

UC Berkeley
UC Berkeley Previously Published Works

Title

Culture and Organization Theory

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5xt3k3hs>

Journal

The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 619(1)

ISSN

0002-7162

Author

Morrill, Calvin

Publication Date

2008-09-01

DOI

10.1177/0002716208320241

Peer reviewed



Culture and Organization Theory

Author(s): Calvin Morrill

Source: *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Sep., 2008, Vol. 619, Cultural Sociology and Its Diversity (Sep., 2008), pp. 15-40

Published by: Sage Publications, Inc. in association with the American Academy of Political and Social Science

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/40375793>

REFERENCES

Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:

http://www.jstor.com/stable/40375793?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents

You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Sage Publications, Inc. and are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*

Culture and Organization Theory

By

CALVIN MORRILL

Culture has become a legitimate concern and part of the basic conceptual toolkit in much of contemporary organization theory. This article historically traces the contested place of culture in organization theory—from acultural rationalist theorizing at the turn of the twentieth century; to the accidental “discovery” of shop floor culture by human relations scholars in the 1920s; to mid-twentieth-century explorations of informal and institutionalized relations in organizations; to present-day approaches that blend concepts from organizational culture frameworks, neoinstitutional analysis, sociology of culture, and social movement theory. This historical backdrop provides a context for raising several research questions relevant to organizational change, boundaries, and deviance. In closing, the author suggests that an analytic nexus between culture, power, and agency is emerging in contemporary organization theory that ultimately may yield a theory of society.

Keywords: culture; organizations; institutions; agency; change; boundaries; deviance

Until recent decades, culture in organization theory occupied a marginal place relative to dominant rationalist frameworks. Early organizational researchers, whether primarily oriented toward theory (e.g., Weber 1978) or practice (e.g., Taylor 1912/1984), considered the core project of organization theory to be the

Calvin Morrill is a professor of sociology, business and criminology, law and society; and codirector of the Center for Organizational Research at the University of California, Irvine. He is the coeditor (with David Snow and Cindy White) of Together Alone: Personal Relationships in Public Places (University of California Press 2005) and the author of The Executive Way: Conflict Management in Corporations (University of Chicago Press 1995), which won the Distinguished Scholarship Award from the Pacific Sociological Association and was a finalist for the C. Wright Mills Award. He is currently engaged in two collaborative research programs on the role of social movements in institutional change and the dynamics of legal consciousness and conflict in schools.

NOTE: An earlier version of this article was presented at the First Annual UCSD Culture Conference in 2005. I thank Amy Binder, Mary Blair-Loy, and Elizabeth Chiarello for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

DOI: 10.1177/0002716208320241

development of universal laws, sanitized of cultural trappings, that could efficiently govern rational, instrumental organizations (Dobbin 1994a). Nonetheless, early organization theorists used bits and pieces of unacknowledged cultural arguments, often as points of departure for creating acultural theory. Beginning in the 1920s, social scientists accidentally “discovered” and then empirically mapped the social psychological contours of shop floor norms and sentiments, thus giving rise to the “human relations” school. As human relations gained momentum in the 1930s and 1940s, scholars included the study of norms and sentiments in mainstream organization theory as variables to be manipulated to increase worker productivity. By the 1950s and 1960s, scholars using ethnographic and case-study methods moved beyond human relations to reveal a complex “underlife” (Goffman 1961) in organizations containing conflicting values and interests that both subverted and facilitated the achievement of formal goals (Selznick 1948). In this context, scholars focused on the institutionalization of social values, as well as the day-to-day negotiation of meaning by organizational members.

It was not until the 1980s, however, that ideas from mid-twentieth-century institutional and ethnographic studies of organizations bore fruit in two significant developments. The first of these occurred with the emergence of organizational culture frameworks that emphasized organizations as systems of meaning and symbols; the second fused elements of early institutionalism, symbolic interactionism, and ethnomethodology into neoinstitutional theories of organizations that highlighted the cultural-cognitive construction of organizational structures and practices. From the 1980s to the present, cultural arguments and questions in organization theory have increasingly focused on the *constitutive* effects of culture with respect to organizational members’ inner lives, the meanings they attribute to organizational life, and the construction and maintenance of instrumental social structures. In contemporary organization theory, the study of culture *in* organizations has become the study of *cultural organization* (Van Maanen and Barley 1985; Dobbin 1994a).

In the next several pages, I trace the historical ebb and flow of cultural arguments in organization theory over the past century. I use this discussion as a backdrop for discussing key culturally inflected questions about organizational change, boundaries, and deviance.

The Unacknowledged Use of Culture in Early Organization Theory

Early organization theory emerged in the crux of the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century project of creating self-regulating markets in Europe and, ultimately, across the globe. As the cause for free markets and capitalist gain became both the utopian ends and grand motives underlying most social institutions, the rational organization, de-contextualized from local customs, came to be seen as the linchpin for realizing and sustaining market society (Polanyi 1944/1957). English,

and later American, French, and German corporations, with their multilayered hierarchies, became important carriers and embodiments of these beliefs as they developed far-flung markets across national, colonial, and regional boundaries. No less important were state bureaucracies, especially military and colonial organizations, which operated, from the vantage points of their European masters, as instantiations of rationality and universal efficiency, as well as guarantors of international peace. This peace, in turn, enabled markets and market ideology to thrive.

As markets and capitalist enterprises thrived, early organizational researchers, which Dobbin (1994a, 117) rightly pointed out produced “hybrids” of theory and “applied practical discipline,” often viewed culture as superfluous to rational organizations, if not regarding it with outright hostility. Organization theory was about the hard edge of rationality, means-end thinking, and goals. Cultural arguments, by which most theorists meant nonrational “noise,” were relegated to the study of custom and local social practice. Given the antipathy it received, culture ironically played important yet unacknowledged roles in early organization theory. This was especially the case in applied organization theory. With respect to factory life, applied theorists viewed workers’ traditions and local practices regarding the pace of work as disruptive to rational production. At the same time, they recognized the value of workers’ considerable knowledge about how factories operate. Because of these twin realizations—culture as threat and resource—applied organization theorists often developed prescriptions for disrupting and then wresting away from workers their decades-old work traditions (Hobsbawm 1974). In this way, early theorists insinuated culture into their work without explicitly acknowledging they were doing so.

American Frederick Taylor’s (1912/1984) early-twentieth-century “scientific management” emerged as the purest and most famous expression of early applied organization theory. Taylor’s primary question focused on the efficient construction of workers’ tasks. His method for answering this question involved a two-step process that first harvested traditional work practices via “time and motion” studies of jobs and then restructured them into simple task sequences that supervisors and owners could more easily control and deploy. Along the way, Taylor argued that scientifically reengineered jobs should be coupled with incentive wages based on piece rates and decoupled from the bargaining power of unions and local traditions of compensation and production. In effect, scientific management stripped organizations of workers’ collective knowledge (while not touching the collective knowledge of managers and owners), only to bring it back, repackaged as “scientifically” constructed procedures. Taylor intended his system as a means to calm labor strife and substitute scientific objectivity for workers’ subjective orientations toward the rhythms of industrial work and production. The realities of scientific management, however, proved quite different. Scientific managers helped deskill jobs (and fueled an ideological sense that jobs could and should be deskilled), undermining the legitimacy of work traditions among factory workers and unions, and fomenting decades of intense labor conflict (Montgomery 1979).

If Taylor offered a rationalist theory of work, French theorist Henri Fayol (1919/1984), writing at the same time as Taylor, provided the best known

rationalist theory of management. Fayol contrasted the inductive approach of scientific management by postulating several “principles” of management (planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling). Fayol also recognized the importance of managerial “flexibility” in applying his principles to actual organizational circumstances, “for there is nothing rigid in management affairs” (p. 181). Moreover, Fayol recognized the importance of building what he called an “esprit de corps” among “personnel,” by which he primarily meant managers, but he also extended the term to include workers and interorganizational relations (p. 200-201). Here are some of the earliest, yet largely undeveloped, allusions to what decades later would come to be known as “organizational culture.”

*In effect, scientific management stripped
organizations of workers' collective knowledge
(while not touching the collective knowledge of
managers and owners), only to bring it back,
repackaged as “scientifically” constructed
procedures.*

As Taylor and Fayol attempted to create universal principles for structuring work and management, academic theorists began developing general, transcontextual laws and abstracted descriptions of formal organization. This style of theorizing is readily apparent in Weber’s classic description of “ideal-typical” rational-legal bureaucracies as rule-governed, hierarchical meritocracies with specialized career lines and rational accounting methods (Weber 1978, 956-63). An acultural rationalist orientation is also readily apparent in his explanation for the historical success of bureaucracy compared with other kinds of organizations:

The decisive reasons for the advance of bureaucratic organization has always been its purely *technical* superiority over any other form of organization. The full developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with non-mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs—these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration (Weber 1978, 973).

This technical explanation for the ascendance of bureaucracy obscures the uneven and sometimes contradictory historical processes that brought

bureaucracy into being (and the broader, multifaceted cultural dynamic, rationalization, of which it is a part) that famously mark Weber's approach to both history and culture (Weber 1904-1905/1958). Indeed, Weber's overall portrait of social life suggests a "messy, compartmentalized world where difference is both receding and hard to reconcile" (Espeland 1998, 36). Such a world precludes universal, rational truth and demands reliance on the sociologist's subjective interpretation of facts (*verstehen*) to make sense of historical and contemporary events. As such, Weber's framework for bureaucracy stands in stark contrast to his overall sociological project, even suggesting a gap between instrumental-rational action and the principles of bureaucracy, on one hand, and cultural action, on the other.

The gap between cultural action and rational organization has informed analytic arguments in organization theory for much of the twentieth century (Dobbin 1994a, 119). Parsons (1956) explicitly built on Weber's differentiation between cultural and instrumental action by arguing that the "concrete" functions of organizations, involving goal attainment and instrumentality, could be separated from the nonrational "human element" in organizations oriented toward solving "integrative problem[s]" (p. 81). Barnard (1938) addressed culture indirectly and rationality more subtly, yet still maintained their boundary, by defining organizations as cooperative systems in which members voluntarily commit themselves to organization goals. Executives play key roles in these processes by setting the moral tone for members' full participation and effectiveness in organizations. By investing organizations with a kind of morality, Barnard could argue that rational organization emerged out of individuals' commitments to morally infused collective goals.

The analytic distinction between culture and rationality ultimately split organizational research into two camps: a larger camp investigating instrumental action (largely without reference to culture) and a much smaller camp concerned with the "softer" side of organizations, such as norms, symbols, and legitimacy. Beyond organization theory, this analytic distinction carried broader disciplinary and institutional implications. The rhetoric of whole disciplines, such as economics and portions of political science, primarily formulate frameworks about organizations based in "asocial, acultural, universal economic laws"; while other disciplines, namely, sociology, anthropology, and parts of applied psychology, ground many of their arguments in the nonrational aspects of historical contexts and social practice (Dobbin 1994a, 119). This same balkanization emerged in business schools where acultural streams of economics, finance accounting, and psychology coexist with sociology and a smattering of other social sciences.

The Discovery of Norms and Sentiments on the Shop Floor: The Rise of Human Relations

Researchers realized as early as the 1920s that culture might offer additional resources for accomplishing managerial prerogatives. At the time, much of

mainstream research still focused on manipulating Taylorist levers for increasing worker productivity: task protocols, technological advancement (especially automation), and the physical conditions under which work occurred. The most famous of these projects unfolded during 1924 to 1927 as a series of field experiments at AT&T's Hawthorne assembly plant near Chicago, where groups of workers in different manufacturing rooms received varying levels of illumination and then had their productivity assessed (Perrow 1986, 79-83; Roethlisberger and Dickson 1939). To the surprise of the researchers and management, no matter how the lighting varied (down to workers working in near dark), productivity increased. By 1927, plant management turned to Harvard Business School researchers Fritz Roethlisberger and Elton Mayo, who, together with plant executive William Dickson, embarked on a series of innovative studies to solve these anomalies.

Subsequent studies involved hundreds of workers in observational experiments and a broad interviewing program to investigate workers' experiences and feelings about work. Despite AT&T being a "progressive" company for its day, most manufacturing jobs were still incredibly monotonous (Perrow 1986). Based on results from the illumination experiments and subsequent studies, the researchers believed that the managerial attention lavished on the workers in the original illumination experiments made workers feel important, which, in turn, motivated them to work harder regardless of the physical conditions. Researchers later generalized this dynamic as the "Hawthorne Effect"—responses of experimental subjects to being studied (and feeling important) rather than the intended stimuli. More generally, Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) argued that workers develop collective beliefs and "nonrational" values that influence their productivity. These insights laid the foundations for the human relations (HR) school, which elevated the place of workplace norms and sentiments to unprecedented importance in organization theory.

For the next few decades, HR researchers examined workers' norms and sentiments via the original Hawthorne techniques of qualitative observation and open-ended questionnaires. Other researchers, hailing from sociology, applied psychology, and labor economics, used increasingly sophisticated quantitative techniques to analyze the data gathered from highly structured surveys and field experiments. These findings formed the basis for a barrage of organizational interventions—from nondirected interviewing by sympathetic personnel staff to internal mass media campaigns to early forms of sensitivity training all aimed at reconstructing shop floor cultures "on management's terms and in management's image" (Perrow 1986, 83). To be sure, HR softened the hard edges of scientific management-inspired control, and remnants of HR can be found in nearly every contemporary organization in the form of personnel departments and other employee accommodations. But the HR movement foundered in 1950s as its evidentiary basis and techniques came under intense criticism (Perrow 1986).

By the 1960s, new strains of organization theory emerged that looked outward from the shop floor to instrumental relations between organizations and their

environments. In their earliest guises, these “open systems” frameworks contained few places for culture and avoided the HR concerns with the nonrational aspects of organizations. Even as the open systems revolution gathered momentum during the 1950s and 1960s, sociologists continued to enter organizations to study them up close. The impetus for their research did not echo HR: one stream of inquiry drew inspiration from the grand functionalist portraits of organization advanced by Barnard and Parsons (the latter of whom was inspired by his reading of Weber). Another stream issued from the sociological and anthropological fieldwork tradition at the University of Chicago.

From Informal Relations and Institutions to Negotiated Orders

Based on his case study of the Tennessee Valley Authority published in *TVA and the Grassroots*, Philip Selznick (1948, 27) argued that internal “unwritten laws” and “informal associations” both subverted and facilitated the accomplishment of “official” goals in formal organizations. Selznick thus turned the old question of informal and formal structure on its head. Rather than only asking how formal structure constrained the irrationality of the informal, he investigated how the informal could channel rationality by “expand[ing] executive control” to achieve organizational goals (Selznick 1948, 27). Moreover, by using concepts like “law” and “association” to describe informal relations, he invoked language conventionally reserved for characterizing formal institutions, which conveyed a sense of permanence and gravitas to informal relations. Selznick (1957, 140) ultimately pushed far beyond this initial brush with institutionalization in his well-known treatise, *Leadership in Administration*, to argue that the job of leadership is to guide “the transition from organization to institution so that the ultimate result effectively embodies desired aims and standards.” Organizations begin, so Selznick claimed, as technical, instrumental building blocks. In these early stages, managers can effectively be engineers, attending primarily to technical efficiency. If organizations are to functionally adapt to broader social contexts, managers must become leaders by “infusing” their organizations with “morally sustaining ideas” and social myths from the broader culture (Selznick 1957, 138).

While Selznick spun out the first versions of a functionalist institutionalism, elsewhere in the academic universe sociologists at the University of Chicago ethnographically delved into the day-to-day worlds of occupations and communities, which necessarily took them deep into the informal sides of bureaucracies. For Chicago fieldworkers, a key objective, especially inspired by Chicago faculty member Everett Hughes (1970), was to empirically map out the actual workings of occupations via close and sustained observation—more generally, to see and understand “behavior in its particular and situated forms” (Gusfield 1995, xii).

Chicago-style fieldwork did not respond directly to the grand organizational portraits of Barnard, Parsons, and Weber but challenged the idea that formal organizations function as static, uniformly rational enterprises. Indeed, midcentury Chicago-style forays into organizations underscore the instability of organizations that only *appear* stable from afar (Fine 1984, 243). Such challenges emerge, for example, from Strauss and colleagues' (1963) psychiatric hospital study of everyday negotiations among diverse occupational groups (doctors, nurses, patients, lay workers) about the meanings, routines, and tacit agreements of work. Their work, which drew explicitly from symbolic interactionism (coined by Chicagoan Herbert Blumer), became the basis for the "negotiated order" approach to organizations that centers on the construction of meaning in organizations via social interaction. In *Boys in White* (1961), Howard Becker, with colleagues Strauss, Hughes, and Blanch Geer, examined the paradoxes of student socialization and survival amid conflicting expectations at the University of Kansas medical school.

Erving Goffman, while never a negotiated order theorist per se, developed a dramaturgical approach to organizations (based in Chicago-inspired symbolic interactionism) as he explored how people navigate the less visible sides of formal organizations. Goffman intended his now-classic *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* as a "handbook" for understanding how organizations are sustained via individual and collective "performances" of roles and identities "within the physical confines of a building or plant" (Goffman 1959, xi). Likewise, his *Asylums* (Goffman 1961), long celebrated for its depiction of the vicissitudes of organizational underlives, provides a theoretical rationale for analyzing the maintenance of the self as key to organizational functioning (Morrell and Fine 1997).

All of these mid-twentieth-century approaches—institutional analysis, negotiated order, and dramaturgy—as well as other culturally inflected works, such as Bendix's (1956) comparative analysis of managerial ideologies in the rise of capitalist and socialist industry or Dalton's (1959) analysis of the informal norms and micropolitics of managers in an American corporation, became well known to organization theorists of the time. Moreover, they inspired future generations of interactionist-oriented researchers to explore the informal sides of organizations and their negotiated orders across a variety of institutional environments (e.g., Barley 1983; Fine 1996; Hallett 2007). But these frameworks did not dislodge dominant rationalist organization theory. As Barley and Kunda (1992) argued, the theoretical and managerial ideological pendulum historically swings back and forth between eras of organization theory that are almost purely rationalist (e.g., scientific management during the first two decades of the twentieth century) and eras during which aspects of culture creep into prevailing rationalist frameworks (e.g., HR, institutionalism, and the Chicago-style fieldwork/negotiated order approaches during the 1930s—1950s). During good economic times, organization theory heavily accents bare-bones technological rationalism (with an emphasis on tweaking efficiency), but it turns to culture when uncertainties about productivity, worker commitment, and managerial imagination set in.

And so, after flirting with aspects of culture at midcentury, organization theorists once more parted company from culture during the economic expansion of

the 1960s. For nearly two decades, frameworks, such as “contingency theory” and “resource dependence,” occupied the imaginations, if not the research programs, of organization theorists (Scott and Davis 2006). By the 1980s, in part spurred by the perceived exhaustion of these frameworks in some quarters and the rising economic success of Japan and Germany, organization theorists, especially in the United States, turned explicitly to the concept of culture, placing it squarely at the forefront of mainstream organization theory. In the next section, I first discuss organizational culture as a framework and fad and then address the rise of neoinstitutionalism.

During good economic times, organization theory heavily accents bare-bones technological rationalism (with an emphasis on tweaking efficiency), but it turns to culture when uncertainties about productivity, worker commitment, and managerial imagination set in.

Systems of Meaning and the Cultural Construction of Rationality: Organizational Culture and Neoinstitutional Frameworks

Although earlier generations of organizational researchers referred to aspects of culture, scholars did not systematically apply the term “culture” to organizations until the late 1970s and early 1980s, when they began to refer to organizations as “socially constructed systems of meaning” (Barley and Kunda 1992, 381; Pettigrew 1979; Van Maanen 1979). With this shift, scholars explicitly began studying and referring to organizational culture, thus highlighting questions of meaning, worker satisfaction and commitment, and the nonrational aspects of organizations (Fine 1984, 239). The impulse to study organizational culture, however, has never operated as a distinctive theoretical framework (unlike, for example, the negotiated order or HR approaches), but as a way to analytically capture organizational

dynamics ignored by mainstream organization theory. Scholars identified with the vanguard of organizational culture research—including Stephen Barley, Gary Alan Fine, Peter Frost, Paul Hirsch, Joanne Martin, Andrew Pettigrew, Edgar Schein, Linda Smircich, and John Van Maanen—collectively drew their inspiration and conceptual groundings from cultural anthropology and interpretive sociology (especially symbolic interactionism). Methodologically, they preferred qualitative fieldwork that included long-term participant observation and in-depth interviews (although a few, namely Barley [1986], mixed quantitative and qualitative methods). Beyond these general orientations, they exhibited great diversity in conceptual leanings, levels of analysis, and topics. This diversity resulted in a loose confederation of approaches, none of which, beyond a shared interest in meaning, agreed upon a single definition of culture, identifying it alternately as shared symbols, rituals, coherent beliefs, stories, ideologies, values, practices, knowledge, or artifacts (Sackman 1992; Smircich 1983).

As organizational culture research gathered adherents in the 1980s and 1990s, newer generations of scholars departed from the emphases of the first generation. Some researchers bought into the survey techniques used in cross-cultural attitudinal research on “individualism” and “collectivism” (e.g., Hofstede 2001). Other researchers experimented with mathematical techniques to recover patterns of meanings through cultural artifacts and practices (Mohr 1998). Still other researchers drew from the humanities, adapting textual deconstruction to study gender inequality in organizations (e.g., Martin 1990), narrative analysis to study organizational change (e.g., Czarniawska 1997; Feldman et al. 2004), and critical hermeneutics to explore the possibilities of emancipatory organizational practice (Alvesson and Willmott 1992). The study of organizational culture thus helped create opportunities for “rapprochement” between organizational studies and the humanities (Zald 1996) but also fomented conflict within organizational studies. What was once a small confederation of approaches grew into a chaotic archipelago of “warring” factions fighting over differences in theory, method, assumptions about the unity or fragmentation of culture, and, especially, cultural interventions into managerial practice (Martin 1992; Martin, Frost, and O’Neil 2006).

Business consultants early on recognized organizational culture’s potential for molding individuals and collaborative relations in the service of management. Building organizational cultures became akin to building communities and tight-knit “clans,” with their attendant images of mutual support, solidarity, and commitment (Ouchi 1980). Unlike HR or early institutionalism, which stopped at the level of normative commitment, applied organizational culture proponents argued for pushing culture more deeply into individual and group psyches by transforming people’s identities and selves—in essence restructuring their inner *and* interactional lives (Schein 1984). In this way, the rhetoric of commitment and cooperation in applied organizational culture work evoked aspects of Barnard’s (1938) arguments about the moral dimensions of organizational membership.

Cultural interventions into managerial practice caught fire in the crux of Japanese and German economic ascendance. By the early and mid-1980s, prominent American business magazines ran cover stories on culture as the new panacea for all that ailed American corporations (Barley and Kunda 1992). Best sellers, such as *In Search of Excellence* (Peters and Waterman 1982) and *Theory Z* (Ouchi 1981), touted the importance of “strong cultures” for organizational success in global marketplaces. Transnational consulting firms, principally McKinsey & Co., marketed the virtues of organizational culture first to American managers and then to managers throughout the world (McKenna 2006, 192-215). Culture became one of the central totems of American managerial practice and, at the same time, generated a wave of critics (evocative of an earlier generation of criticism aimed at HR) who portrayed it as manipulative “normative control” (Kunda 1992) and “deconstructed” strong cultures as hegemonic overlays and fictions (Martin, Frost, and O’Neil 2006; Smircich and Calás 1987). Organizational culture, however, never became as powerful a managerial elixir outside the United States. In Europe, for example, scholars of organizational culture focused more on the political challenges of building cross-national organizations in a “not-yet” common Europe and drew from critical and narrative approaches to study the paradoxes of organizations (Czarniawska 1997, 1).

At nearly the same time as the first academic articles on organizational culture appeared, the first statements of what became the neoinstitutional framework were published. Like the organizational culture perspective, these pieces focused on the nonrational aspects of organizations, especially ritual, myth, and symbols. Instead of using these concepts to explore the cultural molding of organizational members (either for managerialist, critical, or emancipatory purposes), neoinstitutionalists drew on them to understand the cultural constitution of organizational rationality and structure. Building on the insights of early institutional theory, as well as symbolic interactionism and the cognitive-behavioral decision-making theories of James G. March and Herbert Simon (1958), John Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977) argued that rational instrumental organizations symbolize broad cultural myths about rationality that have come to be regarded as objective truths. Specifically, they claimed that organizations signal their conformity to the ideas represented in such myths by adopting particular structures and strategies. It is not rationality that is technically superior but rationality that communicates appropriateness, which, in turn, leads to perceptions of legitimacy and resources necessary for survival. Lynn Zucker (1977), drawing explicitly from ethnomethodology and Berger and Luckman’s *The Social Construction of Reality* (1967), demonstrated experimentally how subjective knowledge comes to be perceived as objective, thus suggesting how rationality comes to be seen as an objective truth, paralleling at the micro level what Meyer and Rowan argued at the organizational and macro levels.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) empirically grounded their ideas in studies of schools and other public organizations where the measurement of efficiency and

effectiveness was ambiguous and formal rhetorics and structures consistently departed (i.e., were “de-coupled”) from actual practice. Efficiency in schools was less a matter of being objectively efficient and effective than a way of developing measures to signal efficiency and effectiveness. Neoinstitutional scholars initially followed this lead and focused much of their attention on so-called “institutional” sectors of society because such sectors seemed more influenced by cultural norms and models than “technical” (for-profit) sectors. In effect, this distinction unintentionally reproduced the hoary boundary between acultural rational and cultural nonrational action that had pervaded organization theory since the nineteenth century (Dobbin 1994a, 126). As neoinstitutionalists and fellow travelers sharpened and expanded their analytic purview (Scott 2007), they ceased distinguishing between institutional and technical sectors and began concentrating on that bastion of contemporary instrumental rationality, the modern capitalist corporation. Neoinstitutional researchers demonstrated the cultural construction of a broad range of corporate dynamics, including efficiency and control (Fligstein 1990), equity and due process in affirmative action policies and grievance procedures (Edelman 1990; Sutton et al. 1994), and, at a broader scale, industrial development (Dobbin 1994b). These works resonated with questions pursued across the social sciences about the cultural and moral construction of markets (Zelizer 1979), science (Knorr-Centina 1981), and individualism as it links citizens to nation-states (B. Anderson 1983).

The neoinstitutional theoretical agenda thus pushed beyond the boundaries of organizations and particular sectors in society to investigate the historical origins of modernity, including contemporary conceptions of rationality and instantiations of instrumental social organization. An underlying question informing much of this work became, Why did instrumental rational organizations come to dominate all other forms of social organization (Dobbin 1994a, 123)? Neoinstitutionalists answered this question by documenting the pervasive diffusion of cultural-cognitive models that emerged out of the Western European cultural watersheds of the Enlightenment, the Industrial and French Revolutions, and “market” projects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These models privileged Western rationalist, means-end assumptions about reality and social organization at all levels of analysis, thus creating a world culture dominated by the “Western cultural account” (Meyer et al. 1997). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) specified the mechanisms through which this diffusion operated, arguing that mimetic, normative (professional), and coercive pressures ensured institutional “isomorphism” among organizations, especially within organizational “fields” of similar producers, clients, relations to governments, and rules of the game. Thus, rational instrumental organizations dominate and persist on the contemporary scene not because they are technically superior on some universal, objective criteria but because they conform to a social reality and are deemed legitimate as defined by pervasively shared cultural assumptions.

Unlike organizational culture, neoinstitutionalism did not become part of a broad fad in managerial practice, sponsored by global consulting firms, or

popularized by best-selling authors. Instead, its success stemmed from a number of other factors, including the timing of its historical emergence, the cultural capital and legitimacy afforded by its elite university bases, and its ability to bridge with other orientations. Like organizational culture, neoinstitutionalism grew up at time when the cultural turn in the social sciences was just coming into view. This timing meant that its adherents found resonance in unexpected places for their concerns about the cultural construction of contemporary society and rationalist thinking. Socially, neoinstitutionalism developed critical masses of scholars at elite private universities that helped legitimate the framework by affording them cultural capital and resources (e.g., superb graduate students) for their research efforts. These early innovators included Paul DiMaggio, James March, John Meyer, Johan Olsen, Walter W. Powell, and W. Richard Scott as well as fellow travelers such as Viviana Zelizer, working at the interface of cultural and economic sociology, and Arthur Stinchcombe, who became steeped in Selznick's "old" institutionalism as a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley (Stinchcombe 1997). Collectively, these scholars work on or have strong ties to the faculties at Columbia, Northwestern, Princeton, Stanford, or Yale. These critical masses also included scholars who began or spent the better part of their careers in top public research universities (e.g., the University of California system, Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona, or City University of New York), such as Robert Alford, Steven Brint, Michael Cohen, Neil Fligstein, Roger Friedland, Jerome Karabel, Pamela Tolbert, and Lynn Zucker.

[R]ational instrumental organizations dominate and persist on the contemporary scene not because they are technically superior on some universal, objective criteria but because they conform to a social reality and are deemed legitimate as defined by pervasively shared cultural assumptions.

Taken together, this cross-cutting, multigenerational, and importantly bicoastal network of scholars proved incredibly entrepreneurial at establishing neoinstitutional intellectual beachheads across wide swaths of academia. They also mentored scores of students at their home universities and through relational networks

in the field.¹ In addition to career sponsorship and cultural capital, these initial groups of neoinstitutional scholars (more so than their organizational culture cousins) typically used and imprinted their students with a broad range of methodological skills that mixed qualitative and higher-end quantitative techniques, enabling them and their intellectual offspring to blend in with their more rationalist (and often quantitatively oriented) colleagues.

Traditionally, research conducted by organizational culture and neoinstitutional scholars differs on a number of dimensions, including the level of analysis (inside versus outside organizations), analytic foci (interactionally constituted webs of meaning versus institutionalized cultural-cognitive models and practices), methods (primarily qualitative versus primarily quantitative), and application in organizations (the former with both an academic and strongly developed applied side, the latter with only an academic side). To be sure, rationalist thinking still holds a dominant position in organization theory, but the study of cultural organization (organizations *as* culture) has become a legitimate concern and part of the basic tool kit of many organizational scholars (Scott and Davis 2006, 376). As such, it is useful to ask, What are the key questions in the study of cultural organization? In the next section, I discuss some promising directions, with particular emphasis on questions of change, boundaries, and deviance.

Change

How does cultural organization change at the micro, organizational, and broader (e.g., field, institutional) levels? What is the role of collective action and everyday social interaction in shaping these dynamics? These questions, like many in the contemporary study of cultural organization, point toward crucial issues of power and agency. They also relate to topics that were undertheorized in the organizational culture and neoinstitutional frameworks. These frameworks proved more successful at explaining the initial rise and reproduction of cultural organizational forms (either through diffusion or managerial adaptation) than subsequent change.

An early (and still current in some circles) strategy for explaining cultural organizational change rests in *exogenous* approaches. Such models highlight the disruption and discrediting of extant cultures and institutions by external, unanticipated “shocks.” For neoinstitutionalists, such shocks are typically analyzed at the macro or meso (field level), taking the form of natural disasters, sudden economic downturns, demographic shifts, wars, or dramatic legal changes. Under such conditions (and by necessity), extant cultural models and practices must be reassessed in light of the “news” of what the shock has wrought. In these circumstances, old models and practices are either recombined into new models and practices, or new models and practices are invented whole cloth to handle the altered context (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). At the organizational or subunit levels, scholars recognize analogous processes, such as when hostile takeovers dramatically alter extant corporate cultures, creating the need for reconstruction and symbolic reframing of shared

institutionalized beliefs, values, and practices (Hirsch 1986; Morrill 1991). Cultural persistence and change at the organizational level also vary with demographic changes in personnel, although not always in anticipated ways given internal dynamics, such as socialization practices and managerial action (Harrison and Carroll 2005). Despite the purchase on organizational change provided by exogenous models, it is unclear how change occurs in the absence of external shocks.

To address these concerns, cultural organization scholars have developed *endogenous* models of change. One such model relies upon the existence and recognition of cultural and institutional heterogeneity (Clemens and Cook 1999; Lounsbury and Ventresca 2003). Friedland and Alford (1991) best articulate this approach from a neoinstitutional perspective with their concept of “contradictory institutional logics.” Institutional logics refer to supraorganizational norms and preconscious schemas that define and govern the means and ends that organizations employ. Friedland and Alford argued that contemporary society, because of its differentiation, contains multiple institutional logics (e.g., means-end market rationality versus unconditional, emotional relationships in families), which can lead to contradictions. In the crux of institutional contradictions, the “legitimacy” of established ways of doing things becomes something of a moving target, which leads to opportunities for institutional change. In analogous ways, organizational culture scholars recognized similar dynamics in organizations as they conceptualized and studied the mobilization of subcultures and the everyday negotiation of diverse and ambiguous identities (Meyerson and Martin 1987).

In heterogeneous “margins, borderlands, and interstices,” institutional and cultural “entrepreneurs” are particularly successful at pressing for change (Clemens and Cook 1999, 450; Schneiberg and Clemens 2006, 218). Under these conditions, recombinations of institutional logics become repertoires that individual and collective actors can use in innovative ways (Clemens 1997; Heimer 1999). Of course, such repertoires can vary historically and culturally, and actors, due to resources, social characteristics, and/or social skill (Fligstein 2001), may have differential access to them. New beliefs, templates, and practices for organizations that emerge under these conditions typically encounter resistance from those with material and cultural stakes in the status quo. Nonetheless, multiple studies document the role of heterogeneity in institutional and cultural change across a broad range of contexts: from the rise of interest-based U.S. politics in the early twentieth century as underrepresented groups (women, farmers, and workers) mobilized alternative institutional logics to reshape their participation in politics (Clemens 1997) to the emergence of urban museums in the 1920s through 1940s amid contestation among proponents of institutional logics emphasizing popular education versus elite aesthetics (DiMaggio 1991).

Endogenous models of change squarely put the study of politics, with particular attention to power relations and agency, on the analytic map of cultural organization research, providing important bases for the development of *cultural-political* approaches (Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch 2003). These approaches highlight the contested nature of culture, including how it can both shape and be a target of change efforts. Such approaches also recognize the institutionalized nature of

culture—that it is embedded in institutional locations (e.g., markets, families, education, and politics) and fields composed of networks of social relations and power (Swidler 2001). In recent years, cultural-political scholars have extended their analytic foundations by drawing from social movement theory. This inspiration emanates from early work by Mayer Zald, who brought the apparatus of political sociology into organizations to study the dynamics of internal collective action and change (Zald and Berger 1978). Researchers now draw on many of the conceptual tools of contemporary social movement theory, studying the dynamics of political opportunities and processes, framing, and resource mobilization (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996).

This engagement with social movement theory has led to a focus at the field level on organized collective action (mass mobilizations, small groups of activists, or negotiated settlements among different types of organizations) that modifies existing arrangements or creates new identities, norms, and organizational forms, which, in turn, can lead to broader cultural changes (Rao, Morrill, and Zald 2000). Armstrong (2002), for example, studied how the cultural know-how of activism from the New Left and homophile organizers in the 1960s made possible the rise of the gay identity movement in the 1970s, which ultimately coalesced as the “gay” field. Without a gay field, the far-reaching cultural and political changes during the past three decades around sexual identity would have been impossible. Progressive cultural models, however, do not always carry the day. Stevens (2001) amply demonstrated how Christian conservative homeschoolers, operating with cultural models rooted in hierarchical organizational authority, have been more successful at creating fields and markets than have progressive homeschoolers, who grew out of more chaotic traditions of countercultural organizations and “non-schooling.” Variants of these approaches resonate with Morrill and Owen-Smith’s (2002) work on the contested emergence of policy discourses and the field of environmental dispute resolution, Fligstein and Sweet’s (2002) study of the cultural-political construction of the European Community, Rao, Monin, and Durand’s (2003) study of the emergence of *nouvelle cuisine* as an identity movement that reshaped institutional logics and role identities in French haute cuisine, and Bartley’s (2007) study of the contested framing and emergence of the transnational private governance of manufacturers.

At the organizational level, Binder (2002) drew on the collective action framing literature (Snow et al. 1986) to document how Afrocentrists framed their attempts to alter school curricula in ways that resonate with the practical problems faced by school officials, which ultimately led them to be more successful than creationists. Vallas (2003) likewise found in his comparative ethnography of four manufacturing plants that management made little headway in accomplishing change because they framed the introduction of “teamwork” structures across managerial and rank-and-file lines as a purely technical concern, rather than as a moral imperative. The importance of culture in organizational effectiveness of contesting groups also emerges as a key theme in Wilde’s (2004) study of Vatican II reforms in the Catholic Church during the 1960s. She traces reformers’ success to their deliberative decision-making culture, which enabled them to compromise and

communicate with heterogeneous constituencies while their conservative adversaries isolated themselves because of their rigid, authoritarian decision-making culture.

At the micro level, Feldman and Pentland (2003) theorize a cultural-political theory of change as it occurs through the performance of organizational routines—interdependent, repetitive actions performed by multiple parties (e.g., hiring, budgeting). Organization theorists typically regard routines as a source of stability, if not organizational inertia. Feldman and Pentland (2003), drawing from Latour (1986), argued that actors perceive routines as objective in their accounts about them, yet by performing them in subjectively different ways, they can introduce variation in patterns of action and practice. The retention of such variation can lead to incremental change over time. This approach also casts a very different light on power relations in organizations. Rather than being a function only of top-down authority or bottom-up collective action, power is relational, involving multiple lines of interaction up, down, and across hierarchies. Hallett (2007) illustrated this broad tack in his ethnography of deference and leadership during change in an elementary school. Ewick and Silbey (2003) likewise underscored the relational character of power in their narrative analysis of how powerless individuals use their working knowledge of institutionalized authority to resist it.

More generally, Feldman and Pentland (2003), Hallett (2007), and Ewick and Silbey (2003) pointed toward cultural organization as continuous processes of performance and interpretation, mixed with improvisation (e.g., Weick 1998). These theoretical inclinations also appear in lines of research that blur the boundaries between neoinstitutionalism and organizational culture frameworks, as well as providing conceptual underpinnings for blended endogenous-exogenous approaches.² Drawing from symbolic interactionism, negotiated order approaches, and neoinstitutionalism, scholars are reimagining institutions as “inhabited” with flesh-and-blood actors who not only enact preconscious cultural scripts but also creatively interpret, modify, and challenge those scripts (e.g., Binder 2007; Elsbach 1994; Hirsch and Lounsbury 1997; Hallett and Ventresca 2006; Scully and Creed 1997). Inhabited institutionalism thus pushes scholars to study the dynamic interplay between broad institutional patterns, on one hand, and local practices and knowledge in fields, organizations, and organizational subgroups, on the other. This project places inhabited institutionalism squarely into many quadrants in the sociology of culture from Swidlerian “tool kits” (Swidler 1986) to the transposability of schema via the duality of structures (Sewell 1992; see also Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984) to multiple forms of agency (Emirbayer and Mische 1998) and framing in discursive fields (Snow 2004).

Boundaries

What role do boundaries play in organizational life? What kinds of boundaries are now salient in organizations? How are boundaries in and through organizations navigated? In recent years, organizational researchers have argued that

organizations as fixed, discrete units with seemingly immutable physical boundaries (as in the classic Hawthorne Plant) have all but disappeared in many fields. Several dynamics appear to be at work in altering what we have traditionally taken to be organizational boundaries: the emergence of interdependent, network structures; the breakdown of commitment between organizations and their members; the increasing mobility and globalization of organizations and their members; the development of technologies that facilitate distant, asynchronous communication; and increasingly blurred distinctions between public, private, and nonprofit sectors (Scott and Davis 2006). At the same time, perceived distinctions and differences among people have not receded but may have increased with the intensity of identity politics, thereby increasing the significance of borders constituted by symbolic and social markers.

Cultural sociologists distinguish between two types of boundaries: symbolic and social. Symbolic boundaries refer to “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space,” which become the necessary conditions for the creation and maintenance of social boundaries that are “objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to unequal distributions of resources (material or nonmaterial) and social opportunities” (Lamont and Molnár 2002, 168).

Such boundaries prevail with respect to home and work (Nippert-Eng 1996) and are integrally related to gender inequality in organizations. Acker and Van Houten (1974) and Kanter (1977) were among the first to systematically study such boundaries (although without the aid of contemporary cultural sociology) in their work on the sex segregation in organizations. More recently, Blair-Loy (2003) found that competing cultural schemas oriented toward family and career inform decisions and expectations by men and women about their careers and have become woven into the gendered texture of organizations and fields. Like Blair-Loy, Roth (2006) found that these cultural schemas influenced the allocation of opportunity and compensation in the financial services field, placing women in disadvantaged positions.

Symbolic and social boundaries also constitute organizational ethnic and racial inequality, as is well documented by Elijah Anderson’s (1999) study of African American managers in contemporary American corporations. Anderson draws from Goffman’s (1963) work on stigmatization to analyze the boundaries sustained among the “own” (loosely knit groups of African American employees who are somewhat stigmatized and isolated from other employees), the “wise” (privileged employees of various social characteristics, who because of background, education, or other experiences reach out to members of the own), and “normals” (the majority of employees). In an increasingly competitive economy with backlash against affirmative action, Anderson argued that the boundaries between the own and normals may harden, thus eroding the ranks of the wise.

Boundaries in and through organizations do not only involve gender, race, or ethnicity. Bechky (2003), for example, examined how workplace artifacts, such as engineering drawings and machines, come to symbolize “occupational jurisdictions” (Abbott 1988) of varying statuses. Through everyday negotiation and

competition among engineers, technicians, and assemblers, jurisdictional boundaries are constituted and challenged, in turn constraining and facilitating collaboration. To understand how collaboration can occur across diverse boundaries, cultural organization scholars have begun drawing on concepts such as “boundary objects” (Star and Griesman 1989) or “trading zones” (Galison 1997) to denote how collective and individual actors with different ideas, statuses, social characteristics, and practices use artifacts (material objects, management techniques, or concepts) or form interstitial spaces to engage one another in meaningful collaboration, exchange, and competition.

The challenges of cross-boundary collaboration can be especially acute in distributed global contexts. Such arrangements are increasingly more common due to advances in technology and complex team structures operating across different regions of the world. Under such conditions, the challenges of collaboration are intense due to a lack of face-to-face communication, ambiguous lines of authority, and/or the heterogeneity of personnel. Under these conditions, boundary objects (such as integrated timelines or online status-reporting techniques) may not facilitate coordination across boundaries, but instead can be ignored or become the objects of conflict, leading to the collapse of collaboration (Sapsed and Salter 2004).

The characteristics of decision-making cultures within organizations also play a role in cross-boundary linkages. Lichterman (2005), like Wilde (2004), in his comparative ethnography of Protestant volunteer and advocacy organizations, found that deliberative internal decision-making cultures lead to alliances with other community organizations. Owen-Smith and Powell (2003) argued that balancing internal academic and patenting cultures influences how well universities are able to exploit connections to industry: universities with cultures of high-impact publishing *and* patenting are more likely to attract corporate interest in joint ventures. Fourcade (2006, 179) observed the importance of negotiators sharing similar economic culture and language in international organizations to ensure that cross-national cultural boundaries can be bridged and the legitimacy and “safeness” of foreign and foreign-trained expertise can be bolstered.

Deviance

How are deviance and responses to it culturally constructed? Despite the past four decades of highly visible instances of organizational deviance, such as the Watergate scandal, the Iran-Contra affair, the savings-and-loan crisis, the Space Shuttle *Challenger* disaster, or the Enron scandal, few scholars have pursued questions concerning the cultural origins and ethical implications of such events (Zelizer 2007). This shortcoming is particularly ironic given pervasive concerns about norms and legitimacy in studies of cultural organization and a long tradition of criminological research on white-collar crime.

Dianne Vaughan’s work provides a notable exception to this trend. Vaughan (1999, 273) defined organizational deviance as “violations of formal [organizational] design goals and normative expectations . . . that produce suboptimal

outcomes.” This definition points toward organizational deviance as a routine part of the social order of organizations and underscores the importance of context, in that deviance is always defined in relation to the normative expectations of some group. Within this broad range of behavior, Vaughan (1999) further distinguished between multiple aspects of organizational deviance: *mistakes* (acts of omission or commission performed in an organizational role that violates some set of norms and produce contained adverse effects for some group), *misconduct* (acts of commission that violate laws or bureaucratic regulations on behalf of organizational goals), and *disasters* (which can originate as either mistakes or misconduct but are broader in scope, involving great harm, drama, and emotional intensity).

Vaughan’s (1996) study of the *Challenger* launch disaster in 1986 (which killed all aboard and cast a dark shadow on NASA both as a technical marvel and a symbol of American innovation and accomplishment), demonstrated most decidedly the power of cultural explanations for organizational deviance. Based on extensive archival and interview-based research, Vaughan argued against monocausal explanations pointing toward misconduct or technical incompetence. She claimed that the multiple mistakes leading up to the *Challenger* launch decision were woven into the NASA work culture itself, which neutralized all signs of danger, thus “normalizing deviance.”

Cultural practices and assumptions not only frame organizational deviance but also what occurs in its aftermath, as would-be agents of social control from internal organizational officials to governments to the public-at-large investigate “what went wrong.” Such cultural framings can occur inside organizations when executives investigate what they define as potentially scandalous economic or social behavior (Morrill 1995), or in broader fields as in the 1980s savings-and-loan disaster that cost the American taxpayers billions of dollars. Calavita, Pontell, and Tillman (1997) connected the sparse prosecution and accountability of the savings-and-loan disaster to direct political collusion between governmental and savings-and-loan officials. They also link these outcomes to the institutionalized political culture in the 1980s, which churned out a “casino economy” culture with widespread beliefs in “hitting the jackpot” in increasingly complicated financial services and real estate deals. These beliefs came into play as cultural accounts to explain away the disaster as a function of risky personal managerial practices rather than a broader culture of organizational deviance. This same rhetoric can be found twenty years later in government officials’ explanations for the 2007 U.S. subprime mortgage disaster, including President George W. Bush’s statements about home buyers’ poor financial decisions and temporary market “liquidity” (Weisman 2007).

A cultural approach to organizational deviance also suggests that the boundaries can be blurred between what is considered deviant and what is not. For instance, Anteby’s (2003) ethnographic work on “poaching” (when workers use materials and tools for personal projects) in an aerospace factory underscored how legitimate and illegitimate moralities intertwine in everyday work. Even more poignantly, participants in discourses and covert cultural practices of resistance to unjust authority often consider their actions to be morally grounded and

legitimate, yet those same practices can appear to be everything from opportunistic deviance to “normal” work routines from the standpoint of elites (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003; Ewick and Silbey 2003). Again, a culturally inflected approach compels one to carefully consider context and perspective.

Conclusion

One could argue that the study of cultural organization merely “messes things up” in organization theory. In each era when cultural arguments have ascended toward the throne of rationalist theorizing—whether as human relations, negotiated order, organizational culture, early institutional or neoinstitutional, or more contemporary culturally inflected theorizing—the questions about organizations have become harder and the answers more complex and contingent. The payoff, however, is that during each of these eras, richer images and understandings of organizations have emerged than could have been produced by rationalist theorizing alone. Topics rarely considered, such as social inequality and deviance, have been developed. New takes on old topics, such as change, have emerged to help us understand both what has occurred and what is possible. More important, sacred rationalist concepts such as rationality and efficiency are interrogated, and their limitations and possibilities are revealed. What is emerging in cultural organization theory is not only an inhabited institutionalism that places more emphasis on agency (e.g., Binder 2007; Hallett and Ventresca 2006; Hirsch and Lounsbury 1997; Scully and Creed 1997) but also a realignment of organization theory that is bringing together theoretical approaches to power, culture, and agency into a useful analytic nexus. Some theorists, such as Neil Fligstein, Martha Feldman, and Mayer Zald, have explicitly recognized this emerging nexus and capitalized on it in multiple ways to build pieces of more general frameworks that incorporate power, culture, and agency in meaningful doses. What is needed now is work analogous to what Charles Perrow (1986, 2002) accomplished for the study of organizational power in society, but with a new wrinkle—a reworking of existing organization theory and research through an analytic window that can integrate the cultural, power, and agentic sides of the house. Such an undertaking must push beyond the goal of producing a better organization theory to tackle a goal that we in sociology have largely, and regrettably, given up during the past several decades: a theory of society.

Notes

1. Among the neoinstitutionalist (broadly understood) and culturally oriented scholars mentored in various ways by these critical masses are Elizabeth Armstrong, Amy Binder, John Boli, Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Elisabeth Clemens, Lauren Edelman, Martha Feldman, David John Frank, Frank Dobbin, Ann Hironaka, Michèle Lamont, John Mohr, Calvin Morrill, Jason Owen-Smith, Francisco Ramirez, Mark Schneiberg, Evan Schofer, Sarah Soule, Mitchell Stevens, Mark Suchman, David Strang, John Sutton, George Thomas, Marc Ventresca, and Xueguang Zhou.

2. Among those scholars whose work is blurring the boundaries between neoinstitutional and culturally oriented frameworks are Stephen Barley, Tim Bartley, Beth Bechky, Amy Binder, Mary Blair-Loy, Doug Creed, Kim Elsbach, Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas, Tim Hallett, Jennifer Howard-Grenville, Sarah Kaplan, Paul Hirsch, Gideon Kunda, Michael Lounsbury, Sioban O'Mahony, Calvin Morrill, Hayagreeva Rao, Maureen Scully, Marc Ventresca, Klaus Weber, and Mayer Zald.

References

- Abbott, Andrew. 1988. *The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Acker, Joan, and Donald R. Van Houten. 1974. Differential recruitment and control: The sex structuring of organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19:152-63.
- Alvesson, Matts, and Hugh Willmott. 1992. Critical theory and management studies: An introduction. In *Critical management studies*, ed. M. Alvesson and H. Willmott, 1-20. London: Sage.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined communities*. London: Verso.
- Anderson, Elijah. 1999. The social situation of the black executive: Black and white identities in the corporate world. In *The cultural territories of race: Black and white boundaries*, ed. M. Lamont, 3-29. Chicago: University of Chicago Press/New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Anteby, Michel. 2003. The "moralities" of poaching: Manufacturing personal artifacts on the factory floor. *Ethnography* 4:217-39.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. 2002. *Forging gay identities: Organizing sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Barley, Stephen R. 1983. Semiotics and the study of occupational and organizational culture. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 23:393-413.
- . 1986. Technology as an occasion for structuring: Evidence from observations of CT scanners and the social order of radiology departments. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 31:78-108.
- Barley, Stephen R., and Gideon Kunda. 1992. Design and devotion: Surges of rational and normative ideologies of control in managerial discourse. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 37:363-99.
- Barnard, Chester I. 1938. *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bartley, Tim. 2007. Institutional emergence in an era of globalization: The rise of transnational private regulation of labor and environmental conditions. *American Journal of Sociology* 113:297-351.
- Bechky, Beth A. 2003. Object lessons: Workplace artifacts as representations of occupational jurisdictions. *American Journal of Sociology* 109:720-52.
- Becker, Howard S., Blanch Ceer, Everett C. Hughes, and Anselm L. Strauss. 1961. *Boys in white: Student culture in medical school*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bendix, Rheinhard. 1956. *Work and authority: Ideologies in the course of industrialization*. New York: Wiley.
- Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckman. 1967. *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Binder, Amy J. 2002. *Contentious curricula: Afrocentricism and creationism in American public schools*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2007. For love and money: Organizations' creative responses to multiple environmental logics. *Theory and Society* 36:547-71.
- Blair-Loy, Mary. 2003. *Competing devotions: Career and family among women executives*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Calavita, Kitty, Henry N. Pontell, and Robert Tillman. 1997. *Big money crime: Fraud and politics in the savings and loan crisis*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Clemens, Elisabeth S. 1997. *The people's lobby: Organizational innovation and the rise of interest group politics in the United States, 1890-1925*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Clemens, Elisabeth S., and James M. Cook. 1999. Politics and institutionalism: Explaining durability and change. *Annual Review of Sociology* 25:441-66.
- Czarniawska, Barbara. 1997. *A narrative approach to organizational studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Dalton, Melville. 1959. *Men who manage: Fusions of feeling and theory in administration*. New York: Wiley.
- DiMaggio, Paul J. 1991. Constructing an organizational field as professional project. In *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*, ed. W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio, 267-92. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. 1983. The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review* 48:147-60.
- . 1991. Introduction. In *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*, ed. W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio, 1-38. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dobbin, Frank R. 1994a. Cultural models of organization: The social construction of rational organizing principles. In *The sociology of culture*, ed. D. Crane, 117-41. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- . 1994b. *Forging industrial policy: The United States, Britain, and France in the railroad age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Edelman, Lauren B. 1990. Legal environments and organizational governance: The expansion of due process in the American workplace. *American Journal of Sociology* 95:1401-40.
- Elsbach, Kimberly D. 1994. Managing organizational legitimacy in the California cattle industry: The construction and effectiveness of verbal accounts. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39:57-88.
- Emirbayer, Mustafa, and Ann Mische. 1998. What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology* 103:962-1023.
- Espeland, Wendy Nelson. 1998. *The struggle for water: Politics, rationality, and identity in the American Southwest*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ewick, Patricia, and Susan Silbey. 2003. Narrating social structure: Stories of resistance to legal authority. *American Journal of Sociology* 108:1328-72.
- Fayol, Henri. 1919/1984. General principles of management. In *Organization theory: Selected readings*, 2nd ed., ed. D. S. Pugh, 181-202. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Feldman, Martha S., and Brian T. Pentland. 2003. Reconceptualizing organizational routines as a source of flexibility and change. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 48:94-118.
- Feldman, Martha S., Kaj Skoldberg, Ruth Nicole Brown, and Debra Horner. 2004. Making sense of stories: A rhetorical approach to narrative analysis. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 14:147-70.
- Fine, Gary Alan. 1984. Negotiated orders and organizational cultures. *Annual Review of Sociology* 10:239-62.
- . 1996. *Kitchens: The culture of restaurant work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fligstein, Neil. 1990. *The transformation of corporate control*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 2001. Social skill and the theory of fields. *Sociological Theory* 19:105-25.
- Fligstein, Neil, and Alec Stone Sweet. 2002. Constructing politics and markets: An institutional account of European integration. *American Journal of Sociology* 107:1206-43.
- Fourcade, Marion. 2006. The construction of a global profession: The transnationalization of economics. *American Journal of Sociology* 112:145-94.
- Friedland, Roger, and Robert R. Alford. 1991. Bringing society back in: Symbols, practices, and institutional contradictions. In *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*, ed. W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio, 232-63. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Galison, Peter. 1997. *Image and logic: A material culture of microphysics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The constitution of society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday.
- . 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates*. New York: Anchor.
- . 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Gusfield, Joseph. R. 1995. Preface. In *A second Chicago school?* ed. G. A. Fine, ix-xvi. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hallett, Timothy. 2007. Between deference and distinction: Interaction ritual through symbolic power in an educational institution. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70:148-71.
- Hallett, Timothy, and Marc J. Ventresca. 2006. Inhabited institutions: Social interactions and organizational forms in Gouldner's *patterns of bureaucracy*. *Theory and Society* 35:213-36.
- Harrison, J. Richard, and Glenn R. Carroll. 2005. *Culture and demography in organizations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Heimer, Carol A. 1999. Competing institutions: Law, medicine, and family in neonatal intensive care. *Law & Society Review* 33:17-66.

- Hirsch, Paul. 1986. From ambushes to golden parachutes: Corporate takeovers as an instance of cultural framing and institutional integration. *American Journal of Sociology* 91:800-837.
- Hirsch, Paul, and Michael Lounsbury. 1997. Ending the family quarrel: Toward a reconciliation of "old" and "new" institutionalisms. *American Behavioral Scientist* 40:406-18.
- Hobsbawn, E. J. 1974. Custom, wages and work load in nineteenth century industry. In *Workers in the industrial revolution: Recent studies of labor in the United States and Europe*, ed. P. N. Stearns and D. J. Walkowitz, 232-54. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Hofstede, Geert. 2001. *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hughes, Everett C. 1970. The humble and the proud: The comparative study of occupations. *Sociological Quarterly* 11:147-56.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1977. *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Knorr-Cetina, Karin. 1981. *The manufacture of knowledge: An essay on the constructivist and contextual nature of science*. New York: Pergamon.
- Kunda, Gideon. 1992. *Engineering culture: Control and commitment in a high-tech corporation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Lamont, Michèle, and Virag Molnár. 2002. The study of boundaries in the social sciences. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 167-195.
- Latour, Bruno. 1986. The powers of association. In *Power, action, and belief*, ed. J. Law, 264-80. London: Routledge, Kegan, and Paul.
- Lichterman, Paul. 2005. *Elusive togetherness: Church groups trying to bridge America's divisions*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Lounsbury, Michael, and Marc Ventresca. 2006. The new structuralism in organizational theory. *Organization* 10:457-80.
- Lounsbury, Michael, Marc Ventresca, and Paul Hirsch. 2003. Social movements, field frames, and industry emergence: A cultural-political perspective on U.S. recycling. *Socio-Economic Review* 1:71-104.
- March, James G., and Hebert A. Simon. 1958. *Organizations*. New York: Wiley.
- Martin, Joanne. 1990. Deconstructing organizational taboos: The suppression of gender conflict in organizations. *Organization Science* 1:339-59.
- . 1992. *Cultures in organizations: Three perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Martin, Joanne, Peter J. Frost, and Olivia A. O'Neil. 2006. Organizational culture: Beyond struggles for intellectual dominance. In *Handbook of organizational studies*, ed. S. Clegg, C. Hardy, W. R. Nord, and T. Lawrence, 599-621. London: Sage.
- McAdam, Doug, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. 1996. *Comparative perspectives on social movements: Political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McKenna, Christopher D. 2006. *The world's newest profession: Management consulting in the twentieth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, John W., John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco Ramirez. 1997. World society and the nation-state. *American Journal of Sociology* 103:144-81.
- Meyer, John W., and Brian Rowan. 1977. Institutionalized organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology* 83:340-63.
- Meyerson, Debra, and Joanne Martin. 1987. Culture change: An integration of three different views. *Journal of Management Studies* 24:623-46.
- Mohr, John W. 1998. Measuring meaning structures. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24:345-70.
- Montgomery, David. 1979. *Workers control in America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Morrill, Calvin. 1991. Conflict management, honor, and organizational change. *American Journal of Sociology* 96:585-621.
- . 1995. *The executive way: Conflict management in corporations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Morrill, Calvin, and Gary Alan Fine. 1997. Ethnographic contributions to organizational sociology. *Sociological Research and Methods* 25:424-51.
- Morrill, Calvin, and Jason Owen-Smith. 2002. The emergence of environmental conflict resolution: subversive stories and the construction of collective action frames and organizational fields. In *Organizations, policy, and the natural environment: institutional and strategic perspectives*, ed. M. Ventresca and A. Hoffman, 90-118. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Morrill, Calvin, Mayer N. Zald, and Hayagreeva Rao. 2003. Covert political conflict in organizations: Challenges from below. *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:391-415.
- Nippert-Eng, Christena E. 1996. *Home and work: Negotiating boundaries through everyday life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Work.
- Ouchi, William G. 1980. Markets, bureaucracies, and clans. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25:129-41.
- . 1981. *Theory Z*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Owen-Smith, Jason, and Walter W. Powell. 2003. The expanding role of university patenting in the life sciences: Assessing the importance of experience and connectivity. *Research Policy* 32:1695-1711.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1956. Suggestions for a sociological approach to the theory of organization—I. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 1:63-85.
- Perrow, Charles. 1986. *Complex organizations: A critical essay*. 3rd ed. New York: Random House.
- . 2002. *Organizing America: Wealth, power, and origins of corporate capitalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Peters, Thomas J., and Robert J. Waterman. 1982. *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Pettigrew, Andrew. 1979. On studying organizational cultures. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24:570-81.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944/1957. *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*. Boston: Beacon.
- Rao, Hayagreeva, Philippe Monin, and Rodolphe Durand. 2003. Institutional change in Toque Ville: Nouvelle cuisine as an identity movement in French gastronomy. *American Journal of Sociology* 108:795-843.
- Rao, Hayagreeva, Calvin Morrill, and Mayer N. Zald. 2000. Power plays: How social movements and collective action create new organizational forms. *Research in Organizational Behavior* 22:237-81.
- Roethlisberger, F. J., and W. J. Dickson. 1947. *Management and the worker*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Roth, Louise Marie. 2006. *Selling women short: Gender and money on Wall Street*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sackman, Sonja A. 1992. Culture and subcultures: An analysis of organizational knowledge. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 37:140-61.
- Sapsed, Jonathan, and Ammon Salter. 2004. Postcards from the edge: Local communities, global programs, and boundary objects. *Organization Science* 25:1515-34.
- Schein, Edgar H. 1984. Coming to a new awareness of organizational culture. *Sloan Management Review* 24:3-16.
- Schneiberg, Marc, and Elisabeth S. Clemens. 2006. The typical tools for the job: Research strategies in institutional analysis. *Sociological Theory* 24:195-227.
- Scott, W. Richard. 2007. *Institutions and organizations: Ideas and interests*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Scott, W. Richard, and Gerald F. Davis. 2006. *Organizations and organizing: Rational, natural, and open system perspectives*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Scully, Maureen, and Doug Creed. 1997. Stealth legitimacy: Employee activism and corporate response during the diffusion of domestic partner benefits. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Boston, August.
- Selznick, Philip. 1948. Foundations of the theory of organization. *American Sociological Review* 13:25-35.
- . 1957. *Leadership in administration: A sociological interpretation*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sewell, William J. 1992. A theory of structure: Duality, agency, and transformation. *American Journal of Sociology* 98:1-29.
- Smircich, Linda. 1983. Concepts of culture and organizational analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28:339-58.
- Smircich, Linda, and Marta B. Calás. 1987. Organizational culture: A critical assessment. In *Handbook of organizational communication: An interdisciplinary perspective*, ed. F. Jablin, L. Putnam, K. Roberts, and L. Porter, 228-63. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Snow, David A. 2004. Framing processes, ideology, and discursive fields. In *The Blackwell companion to social movements*, ed. D. Snow, S. Soule, and H. Kriesi, 380-412. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Snow, David A., E. Burke Rochford, Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford. 1986. Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation. *American Sociological Review* 51:464-81.

- Star, Susan Leigh, and James R. Griesman. 1989. Institutional ecology, "translations" and boundary objects: Amateurs and professionals in Berkeley's museum of vertebrate zoology. *Social Studies of Science* 19:387-420.
- Stevens, Mitchell. 2001. *Kingdom of children: Culture and controversy in the homeschooling movement*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1997. On the virtues of the old institutionalism. *Annual Review of Sociology* 23:1-18.
- Strauss, Anselm L., Leonard Schatzman, Danuta Ehrlich, Rue Bucher, and Melvn Sabshin. 1963. The hospital and its negotiated order. In *The hospital in modern society*, ed. E. Friedson, 147-69. New York: Free Press.
- Sutton, John R., Frank Dobbin, John W. Meyer, and W. Richard Scott. 1994. The legalization of the workplace. *American Journal of Sociology* 99:944-71.
- Swidler, Ann. 1986. Culture in action: Symbols and strategies. *American Sociological Review* 51:273-86.
- . 2001. *Talk of love: How culture matters*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, Frederick Winslow. 1912/1984. Scientific management. In *Organization theory: Selected readings*, 2nd ed., ed. D. S. Pugh, 157-76. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Vallas, Steven P. 2003. Why teamwork fails: Obstacles to workplace change in four manufacturing plants. *American Sociological Review* 68:223-50.
- Van Maanen, John. 1979. The face of fiction in organizational ethnography. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24:43-101.
- Van Maanen, John, and Stephen R. Barley. 1985. Cultural organization: Fragments of a theory. In *Organizational symbolism*, ed. L. R. Pondy, P. J. Frost, G. Morgan, and T. C. Dandridge, 33-51. Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Vaughan, Dianne. 1996. *The Challenger launch decision: Risky technology, culture, and deviance at NASA*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1999. The dark side of organizations: Mistake, misconduct, and disaster. *Annual Review of Sociology* 25:271-305.
- Weber, Max. 1904-1905/1958. *Protestantism and the spirit of capitalism*. New York: Scribner's.
- . 1978. *Economy and society*, vols. 1 and 2, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weick, Karl E. 1998. Improvisation as mindset for organizational analysis. *Organization Science* 9:543-55.
- Weisman, Steven R. 2007. Bush faults easy money for volatility. *New York Times*, August 9. www.nytimes.com/2007/08/09/business.
- Wilde, Melissa J. 2004. How culture mattered at Vatican II: Collegiality trumps authority in the council's social movement organizations. *American Sociological Review* 69:576-602.
- Zald, Mayer N. 1996. More fragmentation? Unfinished business in linking the social sciences with the humanities. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41:251-61.
- Zald, Mayer N., and Michael A. Berger. 1978. Social movements in organizations: Coup d'etat, bureaucratic insurgency, and mass movements. *American Journal of Sociology* 83:823-61.
- Zelizer, Viviana. 1979. *Morals and markets: The development of life insurance in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2007. Ethics in the economy. *Zeitschrift für Wirtschafts- und Unternehmensethik [Journal of Business, Economics, and Ethics]* 8:8-23.
- Zucker, Lynn G. 1977. Institutionalization and cultural persistence. *American Sociological Review* 42:726-43.