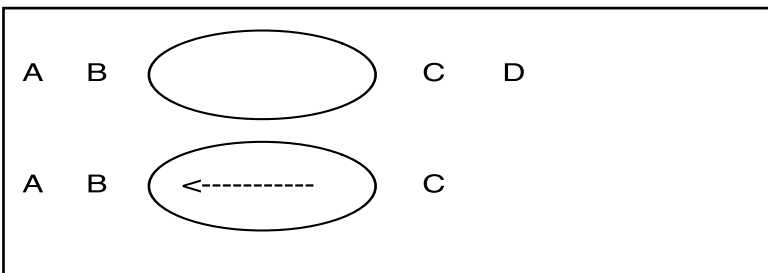
This model includes two simpler ones, the Seesaw and the Self-centering group.

Figure 1: Seesaw



The seesaw shows that when there is a great deal of weight at one end, one needs to go further out and to bounce harder to send even a ripple down the board.

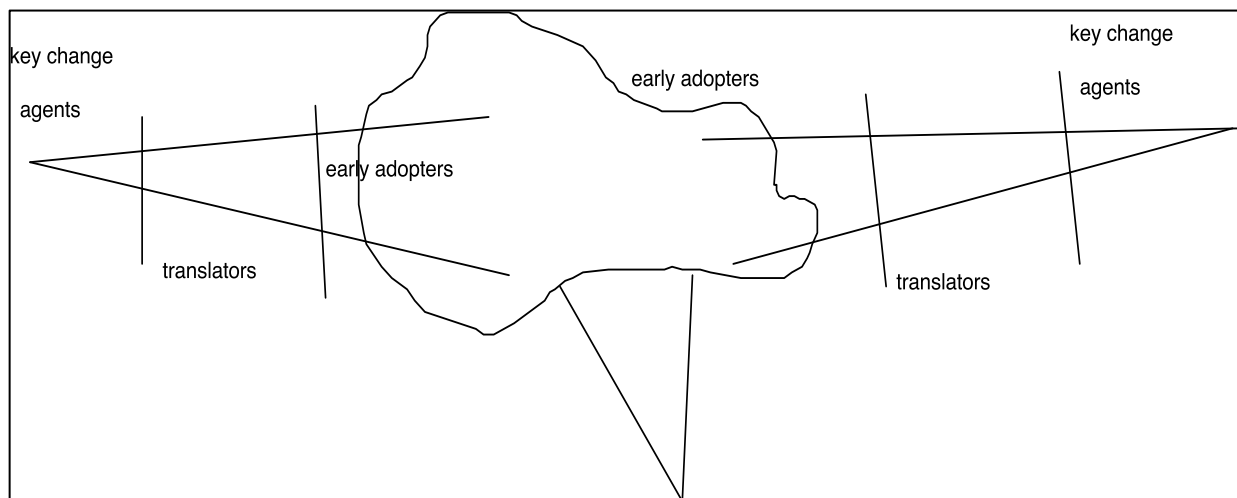
Figure 2: Self-centering group



This illustrates a group constantly trying to centre itself between two extremes. Whenever either extreme moves, toward the centre or away from it, the central group moves in response to re-centre itself. For example, if the most radical person (D) disappears,

the person who was next to her now looks more radical than she did when compared to the first. Conversely, if a new radical comes, the person who used to seem radical now seems more acceptable to the large group in the centre.

Figure 3: 'Amoeba' model



This model suggests that society, and any group within it, is constantly changing. At any time, there are efforts for social change in many directions, often diametrically opposed to each other; for example, abolish "race-based" services versus tino rangatiratanga. The successful efforts will be those :

- ▲ With a solid chain from key change agents through to the centre of society
- ▲ In which there are no missing links
- ▲ Where the weakest link is stronger than the weakest in the opposing chain.

The three main parts of the chain are the key change agents, the translators, and the early adopters. The key change agents are few in number but highly visible because their ideas are considered to be outrageous, completely unreasonable and far too radical. It is a very uncomfortable position to be in, so they need personal and practical support, such as paid employment options.

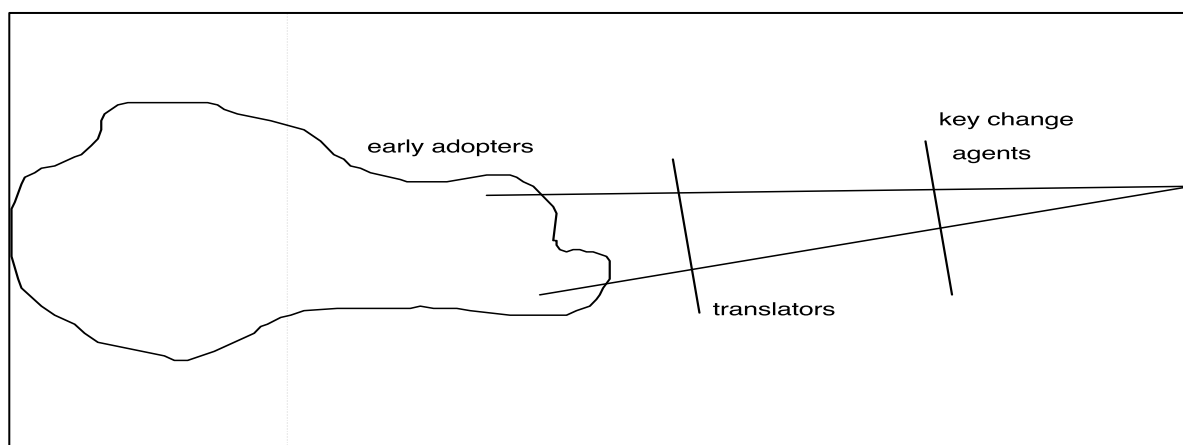
Some people take these outrageous ideas and translate them into more acceptable language, inevitably changing their meaning. These translators can be formally attached to a dominant organisation, independent or moving between these positions.

The early adopters are the first people to translate the ideas into action. This makes it safer and more acceptable for the next group of adopters to try something. Each link of the chain passes the idea from the outrageous person on one side to the conventional in the middle. If links are missing, the idea floats around but doesn't get implemented.

As the idea is passed along in this way it is constantly watered down. This leads to tensions amongst all the groups, even though they see themselves as being on the same side. The key change agents attack the translators for compromising, the translators attack the key change agents for alienating people and creating backlash. The key change agents and translators agree that what the early adopters undertake is only tokenism, and the early adopters retort that at least they are doing something

other than just talking! All too often, it is difficult for observers or participants to recognise common interests.

This conflict is similar to that between reformers and radicals. Reformers want immediate, attainable goals and are willing to compromise with the elite and use predominantly legitimate means. Radicals are not inclined to compromise because they want nothing to do with the existing elites and believe that anyone who does is undercutting the potential for fundamental change. Often each group expends a great deal of energy in fighting the other.



Do not oppose those on your side of the mid-point. It would be more effective to transfer the energy spent on infighting to opposing those who are pulling in the opposite direction, that is, those on the left side of the line in the diagram above. The early adopters, translators and reformers, in particular, benefit from the key change agents and radicals because the latter make the former look reasonable by comparison. And of course, the effort in the opposite direction benefits from the division on the other side.

Further Reading

Chafetz, Janet Saltzman. *Gender Equity: An Integrated Theory of Stability and Change*. Newbury Park, NJ: SAGE Publications, 1990.

The author firmly believes that gender inequality is fundamentally based on the gender division of labour. She proceeds to establish this premise and then analyses the implications for social change. Very interesting ideas and good examples of model development but very theoretical; she uses a great deal of jargon but carefully defines terms in the first chapter.

Ta te rangatira tana kai he korero. Ta
te ware he muhukai.

*Discussion is the main food of a
chief. The ignorant person is
inattentive.*