

# ANTHROPOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONS



The 2022 Organizational Anthropology Collective



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[Self-Published]



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Studying Up and Problematization

Ted Maclin

*"A problem well-stated is half solved" -Attributed to Charles Ketterling, former head of research at General Motors.*

*"Culture is an analytical concept for problematizing the field of organizations; in that field, culture is an ideological claim, rooted in historical conditions and subject to challenge." (Wright 1994:27)*

### Introduction

The study of organizations and institutions falls within several interconnected disciplines. Institutions have been studied in economics (Granovetter 1992; North 1990), political science (Crawford and Ostrom 1995; Hajer 2006; Ostrom 1990), sociology (Campbell 2003; Smith 2005), and anthropology (Billig 2009; Douglas 1986; Mathews 2005). Similarly, organizations have been studied within multiple fields including the eponymous field of organizational studies (Martin 1992). North (1990) notes in particular that organizations arise as a consequence of institutional opportunities, and in working toward their missions act as agents of institutional change. Organizations may include corporations, non-government organizations, social movements, and various types of publics. What they have in common is an ability to exercise group action, so that the entire organization becomes an actor (itself composed of other actors, *sensu* Latour 2005). Anthropological approaches to organizations and institutions are distinctive from those of other disciplines, largely because of anthropology's abiding focus on culture.

This book is a collection of chapters produced by students (graduate and undergraduate) in my Spring 2022 "Anthropology of Organizations" class at the University of Memphis. Split-level classes are tricky to navigate because of the differences in experience between students. In previous years, I had run the class in what I would consider a more traditional mode: lectures and discussions, with students writing papers as mid-term and final grades. It was easy. Comfortable. And, on reflection, did relatively

little to bring students into the community of practice of anthropology through **legitimate peripheral participation** (Lave and Wenger 1991). Put another way: listening to lectures and writing standard academic papers has very little in common with the actual work of practicing anthropologists in general, or organizational anthropologists in specific. Anthropologists studying and working in organizations tend toward collaborative modes of engagement. They also tend to follow timelines dictated by project cycles rather than a rigid semester schedule.

So, working from more of a **critical pedagogy** (Freire 2005), I opted for a flipped approach. Rather than assigning a text, the students and I would work together to develop a text. I provided a menu of optional readings for each section as a starting point, and groups of students worked to collaboratively write the text. Monday classes were still lecture-like, with me providing context and background instead of reading summaries. Wednesdays were reserved for group editing and discussion of draft chapters. The result was far from perfect, but it was engaging—and resulted in the text here. I'll likely write more about the process elsewhere once I have had time to reflect.

I start from this vignette for a couple of reasons. First, I do want the reader to have a sense of how this text emerged, including the process and my rationale for developing it. Second, and I think more importantly, the collaborative writing process here gets to two key concepts in the study of organizations: **studying up** (Nader 1972) and **problematization**.

A critique of the traditional mode of classroom organization—including the institutional structures that reproduce that organization—is explicit here. For students with diverse backgrounds, the University classroom is a common organizational experience. Students are expert observers of classroom organization in a para-ethnographic sense (Holmes and Marcus 2006). Rather than engaging in studies of distant, personally inconsequential, organizations, bringing this critique into the structure of the class itself provides space for reflection on the power relationships embedded in daily work. This is in line with Nader's (1972) thoughts on studying up, and is also an invitation to problematization as "a form of experimentation which implicates *ourselves* in our present, requiring that one allows oneself to be touched by what the present presents in the form of a test, and allowing what touches us the power to modify the relation we entertain to our own reasons" (Stengers 2021:73).

## Studying Up

Nader (1972) describes "studying up" as studying power at home: bureaucracy, upper classes, businesses: looking "up" instead of "down." Down is identified as poverty, a

lack of relative power, lower-class. Nader suggests a need to study up as a way of bringing symmetry to anthropology--studying up as well as down. This would serve a scientific function by balancing research interests. Studying up would serve a democratic function by providing information about the structures and organizations that affect the lives of citizens. The difficulty, according to Nader, is a disciplinary culture within anthropology that values the foreign, and a host of problems related to access.

While the environment within anthropology has largely shifted so that studying at home is more acceptable, participant observation in the halls of power is challenging. Gusterson (1997) suggests replacing it in elite contexts with mixed methods combining interviewing, text analysis, and other techniques across multiple sites, including telephone and email interviews.

As researchers have tried studying up, new problems have arisen. The positioning of the anthropologist has come into question throughout the field (Clifford and Marcus 1986) as articulations of new approaches have begun to unfold. One of these is the connection between studying up and more explicitly feminist, Marxist forms such as institutional ethnography (Smith 2005, 2006; Conti and O'Neil 2007). Another is the relation between participation, collaboration, and public anthropology. As anthropology has looked from its colonial roots toward decolonizing methodologies, neocolonialism in the form of corporate and market forces has moved forward—and some (Escobar 1991) suggest that the discipline has been recolonized.

As anthropologists have changed the focus of their studies, the writing of ethnography has become increasingly problematic, particularly in cases where anthropologists are studying powerful organizations or states—where they may face “public and formal reprimands, or even the threat of defamation proceedings, for their ethnographic accounts” (Mosse 2006a: 938). Mosse describes the writing of ethnography as anti-social because it cuts social ties and breaks relationships. Mosse suggests that objections arise within organizations when powerful actors seek to maintain their projects as “systems of representations” against competing representations—including ethnographic ones (Mosse 2006a: 942.) As with Nader and Gusterson, Mosse does not see these difficulties as reasons to avoid studying up—rather they are key cultural structures that must be included within the scope of research.

“Studying up,” then, has become a partial reality within anthropology—bringing with it a suite of new problems. Problems of access remain, both due to the relative lack of power of anthropologists (who have become the subaltern) and to institutionalized practices within anthropology as a discipline, which tend to keep anthropologists focusing away from conflict and centers of power (Nader 2001). At the same time, where studying

up is taking place the relationship between researcher and researched has become increasingly complex.

## Problematization

Part of the process of studying up is engaging in deep, often personal **critique**. Critique here is not the same as “disapproval.” Rather, it is a systematic process of doubt—a cultivation of uncertainty that seeks to reveal assumptions and systems of power relations. It is “a theory dominated at every turn by a concern for reasonable conditions of life” (Horkheimer [1937] 1972:199). This is the “critical” component of critical theory, and a key to the idea of problematization.

Problematization is not the same as **problem definition**. Problem definition is the process of stating a problem in clear terms, sometimes as the outcome of a problem analysis. Problem analysis and definition are common components of business analysis practices and are therefore familiar to many people in formal organizations, particularly in the economic centers of the Global North. Problem definitions are typically formulated from the perspective of problem owners—businesses, agencies, communities, or individuals. As a result, the goals of those stakeholders are implicit (if not explicit) in the problem definition itself.

Whereas problem definition is normative—seeking statements of problems that permit a non-problematic resolution, problematization is experimental (Stengers 2021)—exploring the ways that meanings, technologies, cultures, politics, and our selves co-affect one another. Problematization admits the idea that a given situation may look very different depending on perspective—and may, therefore have multiple contrasting meanings. Problematization cannot help but call goals, perspectives, and motivations into question, including the goals of organizations and stakeholders. Problematization is, therefore, a process of critique.

From a practical standpoint, problematization can be viewed as an expansive and ongoing process of problem analysis. The problem statements that anthropologists develop may, as a result, be very different from those developed strictly within the bounds of an organization’s mission and immediate goals. While resolution is sometimes a desired or actual outcome of problematization, problem engagement and transformation may also result. The anthropologist Ruth Benedict is commonly credited with saying that “the purpose of anthropology is to make the world safe for human differences.” Combined with Horkheimer’s concern for “reasonable conditions of life” (Horkheimer [1937] 1972:199) this gives some insight into the anthropological perspective—a perspective that will continue to surface in the coming chapters.



## In Practice

- When developing your organization's mission, vision, and goals, whose voices were included? How was power distributed in that process? How often are those statements updated?
- Anthropologists can't problematize *everything*; doing so would be paralyzing. When time and resources are short, there are a few questions that are worth asking:
  - Who is missing?
  - When we make decisions, who is "we"?
  - What are the structural (legal, political, social, technological, and economic) constraints on organizational action?

## Key Concepts

**Critical pedagogy:** a practical teaching philosophy that asks students and instructors to engage in critique, including critique of the education process.

**Critique:** a systematic process of doubt—a cultivation of uncertainty that seeks to reveal assumptions and systems of power relations

**Legitimate peripheral participation :** participation around the edges; the process of a new member entering and becoming established within a community of practice.

**Problematization:** an ongoing, expansive, and experimental form of critique that focuses on seeing human interactions, history, discourse, assumptions, and power relations as potential problems to be engaged.

**Problem definition:** the process of clearly stating a problem in terms of known information.

**Studying up:** Study of systems of control, coercion, or domination. This may include powerful organizations, elite individuals, governments, institutions, technologies, or combinations.

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# Chapter 2

## Frameworks for Studying Organizations

Jennie Doss, Tristan Akins, Robert Banbury

### Introduction

This book will discuss various aspects of organizational knowledge and culture that are beneficial to consider when studying organizations. This chapter focuses on a few of the many frameworks that researchers have found useful when studying organizations. A **framework**, simply put, is a way of conceptually thinking through how one would like to approach a particular study. It should be noted that there is no one 'right' way to study organizations. Instead, the purpose of a framework is to allow the researcher to identify the scope of relevant data by utilizing, and often combining, various theoretical perspectives that others have already developed or used. This chapter will look at broad brush and particularistic approaches, multi-sited ethnography, flows of affect, and participant action research (PAR) models.

To avoid confusion, it is worth distinguishing between a framework and a methodology. A framework, as mentioned above, is a way to use previously conducted research to help you think about and shape your research question. They help to bound research from the beginning by providing a loose structure. A **methodology** is the actual action or series of actions that you will use to answer your research question. They serve as justifications for the frameworks the researcher selects, based on the outcomes that a researcher is seeking.

### Broad-Brush Approaches

The first framework for studying organizations that we will discuss is the broad-brush approach. **Broad Brush Approach** is a term taken from Josiah Heyman who uses them to, "characterize all bureaucracies – or very major groups of them, such as states – as having similar tendencies, modes of thought, and patterns of action" (490, 2004). These approaches attend to theories established by activists, theorists, and philosophers including Marx, Weber, Foucault that are discussed at more length in coming chapters.

Typically, these theorists speak to larger social systems and circumstances. Karl Marx implies bureaucratic tendencies through his theories relating to labor control (Edwards 1979). Max Weber developed a theory of bureaucracy that outlined what he considered to be, "the most rational and effective way to accomplish tasks" (Heyman 490,

2004). While Weber argues for the rationality of efficiency, Heyman suggests that a more useful way to approach engaged work is not by asking, “*is this bureaucracy rational* but *what is the rationale* for this kind of bureaucratic set-up and behavior” (490, 2004). This can aid a researcher in thinking through power relations and resistance to power that are a part of the structure of an organization or bureaucracy. A critique of Hayman’s approach is that it implies that there is a rationale or function. It could be argued that within bureaucracies and other organizations a pattern of behavior might be institutionally perpetuated even though it is no longer justified or functional.

Not only do bureaucracies collect information about the world as it exists, but they also dynamically shape it as well (discussed in length in Chapter 8). For example, a broad-brush framework is that through active data collection, bureaucracies impose categorization on multifaceted individuals (Heyman 490, 2004). This can be seen in state enforced record keeping where individual identity is shaped by the state through requiring last names, licenses, passports, voter registration, taxation brackets, etc. (Scott 1998).

Outside of anthropology, a broad-brush framework might be any approach that focuses on replicability, standardization, or “scaling” across many different organizations. Approaches such as Lean Management (see chapter 4) that offer broadly replicable solutions could be viewed as broad-brush frameworks. Counterpoints to broad-brush frameworks in the anthropology of organizations include particularistic approaches that see each situation as unique, and systems approaches that focus on interconnections and flows rather than individual cases.

## Particularistic Approaches

The term “particularistic” in academia is often used to define approaches and frameworks that prefer examining exceptional characteristics and specificities over universalist or broad-brush frameworks. One such definition of particularism is supplied by Polish economic sociologist Maria Nawojczyk in her 2006 work “Universalism Versus Particularism Through ESS Lenses,” which focuses on particularism as a form of economic systems management that treats every situation as exceptional rather than attempting to establish general rules. These same principles can be applied to organizational anthropology by focusing on an organization’s particular practices of variation, segmentation, and contest (Heyman 2006, 491-494).

Particularism can be a bit complicated as, despite the name, it involves blending specificity with general understandings of organizations and socio-political systems. Two main points of a particularistic study are the systems of difference/stratification within an organization and its interactions with external actors (Heyman 2004, 491-494).

The first step in a particularistic approach is often to look for internal differences – what distinguishes employees and departments from each other. In his description of particularistic approaches to studying bureaucracies, anthropologist Josiah Heyman

encourages one to first look toward the distribution of labor, both in terms of the delegation of tasks and the creation of internal divisions as well as the kinds of workers bestowed with different statuses, duties, and powers (Heyman 2004, 491). This might include the delegation of packaging in a factory to a certain portion of the workforce (creating an internal division), which might consist mostly of entry-level male employees (defining the kind of worker found in this division). These divisions of both tasks and people create internal cleavages that create trust and distrust, as is seen in Marietta Baba's 1999 study: "Dangerous Liaisons: Trust, Distrust, and Information Technology in American Work Organizations." These senses of trust and distrust can in turn create cooperation and conflict, such as competing for funding and promotions. Organizational anthropology may utilize this information in analyzing an organization's internal culture; however, organizational anthropologists may also contextualize these processes and their results in their correlation with wider socio-political processes (Heyman 2006, 494). A particular organization may, for example, prefer to delegate a specific task to employees of a particular race, which could be reflective of a wider socio-political process of racism.

The next step to thinking in a particularistic way is to observe an organization's particular interactions with external actors that fall outside of that organization's internal governance. While the employees within an organization may be subject to policies, regulations, and internal processes of delegation, clients, customers, and external cooperators may not. Anthropologist Norman Long makes a strong case for the "social actor," *social* indicating their interactions with outside institutions and personnel as well as their own processes of processing information and strategizing in their dealings (Long 1992, 13). Josiah Heyman suggests that in many cases where not every detail of the interaction is within official policy, the "official stamp" of an organization is a political marker – perhaps symbolizing the end of negotiations and the finalization of an action (Heyman 2006). This allows organizations to be flexible with their approaches to various situations and clients.

Another step to thinking in a particularistic analysis is to once again go back to the distribution of tasks and status. Specifically, who makes judgement calls when interactions with social actors force a change in the scope of operation? Here one finds the stratification of a certain type of power – the power of interpretation. Certain individuals within organizations hold the power to determine the relevance of and interpret specific policy and rules as well as determine the appropriate course of action when the situation calls for a departure from the norm. Heyman (2006, 493-494) claims that the combination of this power of interpretation with the limits of a given organization's rationality and the performance of actual organizational thought create the ever-discussed "organizational culture" (see Chapter 4: Organizational Culture). Different organizations delegate this power differently. In some organizations, this power is generally designated to managers (see Chapter 2: Anthropology, Labor, and Management), others may designate it to general employees (often smaller businesses), while yet others such as the highly formal

bureaucracy may designate it to hard-to-reach officials (see Chapter 7: Studying Bureaucracies).

This is not a complete guide to particularistic approaches to studying organizations. It should serve as an introduction, however, to studying organizations as constant negotiations between internal and external governance wherein policy only goes so far.

## Multi-Sited Ethnography

Ethnography is a qualitative methodology that lends itself to the study of beliefs, social interactions, and behaviors of small societies, involving participation and observation over a period of time, and the interpretation of the data collected by the researcher (Naidoo 2012). Ethnography is typically qualitative research, although quantitative methods can be used in conjunction, such as statistics (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008). Once the data is collected, it is then analyzed/interpreted by the researcher and organized into an ethnography. (Naidoo 2012) (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008). Ethnography is helpful when studying organizations due to the researcher being embedded in the organizational cultural for longer spans of time. Through this, a researcher is able to see and connections between cause and effect within the context that they are happening. A multi-sited ethnography is ethnographic research that takes place in more than one location, making connections to other processes in the world that might be influential (Marcus 1995).

If ethnography is fixing a flat tire and attempting to understand why it went flat, then multi-sited ethnography is fixing a flat, interviewing other motorists that have gotten flat tires, doing research on road maintenance, learning the most common kinds of road debris and where it comes from, tire manufacturing techniques, etc., and why. Multi-sited ethnography is not just the comparison of events in one place to events in another. Multi-sited ethnography is useful because it reveals more than this; the indirect and casual connections among places, people, ideas, events, etc. that appear culturally or geographically independent. Marcus wrote in 1995: "Thus, in multi-sited ethnography, comparison emerges from putting questions to an emergent object of study whose contours, sites, and relationships are not known beforehand, but are themselves a contribution of making an account that has different, complexly connected real-world sites of investigation." (Marcus 1995)

Multi-sited ethnography does not set out to prove a hypothesis through conducting fieldwork; rather, it seeks to analyze a particular phenomenon through the connections of it to other phenomena (Atkinson and Hammersley 1994) (Naidoo 2012). In this way, once the data is collected, it is analyzed and organized to reveal themes and relationships that emerge from the data. From this, ethnographers can "...generate tentative theoretical explanations from their empirical work" (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008). It is then the

job of the ethnographer to explain the data through description, explanation, and in creating a narrative (Naidoo 2012).

Since a multi-sited ethnography may require close personal relationships between the researcher and the participants, and is based upon accounts of the researcher, reflexivity is an important component to include. Reflexivity is the relationship that the researcher shares with the world that he or she is investigating (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008) This means including the researcher's personal thoughts and ideas, which can then be used by the reader to weigh the possible impacts they had on the study (Naidoo 2012).

Conducting a multi-sited ethnography rests upon the ability to construct coherent connections between sites. from one place to another. These connections are revealed by becoming familiar with the context and how social structures are layered and expressed in each site, but also are found through the process of conducting a multi-sited ethnography itself. "Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography." (Marcus 1995). In a multi-sited ethnography, the overall point of the work comes from the juxtaposition and connections made, and the author's reasoning behind making the connections.

## Flows of Affect Framework

Another framework that may be helpful to consider when studying organizations is the flows of affect. This model is grounded in new (or neo) materialism that, "dissolves boundaries between the natural and the cultural, mind and matter" (Braidotti 3, 2013). "Matter is not inert, nor simply the background for human activity, but 'is conceptualized as agentic', with multiple non-human as well as human sources of agency with capacities to affect" (Taylor 666, 2013). By being able to take into account both human and non-human agency, this framework helps researchers to think through what entities do rather than simply what they are.

This conceptualization places bodies and objects on the same plane and therefore allows them to be looked at in terms of relation. This is important because relations can develop between entities in unforeseen ways that some might call chaotic. These connections are constantly in flux, can break apart and reassemble in new ways, and exist independently of human bodies (Fox 401, 2015). Fox and Alldred refer to these associations as 'assemblages of relation' (401, 2015).

This framework also takes the concept of human agency and replaces it with the notion of affect. **Affect** is simply, "the capacity to affect or be affected" (Fox 401, 2015). This is a key distinction to make since it results in a shift of the perception of subject and object in a study, and refocuses on how, "an affect is a 'becoming' that represents a change of state or capacities of an entity [that] may be physical, psychological, emotional or social" (Fox

401, 2015). Human agents are no longer the sole unit being analyzed, instead research is seen as an assemblage. This perspective likens assemblages to machines that connect elements affectively in order to accomplish something (Fox 403, 2015). Flows within these assemblages are considered an ‘affect economy’ in which affective capacities switch bodies and other entities from one mode to another in terms of attention, arousal, interest, receptivity, stimulation, attentiveness, action, reaction, and inaction (Clough 15, 2004).

Again, there is no one ‘right’ or ‘correct’ way to study organizations. The frameworks highlighted in this chapter are simply meant to serve as informative introductions to a few of the many frameworks that exist to study organizations.

## In Practice

1. There are many possible broad-brush frameworks: continuous improvement, Lean, Neo-Marxism, Feminism, etc. Some of these can also be used in a more focused, particularistic or systemic way.
2. Before beginning, be sure that you are thoroughly familiar with the approach(es) you plan to use, including both the possible benefits and any criticisms. Lean Management, for example, has a wealth of supporting literature describing the benefits of the approach in terms of efficiency and productivity, as well as an equal volume on problems with the approach—including resistance from workers, inappropriate or inadequate adoption, and an unreasonable adoption of economizing values at the expense of competing social or moral values. Marxist approaches also carry a wealth of peer-reviewed literature, both supporting and condemning.
3. Think about your desired outcomes. Reaching your goals can be wonderful, if you select the right goals. Many of these broad-brush approaches necessitate, eliminate, or throw into question some set of goals. Broad-brush approaches can be useful in the goal-setting process.

## Key Concepts

**Affect:** The capacity to affect or be affected (Fox 401, 2015).

**Broad-brush Approach:** A term taken from Josiah Heyman who uses them to, “characterize all bureaucracies – or very major groups of them, such as states – as having similar tendencies, modes of thought, and patterns of action” (490, 2004).

**Ethnography:** A qualitative methodology that lends itself to the study of beliefs, social interactions, and behaviors of small societies, involving participation and observation over a period, and the interpretation of the data collected by the researcher (Naidoo 2012)



**Framework:** A way to use previously conducted research to help think through and shape the development of a research question. It also helps to bound research from the beginning by providing a loose structure.

**Methodology:** the actual action or series of actions that a researcher uses to answer a research question. It also serves as justifications for the frameworks the researcher selects, based on the outcomes that a researcher is seeking.

**Multi-sited ethnography:** Ethnographic research that takes place in more than one location, making connections to other processes in the world that might be influential (Marcus 1995).

**Reflexivity:** The relationship that the researcher shares with the world that he or she is investigating (Reeves, Kuper, and Hodges 2008).

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# Chapter 3

## Organizations and Social Reproduction

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### Introduction

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously quipped in a 1987 interview that “There is no such thing as Society. There are individual men and women, and there are families” (Keay and Thatcher 1987). She later clarified that there are also communities and other groups, but her initial statement would live on. Decades later, in 2017, US Supreme Court Chief Justice described empirical social data on gerrymandering as “sociological gobbledygook” (Flaherty 2017). The idea that “the social” is not real, important, or useful—that the important bits of humanity are found in individuals and voluntary associations—is an important thread in the dominant fabric of American economic and political philosophy. At the very least, this is a point of tension for anthropologists and other social scientists who see what is ‘the social’ in their work settings.

To understand what is meant by social reproduction, it is helpful to understand the counterpoint(s) to Thatcher’s position. It would be simple to say that the opposing view is that society exists—but as is so often the case in the social sciences, the story is slightly more complicated than that.

Figure 2-1 shows one typology for approaches to explaining the social. Using this system, Thatcher’s perspective falls into what is labeled **methodological individualism**: the idea that social phenomena are explainable by looking at the actions and relations of individuals. This differs from **atomism**, which suggests that only individual psychology, beliefs, and attitudes (and not relations among or between individuals) explain ‘the social’. Both approaches, in effect, deny the existence of stable or recurring social phenomena such as class, gender, institutions, or culture.

		<i>Properties of and relations among aggregate social entities are irreducibly explanatory</i>	
		YES	NO
<i>Relations among individuals are explanatory</i>	YES	Anti-reductionism	Methodological Individualism
	NO	Radical Holism	Atomism

*Figure 2-1: These four approaches to explaining ‘the social’ are based on reliance on individualistic versus social criteria (Wright, Levine, and Sober 2003, 57).*

On the other side of this chart are approaches that recognize the influence of social phenomena on people’s daily lives. Wright, Levine, and Sober (2003) make the point that **radical holism** is rarely—if ever—seen in practice, as it only acknowledges these social phenomena and not individual actions. It focuses on the idea that only these social categorizations matter, while individuals can make little if any difference in the world. In general, anthropologists are **anti-reductionists**. We tend to see individuals, groups, and socially constructed phenomena like identity or class as mutually influential and interacting. In organizations, anthropologists and those who work with them consider anti-reductionism a significant force in their work. Anthropologists often see social structure as an important influence on human behavior—and vice versa.

Social scientists also have multiple perspectives on what constitutes “the social.” At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Emile Durkheim conceived of what he called **social facts**: “These social realities are best thought of as (i) ‘exterior’ to each individual consciousness considered purely individually and as (ii) capable of exercising a ‘coercive’ action on individual consciousnesses” (Gane 2011, 11). Social facts include institutions, social roles and expectations, culture, class, and other relatively stable phenomena. These include categories of identity such as “worker.” When we discuss social reproduction, it is these social facts that are being reproduced—through the actions of other social facts. Another perspective comes from social anthropologist Bruno Latour (2007) who sees “the social” as a heterogeneous assemblage. This is a diverse network composed of individuals,

materials, beliefs, technologies, organizations, and so on. In Latour's framing, the role of the social scientist is to trace these connections and develop an understanding of how these assemblages are formed, maintained, and transformed.

For our purposes, we define **social reproduction** as the process of replicating patterns of association (of people, materials, technologies, resources, knowledge, etc.) and their associated political relationships. This includes reproducing social roles (like workers), structures (like institutionalized racism), and patterns of meaning (broadly, culture). It also implies looking at who and what is excluded from a particular association, and why. Organizations are produced and reproduced through this process. At the same time, organizations both do the work of social reproduction and act as locations for social reproduction.

Social reproduction is a lens that anthropologists and other social scientists use in order to, "analyze the persistence of society over time, even as its human and material components keep changing" (Weiss 2021, 1). Anthropology's strategy of making sense of the world relies largely on categorization and observation of patterns. The use of social reproduction theory enables researchers to tease apart the categorical layers of societal influence that are displayed in repeated individual and group actions and responses. Fundamentally, social reproduction theory seeks to answer the question 'why do we do what we do?' with the goal of uncovering tacit reasoning and logic for behaviors and beliefs that weave themselves throughout and ultimately compose a society.

When considering the role organizations play in social reproductions, various establishments play significant roles in instilling and perpetuating certain attitudes and behaviors in their members. Organizations such as the military, churches, schools, corporations, and community organizations are all potential field sites where an anthropologist would be able to encounter and identify instances of social reproduction.

Anthropologists have also pointed to social reproduction as a source of the perpetuation of inequalities in our society. As such, some are considering the possibility of using the theory as the grounding concept in contemporary justice work. An example of this can be seen in Strauss and Meehan's article *New Frontiers in Life's Work* where they discuss precarity with the goal to, "bring into conversation different approaches to conceptualizing and resisting inequality and exploitation and to consider whether new alliances of theory and justice might be forged through a feminist materialist politics grounded in the concept of social reproduction" (2015, 16). They go on to highlight the usefulness of exploring new and innovative ways to consider using social reproductive theory as a means of making visible that "those in power would have remain unseen" (Strauss and Meehan 2015, 26). By being identified, social mechanisms have been traditionally used to oppress now have the potential to become sites of intervention.

## Historical perspective

Butler's "Merely Cultural" tracks the politicization of social reproduction theory and the ways in which social and sexual conservatism relegated questions of race and sexuality as secondary and reduced political movements to "assertion[s] and affirmation[s] of cultural identity" (Butler 1997, 267). She unpacks an albeit simplified version of *factionalization* that she says "splintered" the Left and "allowed" the Right to gain the political middle ground, prioritize a "racially cleansed notion of class, [and] fortify its own unity and coherence" (268 - 269). According to Butler, the "politics of inclusion and unity" use identity politics as "a derogatory term for feminism, anti-racism, and anti-heterosexism" which are deemed factionalizing, identarian, and particularistic (265 & 270). However, post-structuralist and social accounts more closely argued for an understanding of overlapping, mutually determining, and convergent political formations based in race, class, gender, and other identifying factors that produce sets of social relations by communicating "cultural and symbolic value" and securing "routes of distribution and consumption" (269 & 275).

Andrucki et al. reject traditional and neoclassical Marxist explanations of labor that utilized sexist and racist frameworks of understanding trade, waged labor, and factory work. Instead, they embrace a feminist-inspired Marxism that recognizes the fluidity of relationships that create the capitalistic conditions through which families and racialized bodies experience the world. In doing so, they call attention to the role of activism and politicization in transforming the distinctions made between individual and collective care.

## Education

Social reproduction is the process associated with the replication of social patterns and relationships. These processes do not occur in a vacuum, but through the daily interactions between people, organizations, and institutions. The education system is an organization and institution that most, if not all, people interact with in their lifetimes. Social reproduction theory argues that schools are not institutions of equal opportunity operating as meritocracies, but as mechanisms for perpetuating social inequalities (Collins 2009). This view can be analyzed using three different perspectives on inequality: economic, cultural, and linguistic. Traditional Marxist and economic explanations for the uncertain relation between class and educational outcomes proved to be too narrow because they excluded the intersections of race and gender and too rigid because they failed to investigate agency and identity (Collins 2009, 43). Cultural and linguistic models of social reproduction in schools focused on the production of class as an expressive performance, elucidating the power of class in language, schooling, and life chances, while also acting as foundational for deficit models that posed poor urban Black students were

intellectually inadequate because they were culturally and linguistically “deprived” (41). Collins ultimately argues for a new approach that moves beyond the micro-macro dichotomy to investigate identity, agency, person, and voice in tandem with the structures and institutions of class and the sociopolitical economy.

### **Economic Reproduction**

Teachers, administrators, parents, and students have debated ideas about the proper curriculum and methods for teaching reading, mathematics, and several other subjects since the early twentieth century (Loveless 2001). All parties aim to see students properly learn, develop, and succeed. However, in their provocative 1976 work *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis argue that individual economic success can only partially be attributed to cognitive development cultivated in school settings and, “advanced the position that schools prepare people for adult work rules by socializing people to function well and without complaint in the hierarchical structure of the modern corporation” (2002, 1). However, other scholars have argued that families, not class structure and curriculum, play the most significant role in the outcomes of children. Annette Lareau argues that class conditions at home influence children’s school experiences, as middle-class parents with office work might bring their work home with them, thereby modeling a work/home connection that children of working-class parents will not observe or emulate (Collins 2009, 37). An argument of this nature provides a useful segue into the next section.

### **Cultural Reproduction**

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is an individual’s “accumulated labor” that can be used as “social energy” (Bourdieu 1986). In simpler terms, cultural capital can be derived from an individual’s knowledge, behaviors, and group memberships that contribute to social and cultural status, mobility, and opportunity. In most cases, the acquisition of cultural capital begins in families, as “parents are considered the first teachers of their children” (Huang 2019, 46), so families are an institution that offers education. These notions are not only reflected in the work of Lareau. Douglas Foley’s 1990 work *Learning Capitalist Culture* shows how schools are sites of cultural practices that reproduce social inequality. He studied a south Texas town and high school in the 1970s and determined that class and racial hierarchies are replicated in multiple settings, but that “class relations take priority over ethnic affiliations, but that class is expressive rather than structural” (Collins 2009, 37). These observations reify Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital.

### **Linguistic Reproduction**

Sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology demonstrate that language is also a powerful means of reproducing social patterns. As a result, the use of language and

communication in schools has led to debates among scholars (Collins 2009, 39). A major debate around linguistic reproduction is that of linguistic deprivation as an explanation for educational failure, particularly among poor African Americans. However, anthropologists and other critics of the deficit model have argued that minorities did poorly in school not because of their language, but because they were treated differently in general (Leacock 1969, cited in Collins 2009, 40-41). These findings tie back to the influence of cultural capital, as language is associated with class and there is a “disjuncture between poor and working-class language practices and those expected in public arenas such as the school or the (white collar) workplace” (Bernstein, cited in Collins 2009, 41).

## Government

Social Reproduction Theory examines the experiences of individuals living in a capitalist society and the unmet needs of these individuals produced in a repeating cycle driven by these capitalist ideals (Jaffe 2020). This applies to examinations of organizations through investigations of the “production of embodied labor powers” (Jaffe 2020) and how these powers perpetuate capitalism so that it continues to be a dominating force in society.

At their foundation, organizations are social groups in need of social dictates (Wilson 1992). Governmental organizations accomplish these through the development of policies and procedures that government actors are taught to follow. These institutions encourage the gendering, racialization and sexualization of the members of the workforce (Arruzza 2020). At the same time, they reproduce those social configurations within the workplace for the next generation of workers. This may be one reason that government organizations seem so resistant to change.

The political argument demanding the restructuring of government organizations is also a social one. This cycle of social reproduction contradicts the primary purposes of most government organizations which are to defend, represent, and maintain the social welfare of members of the society being governed. Currently, members of the workforce and these governmental organizations are participating, largely unwillingly, in a cycle of reproduction that is dominating and unsustainable. In the public sector, efforts are being made to continue the reproduction of labor while meeting the needs of the workforce members. This is being accomplished through efforts such as President Obama's plan for a regulatory system that “consider(s) costs and reduce(s) burdens for American businesses and consumers when developing rules; expand(ing) opportunities for public participation and public comment; simplify(s) rules; promote(s) freedom of choice; and ensure(s) that regulations are driven by real science,” (Sims 2016). These efforts within government organizations to reframe the cycle of social reproduction present the opportunity for governmental actors to develop a more equitable and sustainable mode of reproduction.

However, while an effort is being made to reform government organizations to improve the current model of social reproduction, there are significant obstacles to these



alterations. Due to New Right policies (see the chapter on Organizational Culture) limiting the state's power, governmental organizations and their workforce are mainly encompassed by the private sector (Wright 1994). While the public sector is pushing efforts to "maximize opportunities for disadvantaged groups of people" (Wright 1994), both the public and private sectors are having difficulty establishing any evident change. One cause of this is likely the bureaucratic model that many of these organizations are built upon. The bureaucratic model is centered around different forms of culture that have become ingrained within these government organizations that all combine to develop a "strong company culture" (Wright 1994).

This company culture is imposed on the workforce of these governmental actors throughout their training and then reinforced by the policies of these organizations or through the actions of other individuals within the institution. Company culture is heavily promoted in governmental (and often non-governmental) organizations as a bond between members of the workforce; however, a by-product of this culture is the perpetuation of current forms of social reproduction. The bureaucratic structure of governmental organizations continues to separate the management from the general labor force, benefitting those on the higher levels of government by maintaining power structures and reproducing a labor force that will continue to perform a standardized set of repetitive tasks (Wright 1994). While Karl Marx established this approach by governmental organizations to social reproduction as an essential reproduction of labor power, social reproduction within these organizations is still "a site of oppression expropriation and exploitation, and ...a site of political struggle and social transformation" (Arruzza 2020).

## Conclusion

### Key Concepts

**Anti-reductionists:** individuals, groups, and socially constructed phenomena like identity or class as mutually influential and interacting

**Atomism:** suggests that only individual psychology, beliefs, and attitudes (and not relations among or between individuals) explain 'the social'.

**Methodological individualism:** the idea that social phenomena are explainable by looking at the actions and relations of individuals.

**Radical holism:** focuses on the idea that only these social categorizations matter, while individuals can make little if any difference in the world

**Social facts:** From Emile Durkheim, "These social realities are best thought of as (i) 'exterior' to each individual consciousness considered purely individually and as (ii) capable of exercising a 'coercive' action on individual consciousnesses" (Gane 2011,

11). Includes institutions, social roles and expectations, culture, class, and other relatively stable phenomena.

**Social reproduction:** The process of replicating patterns of association (of people, materials, technologies, resources, knowledge, etc.) and their associated political relationships.

## In Practice

### Research Questions

1. Consider how the daily activities of your organization may impact workers and organizational culture. (More on organizational culture in Chapter 5)
  - Do the daily activities of this organization (meetings, reporting, language used, communication styles, and so on) affect all organization members the same way? If not, how?
2. Consider how your organization policy on remote work impacts the lives of employees outside the office. How might the following policies socially reproduce issues surrounding gender, childcare, elder care?
  - Personal time off
  - Medical leave
  - Maternity leave
  - Paternity leave
3. Consider how organizational policies and organizational culture might socially reproduce cultural issues involving overwork and blurred boundaries between work and home life.
  - Work time vs. Leisure time
  - Worker Self-care
  - Burnout risk

### Website Resources:

- Space and Social Reproduction in Organizations:  
<https://experts.illinois.edu/en/publications/space-and-social-reproduction-in-local-organizations-a-social-con>
- Social Reproduction and the Pandemic:  
<https://experts.illinois.edu/en/publications/space-and-social-reproduction-in-local-organizations-a-social-con>

### Example:

1. Freshour expands on the ideas briefly discussed by Andrucki et al. by focusing her ethnographic research on Black and Latina poultry workers and grassroots social justice organizations in and around northeast Georgia. Drawing attention specifically to the institutions of slavery, Jim Crow, and American criminal justice, Freshour explains how anti-Black and anti-immigrant workfare policies discipline,

displace, and dispose of workers in the name of capital accumulation. Women workers in Georgia experienced a litany of restrictive political conditions to their existence, such as the inability to access SNAP benefits because their wages were slightly over the poverty line. In sum, the poultry industry relied on a social reproduction in continual crisis that precariously maintained wagelessness as a lifetime condition.

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# Chapter 4

## Anthropology, Labor, and Management

Bre Kramer, Holden Erikson, Tristan Akins

### Introduction

*"A commodity has a value because it is a crystallization of social labor. The greatness of its value, or its relative value, depends upon the greater or less(er) amount of that social substance contained in it; that is to say, on the relative mass of labor necessary for its production," (Marx 1966).*

Anthropological examinations of labor and management emerged during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Theorists such as Karl Marx (1966) and Max Weber (1930) developed theories surrounding America's capitalist structures, labor, and the perceived power organizations gained from their use of the workforce. Marx's theory of labor focuses on power and value, the latter being reliant on the amount of effort a laborer took to produce it (Marx 1966). While Marx's theories and observations regarding capitalism were largely critical, they have contributed to current anthropological approaches to understanding labor and management in American society.

Weber posited that the capitalist workforce structure would not endure, and the capitalist system would eventually fall into a decline due to divisions within the labor force. Weber's theories surrounding labor and the capitalist system were formulated from his understandings of Protestantism and the protestant work ethic (1930), research concluded that communities that strongly valued hard work and finding success, such as the protestant culture, were more successful and therefore more likely to gain monetary success. While Weber's theories and beliefs have been challenged by contemporary anthropologists, his discussions about capitalism, bureaucracy, and the class system are still central to anthropological research of labor, management, and organizations today.

In this chapter, we explore contemporary anthropological approaches to the topics of labor and management. Anthropologists have begun to move beyond academic examinations of labor and management by taking a more active and applied role in these areas. Through discussions of business anthropology, anthropology in family and the workplace, and the feminist perspective of labor and management, anthropological examinations of labor and management have moved beyond the pages written by theorists such as Marx and Weber to alter the conditions of labor and management within the workforce.

## Business Anthropology

The field of business anthropology rose out of the need for a more holistic approach toward mainstream policies and analysis. These anthropological approaches have become useful in incorporating more communities within the world of business, such as rural communities and people of color, (Alf 2013). Further, approaches within the anthropology of business have developed and changed alongside the directions and goals of the businesses and corporations within American society, (Moeran et al. 2012). Today, the applications of business anthropology vary, but it is the qualitative approach that the field of anthropology brings to the workplace that “[expands] the focus on non-work-related aspects” (Krawinkler 2016). Business anthropologists are involved in areas such as examinations of procedures, diversity management, and changes in the management process (Krawinkler 2016).

### **Anthropological Examination of Procedures**

Anthropological involvement in the examination of procedures in the workplace is largely used to increase productivity. This means that business anthropologists not only examine the procedures and functions of an organization from the perspective of the workforce, but they are also often involved in researching the customer’s needs (Manjula and Sindhura 2021). The ethnographic approach of anthropology is used in these situations to find and determine weak points or needs both within and outside the organization in order to help an organization expand its success. In episode 84 of the Talking About Organizations Podcast, Louis Brandeis discusses the life and works of Louis Brandeis who originated the term ‘scientific management’ that aimed at conserving effort and making work life more predictable, reducing worker stress and increasing satisfaction. Brandeis proposed forms of management where profit would not be the only measure of a business’s success. The methodological approaches used by business anthropologists in these areas include “non-participant observation, participant observation, Case studies, Mapping, Delphi techniques, Key informant interviews, (and) In-depth interviews,” (Manjula and Sindhura 2021). The use of these methods and the perspectives of business anthropologists provide these organizations with theoretical and practical tools to understand the dynamics and information overlooked by institutional actors focused on completing their designated tasks.

### **Diversity in the Workplace**

Discussions of diversity in the workplace have been growing alongside the expanding workforce in America, and have largely been attributed to globalization, which is “the shift to a service economy, and organizational emphases on teams and knowledge workers” (Qirko 2012). However, the need for more laborers within the workforce does not always result in increased diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, or national origin.

**Diversity management** is an anthropological approach to this issue with both an **emic** and **etic** perspective, meaning that anthropologists examine this issue from both within and outside the groups they are working with. Most business anthropologists currently take the diversity management approach based on the belief that diversity is a relationship formed between the similarities and differences within an institution (Qirko 2012).

The goal of diversity management is to develop a more **holistic** workplace for all members of the organization (Qirko 2012). Many businesses approach this by creating diversity training courses and celebrating different groups and communities within their organization. The anthropological approach to this issue, however, relies on an examination of the beliefs and behaviors of the business to develop an understanding of the “fundamental cultural assumptions” (Qirko 2012) that drive the actions of the organization. In doing so, anthropologists provide insight to these organizations on both a procedural and managerial level to improve diversity and relations within the workplace. We will discuss the work of organizational transformation—including intentionally cultivating multiple forms of diversity—in Chapter 6.

## **Anthropology in Management**

Anthropologists who study management often describe the process of management itself in cultural terms, involving both negotiation and construction of meaning to keep the workforce adequately productive (Linstead 1977). Management is also seen as both a function and a process within an organization (Linstead 1977). Individuals in positions of management are impacted by their own perspective, the perspective of the organization, and are influenced by the larger socioeconomic processes of society (Marietta 2016). For example, those in positions of management might apply their personal experiences of being managed, while also applying the rules of the organization that they may not necessarily agree with to produce the most profit for their organization.

Two common approaches used by business anthropologists in the analysis of management are **defamiliarization** by **epistemological** critique and defamiliarization of cross-cultural critique (Linstead 1977). Defamiliarization is the process of presenting ordinary things in a new way to gain a new perspective of that topic (Linstead 1977). Anthropological approaches to examining management attempt to apply understandings of knowledge and culture in tandem with associated theories to encourage and create change within higher levels of institutions. (Linstead 1977). The challenge with anthropological work at these levels of organizations is that they rely on the willingness of management to reshape their own understandings of the workplace and participate in self-critiques of their own actions.

## Anthropology of Family and the Workplace

As discussed in Chapter 2, families are key sites of social reproduction—including the reproduction of “workers” and the ability of people to go to jobs outside the home. Family dynamics and labor practices have long been intertwined, such as the sites in which making a living and making a family come together, in both the home and the office (Chart 2021). Prior to today’s version of the average workplace, confined to cubicles and wage labor, almost everyone’s place of work was within the household or the fields. Families worked together to maintain the house, and rarely ventured outside to commute to work. The closest thing to a distinct workplace was the workplaces of artisan labor (National Geographic 2020). However, the separation of work from family is a relatively recent phenomenon. The advent of the modern workplace coincides with the rise of urbanization, wage labor, and specification within the division of labor (National Geographic 2020). This has resulted in a rise of bureaucratic management structures (see chapter 9) built upon a specific set of rules. The whole concept of what a workplace means “already on the terrain of modern institutions. Prior to the modern reorganization of relations in and of production” (Richardson 2006). As mentioned previously, the closest resemblances of the modern-day workplace found in years past before the advent of said modernization of labor separate from family would be that of skilled artisans.

For example, it was common for carpenters to have a distinct workplace in order to use their specified knowledge of the craft to make furniture for the community. The next closest example of the modernized workplace found before the industrial revolution would be the divisive organization and specification of labor found on that of a fishing vessel. A captain would need a huge crew of people who each held specific tasks when out at sea of people who each held specific tasks. If more than one group of workers messed up, the ship would sink, or people would go hungry. Now in the modern workplace, it would make sense to envision every building of employment as a self-contained vessel much like that of a ship. However, there is no longer any risk of death or starvation, just the risk of employees not showing up, profits dipping for a quarter, of being understaffed. In other words, far less crucial.

Workers today are expected to separate their work life from their family life, with “the forces leading to the separation of work and family in space (the workplace from the home) and in time (the working day from leisure time spent with family and/or friends), particularly among global middle classes” (Richardson 2006) resulting in an isolated experience in the workplace. This shapes understandings of the workplace and productivity that further impact approaches to ideas of labor and management throughout the workforce.



## Feminist Perspectives

Labor is not gender neutral. *Women, Culture, and Society*, a 1974 work by Stanford anthropologists Michelle Rosaldo and Louis Lamphere, examines the issue of near-universal sexual asymmetry and female subordination. In organizational anthropology, feminist scholars investigate the ways in which this sexual asymmetry and subordination are expressed and created in spaces of labor. It is worth noting, however, that there is not one single form of feminist scholarship; rather, feminist scholarship describes a range of perspectives that share common concepts and unifying goals.

*Feminist Political Economy*: feminist political economy seeks a more complete analysis of economics, the processes of inclusion/exclusion that define a neoliberal economic system (Agenjo-Calderón 2019), and the politics that create and maintain these processes (Lokot, Michelle and Amiya Bhatia 2020). Feminist political economy tends to emphasize the existence of status-quos and the powers that maintain them. In the analysis of an organization, the perspective of feminist political economy may be particularly useful in analyzing the distribution of paid labor, the role of unpaid labor, and the distribution of wages.

*Lesbian Feminism*: lesbian feminism evolved in many ways as a reconsideration of cultural feminism. Lesbian feminism tends not to portray *men* as the source of issues but rather (traditionally) *male values* such as aggressiveness and dominance (Taylor, Verta 1993). One of the largest issue areas for lesbian feminism, which it shares with the Women's Health Movement, is the commodification and objectification of the female body, which have real physical, social, and political consequences, such as sexual harassment, needlessly sexualized media, and legislation that disproportionately controls female bodies. In the analysis of an organization, the perspective of lesbian feminism may be particularly useful in analyzing how traditionally male values both directly and indirectly perpetuate harmful narratives.

*Women's Health Movement*: A powerful political force from the 1980s onward, the Women's Health Movement strives to improve women's health care and draw attention to the cultural processes that harm women's bodies. One of the main goals of the Women's Health Movement is advocating for women's bodily autonomy and protection from discriminatory health practices (Layne, Linda 2003). In the analysis of an organization, the perspective of the Women's Health Movement can be useful in considering how distributions of labor and gendered institutions can harm women's bodies or impede bodily autonomy.

*Relational-Cultural Theory*: relational-cultural theory was initially developed as a means of understanding women's psychology; however, it has since been utilized in understanding general human psychology, including men. Relational-cultural theory explores how close social relationships—which are disproportionately portrayed as

feminine—are necessary for human growth and development and is foundational for research on mental illness, racism, sexism, and other social issues (Jordan, Judith 2002). In the analysis of an organization, the perspective of relational-cultural theory can be useful in considering how the gendering of close-knit relationships can have significant effects on employees and members of an organization.

## Key Concepts

**Critical theory:** Critical theories, as opposed to problem-solving theories, question the existing and historical social and ideological conditions that influence the present. Feminist theories developed alongside critical theories in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Feminist scholarship revolves around critique – “critical appraisal of the social structures and cultural ideologies that shape women’s lives and reformulation of the theoretical apparatus that anthropologists have used to understand these structures and cultural notions” (Lamphere 2006).

**Gender:** while *sex* refers to biological characteristics, *gender* is based on socially constructed behaviors, assigned roles, and expectations that are often related to, but not dependent on, sex (Vlassoff 2002).

**Intersectionality:** a term defined in 1989 by law scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the interactions between race, gender, and class (“Kimberlé Crenshaw on Intersectionality” 2017). Through the lens of intersectionality, one can understand that markers such as gender, race, and class do not stand separate, but rather are layered and influence an individual’s lived experiences. A rich Black woman and a poor White woman will likely experience racism, sexism, and classism differently.

**Gender Performance:** Gender Performance Theory holds that ideas such as masculinity and femininity are not biological traits; rather, they are performed social identities. Some identities may even be privileged – consider athletic masculinity – while others may be marginalized – consider gay masculinity (Harris III 2009).

## In Practice

“Signal questions” to help someone with evaluating diversity:

1. Ask not just “are you hiring from a diverse pool” but also “who does which jobs?” or “how is labor and power distributed across lines of diversity?”
2. Develop a brief statement encouraging someone conducting a gender-based analysis to think from multiple perspectives and provide some advice in doing so
3. Example question: How are work and family separated in your workplace? How does this impact productivity and morale?

Analysis of how diversity impacts your workplace

1. Examine intersectionality and identities that exist within the workplace.
2. Consider how people are treated in your workplace and how it relates to their identity.
3. Reflect on if your workplace has any rules or regulations in place for reducing discrimination / encouraging diversity?

## Glossary

**Defamiliarization-** “a theory and technique, originating in the early 20th century, in which an artistic or literary work presents familiar objects or situations in an unfamiliar way, prolonging the perceptive process and allowing for a fresh perspective,” (Dictionary.com 2022).

**Diversity management-** “Diversity management, a part of human resource management, involves the recognition, effective deployment and harmonization of individual employee idiosyncrasies,” (Knowledge 2022).

**Emic perspective-** “Here the researcher throws themselves into the culture, society, or phenomena to be investigated. Their aim is to look at the culture from the inside, to create their own model of what it is to be embraced by the circumstances surrounding the phenomenon and analyze it as an insider. This serves both for building experiential knowledge and subjective knowledge linked to different aspects of the experiences,” (Nissen 2021).

**Etic perspective-** “In sum, the Etic perspective consists of an aseptic view of phenomena. In the Etic perspective, the observer tries to stay away from an experience, culture, or occurrence under the assumption that looking at it from afar helps them to be objective and neutral,” (Nissen 2021).

**Epistemological critique-** “Epistemology is a philosophical concept used to study the nature and essence of knowledge and can be applied as a spur to encourage further discussions among the scholars,” (Britannica 2022).

**Holistic-** “characterized by the belief that the parts of something are interconnected and can be explained only by reference to the whole,” (Dictionary.com 2022).

**Urbanization:** process of population concentration. This might seem like a rather limited definition, but anthropologists “evaluate the state of knowledge of the relationship between Urbanization and economic growth” (Spence Anne 2008). As more and more countries become further developed and urbanized, the dynamic between family and the workplace becomes strained. However, anthropologists attempt to reveal how solid lines drawn between public and domestic spheres of life are in truth fragile and fleeting; we join those terms now considering how these lines have become more obviously blurred, or even erased.

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# Chapter 5

## Organizational Culture and Managerial Governance

Reaghan Gough, Grace Bowen, Christin Calvert

### Introduction

“Culture” is a popularly used yet pervasive term that is of historical interest to anthropologists and organizational theorists for its relativity and flexibility. However, this malleability also means that its use in organizations may vary. According to E.H. Schein, “We cannot build a useful concept if we cannot agree on how to define it, “measure” it, study it, and apply it in the real world of organizations.” (Schein, 1991 as cited in Wright, 1994, 3).

Organizational Studies			Anthropology
Organizations as Machines	Organizations as Organisms	Organizations as Culture	Culture as Process and Ideology
closed systems with segmental structures and hierarchies	open systems depending on environmental factors	conflict between company culture and worker subculture	all ways of conceptualizing organizations are inherently cultural and related both to the material environment and identities of the workers

*Chart 1: Organizational studies have historically framed organizations through the first three models, arguing that organizations may either exist as: a) closed systems with segmental structures and hierarchies (machines), b) open systems depending on environmental factors (organisms), and c) conflict between company culture and worker subculture.*

*Anthropologists, on the other hand, tend to view all ways of conceptualizing organizations as inherently cultural and related to the material environment and identities of the workers (Wright 1994, #).*

In this section,

**Ideology:** systematic and materially founded knowledge discourse claiming truth and are believed to be self-evident or natural; alternative possibilities and explanations are deemed unthinkable but susceptible to historical conditions and subject to change (Wright 1994)

### Organizational Studies

Scientific Management or Taylorism describes the “manager-centered or top-down view” of organizational culture that divides work processes into “strictly demarcated tasks” and assumes human behavior and performance will function automatically as a result (Wright 1994). Wright specifically conceptualizes **organizational culture** as a “sharedness” of common yet ambiguous ideas that are continually reworked and actively contested (1994). Formal: organizational structure, job roles, hierarchy of decision-making, goals, rules, policies. Informal: the ways individuals and groups relate within the formal system to achieve organizational goals.

## Culture Types

This section discusses, first, the four types of organizational culture described by Bruce M. Tharp from *Anthropology in the Office*, and, second, the five described by Henry Mintzberg from *The Study of Organizations*, both of which are widely accepted within the anthropological community. There are a multitude of other organizational culture types discussed by anthropologists, as well as the rejection of assigning types to culture, but these are not covered in this section. Although defining and understanding ‘culture’ is a fluid and abstract process, Tharp identifies dominant attributes within a two-dimensional framework of competing values that enable organizational theorists and anthropologists to understand the dynamics of culture within small-scale and global organization structures.

Tharp defines ‘modern’ culture as a complex whole encompassing the knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by a group (Tharp 2009, “Defining...” 3). This is remarkably similar to Edward Tylor’s description from *Primitive Culture (1871)*, one of the oldest definitions of culture in anthropological history.

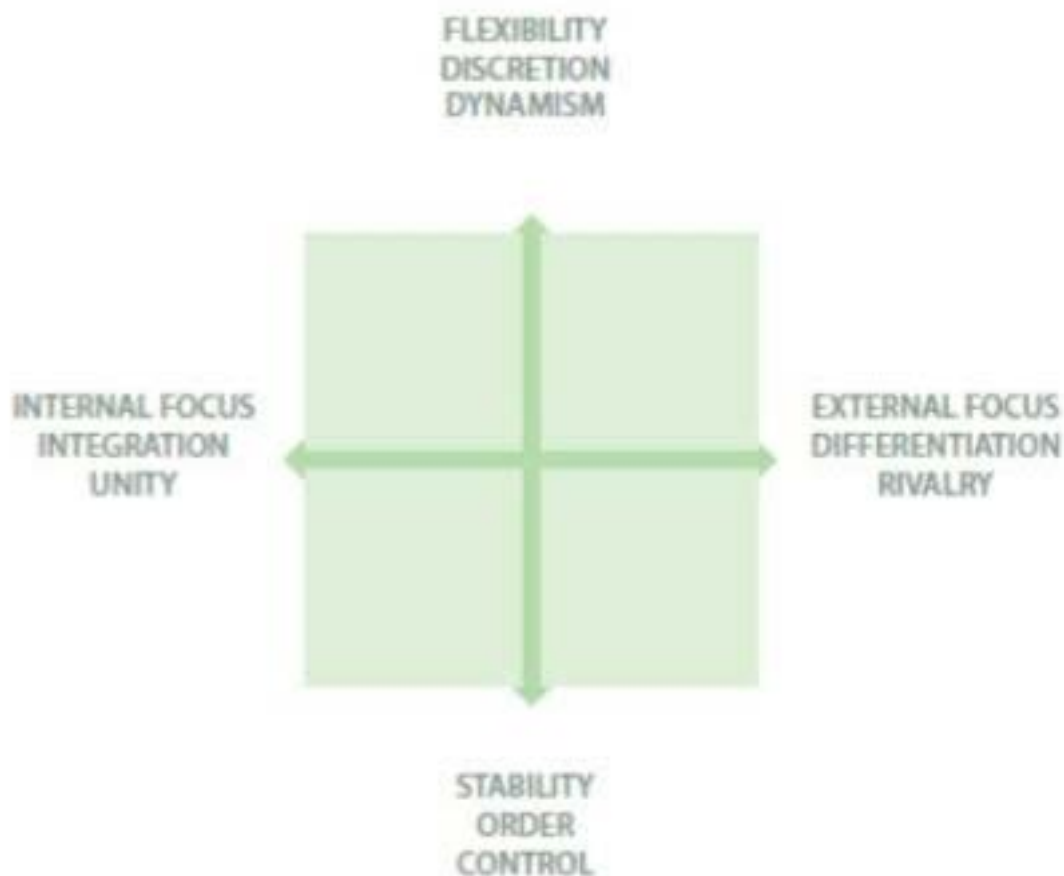
**Organizational culture**, on the other hand, is defined as the employment of ‘culture’ to understand the shared basic assumptions of a group and solve its problems of external adaptation and internal integration which are disseminated to members as the correct ways to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (Tharp, 2009, “Defining...” 5).

Tharp claims organizational culture and performance are closely linked in that modern businesses must recognize the importance of culture in order to gain a competitive advantage. For example, Apple continues to innovate with its products and internal processes through the leveraging of culture. In doing so, they have endured and explored new, profitable markets in the face of many competitors (Tharp 2, 2009).



## Competing Values Framework

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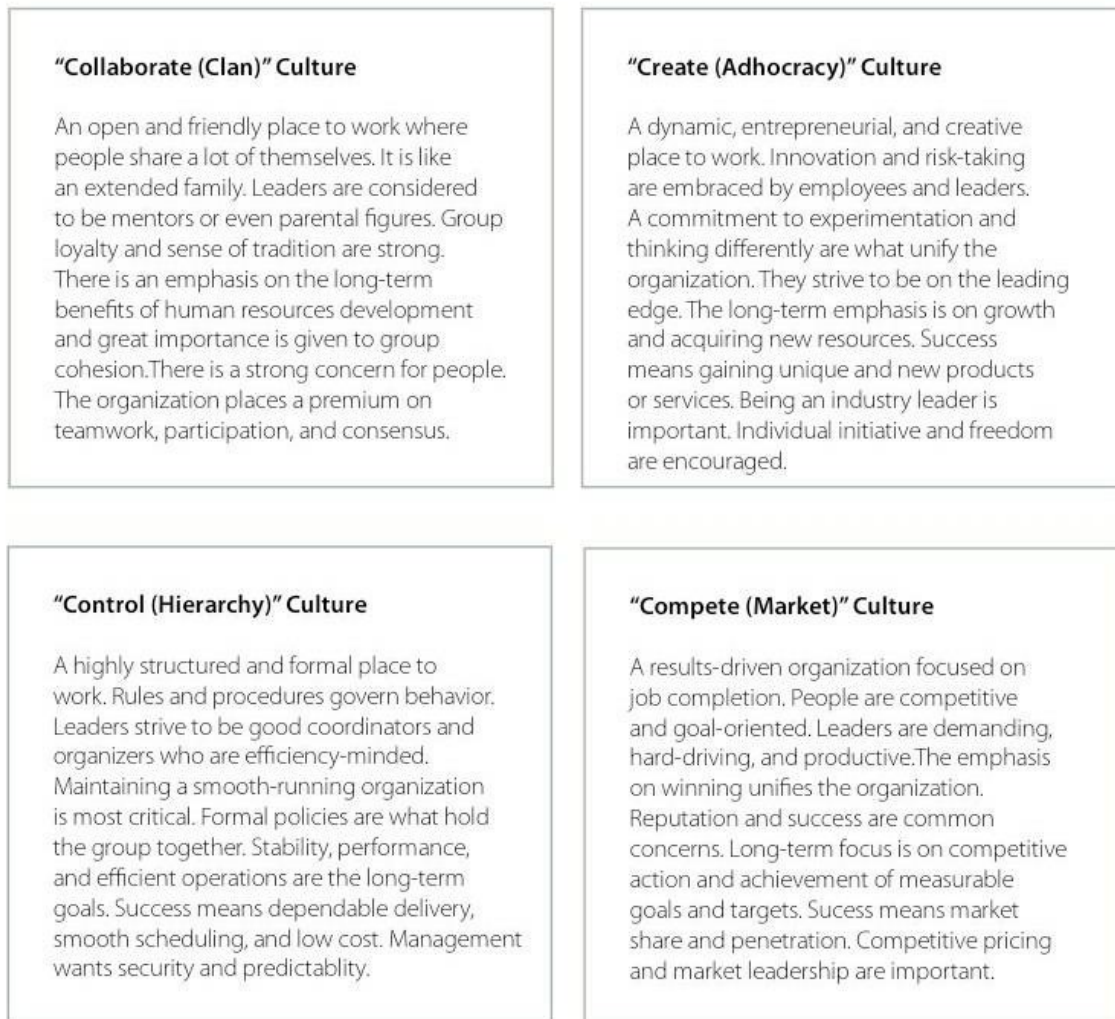
*Image 1 (Competing Values Framework): The first of these two dimensions represents the values of flexibility, discretion, and dynamism, while the opposite end represents stability, control (predictability), and order (mechanistic processes). The second of these dimensions holds the values of internal focus (orientation), integration, and unity on one end, and external focus (orientation), differentiation, and rivalry at the other (Tharp 2, 2009).*

While some companies operate more effectively by centering organizational focus on their internal processes, others focus heavily on the market and competition. Tharp argues, however, that “the key to using culture to improve performance lies in matching culture or attributes to organizational goals” (Tharp, 2009, “Four...” 3). The quadrants



portray the characteristics a company might analyze when deciding how they want to represent their observable artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions.

The Tharp suggests that there are four dominant organizational culture quadrants used to classify organizations: Collaborate (clan), Create (adhocracy), Control (hierarchy), and Compete (market). The chart below summarizes each of these categories and their values.



*Image 2: This image divides the Organizational Culture Types identified by Tharp (2009) in order to simplify and label each. The four described are expressed in these quadrants (Tharp, 2009, “Four...” 5). The determination of these categories is based on Cameron and Quinn’s Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (2006), as well as the influence of Mintzberg’s theories (1871).*

The **Collaborate (clan) culture quadrant** has an inward focus as well as the concern for integration and an emphasis on flexibility. This results in an often team-centered approach, in which the members share the ability to hire and fire employees and are strongly encouraged to participate in deciding how things should be done (the source references some Japanese companies for this definition). An example of an American Collaborate company is Tom's of Maine, which produces all-natural toothbrushes, soaps, and other hygiene products. Their entire team is greatly encouraged to show respect for coworkers, customers, owners, agents, suppliers, the community, and the environment, while having a safe and fulfilling workplace and providing employees with opportunities to grow and learn (Tharp, 2009, "Four..." 3). Companies with these characteristics seem to lean more towards the flexibility and internal focus category within the competing values framework.

The **Create (adhocracy) culture quadrant** places a strong emphasis on flexibility and discretion, with an internal focus and a significant concern for differentiation and adaptability. Companies such as Google are said to thrive in what was before considered an unmanageably chaotic environment. Google, for example, has developed high-tech, prototypical, and entrepreneurial software, as well as cutting edge technology and processes. These advances have built them up as leaders in the market and have forced other companies to play catch-up (Tharp, 2009, "Four..." 4). These companies also seem to fit within the flexibility and internal focus category of the competing values framework.

The **Control (hierarchy) culture quadrant** is composed of organizations that run similarly to large, bureaucratic corporations, in that they are defined by stability, control, internal focus, integration, and a clearly defined structure of authority and decision making. Beneficial leaders within these organizations should be able to organize, coordinate, and monitor people and processes. Managers at McDonald's, for example, should display these characteristics in order to maintain a standardized and efficient business. Government organizations such as the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) also should abide by espoused rules and established bureaucracy (Tharp, 2009, "Four..." 3). This type of organization fits within the three categories of the competing values framework, but not the external focus, differentiation, and rivalry values. This especially makes sense when analyzing government organizations like the DMV.

Finally, we have the **Compete (market) culture quadrant**. This quadrant greatly values stability and control, but they have an external focus and value differentiation over integration. This quadrant is said to have developed its values mainly due to overseas competitive challenges, and American businesses were forced to find more effective organizational approaches. They focused particularly on relationships such as transactions with suppliers, customers, consultants, regulators, and more. They feel that external relationships generate success, and they optimize stability and control by establishing rules, standard operating procedures, and specialized job functions. Companies such as General Electric had leadership that claimed if business divisions were not first or second

in their markets, then they were to be sold since corporate culture is highly competitive and performance results are generally more evident than the process to get them (Tharp, 2009, "Four..." 3). This quadrant falls within the three competing values framework categories, except for internal focus, as these organizations want to do better than their competitors.

Although there are these four dominant organizational culture types, businesses also have sub-dominant cultural elements as well. Accounting departments, for example, might be a dominantly Control (hierarchy) culture type, but will still have many Compete (market) traits. So, having pure forms of each organizational culture type is not just rare, but is nearly impossible, because these other influencing components are present. These four organizational culture types will not be equally proportional within companies, as they generally have a dominant culture type (Tharp, 2009, "Four..." 4).

Henry Mintzberg describes some similar concepts in *The Structuring of Organizations*, but with a few differences. He suggests that there are five culturally structured configurations that organizations fall within.

<b>Mintzberg's Five Designs</b>			
<b>Structural Configuration</b>	<b>Prime Coordinating Mechanism</b>	<b>Key Part of Organization</b>	<b>Type of Decentralization</b>
Simple structure	Direct supervision	Strategic apex	Vertical and horizontal centralization
Machine bureaucracy	Standardization of work processes	Technostructure	Limited horizontal decentralization
Professional bureaucracy	Standardization of skills	Operating core	Vertical and horizontal decentralization
Divisionalized form	Standardization of outputs	Middle line	Limited vertical decentralization
Adhocracy	Mutual adjustment	Support staff	Selective decentralization

*Image 3: This image lays out the Five Structural Configurations that Mintzberg uses to categorize organization for a better understanding of them (Mintzberg, 1979, 301).*

Like those described by Tharp, these structural configurations are meant to assist in understanding and categorizing organizations. Tharp claims that no organization will fit only within only one of these configurations. Similarly, Mintzberg claims that each of these configurations is a 'pure' or 'ideal' types. Mintzberg believes that it's likely impossible to detangle how an organization is affected based on the size, technical systems, environments, and the powers of structures. The five configurations described by Mintzberg can be laid out as a symbolic pentagon. The area inside of this pentagon, where real structures exist, can only be understood when based on these boundaries (Mintzberg, 1979, 301).

Mintzberg also describes the **five pulls on organizations**, which are the pull to centralize, standardize, professionalize, collaborate, and balkanize (Mintzberg, 1979, 302). Based on these pulls, the five structural configurations laid out by Mintzberg enable us to view the world as more ordered and better understood. This order and understanding should be based on contingency factors (size, technical system, environment, and power) of structure. These factors, according to Mintzberg, can no longer be viewed as independent variables, but instead must be understood as dictated by tightly knit interdependent relationships within the organization. Essentially, every factor and pull is dependent upon everything else (Mintzberg, 1979, 303). Effective organizations will alter their pulls and configurations in order to maintain coherence within these interdependent relationships (Mintzberg, 1979, 304). This benefits management and workers within organizations. Researchers advise management as to what changes should be made to be more efficient, and, when employed, they should result in a healthier, more productive work environment.

The models presented by Tharp and Mintzberg have some parallels with each other; for example, they both describe adhocracies, or changeable, informal organizational structures, in order to simplify the structuring of organizations. They both acknowledge that organizational culture types can be placed within certain categories, but also that this does not mean there will be no overlap between them. A key point for this section is that these models of organizational culture types are as the chapter introduction states, different from how anthropologists use the term culture. Culture typing was prevalent in early 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropology, as seen in the work of Lewis Henry Morgan, Julian Steward, Ellman Service, and others. Since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century much of the work of cultural anthropologists has focused on interpreting culture, with a particular focus on culture change and conflict.

## Governing and Audit Culture

The intersection of government and organizational culture is of particular importance to anthropologists and organizational theorists. Andrew Kipnis, Susan Wright, and Cris Shore

seek to bridge the “gap of understanding” in governing practices and organizational culture from a critical global context (Kipnis 2008).

**Audit culture** describes the processes and sociocultural consequences associated with elaborate systems of ranking, measuring, monitoring, and inspecting in government and organizational culture (Kipnis, #; Shore & Wright 2015, #). According to the principal agent theory, audits are “conducted in situations in which accountability and control are desired by a principal who does not feel otherwise able to evaluate the performance of an agent” (Kipnis 2008, #). This dynamic implies not only an authoritative power for the principal, but also a lack of trust between principal and agent requiring intensive monitoring and evaluation (#).

Audit culture is not a culture type in the sense of “adhocracy” or “machine bureaucracy.” Instead, it is a description of a cultural trend since the 1970s across multiple domains and types of organizations. I don’t know if you want to open this door, but it is a good example of what Adorno meant by hegemony.

Many Western academics conceptualize audit culture through ‘**neoliberalism**,’ which is defined as a “tacitly accepted if not widely shared” political rationale of calculability, self-reliance, and discipline that emphasizes the “inherent goodness” of financial markets and deems social constructions as irrelevant (Kipnis 2008). Advanced liberal discourse promotes ‘**governing from a distance**’ and remote surveillance physically and constitutionally by endorsing organizational structures that rely on ‘market rationalization’ to shape ‘desired’ behavior and create governable, industrious, and responsible workers (Kipsnis 2008; Shore & Wright).

This model of governance is similar yet distinct from the systems described by teachers in Zouping, China. Here, performance audits serve to fulfill economic development, spiritual and ideological construction, and party organizational structure by “shifting employee attention away from organizational goals to the politics of selecting, measuring, and fulfilling audit criteria” (see Chart 2). Although similar in structure, Chinese systems of evaluation and examination are academically evaluated as historical relics of Confucian culture and “socialist legacy” enforced by the Chinese Community Party (CCP).

**Chart 2: Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Audit Targets and Indicator/Measurement Examples**

Audit Target	Indicator/Measurement Example
Economic Development	Tax, agricultural output, peasant income, individual/private sector, outside investment
Construction of Spiritual Civilizations	Legal system, social stability, lack of petitions and Falun Gong activity, united work front, ideological construction, civilized behavior, environmental protection, newspapers and publications
Party Construction	Organizational construction, party work style, clean government, democratic elections, propaganda, ideology, political awareness
Performance Audit	Deception, formalism, measuring, fulfilling audit criteria

*Chart 2 (Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Audit Targets and Indicator/Measurement Examples): Economic development indicators for the CCP include taxation, agricultural output, peasant income, individual and private sectors, and outside investment. The construction of a spiritual civilization is measured by the state of the legal system, social stability, lack of petitions and Falun Gong activity, a united work front, ideological construction, civilized behavior, environmental protection, newspapers, and publications. Party construction efforts look to organizational construction, party work style, clean government initiatives, democratic elections, propaganda, ideology, and political awareness to assess effectiveness, and performance audits are deemed effective when deception is perceived to be low and formal processes of measuring and fulfilling audit criteria are maintained (Kipnis 2008).*

As a response to this rift in theory, Kipnis advocates for restructuring our understanding of neoliberalism and audit systems to be indicative of a global **scientism** paradigm that “abuses scientific reasoning” and fails to create efficiency, growth, and “fully individuated, law-abiding, rational, liberal, and disciplined subjects” (Kipnis). A neoliberal critique of scientism, according to Kipnis, reveals the impact of financialization and governing by numbers on processes of management and control (Kipnis 2008; Shore & Wright 2015).

**Financialization** may be described as the processes, principles, and techniques of accountancy and fiscal management when applied to governance and organizations (Shore & Wright 2015). Quantitative statistical interpretations use numbers, indicators,



algorithms, and audits as “instruments of state power” to reflect qualitative aspects of organizational culture, such as trust, perception of corruption, quality of life, happiness, and management of risk. Governments and other financialized organizations **govern by numbers** to reduce complex processes with qualitative features to simple numerical indicators and rankings for purposes of management and control. The ‘culture’ created by this structure of governing and organizing creates an **ethic of accountability** that links morality and production and presents itself as a natural and inevitable aspect of being a worker, student, or employee.

One way to think about the two previous paragraphs is in terms of why some anthropologists studying organizations see scientism and financialization as culturally important. IMHO, three things here: 1) anthropologists tend to take a broad view that is highly contextualized, so for me I can’t divorce organizational culture from larger cultural trends and processes. 2) Related to point 1, the ‘domain of organizations’ has a great deal of overlap with the domain of science and the domain of economics. 3) both scientism and financialization are important in terms of the politics of knowledge: who gets to simplify complexity (Martinez-Alier 2005); which knowledges are ruled legitimate; and what becomes invisible, silenced, or illegitimate in the process.

## In Practice

Example: Hawthorne and Manchester Studies

1. Kipnis provides an example of audit culture through his fieldwork conducted with teachers in Zouping, China. Reminiscent of the “regimes of accountability” associated with high stakes testing and No Child Left Behind in America, Zouping teachers discussed the role of self-reliance (*zili gengshen*) in perpetuating a “never-ending series of competitions and evaluations (*pingbi*)” associated with “bourgeois liberalization” (*zichanijeji ziyouhua*). Despite stated purposes of supporting low-level cadres to “serve the masses without corruption” by the Chinese Community Party (CCP), collusion and the faking of numerical targets meant that quotas and performance audits often resulted in “efforts to comply with directives from above,” rather than accurately and honestly reflecting real world experiences.
2. Assigning organizations to set categories is impossible to do, since they tend to have overlapping cultural features. It would be easy to say an organization falls strictly within a Compete Culture Quadrant, such as that Tharp presented us with, but it will share certain qualities with others, too. Because organizations are composed of interdependent groups, the best way to create culture within is to find out what works best for those doing the work, which is where Anthropologists come in and determine what would make it a productive work culture.

## Key Concepts

**Audit culture** describes the processes and sociocultural consequences associated with elaborate systems of ranking, measuring, monitoring, and inspecting in government and organizational culture (Shore & Wright 2015, #).

**Collaborate (clan) culture quadrant** has a very inward focus with concern for integration and an emphasis on flexibility (Tharp, 2009, “Four...” 3).

**Compete (market) culture quadrant** greatly values stability and control, but they have an external focus and value differentiation over integration and are focused particularly on relationships such as transactions with suppliers, customers, consultants, regulators, and more. They feel that external relationships generate success, and they optimize stability and control by establishing rules, standard operating procedures, and specialized job functions (Tharp, 2009, “Four...” 3).

**Control (hierarchy) culture quadrant** is composed of organizations that run similarly to large, bureaucratic corporations, in that they are defined by stability, control, internal focus, integration, and a clearly defined structure of authority and decision making (Tharp, 2009, “Four...” 3).

**Create (adhocracy) culture quadrant** places a strong emphasis on flexibility and discretion, with an internal focus and a significant concern for differentiation and adaptability (Tharp, 2009, “Four...” 4).

**Ethic of accountability:** organizational culture that links morality and production and presents itself as a natural and inevitable aspect of being a worker, student, or employee

**Financialization:** Processes, principles, and techniques of accountancy and fiscal management applied to governance and organizations (Shore & Wright).

**Five pulls on organizations:** the pull to centralize, standardize, professionalize, collaborate, and balkanize. These enable us to view the world as more ordered and better understood. This order and understanding should be based on contingency factors (size, technical system, environment, and power) of structure (Mintzberg, 1979, 302).

**Governing by numbers:** Using statistical measurement and competitive ranking to reduce complex processes with qualitative features to simple numerical indicators and rankings for purposes of management and control (Shore & Wright 2015, 22).

**Governing from a distance:** The endorsement of organizational structures that rely on ‘market rationalization’ to shape ‘desired’ behavior and create governable, industrious, and responsible workers (Kipnis 2008).

**Governmentality:** how we think about governing others and ourselves (Kipnis 2008, #)

**Neoliberalism:** a “tacitly accepted if not widely shared” political rationale of calculability, self-reliance, and discipline that emphasizes the “inherent goodness” of financial markets and deems social constructions as irrelevant (Kipnis).



**Organizational culture:** “sharedness” of common yet ambiguous ideas that are continually reworked and actively contested (Wright 1994); is the employment of ‘culture’ to understand the shared basic assumptions of a group and solve its problems of external adaptation and internal integration which are disseminated to members as the correct ways to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems (Tharp, 2009, “Defining...” 5).

**Scientific Management/Taylorism:** manager-centered or top-down view of how to fix production system in organization by dividing process into strictly demarcated tasks which are investigated and if physical conditions are correct, human behavior and performance will follow automatically

**Scientism:** a global paradigm that failed to create efficiency, growth, and “fully individuated, law-abiding, rational, liberal, and disciplined subjects.”

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# Chapter 6

## Organizational Knowledge and Innovation

Colleen Runnion & Jennie Doss, Christin Calvert

### Introduction

**Organizational knowledge** can be defined as “the capability members of an organization have developed to draw distinctions in the processes of carrying out their work, in particular concrete contexts, by enacting sets of generalizations whose application depends on historically evolved collective understandings” (Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001, 973). In less jargon-filled terms, organizational knowledge is the collective understandings that organizational members share about what they do and how they do it. Successful organizational operations and processes depend on the proper understanding and implementation of organizational knowledge by seasoned professionals and new members alike. The leveraging of organizational knowledge depends on how an organization’s leadership conceptualizes and shares knowledge, otherwise known as **knowledge management (KM)**.

Knowledge management within an organization depends on the sites from which knowledge emerges and which of these sites of knowledge are valued. Organizational scholars Masao Katakura and Carsten Sorensen (2002) explore knowledge emergence and consider four distinct conceptualizations: (1) knowledge as object, (2) knowledge as interpretation, (3) knowledge as process, and (4) knowledge as relationship. KM research is dominated by the view of knowledge as object, meaning that knowledge represents a “pre-given” world, or objective reality, that exists outside of observing actors. This understanding is flawed, as knowledge emergence emanates from the interaction of multiple actors and cannot be predicted based upon how each actor or system component operates in isolation (Holland, 2000). Instead, it is critical that knowledge be understood as interpretation, process, and relationship, rather than simply as an object. This is because knowledge is not independent of the social environment and the interactions that occur in an organization's social space (Katakura and Sorensen 2002, 6).

This chapter will further explore the importance of the social environment and interactions on the emergence, management, and use of organizational knowledge by examining the following topics:

- Knowledge creation in organizations
- Culture and organizational knowledge

- Organizations: social practice and atmosphere

## Knowledge Creation in Organizations

Successful organizational operations depend on effective knowledge management. To manage knowledge, leaders must understand how knowledge is created and used in their organization. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, knowledge is not independent of the social environment and interactions between actors in the organization. Organizational scholars Ikujiro Nonaka and Ryoko Toyama echo this idea with their model of knowledge creation as a synthesizing process.

Nonaka and Toyama (2003) argue that knowledge creation in organizations is a dialectical process “in which various contradictions are synthesized through dynamic interactions among individuals, the organization, and the environment” (2). They explain this using “Four Modes of Knowledge Conversion” that explain how **tacit knowledge** and **explicit knowledge** operate. **Explicit knowledge** can be thought about as information that can be communicated through words or numbers. **Tacit knowledge** refers to knowledge that is “rooted in action, commitment, and involvement in a specific context” (Nonaka 1994, 339). These four modes form the SECI model: Socialization, Externalization, Combination, and Internalization (2000, 5).

1. Socialization: The first step in knowledge creation. A process in which new knowledge is converted into tacit knowledge that actors share in the experiences of daily work and interaction.
2. Externalization- The process through which tacit knowledge is articulated into explicit knowledge. This can occur through dialogues between actors and exposing actors to different contexts.
3. Combination- Explicit knowledge is gathered from internal or external sources and then “combined, edited, or processes to form more complex and systematic explicit knowledge.”
4. Internalization- Explicit knowledge is shared throughout the organization and converted back into tacit knowledge by members.

The knowledge created through the SECI process is not confined to the organization, but “can trigger the mobilization of knowledge held by outside constituents, such as consumers, affiliated companies, universities, or distributors” (Nonaka and Toyama 2003, 5).

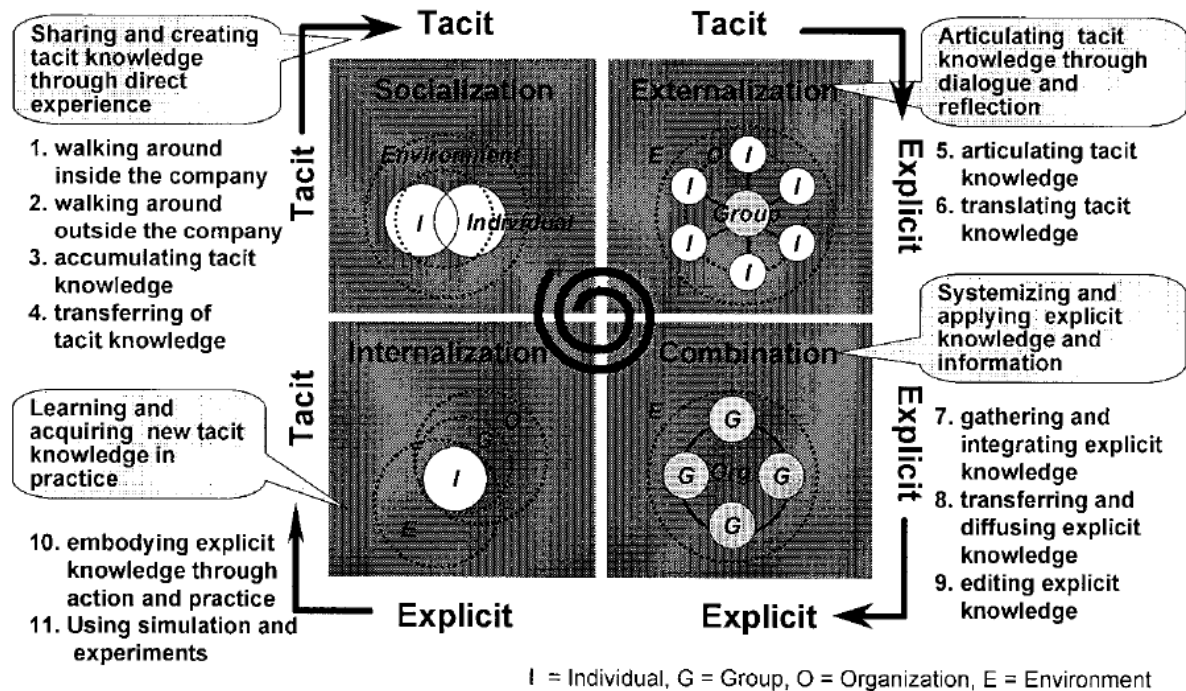


Image 1 (SECI Model): Tacit and explicit knowledge are converted through the processes of socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (Nonaka and Toyama, 2000, 5).

Nonaka and Toyama also draw upon the concept of **ba** to explain knowledge creation in organizations. Ba can be understood as “a shared context in motion, in which knowledge is shared, created, and utilized” (2000, 6). This is the space in which individuals, groups, and teams interact and exchange knowledge. Knowledge can be exchanged in an organization’s physical space through physical meetings, or an organization’s virtual space, such as through virtual meetings, emails, and instant messaging mediums.

Nonaka and Toyama’s work on the SECI model is widely read and cited. However, disagreements with their work and alternative explanations for the exchange of tacit and explicit knowledge in organizations exist. One of these criticisms comes from Stephen Gourlay. He challenges Nonaka’s conceptual framework and finds that the SECI model lacks adequate evidentiary examples (2006). Gourlay asserts that knowledge is not converted through interaction in ba, but rather through different kinds of behavior that produced different kinds of knowledge (2000, 1415).

Gourlay relies upon Dewey’s concepts of reflective and non-reflective experiences and associates them with explicit and tacit knowledge respectively (2000, 1427). He argues that organizational leaders have very limited control regarding the management of tacit knowledge, as we must accept that “tacit knowledge is created all the time, being shaped by people’s experiences [and]... may have unintended and undesirable consequences that we should seek to inquire into before committing ourselves to a decision” (2000, 1429). Even

though Gourlay criticizes Nonaka and Toyama's SECI model, it is worth noting that his approach, like theirs, is deeply social. This reinforces the notion that knowledge must be understood through interpretation, processes, and relationships.

## Culture and Organizational Knowledge

"Organizational theory suggests that organizational performance in terms of innovation, product development and competitive advantage is highly determined by the creation of knowledge at the individual, group and organizational levels" (Nonaka 1994, 348).

In Chapter 5, organizational cultures are discussed at length. Here, we take a moment to focus in on what Karin Cetina refers to as knowledge culture and how organizations, through knowledge communication, can be considered spaces that generate culture and knowledge in and of themselves (2007). This section explores both knowledge and epistemic culture, how organizations can go about facilitating knowledge creation, and a few of the impacts on organizational culture in light of knowledge sharing and hiding.

Organizations and the individuals that make up those organizations are constantly processing large amounts of information. This knowledge gathering and processing is, "viewed as a problem-solving activity which centers on what is given to the organization – without due consideration of what is created by it" (Nonaka 1994, 337). There are two types of knowing: Explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge (defined earlier in the chapter). According to Nonaka, there are four different patterns of interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge that result in knowledge creation by an organization. These four patterns are shown in Image 1.

These four knowledge conversion modes have been proven to be present in organizational knowledge creation, with an important role being played by tacit knowledge conversion (Nonaka 1994, 350). This highlights the importance of taking into consideration not only what is explicitly stated and understood, but also to consider that which cannot be stated when considering organizational culture creation.

In order to better understand the connection between knowledge creation and culture creation, one can look to academic works on knowledge culture. Karin Cetina explores knowledge culture and epistemic culture, two similar terms that she differentiates. **Knowledge culture** refers to how information is generated, shared, and received. **Epistemic culture**, on the other hand, focuses on, "the construction of the *machineries* [emphasis by author] of knowledge construction" (Cetina 2007, 361).

Cetina asserts that we are entering a time where the societal focus is on knowledge and information, both of which are intertwined with other simultaneous processes (2007, 361). There also exists an emphasis in this work on information infrastructures and how transformations in organization can result from them. An example used by Cetina is that of

multinational networks, specifically the international financial architecture and how this network reports knowledge of events.

*“...what appears to be at stake in information circuits is not truth in the sense of lasting findings but news, knowledge of relevant developments in a continually changing environment. The shift to news implies a shift in temporality away from the large amounts of time required by research and toward speed in identifying and reporting the news content. But a deeper aspect is that information knowledge in the area discussed tends to be interpreted with respect to an expected future and used as a basis for implementing financial moves. In this process, information knowledge gets used up: usage changes the conditions of relevance for what counts as knowledge and information”*  
(Cetina 2007, 368).

These adjustments towards a desired end are informed decision points where the financial organizations begin to influence the culture of their work environment, the work itself, and their respective organizations.

## Organizations: Social Practice and Atmosphere

### Knowledge, Organization, and Social Practice

This section is concerned with the community of practice, which, in the anthropological study of organizations, is considered to be a unit for understanding knowledge within a firm or organization. In “Knowledge and Organization: A Social-Practice Perspective” by John Seely Brown and Paul Duguid, it is argued that anthropological research overanalyzes the idea of community and neglects the implications of practice. Practice, in this context, is the source of difference within a firm, as well as its advantage within the market because of its dynamic, coordinated knowledge produced by the community. This enables us to lay out the framework of the internal and external relations of organizations, which involves creating barriers among different communities within said organization.

### Dimensions of Knowledge

There are two main dimensions we will focus on, though there are many other ideas and theories available. The first of these two dimensions is called **sticky discussions** (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 199). Within this dimension, an organization must focus its energies on moving knowledge within their own firm. For example, an organization desires to transfer inherent knowledge from one area to another because of its effectiveness. Performative knowledge is synonymous with sticky, and it is non-marketable. The second dimension is known as **leaky discussions** (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 199). This situation

involves an organization focusing on the external and undesirable flow of knowledge especially when it is 'leaking' across the firm's boundaries into those of competing firms. There is a competitive advantage when firms can prevent this leakage of knowledge.

**Regimes of appropriability** are protective governing structures which establish boundaries within the organization to prevent overflow of knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 199). Leaky discussion is also known as declarative knowledge, and, in principle, can be marketable. It is difficult to argue if an organization is one or the other because ideas, inventions, insights, and practices all influence the sticky and the leaky elements.

If a member of an organization offers one of these influences and it is rejected by their community, they might engage in fissioning. **Fissioning** is a process in which people find themselves blocked in one organization, and, as a result, will form a new organization which will provide more sympathetic treatment towards their ideas (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 199). A beneficial approach to sticky and leaky knowledge is one that analyzes the context or environment from which it sticks and/or leaks. This will often result in a 'social' or 'cultural' explanation as to where and why the knowledge is sticking and leaking. An approach such as this enables questions about collective meaning, sense making, trust, motivation, and issues of the sticky and leaky knowledge to be brought up in conversations, resulting in more effective sociocultural accounts (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 200). Such discussions are effective in providing a deeper, more knowledgeable understanding of social practices within organizations.

Difficulties do arise with these sociocultural accounts, though. The first issue is that they might convey cultural equivalency to the old 'black box' model of organizations, which theorized that inside of this 'box'/organization, the people are free of external influences. The second issue is that stickiness associated with knowledge and discussions is complex and often left unexplained in these accounts, as is the internal flow of the organization. The third discusses knowledge is leaky between firms, despite the guarantee of culturists that it isn't (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 200). In order to resolve these issues, we must look past explanations that accept knowledge as a well-defined substance, as well as refuse to accept explanations that take the firm's cultural unity for granted. This is a prevalent theme specifically in Chapter 4 as well as the rest of the book. We are called to do this by studying the **prism of practice**, which is composed of how work gets done and how knowledge is created (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 200). This understanding of work production and the source of knowledge is a common theme throughout the previous chapter, as well as this one, emphasizing the importance of knowledge within our study of organizations.

## Learning within Organizations

Learning within an organization is the acquisition of knowledge as well as the determination of identity (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 200). Learning *about* something and learning *to do* something are two very different things. The example of this is that one cannot just say that they are educated in a field, but rather they must show that they are,



and then, only with the recognition of their peers, their claims to education be accepted. This example falls within the realm of community of practice, and it widely accepted across most workplaces. This is an effective illustration because it demonstrates how an individual sees themselves versus how the world views them. These perspectives are both important on their own, but they depend upon each other to be the most productive, just as a community depends on its firm and vice versa.

Communities of practice are vital for learning within organizations. **Communities of practice** are composed of interdependent individuals who share identities within the workplace/organizational context (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 202). Individuals develop a collective outlook on their work and the world, and while this can reflect the organization as a whole, it is more likely to reflect the local community. This perspective they share leads to a more holistic understanding and when practices are distinct, identities and knowledge will be too. These communities of practice are tight loops of insight, problem identification, learning, and knowledge production which researchers are privileged to observe. They are a repository for the reproduction of knowledge, maintenance, and development, while also allowing for knowledge to be created, and for organizations constantly change and react prior to environmental change (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 203). Communities of practice provide a link between organizational strategy and its response to changes occurring outside their organization.

### Knowledge, Organization, and Social Practice Summary

As previously discussed, organizational scholars recognize forms of tacit and explicit knowledge. Brown and Duguid refer to these forms as "sticky" and "leaky" respectively. These dimensions are interdependent, just as the organization's people are. "Knowledge, in short, runs on rails laid by practice" (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 204). By engaging in similar practices people share tacit understandings, as well as sharing insights and knowledge by simply being members of an organization. Sharing practices such as these allows for the distribution of ideas that challenge workplace/organization communication and coordination. Within a community of practice, practices are commonly understood, meaning these groups hold and share knowledge collectively. The stickiness and leakiness of knowledge are constrained through the spread of these shared practices. Communication is often global within the group, so these practices flow easily so that specialized knowledge is communal (Brown & Duguid, 2001, 204).

In summary, knowledge, organizations, and social practices are all intricately intertwined. Knowledge and social practices are necessary to form an organization. Knowledge is what enables an organization to function, and communal knowledge is what enables the community to have a unified goal. Practice is dependent upon the communal knowledge of necessary actions. Knowledge depends on practice. Without they other, they are useless. These three components come together to form an organizational community, and, ultimately, if run properly, a thriving business/organization.



## Organizational Atmosphere

In Lydia L. Jorgensen's *Moving Organizational Atmosphere: Chapter 2: Situating Organizational Atmosphere*, organizational atmosphere is presented as having multiple aspects: aesthetic, spatial, and affective. The concept of *ba*, as previously described in this chapter, offers similar ideas about atmosphere and shared social space, and thus can be compared with this concept of organizational atmosphere. An **organizational atmosphere** will be engaged with an undefined, an ephemeral, and a cultural presence, emphasizing a need to look past current social-scientific thinking and methods (Jorgensen, 2019, 25). The aspects of such concepts provide insight and allow discussion for creating knowledge and methods to help us understand what an organizational atmosphere is.

There have been many perspectives on organizations over the years, but seeing "organizations as an emergent phenomenon constantly in the making," (Jorgensen, 2019, 27) enables us to connect this back to the ideas about practices and knowledge in the previous section, as they are constantly evolving with their changing environments. The focus on the environment is also important to organizational studies in this chapter, suggesting that this can be extended to organizational atmosphere which involves marketing, environment, climate, and culture (Jorgensen, 2019, 27). If the organization provides a healthy climate, it should increase productivity, job satisfaction, innovation, and creativity amongst members. Creativity and innovation are especially important to understanding factors and goals of an organization, because they reiterate aesthetic capitalism discussions (Jorgensen, 2019, 27). Anthropologists have tried to make sense of the ambiguity of organizational atmosphere through labeling/creating categories, which treats it as though it isn't an independent phenomenon. Alternatively, approaching it as a conscious phenomenon (more than a subject-object dichotomy) will positively impact organizational studies. We still attempt to instrumentalize the atmosphere through the subject-object lens, though, making it a dualist conception (Jorgensen, 2019, 28). This ambiguity of atmosphere offers new contributions to research involving organizational atmospheres, and thus will be influential to organizational research fields.

Aesthetics in organizational studies is presented as organizational knowledge, in which an organization establishes as a perceptive relation. "Organizational aesthetics is said to enrich knowledge of everyday organizational life and theoretical-methodological approached to knowledge production in organization studies" (Jorgensen, 2019, 29). Aesthetics placed new themes on the organizational research agenda, especially the ones involving tacit and common knowledge, and proposing the sensory in place of cognitive knowledge. Alternatively, one new theme could involve more observation of artifacts, human bodies, and the interactions they have in organizational analysis and understanding. The Aesthetic considers emotional and embodied qualities as organizational knowledge through the analysis of complex prior experiences and emotions (i.e. odors, tactility, pleasure, and fear) (Jorgensen, 2019, 30). This emphasizes focus on everyday life, allowing for access to tacit organizational knowledge, as well as how work itself is practiced.

## Turns in organizational Study

The atmosphere is a hybrid, and this results in the need to study it from an anthropological perspective. The atmosphere of a space can be judged in terms of taste, demonstrating how it is related to organizational aesthetics, which can offer new understandings of old problems through the use of intellectual and artistic methods. New aesthetics, in relation to atmosphere, can open and broaden perspectives in firm/organizational everyday experiences, as well as increasing the scope of organizational, boundaries, and reception and production studies. When the atmosphere is viewed as new perspectives of aesthetics, it can contribute to discussions of content and methodological organizational research (Jorgensen, 2019, 31). Based on this information, we can see that, although it is a newer concept, the **aesthetic turn** within organizations can greatly contribute to the study of atmosphere within those organizations.

The second turn within organizational studies is the **spatial turn**, which is the reframing of space which can challenge the rationality of neutral space in organizations, similar to the concept of ba. Viewing organizational atmosphere as spatial addresses the neutral with the argument that space cannot be understood as a material thing, suggesting also that space is related to sensory aesthetics and affective concerns (Jorgensen, 2019, 35). Pleasant spaces should focus on the production of atmospheric spaces, and the elements of space include boundaries, distance, and movement, as well as themes of distribution, isolation, differentiation, and intersection (Jorgensen, 2019, 35-36). Focusing on organizational practices aids in our understanding the dichotomy between the social and the material. This turn establishes the argument that more attention should go to spatial experiences of materiality.

The third and final turn is the **affective turn**, which has to do with organizational atmosphere by employing concern for emotion, embodiment, and affective space within firms/organizations. The affective turn was covered in frameworks to studying organizations in Chapter 2. Here, affect refers specifically to emotional affect, and in the later chapter it is broader. The affective turn brings the human body into the equation, which have been long overlooked. Bodily capacity has to do with being affected, as well as affecting. Jorgensen offers “that a good mood has a positive effect on decision making, creativity, conflict resolution, and leadership” (Jorgensen, 2019, 40). Affect, thus, brings emotional and embodied aspects in organizational and social development, forces accountability in excess, forms collection of potentialities. The relationship between technology, objects, and the human body helps overcome dichotomies characteristics in research. Moods contribute greatly to the affective atmosphere, not to objects, and so prepare organizations for affective turns (Jorgensen, 2019, 42). Organizational studies shape new perspectives on bodies, spaces, and performances by seeing implicit effects in these relationships.

Organizational atmosphere has to do with affect, space, and aesthetics in studies, helping to bridge research with these aesthetic, affective, and spatial processes. Studying

these processes enables a more enriched study of organizations, which should lead to a non-dualist perspective about organizational atmosphere. Organization and atmosphere come together with aesthetics and “involve the perspective and affective aspects of the organizational atmosphere.” (Jorgensen, 2019, 47) Since atmosphere is composed of aesthetic, spatial, and affective turns, it is similar in its composition with that of organizational knowledge. Both organizational atmosphere and knowledge are not understood as elements that fall within restrictions of categories, though we try to apply framework to help us understand the concepts more easily. Both the atmosphere and knowledge within organizations are organic in a sense; they are based upon the thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes of the members. Because of this, every organizational atmosphere and all organizational knowledge will vary from organization to organization (i.e. why we can’t establish a universal framework). These components of organization must be studied by anthropologists, in order to create an organization that runs as healthily and as smoothly as it can.

## In Practice

1. Organizational knowledge and social practices and atmosphere are vital to understanding how a workplace can be most productive. By studying how knowledge and social practices came about, a researcher will be better able to advise management when making decisions that will influence productivity in the workplace. Additionally, the atmosphere of an organization is important to account for when dealing with workers. The three suggested turns described previously are beneficial ideas for researchers to incorporate. They should be able to ask questions and observe the workplace until they are able to suggest positive changes which will increase work production.
2. Additionally, consider how policies and operations at your organization might need adjustment to incorporate tacit knowledge, especially for new employees:
  - Onboarding new employees
  - Mandatory training
  - Mentorship programs
3. Think through new ways that your organization may create spaces for feedback and information gathering from all levels of your organization structure. This may look like:
  - Anonymous surveys
  - Managerial staff shifting to a collaborative leadership approach

Additional resource:

[Journal of Management Studies](#)

## Key Terms

The **Aesthetic Turn** can open and broaden perspectives in firm/organizational everyday experiences, as well as increasing the scope of organizational, boundaries, and reception and production studies. When atmosphere is viewed as new perspectives of aesthetics, it can contribute to discussions of content and methodological organizational research (Jorgensen 31, 2019).

The **Affective Turn** employs concern for emotion, embodiment, and affective space within firms/organizations, and brings the human body into the equations, which has been long overlooked. Bodily capacity has to do with being affected, as well as affecting.

**Ba-** “a shared context in motion, in which knowledge is shared, created, and utilized” (Nonaka and Toyama 2000, 6); can be physical or virtual space.

**Communities of practice** are composed of interdependent individuals who share identities within the workplace/organizational context (Brown & Duguid, 2001, p.202).

**Epistemic Culture:** focuses on, “the construction of the *machineries* of knowledge construction” (Cetina 2007, 361).

**Explicit knowledge-** knowledge communicated through words and numbers; explicit

**Fissioning** is a process in which people find themselves blocked in one organization, and, as a result, will form a new organization which will provide more sympathetic treatment towards their ideas (Brown & Duguid, 2001, p.199).

**Intra-organizational Knowledge Hiding:** intentional attempt by an individual to withhold or conceal knowledge (Serenko 2016, 1200).

**Knowledge Culture:** refers to how information is generated, shared, and received.

**Knowledge management-** the leveraging of organizational knowledge, which depends on how an organization’s leadership conceptualizes and shared knowledge with members and outsiders

**Leaky Discussions** involve an organization focusing on the external and undesirable flow of knowledge especially when it is ‘leaking’ across the firm’s boundaries into those of competing firms. There is a competitive advantage when firms are able to prevent this leakage of knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 2001, p.199).

An **organizational atmosphere** will be engaged with an undefined, an ephemeral, and a cultural presence, emphasizing a need to look past current social-scientific thinking and methods (Jorgensen, 2019, p.25).

**Organizational knowledge-** the collective understandings that organizational members share with each other about what they do and how they do it

A **Prism of Practice** is composed of how work gets done and how knowledge is created (Brown & Duguid, 2001, p. 200).

**Regimes of Appropriability** are protective governing structures which establish boundaries within the organization to prevent overflow of knowledge (Brown & Duguid, 2001, p. 199).

The **Spatial Turn** is the reframing of space which can challenge the rationality of neutral space in organizations. Viewing organizational atmosphere as spatial addresses the neutral with the argument that space cannot be understood as a material thing, suggesting also that space is related to sensory aesthetics and affective concerns (Jorgensen, 2019, p.35). With **Sticky Discussions** an organization must focus its energies on moving knowledge within their own firm; an organization desires to transfer inherent knowledge from one area to another because of its effectiveness (Brown & Duguid, 2001, p.199). **Tacit knowledge**- knowledge that is “rooted in action, commitment, and involvement in a specific context” (Nonaka 1994, 339).

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# Chapter 7

## Transforming Organizations

### Intentional Projects in Organizational Change

Colleen Runnion and Finn Demo

### Introduction

Organizational culture can be defined as an accepted pattern of basic and shared assumptions that are learned and passed on to new members as a group solves problems involving “external adaptation and learned integration” (Tharp 2009, 5). More simply, organizational culture is the attitudes, values, and ways of being and working that older, established members of an organization uphold and reinforce when new members join. All organizations, including businesses, corporations, governments, and non-profits, have an organizational culture with both tacit and explicit elements (defined in previous chapters). Oftentimes, issues related to organizational function, productivity, and profit are symptoms of organizational culture problems.

Though often critical to the success and productivity of an organization, organizational culture change is difficult to achieve. This chapter will explore the reasons why organizational change is challenging, the ways in which anthropologists are well-suited to help organizations address these issues, and organizational issues related to diversity and diversity management.

### Organizational Culture Change is Difficult

As discussed in previous chapters, knowledge creation and management in organizations are social processes (Nonaka and Toyama 2003; Gurlay 2000). Culture, as shared knowledge, then must change as a result of social processes as well. This social aspect of organizational change is what makes it incredibly difficult for organizations to implement, as organizational change “redefines its members’ relationship with each other as well as their relationships with the organization’s various stakeholders” (Awal et al. 2006, 81). Awal et al. (2006) compare this to “one team changing the rules of the game during the game” (79), which can be disruptive. Anthropologists can assist both organizational leaders and members in understanding and navigating these disruptions in ways that can create positive change for the culture of the organization.

The career and work of pioneering practicing anthropologist Elizabeth Briody provides an example of how anthropologists can leverage their “anthropological toolkit” to drive and manage organizational culture change. During a large portion of her career, Briody worked as a researcher at General Motors (GM). GM’s Ideal Plant Culture Project,



through which Briody worked alongside other applied researchers, provides an excellent example of the ways in which applied anthropological research can help members at different levels of an organization navigate change effectively.

The Ideal Plant Culture Project “was initiated to gather employee and managerial input on organizational culture change within GM’s manufacturing function” (Briody 2012, 68). The applied research team visited and gathered data from several U.S. manufacturing plants about best practices and changes sought by employees. During this investigation, the team found that many employees desired a change from authoritative and hierarchical management to a “collaborative ideal” (2012, 68).

Briody and the rest of the research team used these findings to address a specific issue they encountered at one of the plants. They refer to this issue as “the hoist story” (2012, 71). Through interviews with plant engineers and plant floor operators, the team learned about the operators’ resistance to using a hoist, which is an apparatus used for raising something into position, as it was too time consuming and cumbersome. This resistance was cause for great concern, as using hoists on the plant floor is crucial for safety and compliance with the U.S Occupational Safety and Health Administration. There was an apparent clash between engineers and floor operators regarding how to fix the issue, which was ultimately addressed through a series of cooperative efforts (2012, 71-73).

The solving of the hoist issue, along with other findings from the Ideal Plant Culture team’s work, led to the creation of new cultural models and training materials at GM. This project illustrates the ways in which an ethnographic approach can provide organizations with a better understanding of members’ relationships to each other (hierarchical), the changes desired (collaboration), and the ways in which sought changes can be implemented (training).

## Diversity in Organizations

### What is Diversity?

While **diversity** is often thought of in terms of identity markers such as race or gender, it expands further into the individual experiences any one person has culminated into their current values and beliefs, which carries over into their decisions about and interpretations of the environment around them. Given that each person has their own unique set of experiences, they are all going to bring varying perspectives to the same problems and tasks.

"Diversity in the workplace can be broadly defined as differences, similarities and related tensions among people in the workplace based on visible dimensions, secondary influences, and work diversities" (Tetteh 2021). These visible dimensions include characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and physical or mental ability. Secondary influences, such as class, education, and religion are considered not as noticeable as visible dimensions and therefore less immediately obvious, though not any

less important. It is important to note that these classifications, however, can overlap or contradict each other, and are more than anything simplifications of the ways in which others may perceive and subsequently label an individual, which may affect the way they treat them. For instance, one may be perceived as “lower class” due to their style of dress, which would make it visible in some sense, or in a different situation one may be perceived and treated as a gender or sexuality that does not align with their identity, only adding more layers of complexity to the situation. Further, labels like “race” are not inherent to humans and are instead constructed by them, as a set of traits and associations by which people categorize or identify with others. While race does not technically exist, it is still a social influence that is used to both empower and oppress groups of people and therefore is, in some sense, real. Finally, work diversities pertain to qualities of the organization itself that affect those interacting with it rather than qualities of the individuals, such as whether workers are unionized, how close their place of work is to the corporate headquarters, what their product or goal is, and how the business is structured.

Communication is a key part of diversity, as it can dictate the way we mentally label and categorize the world around us, especially, in the case of organizations, with other people. The way we subsequently use those labels can itself carry meaning and provide socioeconomic benefits or consequences to whoever is being labelled. For instance, the idea of an “older worker” has its own implications of whether this individual should be hired, if they are able to retire, and/or if they can receive pensions. This labelling and categorization, both written and verbal, influences relationships, how one relates to organizational practices, and what place they have in the context of the larger society or organization. Communication, therefore, can be seen as not just words, but a way of promoting ideas and carrying out plans (Calvard 2021).

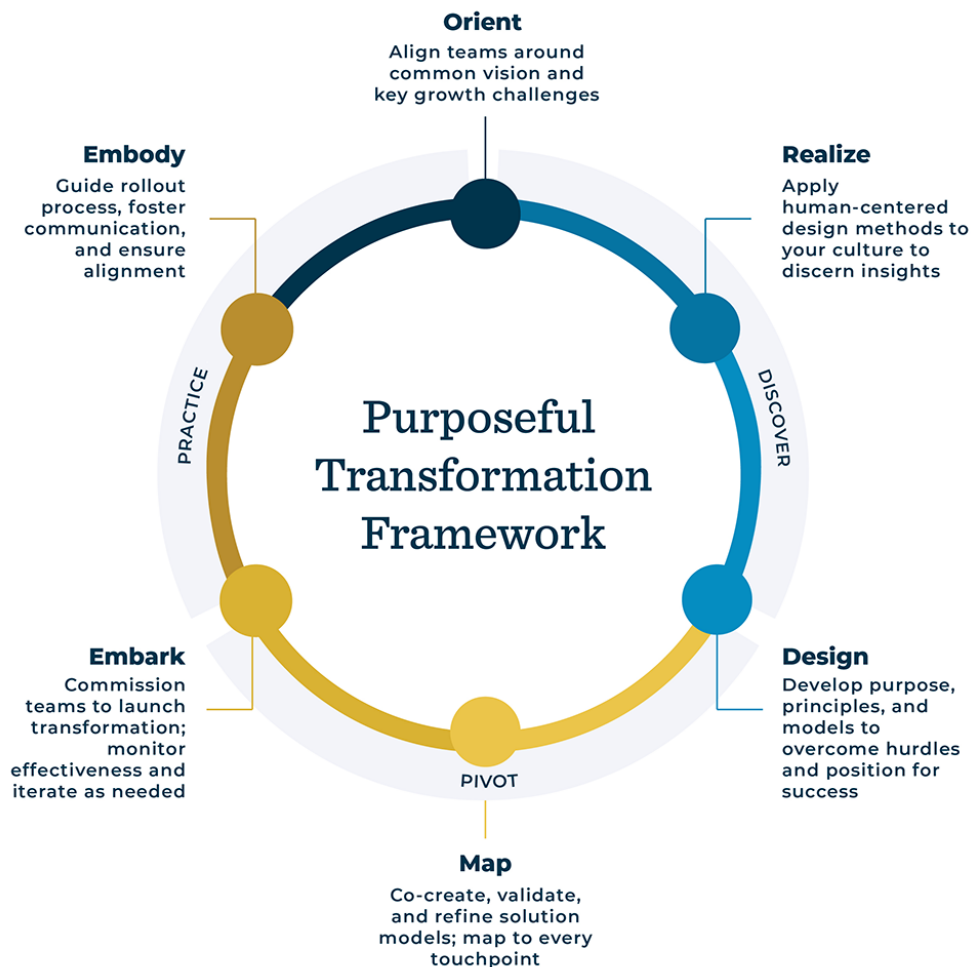
With communication, however, comes its limits. While useful, communication is never quite able to perfectly capture reality, and at times can leave a vague impression of information which may then be interpreted in various ways by different members of an organization. The idea of “valuing diversity” seems like a fair goal in theory, though in practice it begins to fall apart, because without specific objectives the actions and decisions which constitute “valuing diversity” may vary from person to person. Further, communication itself may serve to stagnate conversations on diversity and limit their scope through domination by one prevailing perspective or repeated use of terms which may begin to lose meaning as they become an obligation rather than an option. The idea of diversity solely as a problem to solve, for instance, constrains diversity to a set number of solutions, which itself does not seem to be incredibly diverse or creative in its thinking. It is of particular importance, then, to not just communicate, but to question the methods of communication themselves by understanding who is saying it, who they are saying it to, why they are saying it, and what their words may imply for future actions and decisions (Calvard 2021).



## Diversity in Organizations

In recent decades, there has been an increase in workplace diversity, due to factors such as increased number of women in education and careers, increased life expectancy, existence of multi- and trans-national companies with the rise of globalization, and further integration of workers from multiple regions of the world (Sharma 2019, 12-13). This increase makes it especially important and often necessary that management strategy is properly accustomed to a diverse set of workers.

## In Practice



... Purposeful Transformation Framework...Epic Pivot. <https://epicpivot.com/services/purposeful-transformation/>)

1. The proposed strategy by Epic Pivot, a company focused on transforming organizations, comes in six steps: orient, realize, design, map, embark, and embody.
2. First, to orient an organization, common goals and strategies must be established and shared with all the workers and/or teams within the organization.
3. Next, one must realize what wants and needs are prevalent among workers, which can look as simple as having conversations to get to know some of them better individually. Problems often noted in this stage are disconnects between departments and certain data being inaccessible, often because of the lack of consistent structure.
4. Once these wants and needs are established, that information can be used to design purpose, principles, and models that aim to solve the common issues and utilize the common interests noted among the workers, effectively creating structure and combatting faulty practices. Making a guiding principle, or more generally something for everyone to rally around, is an effective and therefore important part of this step.
5. Then, after the designing comes the mapping, where the actual pivot, or change, begins. This is where the design is mapped onto the company and necessary changes are made to make the design work, going from department to department to model how these changes are going to happen and the ways they will affect the structure of the organization and the ways the workers interact with it and each other. This is one of the most challenging stages, because it requires individuals to correct their behavior in practice and not just in theory.
6. After mapping, it is time to embark on the changes and see them at work in the company. The plan for transformation is put into action, and changes are monitored for their effectiveness and reiterated as needed.
7. Finally, the organization must embody their changes. In some ways, this step is fine tuning the changes executed during the embark stage, in that it is trying to solidify and improve on the established principles. This process of change should be guided to ensure alignment within the organization, and communication between separate individuals and departments should be encouraged.
8. The strategy then loops back around to the orient stage, where workers are realigned to a common vision, and continues its way from there.

## Key Terms

**Diversity-** is often thought of in terms of identity markers such as race or gender, but can expand further to encompass individual experiences, values, and beliefs.

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# Chapter 8

## Studying Bureaucracies

Breanna Kramer

### Introduction

Bureaucracies are a form of organization that consists of four primary characteristics (Downs 1965). These characteristics are being a large organization where many of the members do not know one another, the majority of laborers are full time, hiring and promotion within this organization are dependent on a form of assessment based on performance, and the organization's output is not measured by any external markets (Downs 1965). These characteristics allow for the development of an organization that is largely dependent on impersonal relations, administrative actions, strong commitment from the workforce, and the development of motivation to change behaviors from within the organization (Downs 1965). The bureaucratic form of organizations has been widely studied in the field of anthropology, starting with the development of Max Weber's (pronounced Vay-bur) theory of bureaucracy.

Max Weber is a well-known sociologist who taught at universities in Germany during WWI (Yizman et al. 2021), is the first known theorist to study and develop a theory regarding the concept of bureaucracy. He defined bureaucracy as "an organizational structure that is characterized by many rules, standardized processes, procedures and requirements, number of desks, meticulous division of labor and responsibility, clear hierarchies and professional, almost impersonal interactions between employees, (Weber 1946)." Weber strongly emphasized the importance of impersonality and rationality and contributed to the development of management structure during the first world war and continues to influence the field of management today (see chapter 3 regarding management and labor).

Bureaucracy may also be defined as a system of governance run by professional administration and associated with rules that are used to structure all the actions individuals within them take. **Governance** refers to the process of ruling or controlling (Oxford Dictionary 2022), this system is largely associated with government organizations, however, it can be applied to businesses as well. As bureaucratic organizations are essential in understanding the field of management and government institutions, it is imperative that anthropological work is conducted on this subject. Throughout this chapter, we will discuss the structure of bureaucratic organizations and anthropological perspectives on this organizational structure.

### The Structure of Bureaucracy

In his discussions of bureaucracy, Weber defines three forms of authority that exist within these organizations. Authority as defined by Weber (Yilmaz et al. 2021) is a form of legitimate power that is accepted by society. These forms of authority are known as **traditional**, **charismatic**, and **rational-legal authority**. Traditional authority refers to historical and customary actions extending so far back that it is unknown when these authority structures were developed (Yilmaz et al. 2021). The power in this type of authority stems from traditions such as **Gerontocracy** and **Patriarchalism** (Yilmaz et al. 2021). Charismatic authority is known as authority derived from complete devotion and trust in the person who is in power (Yilmaz et al. 2021). Some of these individuals are believed to have been given their power by a god, others are simply skilled speakers and negotiators, though overall they are not to be questioned by those that they rule. Lastly, rational-legal authority is based on the use of rationally established laws that provides individuals with legitimacy as authority figures. This form of authority “is acquired as a result of choices made by reason and logic and is transferred in the same way” (Yilmaz et al. 2021). Weber strongly advocated the legitimacy of rational-legal authority as it is seen applied in parliamentary governments as rationally applied law.

The structure of bureaucracies appears to some individuals as a utopian ideal of organizations (Graeber 2015). However, the rules and structures set in place by bureaucratic organizations are often difficult to follow and impossible to properly achieve (Graeber 2015). Graeber (2015), in “Utopia of Rules” argues that bureaucratic organizations set what they believe to be reasonable rules and when these rules are difficult to follow, conclude that the issue is not with their organizational structure, but with those individuals who fail to achieve the bureaucracies demands and goals. This issue is why Weber posited that the power of these bureaucratic organizations lies with the effectiveness of the organization (Hodson et al. 2014). If the rules and demands established by a bureaucracy are too difficult for individuals to follow and achieve, then these organizations are unable to hold much power over the society that they are working within.

Bureaucracy in the United States has experienced issues with its development due to binding rules that rendered the bureaucratic administration ineffective. Prior to the Civil War, American bureaucracy was foundationally based on **constitutionalism**, where binding rules were developed either through common law or legislative statutory enactments (Postell 2017). At the state and local levels, there were no hierarchical structures in place, which rendered administrators accountable to legislators. Throughout the past hundred years, the structure of American bureaucratic organizations has shifted to develop regulations that can “be attained through a competent administrative power without sacrificing the basic tenets of constitutional government,” (Postell 2017). These approaches are still controversial, as bureaucracy conflicts with principles of constitutional order and threaten tenets of American society such as representative self-government and the separation of powers through its central tenants of hierarchical structures that are

reliant on the higher levels to make decisions for everyone (Postell 2017). These problems with bureaucracy within American societies display the need for anthropological examination and research into effective structures and applications of bureaucratic organizations.

## Anthropology in Bureaucracy

Historically, the examination of bureaucracy and bureaucratic organization was the domain of fields such as sociology and political science. However, contemporary interest within the field of anthropology on the subject of knowledge production has led to a rise in ethnographic interest in bureaucracies. This is because bureaucracies as a system produce massive amounts of knowledge (Hoag 2011). Due to the structure of bureaucracies, the administrators that work within these organizations become **gatekeepers** of the knowledge they develop.

Anthropological work within these organizations faces some consistent challenges. First, bureaucratic organizations are insistent when talking to anthropologists that bureaucracies “should work” because they are designed to achieve specific goals (Hoag 2011). It is also difficult for anthropologists to approach these examinations from a non-normative perspective as the format of bureaucratic organizations provide anthropologists with a preset number of laws and regulations to compare individual behavior to. Lastly, Hoag (2011) posits that a difficulty of anthropological involvement in the study of bureaucracy is being able to discuss these organizations without allowing their self-idealizing beliefs to shape our approaches. Anthropologists working within a bureaucracy are often either assumed to be in an evaluative role or coerced into taking such a role. However, this is not always the case as approaches such as **para ethnography** can be applied to be an evaluative method that is also valuable from the perspective of bureaucratic elites. Para ethnography (Marcus and Holmes 2005) is a collaborative approach that applies both the knowledge developed by anthropologists and knowledge provided by members of the institution being examined,

Anthropologists such as Hannah Ardent (1967) argue that due to the separation between bureaucrats and the individuals which they are serving, bureaucrats act on behalf of their organizations in ways that some would find excessive and intolerable. The application of anthropological perspectives in research regarding bureaucracies can, however, be incredibly useful. One reason for this is that there are similarities between the discipline of anthropology and the actions of bureaucratic organizations. “Similar to the way that anthropologists interpret and author social worlds according to formal and informal codes of conduct (e.g., ethical guidelines, methodologies), so too do street-level bureaucrats scrutinize their clients' appearance, statements, and actions in determining whether to provide services according to laws, regulations, and professional norms,” (Hoag 2011). The bureaucratic approach to these services through an objective-subjective binary

produces a gap in outcomes which decreases the legitimacy of the organizations. Anthropological research methodologies used to explore this gap can aid these organizations in acknowledging and addressing the problems within these systems and the outcomes that they produce.

As bureaucracy has become such an all-encompassing cultural form within society, contemporary critical analysis of these organizations has been limited (Lea 2021). Bureaucracies as a system will implicitly do anything to ensure their reproduction, which includes encouraging societies' beliefs in their rules, procedures, and their standing as objective, rational institutions. This is due to the institutional arrangements from which they are constructed. The idea that bureaucracies are foundationally objective and rational is flawed as bureaucracy is "wholly human creation, made structural-seeming through human rituals, symbols, actions, and desires," (Lea 2021). Administrators of these bureaucratic institutions fight to keep societies belief in their system as bureaucracy is similar to religion in the idea that when people stop believing in it, the power and authority of the institution is weakened.

## In Practice

### Suggested Reading:

- Heyman, J. M. (2004). The anthropology of power-wielding bureaucracies. *Human Organization*, 63(4), 487–500.
- 1. In "The Anthropology of Power-Wielding Bureaucracies," Heyman (2004) posits that anthropologists should be studying the power that bureaucracies hold and how that power is maintained. The essay draws on the works of anthropologists such as Alvarez and Bornstein in order to better strengthen their argument. They describe the development of bureaucracy and toolkits that may be useful in the research of these institutions. This work raises questions for anthropologists to consider as to how bureaucracies shape anthropologists politically and the approaches we use.
- 2. Questions to consider:
  - For people in organizations, what is the effect of informal interaction? How can organizations encourage informal, uncontrolled interaction?
  - How would you approach anthropological work within a bureaucratic organization? Apply the information you have learned throughout the book thus far.

## Key Concepts

**Charismatic Authority-** "A form of authority distinct from those of tradition and law. The process whereby charismatic authority becomes transformed, or changed, to any of the

other forms of authority (such as bureaucracy) is referred to by Weber as the ‘routinization of charisma,’” (Britannica 2022).

**Traditional Authority-** “Defined as the power legitimized by respect for long-established cultural patterns. It comes from unwritten rules that are maintained over time. Leaders in traditional authority are people who depend on an established order or tradition. This leader is a dominant personality and the existing order in society entrusts him the mandate to rule. Traditional leadership is reflective of everyday conduct and routine,” (Studious 2018).

**Rational- Legal Authority-** “Legal authority can be defined as a bureaucratic authority, where power is legitimized by legally enacted rules and regulations such as governments. This form of authority is the one that is grounded and clearly defines laws with explicit procedures that define the obligations and rights. This is largely respected due to the competence and legitimacy that laws and procedures bestow upon the people in the authoritative position,” (Studious 2018).

**Gerontocracy-** “A form of social organization in which a group of old men or a council of elders dominates or exercises control,” (Merriam Webster 2022).

**Governance** refers to the process of ruling or controlling (Oxford Dictionary 2022), this system is largely associated with government organizations, however, it can be applied to businesses as well.

**Patriarchalism-** A form of social organization which is led by a father-figure

**Constitutionalism-** “Adherence to our government according to constitutional principles,” (Merriam Webster 2022).

**Gatekeepers-** A person who controls access to a specific organization, field, or area of knowledge.

**Para Ethnography-** “People who think, act or analyze culture, community, identity and social behaviors in ways similar to anthropologists, but who may or may not necessarily have any formal academic training in anthropology,” (Powell 2018).

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# Chapter 9

## Policy Organizations and Networks

Reaghan Gough, Jisu Kim, Robert K Banbury

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore policy organization and network analysis to investigate how agencies and their network systems affect our lives and affect people's lives. An important focus of anthropology of policy is to look at “the understanding the cultures and worldviews of those policy professionals and decision-makers who seek to implement and maintain their particular vision of the world through their policies and decisions” (Wedel et al., 2005, p. 34).

From this point of view, it is necessary to understand who makes policy decisions, whose voices are heard or not, and how policies translate to solid government or institution policy to implement policy decisions. In other words, the anthropology of policy is the understanding of the policy circle relationship: policy makers make policy; policy affects governance. But it should be noted that individuals rarely make policy decisions. Rather, the policy is usually made by shifting networks of people and organizations that may have multiple complex agendas.

Therefore, this chapter explores how their policy-making process is and how it is conveyed and interpreted in our society from anthropological perspectives.

### Anthropological Perspectives of Public Policy

Early anthropologists emphasized the importance of participant observation, particularly in terms of studying remote, foreign communities that they deemed ‘primitive.’ This academic paradigm focused on investigating the ways in which communities ‘evolved’ through a process of savagery, barbarism, and civilization, arguing that race and gender were fixed, biological traits that impacted socialization (Morgan 1877; Wedel et al. 2005, 31); As a result, another anthropological paradigm emerged in the United States, particularly through the works of Franz Boas, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Zora Neale Hurston, who argued that “‘race’ is a changing, social construct and [physical] differences between ‘races’ are variable and depend on context” (Pandian 2019; Wedel et al. 2005, 31). These theoretical frameworks were compounded by an academic environment that catered anthropological training to middle and upper-class White communities looking to advance their academic careers. The method of participant observation was being utilized as a research tool by academics whose discourse at the time was steeped in racist and classist assumptions about communities outside of the Western World, a result of anthropology’s

colonial roots, revealing a stark ethical conundrum for upcoming anthropologists: Who do we study, and why?

According to British anthropologist Cyril Belshaw, anthropology's direct connection to colonialism inherently encourages studying how social institutions and policies organize, function, and change as a result of social interactions (Wedel et al. 2005, 32). Likewise, Stewart and Aldrich argue that anthropologists' "expertise about the remote and exotic," as well as their "sympathy for the less wealthy and [powerful]" may be both advantageous and restricting in analyzing public ideologies and practices (Stewart & Aldrich 2015, 175). More specifically, anthropologists attempt to get behind the "facelessness" of bureaucratic processes by raising questions of responsibility, accountability, self-regulation, social structure, and network analysis (Nader 1972).

## Policy Organization and Analysis

To understand policy organization, it is necessary to understand first from what perspective of policy is, how policy decisions, relationships, and interpretations are made, and how organizations function within them. The policy does not always mean to be generated by official institutions; it is sometimes made by small organizations or unofficial social settings. At this point, the policy is a little far from laws, which can be made by the government or official institutions and directly regulate social behaviors (Tate, 2020). Wherever it is made, if we could call it socially "the policy," it would regulate people's lives and sometimes change social norms and integrations. In general, policies are written documents that create, define, or support the needs of institutions and the outcome of a decision-making process on an existing or past problem or issue.

**Policy organizations** are those organizations that focus on making effective policies and having power over policy consequences. In general, policy organizations can specifically examine the power relationship between bureaucrats and organizations, what problems or organizational values are, and the policy contents of the organization according to the norms formed based on the problem (Tate, 2020; Wedel et al, 2005). Although policy development typically follows formal institutional, often bureaucratic, processes, it can also be strongly influenced by both institutional ambiguity and informal interactions (Maclin and Bello 2010). According to the study that explored the discussion of rules, on alternative energy, and biofuels at the Fourth World Conservation Congress (WCC), the process of forming policies while coordinating the perspectives and positions among international political organizations surrounding energy issues were studied (Maclin and Bello 2010). In this process, democracy and policy ambiguity of policy organizations display the need for decomposing the policy meaning and looking into the dynamic of the process for policy analysis.

Thus, a policy from a policy organization is an organization's written document, a set of fundamental principles, and can be "analyzed" (Wedel et al. 2005). Kraft and Furlong (2021, p. 9-10) pointed out that "policy analysis is to examination of components of public

policy, the policy process, or both," and "analysis means deconstructing an object of study." The deconstruction of the research subject here refers to the overall policy process, power relations, and the working relationship and interpretation and specific analysis of norms within the organization, and an ethnographic research process on the policy organization is required.

**Policy analysis** is to follow the models of rational decision-making and consists of five steps in the analytic process: *Define and analyze the problem, Construct policy alternatives, Choose evaluative criteria, Assess the alternatives, and Draw conclusions* (Kraft & Furlong 2021, p.116-117). Literally, policy analysis in policy research focuses on problems and solving individual and social problems based on the democratic process. In other words, policy analysis pursues ideal solutions by considering policies, strategy, and implementation. To follow this process, we need to think about what kind of policy analysis frame we are going to use to analyze. The research frameworks in Chapter 2, "Frameworks for studying organization" will give a useful conceptual framework to conduct policy analysis; broad brush and particularistic approaches, multi-sited ethnography, flows of affect, and participant action research (PAR) models. For example, here is CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) Policy analysis framework.

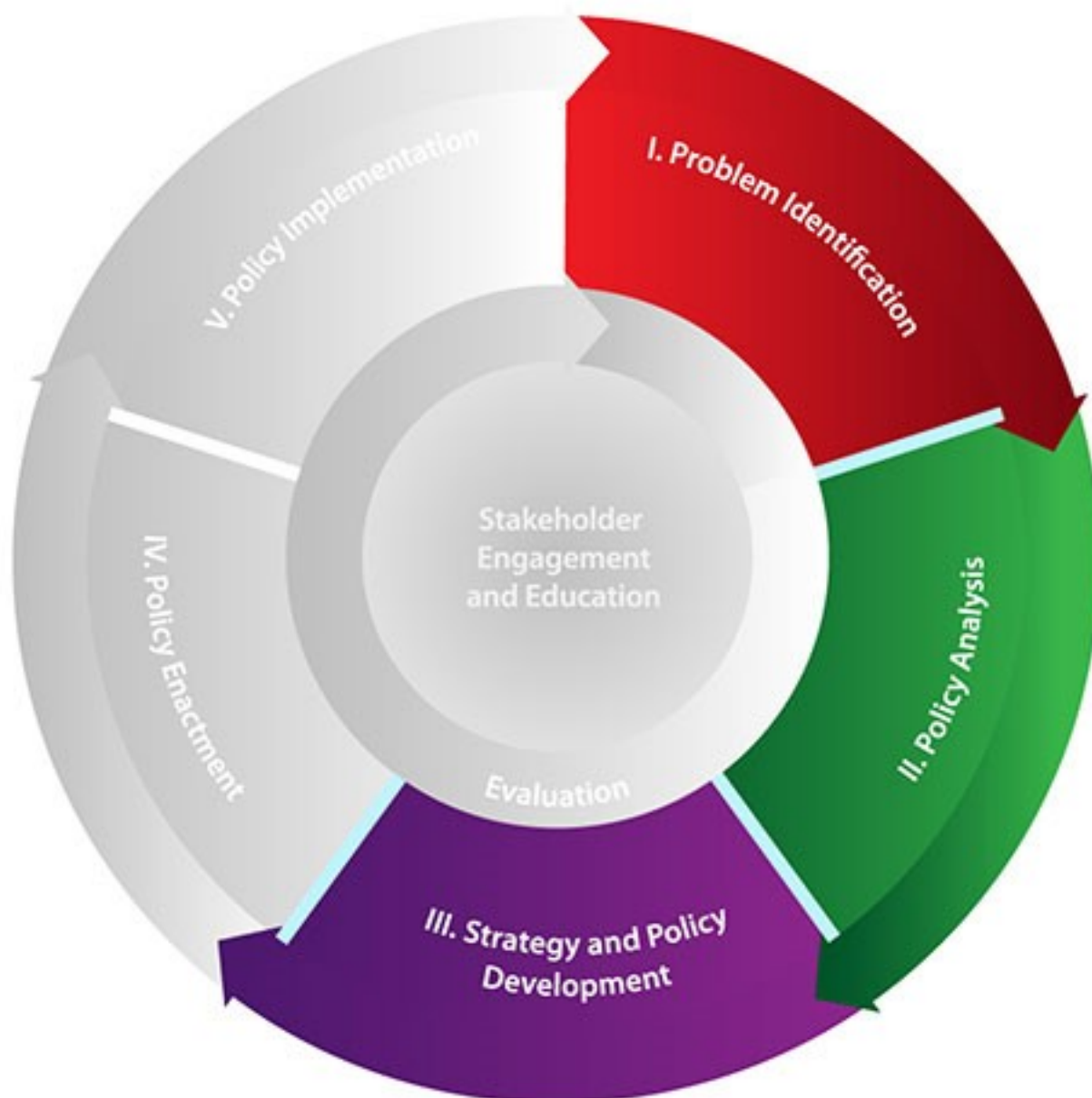


Figure1. CDC policy analysis framework, source: <https://www.cdc.gov/policy/analysis/process/analysis.html>

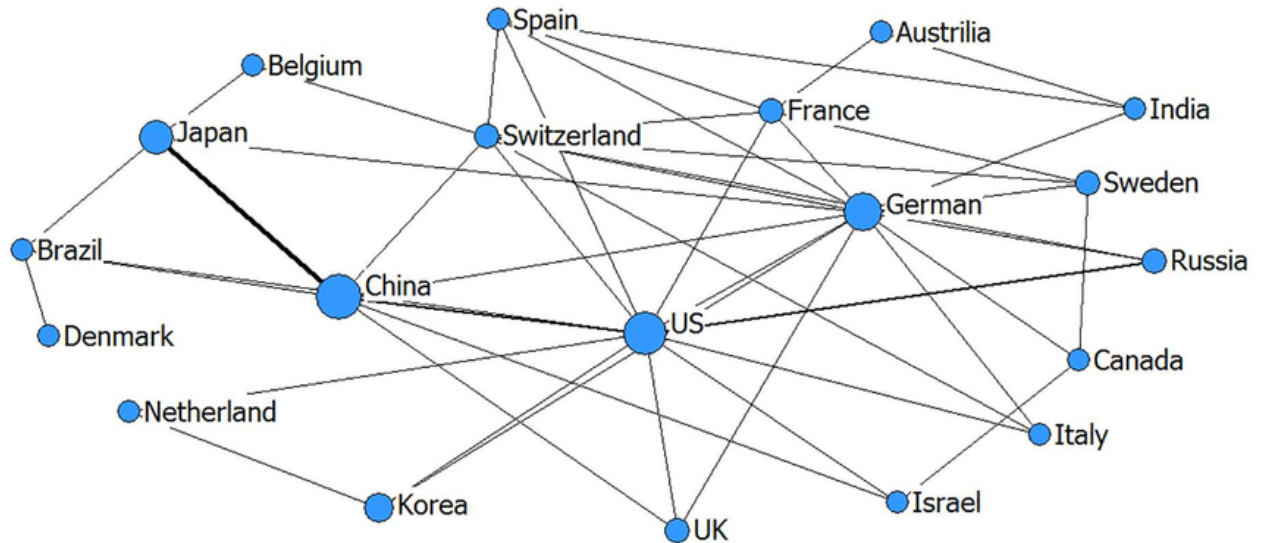
From these frameworks, policy analysis can have three methods to investigate what the most priority policy is (Tate 2020; Kraft & Furlong 2021), identify what the core problem or power relationship in that policy is (Lewis et al, 2003), and decode the meaning of the process of policy implementation (Tate 2020). First, in terms of "policy is responsible, diagnostic, and a blueprint for governance" (Tate 2020, p84-85), policy analysis can identify what governing ideology, values, and practices are prioritized and how they are implemented as policies.

Second, policies can be examined through network analysis between actors involved in and influencing the policy. As will be discussed in detail in the policy network, policies can be approached by analyzing the power relationships and values of interest groups or institutions. Policies can be analyzed as artifacts to affect some groups and increase social and political capital. This policy basically plays a role in managing, regulating, and forming society or individuals in accordance with social norms (Tate 2020). For example, the meaning of social norms of policies can be examined through the analysis of power relations in the process of policy formation.

Finally, policy analysis means an interpretation of the meaning of the policy in the process of realizing it. The policy is an objective document, but since the policy is implemented without prior testing, it has ambiguous and diverse interpretation methods (Wedel et al. 2005). For example, in the process of determining policies, intentions or values are socially realized and interpreted in various or other meanings.

## Policy as a Network

Networks, in short, are organizations of actors that form relationships among each other. One might think of a network as a web, where the center of the web is a goal, each node an actor, and each thread a relationship. Networks are often more complicated than just one “web”. There may be many overlapping and interconnecting webs within a single organization, or webs that connect across organizations or disciplines.



3D printing technology visualized as a network with NetDraw software. (Bai and Liu 2016)

A broad definition of policy network is: “one of a cluster of concepts focusing on government links with, and dependence on, other state and societal actors.” (Rhodes et al 2006) Within a newspaper company, for example, a goal might be to publish an edition once a week, with a certain number of stories, organized into a certain number of categories.

There is also a goal to get enough advertisers to pay the bills and to distribute the newspaper to a certain number of places. The network, then, would be the journalists, copy editors, editors, couriers, the printing house, the sources of information that eventually make up the stories, the locations where the paper is sold, events that happen around the area, the businesses that want advertisements, etc., and all relationships among those, working or personal.

All the actors working in conjunction produce a weekly newspaper, and the network forms its own rules, or “policy,” based on experience in the past (Marsh and Smith 2000). One printing house might have lower rates and produce prints with fewer errors, but since another company has been historically patronized by the newspaper, and the CEO of the printing house has a personal relationship with the publisher, the newspaper might give their business to them instead of the one with lower rates. This is a simplified example of how decisions made in networks are not necessarily reflective of rational decision making, but rather reflect past conflicts and the culture and values of decision-makers.” (Marsh and Smith 2000) Marsh and Smith also point out that: “Networks result from repeated behavior and, consequently, they relieve decision-makers of taking difficult decisions; they help routinize behavior.” Meaning that, rather than devising a solution or decision based on present variables, a policy network might look at what decisions they have made in the past or look to other organizations for inspiration to create policy. This may even include copying text verbatim from older, already-legitimized policies into new policy texts as a way of both transferring and conveying legitimacy (Maclin and Bello 2010).

Exploring the organization of networks can reveal larger policymaking processes. The structure of networks often reflects the policy the networks create because the creation of policy is influenced by the structure of the network (Burt 2004). The quantitative study of networks is known as Policy Network Analysis (PNA) or Social Network Analysis (SNA) and has become an increasingly utilized tool to understand networks and how they affect policy making (Galey and Youngs 2014). There are also more qualitative means to analyze networks (add more about the qualitative means) Analyzing policy has applications wherever there is a network of actors creating policy, whether that be a government agency or business.

The study of networks can also uncover structural hierarchies in policymaking and the roles of various actors within a network. Who gets heard, who does not, and why, are things that can be determined through studying networks (Oliver and Faul 2018). Within policy networks, there exists **social capital** that is advantageous to policymaking that comes with forging relationships across organizations or networks. “People whose networks bridge the structural holes between groups have an advantage in detecting and developing rewarding opportunities. Information arbitrage is their advantage. They can see early, see more broadly, and translate information across groups.” (Burt 2002) This means that a small percentage of policymakers that have “bridged the structural holes” are more effective than the rest when it comes to navigating networks to produce policy. This occurs when actors

know the “lay of the land” and the language necessary to strongly influence policy discourse. But this is not always the case. In certain instances, the more diverse the evidence (evidence related to policymaking) and actors, the more open a network is to new ideas (Oliver and Faul 2018).

## In Practice

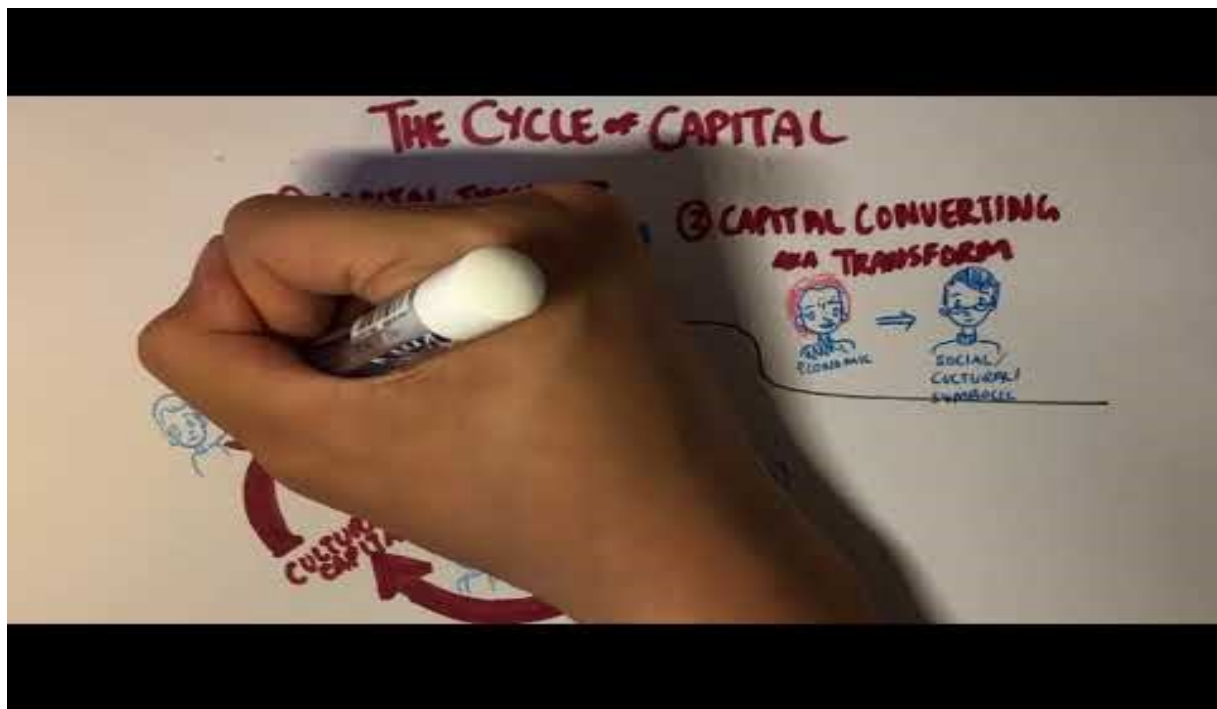
To better understand social capital and its impacts, see the links to informational videos below:

[Pierre Bourdieu: Theory of Capital \(Social and Cultural Capital\)](#)

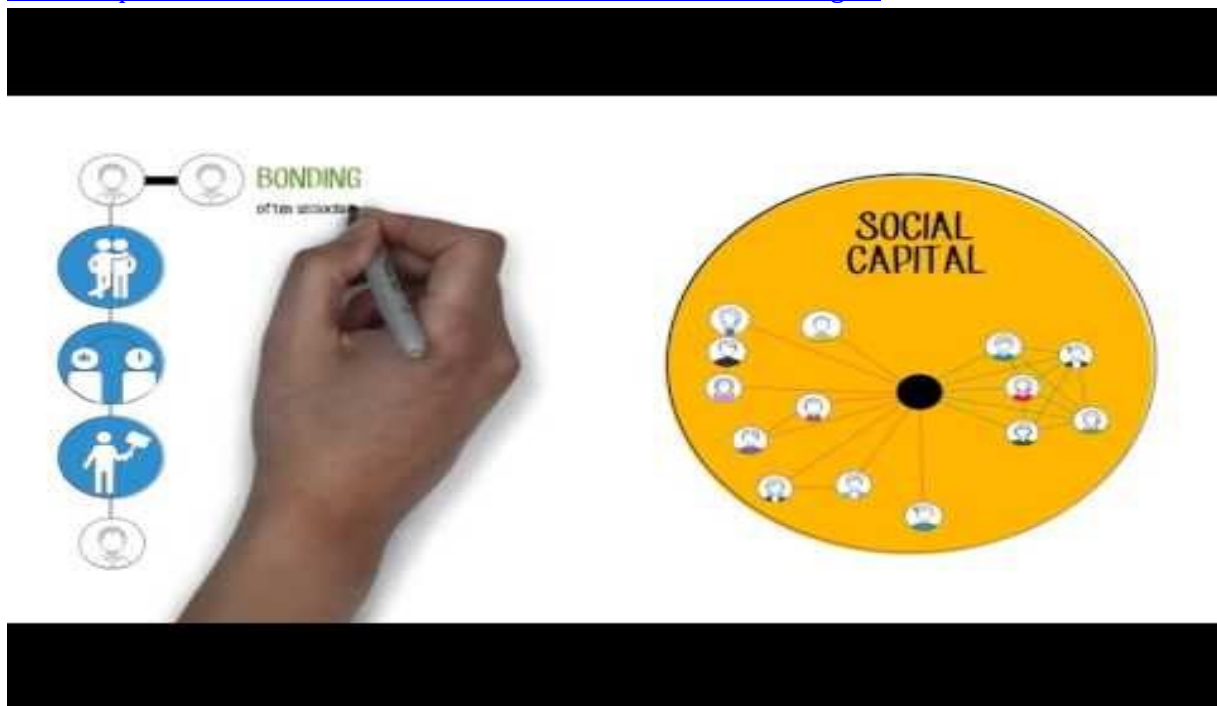


[Pierre Bourdieu: Theory of Capital Part 2 \(Economic/Symbolic Capital + Cycle of Capital\)](#)





[Social Capital and New Communication and Information Technologies](#)



Additional resources:

1. More on policy networks: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/policy-network#:~:text=Sabatier%20and%20Jenkins-Smith%20%281993%29%20argue%20that%20policy%20networks,in%20a%20policy%20network%20may%20prompt%20policy%20change.>

## Key Concepts

**Policy analysis** in policy research focuses on problems and solving individual and social problems based on the democratic process. In other words, policy analysis pursues ideal solutions by considering policies, strategy, and implementation.

**Policy organizations:** those organizations that focus on making effective policies and having power over policy consequences. Policy network

**Social capital:** advantageous to policymaking; comes with forging relationships across organizations or networks.

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# Chapter 10

## Organizations Today

Recent and ongoing changes in the structure and functioning of organizations.

Jisu Kim, Finn Demo, Holden Erickson

### Introduction

As the world attempts to return to some semblance of a new normalcy following the economic, social, and cultural shockwaves caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, new and pressing issues continue to arise, such as maintaining a solid workforce and navigating the online shift and cultivating a healthy and collaborative work culture. In this chapter, we explore the evolution of organizational culture in response to the global pandemic, as well as newer problems of varying urgency that workplaces face in retaining employment through a labor shortage. While some companies hover on the verge of crisis, others have been able to adapt with the times. Successful companies can stay true to their organizational identities, while offering a strong and adaptive sense of culture to both managers and employees. In the face of the unprecedented nature of the global pandemic, successful organizations have been able to adapt their cultures to fit the new environmental realities.

There have been prominent shifts in not only aspects of our everyday lives, but also in the ways in which we view work and communicate in the workforce. This is evident in the sudden shift toward remote employment, where lunchroom chats have been replaced with breakout zoom lobbies. This presents a great challenge to organizations but has also allowed researchers to truly examine the structure and strength of organizational cultures. Further anthropological research has “identified more productive ways of engaging with cultural change [involving] cyclical processes of reflection, experimentation and action. To do this, organizations should begin by ensuring their members have some degree of psychological safety. This means they feel secure enough so they will not act in defensive or reckless ways” (Spicer, 2020). While it is respectable for organizations to have positive aspirations and good intentions on self-reflection to be better for the workers and customers, what separates successful companies from the rest is the ability to communicate and allocate resources and training to their employees and adapt to an ever-changing world.

### Biggest challenges

To take advantage of the confusion caused during the pandemic, our workplace has moved online quickly and organizational culture and living environment have moved with it. While in the past online settings were merely an option for work, covid has changed this option into a necessity, forcing a rise in and strengthening of online-based work culture. Further, these online working conditions and lifestyle shifts have brought many changes

socially and culturally. Social media has the advantage of being able to increase connections between a growing number of people anonymously and plays a critical role as a catalyst for promoting engagement and involvement among citizens in government policy. (Haro-de-Rosario, et al. 2018). However, these network-based forms of social movement organization, as Juris (2016) points out, are "not new" when compared to the New Social Movement of the 1970s, but are an "alternative cultural framework" and "a unique set of social infrastructure" that may explain new forms of today's online culture.

Those network-based online organizations may operate in one of the market, hierarchy, network, and bazaar governance models (Demil & Lecocqu, 2006), or a mixture of several. This is because the network-based online organizational structure does not designate the characteristics of a specific model, but the model that has developed the existing governance model through socio-cultural change. Specifically, today's network-based organizational model also has the contractual framework of the market, the "classical contract", and the "employment contract" of hierarchical governance. It is in this context that Demil & Lecocqu (2006, p1454) also pointed out that the theoretical distinction between these different organizations is the kinds of relations that operate between agents. Therefore, it should be noted that in identifying organizational problems today, we are confronted with many cultural and structural problems derived from and linked to existing organizational problems between the actors in organizations.

Except for the issue of millennial generations' labor values and technological security, today's organizational challenges or problems do not deviate much from the issue of labor & management in chapter 3 about diversity, the balance between family & work, and equality. Rather, many of the old organizational problems that need to be solved urgently are re-emerging as today's challenges with the online shifts.

## Problem Clusters and Suggestions

Although few organizational studies have done much, based on some organizational studies, significant today's organizational problems can be clustered into four categories, which have developed in the Spring 2022 course of Anthropology of Organization (ANTH 4418/6418): *Worker autonomy, Organization culture, Social & Environment, and Communication & Efficiency*. These were brought up the today's organization problems after the discussion on changing online organization working culture. Although these clusters are unable to encompass all issues faced by today's organizations, they are to help to identify today's problems and find solutions for them. Specific organizational issues within the cluster of organizational issues can be seen in Figure 1.

## Today's Organizational Problems cluster



Figure 1. Today's Organizational Problems cluster

Organizations today face numerous challenges connected to working conditions, culture, social uncertainty, and communication problems. These problems come from doubts about the outcome and the process of completing a common goal or task without being physically in one space, such as working remotely. In other words, the question is how much my colleagues or employees can be immersed in their work and produce meaningful results.

Today's organizational problems give us the chance to rethink the way workers do their jobs and needs according to socio-cultural changes. As we can see in the great resignation during the pandemic era, workers are balancing work and life and leaving in search of more professional or good jobs, and this is causing labor shortages in companies ("NPR The Great Resignation"). However, the important point here is what it means to get a 'good job' and to figure that it is linked to changes in workers' needs and values toward work ("HBS Managing the Future of Work"). Changes in the working environment are essential to change the organizational culture, and rapidly changing socioeconomic factors are also promoting organizational change and making collateral problems. However, it's still pointed out that the problem with online organizations is how to supervise or manage workers as same as yesterday.

While individual organizations are micro-level modes of culture, sudden and jarring changes in macro-level cultures "can create the problem of hysteresis where an organization's culture remains out of step with wider societal level cultures" (Strand and Lizardo, 2017). The key for an organization to avoid creating a disconnect with its employees is to be able to adapt to the ever-changing needs of their workers and customers alike through



a strengthening sense of unity and purpose, which can only be done through honest communication.

There has always been a disconnect between workers and managers, and that old problem has only been exacerbated by the Pandemic. These jolts of environmental change brought about in the wake of Covid 19 can have varying effects. While these jolts of culture shock within organizations are catalysts for change, they could quickly become catalysts of collapse if an organizational culture is unable to adapt to the new environment of work life. It is very hard to translate a sense of belonging and culture within a workplace to a digital sphere, some things just won't translate. This acceptance of change and having a flexible approach to whatever might arise is a crucial ability a manager must possess. These managers must "ensure these new practices become routine aspects of organizational life, with new practices which should be discussed in ways which appeal to existing ideas and emotions which organizational members hold onto" (Strand and Lizardo, 2017, p. 168).

The way we interpret and view today's organization is a platform or perspective on the existing organizational environment. Therefore, to analyze new environmental organizations, it is time to apply the conceptual, flexible, dynamic, and practical aspects we have learned through the perspective of anthropology to online work environments. Here are suggestions to develop worker autonomy: It is needed to create or manage workers' autonomous online organizational culture or rules by applying a new dynamic and flexible perspective; develop the involvement IT interface aligned with online working circumstances; make strategies what communication media effectively work for online team and organization.

## In Practice

1. Investigate problem clusters within your own organization.
2. Provide incentives for people in your organization to help develop solutions for new and developing problems.
3. Be attentive to culture change and social movements outside your organization—and be proactive in developing collaborative responses.
4. Be attentive and kind to those in management as well as average workers. They are experiencing a lot of shifts personally from the changes brought about by the pandemic
5. Do an analysis: list organizational qualities pre- and post- pandemic for comparison.
6. How has the pandemic changed the ways you work as well as the way you perceive your work?
7. What new challenges have arisen in your workplace since the pandemic? What challenges have continued through it?

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# Chapter 11

## Collaboration and Complicity

Ted Maclin, Tristan Akins

### Introduction

Formal organizations are the driving engines behind political initiatives and programs in countries around the world. Understanding both the efficacy and unintentional outcomes of these programs has been the subject of increased social research, particularly in terms of local effects, community resistance, and obstacles to achieving program goals; However, relatively little attention has been paid to the **politics of knowledge** and decision making within these organizations—the ways that knowledge is created, legitimated, valorized, and silenced. In researching the social and institutional relations within these organizations, there is seemingly no line between **collaboration** and **complicity**. Rather, there exists a complex and changing terrain: a relational space where collaboration and complicity coincide. Within this landscape, researchers must both recognize complicities and negotiate which are tenable within their research.

Social research has seen calls for studying up (Nader 1972, Gusterson 1997), institutional ethnography (Grahame 1998; Macdonald 2003; Smith 2005, 2006), work with elites (Marcus 1983, Conti and O'Neill 2007), and multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995, Markowitz 2001, Gustavson and Cytrynbaum 2003). At the same time, there have been increased calls for collaborative research (Lassiter 2001, 2005; Nicks 2004) and other emancipatory methods (Lynch 1999), particularly in relation to marginalized groups. Although elites and powerful organizations are not typically considered “Marginalized,” there remains both utility and an ethical prerogative in approaching studies of elites through a collaborative lens.

Critiques of organizations from the outside, or from the inside using deception to gain entry, have contributed to an antagonistic environment between social science and elite organizations, sometimes leading to myopia within social science research, which further obscures institutional processes. Collaborative research has the potential to reopen some of these doors, while addressing concerns about the **politics of representation**—who is allowed to represent an individual or group, and to what end (Lassiter 2001:138)?

### Collaboration

Collaboration is different from simple participation. Participation signifies involvement in research, possibly as an interviewee or a research subject. Collaboration, on the other hand, involves all stages of the research process: from developing research questions and frameworks to selecting methods, conducting the research, doing the analysis, and developing the results. When participation is initiated both by the researcher

and the researched working together through all aspects of the research, the 'researched' become co-researchers and the project becomes iteratively reflexive. Under such conditions the research can be said to be collaborative. Collaborative research provides one answer to critiques of anthropology as overly positivist, interventionist, and colonizing.

The link between new collaborative approaches and a rejection of colonialism points in another direction: if the gaze of anthropology has been limited—directed away from power at home—by its colonial past, then studying up is a way of decolonizing anthropology. Given this thought, studying up (Chapter 1) should also be open to collaborative approaches, but at what point does collaboration give way to complicity? And how do anthropologists collaborating with powerful organizations maintain a critical stance—“a theory dominated at every turn by a concern for reasonable conditions of life” (Horkheimer [1937] 1972:199)?

The use of collaborative methods has been described as an ethical imperative (Lassiter 2001, 2005). Ethical considerations in research may be described institutionally in professional codes (AAA 1998) or IRB policies (Bozeman and Hirsch 2005), but may also be collaboratively negotiated as part of the research process (Elwood 2007). The negotiation and renegotiation of research ethics, expectations, and procedures takes place within relational spaces when the focus of the research turns inward toward the research itself (Gustavson and Cytrynbaum 2003; Stening and Skubik 2007). Navigating this changing terrain while continuing to fit within the institutional guidelines of academia and research funding is an increasingly important challenge for researchers (Niks 2004). The micro-politics of authority come into play here (as in power differences between interviewer and interviewee), as does the recognition of counter-expertise—both within the organization and between organizational actors and the researcher (Fortun and Cherkasky 1998; Fortun 1998). Collaboration becomes the recognition of pluralism as a resource (Fortun and Cherkasky 1998: 146).

Studying up with varying degrees of collaboration is a response to both Nader's (1972) call for a change in direction and the change in positioning of anthropologists relative to those they study, or study with (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Bringing critical study to organizations, institutions, elites, and states touches on ongoing debates between public and applied anthropology. Whether or not applied and public anthropology are actually all that different (McGranahan 2006; Singer 2000), both approaches potentially engage with what Nader (1972) and Rappaport (1993) call studying up or “engaged anthropology.” Aside from largely institutionalized ethics relating to consent practices, do anthropologists also have a moral obligation to seek out “trouble” relating to oppression, human rights violations, and economic shifts often originating in our own back yard (Bourgois 1990; Rappaport 1993)?

All applied studies of organizations and institutions are not equal, and certainly not all count as studying up. Anthropologists working in development programs may be isolated from theoretical shifts in the discipline while replicating Western power

arrangements under the guise of participation (Escobar 1991.) Development (and by analogy conservation) is a powerful discourse with far-reaching effects around the globe and in many disciplines (Escobar 1991:765; Hausner 2006). When studying within conservation, public policy, or development arenas—particularly collaboratively—how can we keep from being subsumed by such discourses? Poststructuralism in engaged research—a continual searching for other categorizations and narratives—may provide one road (Fortun 2006). Bruce Knauft (2006) has suggested that anthropology is seeking a middle path—articulations of contradictions within the discipline that cut across multiple spatial and temporal scales. From this perspective, the structural and post-structural coexist productively as dialectic forms, leading to a new engaged synthesis. A public anthropology may engage with multiple theories and methodologies, but must be both outwardly and reflexively critical—challenging existing institutions within the discipline itself (Purcell 2000). Whether this is framed as public anthropology or as a recentered form of applied anthropology (Rylko-Bauer et al. 2006), this type of critical engagement should be a key feature of “studying up.”

Collaboration within non-traditional research contexts (**studying up, multi-sited ethnography, global ethnography**) calls for a turn away from traditional ideas of rapport—wrought with **complicity** in its negative ethical connotation—to a complicity that recognizes the researcher as an outsider (Marcus 1997). Complicity of any sort raises ethical questions, but these are questions that need to be asked. Complicity may also be productive, in the sense that experts are complicit in the development of the research project (Marcus 1997). New reflections on collaboration and complicity follow directly from new research contexts, critical reflection on the positioning of researchers, and new approaches to writing ethnography (Marcus 1997, 2007; Clifford and Marcus 1986). Anthropologists and their collaborators are mutually complicit in a process of culture-making (Myers 2006). A research process that begins collaboratively may also help to open access for later researchers (Sridhar 2005).

## Complicity

Complicity literally refers to a process of “folding together.” Complicity indicates a shared ethical burden that often has connotations of involvement in illegal or unethical behavior (as seen in the related terms accomplice and illicit), but it is also possible to be complicit in other ethical senses. Some ethical senses of complicity focus not on an immoral act but on using complicity to relay complexity and involvement in a given context (Marcus 1997). Other ethical senses focus not on how a person *is* complicit but rather on how they are coerced into complicity by structural patterns (Becker and Aiello 2013). This section will delve deeper into each of these ethical senses and their places in organizational anthropology.

## Complicity and Access

Possibly the most orthodox understanding of complicity is that which focuses on one's participation in an unethical act. This is reflected in most dictionary definitions of "complicity," such as the Merriam-Webster definition: "association or participation in or as if in a wrongful act" ("Complicity"). This sense of complicity is particularly common in past critiques of anthropology – particularly the earlier years of anthropology – such as anthropologist Renato Rosaldo's 1989 essay "Imperialist Nostalgia." In this critique, Rosaldo discusses how the very conditions that allow for traditional anthropology ethnography – living within an indigenous community and documenting their lives – make the anthropologist complicit in imperialism. Rosaldo describes his own complicity in his anthropological studies, such as his reliance on a missionary group's plane. While Rosaldo was not trying to convert and "civilize" the people he was studying (as is sometimes the goal of missionaries), he was still present and participated, if even to the smallest degree, in such transformations. We draw on this example to examine complicity as a tool of access. Individual actors are complicit – intentionally or not – because complicity works as a means through which to reach an end.

## Complicity and Connection

Another sense of understanding complicity emerges as anthropology moves towards multi-sited ethnography (Chapter 2) and the metaphor of an inside perspective loses its appropriateness. In a 1997 essay on complicity, George Marcus examines how the mere presence of an anthropologist makes the *elsewhere* present, and the subjects of study display their sensitivity to elsewhere. As connections between sites emerge, creating said multi-sited ethnography, complicity exists "as an affinity, marking equivalence, between field-worker and informant," as both researcher and subject are complicit in their relationship to the other sites involved in such multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1997, 100). The anthropologist both literally represents an outsider as well as metaphorically represents the connection between various sites as they create material research on the existing connection. This sense of complicity focuses on the connotations of involvement that are inherent in complicity and not illegal or unethical behavior. We draw on this sense of complicity as a key aspect of research – one of the primary objects of study – to provide a possible, more appropriate-to-the-times alternative to the sense of complicity as a means. Individual actors are complicit because they are connected through networks of information or policy (Chapters 7 and 9, respectively).

## Complicity and Coercion

A final sense of understanding complicity is that of coerced complicity, which focuses not on judging those that are complicit but on the structures that mandate their complicity. A 2013 essay, "The Continuum of Complicity: 'Studying Up' / Studying Power as

a Feminist, Anti-Racist, or Social Justice Venture,” by Sarah Becker and Brittanie Aiello examines the relationship between complicity and power. Becker and Aiello find that one’s ability to resist complicity and one’s power fall have a direct relationship, existing on a sort of *continuum* (Becker 2013, 65-70). On this continuum, someone with little power (consider, a cashier at a store) has great incentive to remain complicit while someone with much power (consider, the general manager of the same store) can speak up with much less fear of negative consequences. Within any given context, an individual may experience an unethical incident - a racist joke, the breaking of a law, the unequal enforcement of policy - but remain silent, and thus complicit, because the consequences for speaking up may be too high. An employee might risk getting fired, an anthropologist might damage their relationship and access to their subjects, the disruption of the unethical behavior may be detrimental to the organization’s performance, or the “accomplice” might be risking becoming a social outcast if the unethical behavior is especially normalized. We draw on this sense of complicity to consider a more active approach to understanding relationships of power and a more realistic evaluative approach that considers a person’s action in context rather than completely detached from the situation at hand.

## In Practice

### Key Concepts

**Collaboration:** in ethnography, collaboration implies the direct involvement of research subjects in all elements of the process: design, backgrounding, selection of methods, implementation, analysis, and dissemination. More than that, it also indicates that research subjects have co-control over those elements.

**Complicity:** literally “folded together,” complicity indicates a shared ethical burden. It often has connotations of involvement in illegal or unethical behavior (as seen in the related terms accomplice and illicit), but it is also possible to be complicit in other ethical senses.

**Politics of knowledge:** a perspective on knowledge that focuses on differences in power among multiple actors, and how those power differences influence the creation, transformation, legitimization, and spread of knowledge.

**Politics of representation:** a perspective on representation that focuses on differences in power among multiple actors, and how those differences influence the process of representation.

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# The 2022 Organizational Anthropology Collective

**Tristan Akins** is pursuing an undergraduate degree in International Studies and Anthropology at the University of Memphis with an expected graduation in the summer of 2023. His main areas of academic and professional interest are government organizations, environmental resources, and security studies.

**Christin Calvert** is an Anthropology and English Double Major at the University of Memphis. She has a passion for creative writing such as poetry and fictions and an immense love for animals. She intends to apply the concepts learned in Anthropology in her everyday life and keep on learning.

**Finn Demo** is pursuing an undergraduate degree in Anthropology, Psychology, and Japanese language at the University of Memphis. They have an interest in historical linguistics as well as internet-based interactions, communities, and culture formation.

**Jennie Doss** is currently seeking a master's graduate degree in Applied Anthropology from the University of Memphis with an expected graduation in the spring of 2023. She has a background in horticulture and community-based research. Her current research interests are in community development and social and environmental justice.

**Reaghan Gough** is a master's graduate in Anthropology at the University of Memphis with a B.A. from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. She has a background in education, history, and communications. Her current research focuses on power, intersectionality, race, and dis/ability in school discipline policies and the youth justice system.

**Jisu Kim** is seeking a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Memphis with expected graduation in the fall of 2022. She has a background in social media research and working experience in South Korean Government Office. She is interested in education policy and social media public engagement.

**Breanna Kramer** is a master's graduate in Medical Anthropology from the University of Memphis. She has a background and interest in forensic science and government work. Her current research involves studying the institution of criminal justice and its bureaucratic structures.

**Ted Maclin** is an anthropology faculty member at the University of Memphis. His current research is on political ecology, policy, knowledge, and organizations shaping the



development of the Blue Oval City Ford Motor Company plant in West Tennessee. He is interested in human/environment interactions, the anthropology of policy, and the politics of knowledge.

**Colleen Runnion** is seeking a master's degree in Applied Anthropology from the University of Memphis with an expected graduation in the spring of 2023. She has a background in cultural anthropology, business and organizational anthropology, and political science. Her upcoming research involves the anthropology of philanthropy and donor experience.