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If People are Strange, Does Organization Make us Normal?

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INTRODUCTION

It is possible to write a great deal about organizations without ever addressing the simplest fact that they exhibit: they are premised on relations of power and domination, which may be more – or less – authoritative. It is a possibility whose consummation is rarely achieved in much of the literature which manages to sidestep such self-evidence. Power – and resistance to it – was a theme inscribed in the practical history of organizations at the outset even if it was largely missing in action in many subsequent theorizations. Power is, perhaps, least evident to those whom its relation flatter, seduce and enroll in its projects; by corollary, it is, perhaps most evident to those whom these relations spurn, estrange and humiliate. Thus, the crucial relations are those between the person, the organization, and the primal categorization devices of familiar or stranger. Noting that all forms of order face risk,

I shall go on to argue that organizations shape themselves in relation to those strangers society creates – African Americans in the Jazz Age, Islamists today, when the perception is that contemporary organizations are increasingly at risk from a heightened state of insecurity. The strangers whose deviance is used to define organizational normalcy are still different but in different ways. The Jazz Age exists as a case study in how projects of organization power migrate and change socially, which will be indicated by recalling how shifts from policing the body to moral policing occurred. If the southern ‘Negro’ was the problem in the 1920s, one may say that more recent manifestations of the stranger now capture societal imagination in the West, giving contemporary forms of hypersurveillance a boost, demonstrating that all forms of surveillance and policing produce deviance as the proof of the normal. Finally, a new agenda for researchers is sketched – the impact of societal politics on organizational

practices and the need for alertness to the strangers in our midst – some of whom we create through our own practices, others whose strangeness our practices intensify. The overall purpose of the chapter is to highlight the importance of the situational ethics that constitute what it is that organization researchers do and to encourage greater reflexivity towards these practices, and their ethical considerations. In short, good organizational and management research should not accept the tribal wisdom embedded in particular communities of practice as the arbiter of analytic taste. It needs to be reflexive towards that on which it trades.

POWER AS TECHNIQUES OF SOCIAL RELATIONS

Foucault teaches us that, rather than being a resource that can be held or exercised – a capacity inanimate but potential – power is inseparable from its effects. The focus for analysis is the play of techniques, the mundane practices that shape everyday life, structuring particular forms of conduct and more especially structuring the ways in which people choose to fashion their own sense of self, their dispositions and those devices with which, through which, by which, they are shaped and framed. Some representations of the world, which of necessity have a historical specificity (ways of seeing the world are always diachronically shifting and contested language games) become fixed in usage, are normalized, become the common currency of thought and conceptualization. Specific discursive practices become institutionalized and thus have common currency among other discursive practices, even as they are resisted. Thus, in closely related times but in radically disjunctive conjectures of knowledge, justice can be served both by imposing its design on the body or by seeking to discipline the soul (Foucault, 1977).

There are those who know indubitably that their bodies and their souls are dominated, who have power and surveillance exercised over them, and there are those who stand in

hybrid relations to power – partly constituted by it and partly enacting its constitutions. And there are those who move effortlessly through the elite portals of power: they switch effortlessly from boardroom to executive suite, from the Cabinet Office to the corporate headquarters, traversing spaces that are just as designed as the panopticon – but designed to produce *legitimate* asymmetries of authority; asymmetries that the hybrids will want to *desire*, by which they will seek to be *seduced* (Rosen et al., 1990). Still others may be *forced* to accept such relations through *coercion*, while others may be *deceived* as to the intent that resides in these relations and are thus *manipulated*. Different actors may generate power effects through these different modalities. A key role is played by the constitution of the stranger for it is the categories of deviance that define the norm.

THE STRANGER

Bauman (2001: 200) has suggested of societies that they each make their own strangers: the same is true of organizations more specifically.¹

All organizations produce strangers; but each kind of organization produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way. If strangers are the people who do not fit the cognitive, moral or aesthetic map of the world – one of these maps, two or all three; if they, therefore, by their sheer presence, make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be a straightforward recipe for action, and/or prevent the satisfaction from being fully satisfying, pollute the joy with anxiety while making the forbidden fruit alluring; if in other words, they befog and eclipse the boundary lines which can be clearly seen; if, having done all this, they gestate uncertainty, which in turn breeds discomfort of feeling lost – then each organization produces such strangers, while drawing its borders and charting its cognitive, aesthetic and moral map. It cannot but gestate people who conceal borderlines deemed crucial to its orderly and/or meaningful life and are thus charged with causing the discomfort experienced as the most painful and least bearable.

As Bauman says, ‘the stranger carries a threat of wrong classification, but – more horrifying

yet – she is a threat to classification as such, to the order of the universe, to the orientation value of social space – to my life-world as such’ (Bauman, 1993: 150). Perhaps a critical question for studying organizations relates to how they both create and treat strangers and how strangers are allowed in, or banned. Note that strangers are not necessarily workers from the bottom of the organizational hierarchy: strangers might well sit in boardrooms. (Top) managers can be alienated from their team just as workers from management. That does not mean that we have more sympathy with them, but it stresses the fact that lines of conflict do not follow the organizational chart vertically but emerge rhizomatically throughout the organization. Being a stranger is not a matter of class but, as Bauman writes, ‘the stranger is someone of whom one knows little and desires to know even less ... [and] ... someone of whom one cares little and is prompted to care even less’ (Bauman, 1993: 167) yet who might still be in close physical proximity. On this basis, the nature of the strangers created might tell us much about an organization. The problem of modern society and of organizations might be cast as being not how to eliminate strangers, but ‘how to live in their constant company’ (Bauman, 1993: 159).

Practically, one can imagine the difference of strangers being responded to through one or other of three typical approaches within organizations. First, there is an *anthropophagic* strategy. Organizations devour strangers to annihilate them, making them metaphorically indistinguishable from the body of the existing organization. *This responds to difference, literally, by incorporation.* Some of Goffman’s (1961) total institutions, those based on an overarching normative frame, such as boot-camps, barracks, boarding schools, and nunneries, typically seek such annihilation of any difference that pre-exists those that the organization will shape, devising appropriate degradation rituals to achieve this eclipse of identity. Under the spell of instrumental managerialism organizations become culturally, calculably, and contingently totalitarian, sucking the life-worlds

out of their subjects, making them McTeam members incapable of agency or resistance. For management scholars, the issue here is how not to be *sucked in*. Where organizations cannot incorporate through rituals that devour difference, then, once membership prevails, the second, *anthropoemic* strategy can come into play: the organization can vomit strangers out, ‘banishing them from the limits of the orderly world and barring them from all communication with those inside’ (Bauman, 2001: 201). Excommunication, expunction, and rustication push strangeness outside the orderly inclusive words of an organization that refuses to address some as members, excluding and ‘expelling the strangers beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory’ (Bauman, 2001: 201–202). *This responds to difference, literally, by dismembering.* The risk is of being *spat out*.

Because identities are in the process of emergence and becoming in different projects, mingling and intercepting with identities already in being, they are oriented to ‘conditions of overwhelming and self-perpetuating uncertainty’ (Bauman, 2001: 208). Members and deviants, familiars and strangers, are thus the by-products, as well as the means, of production of the incessant and never conclusive process of identity building that organizational discourse, in its different projects, sustains. A key part of the uncertainty relates to how boundaries are blurred and how normal divisions and gaps of complex organization are eclipsed by variable experience in projects that enable people to wander across boundaries, becoming metaphorical strangers in terms of previously fixed organizational identities. Such strangers pose problems for organizations because they actively transgress the boundaries of sensemaking to the extent that management power uses certain legitimated discourses within which strangers cannot be contained. The risks here are neither being *sucked in* nor *spat out* (cf. Parker, 2002) but of *communion*: is one making sense in terms of the range of recognized, institutionalized and powerful ways of making sense to which the organization is host? (Clearly, as the

term chosen suggests, these are especially concerns for religious organizations in certain Christian traditions. As cultural commitment begins to take on more and more the elements of religious belief – and as Christian fundamentalism shapes an increasing number of especially US organization members – the aptness of the term should not go unremarked.)

THE JAZZ AGE, STRANGERS WITHIN, AND MORAL PANICS

After the US Civil War, black people left the sharecropper society of the Deep South in droves, fleeing a culture rooted in slavery. And, after hitting Highway 61, they headed for the burgeoning factories of the north, in Chicago and Detroit, in the latter of which Ford began hiring African Americans in large numbers in 1915, paying them the same wages as his white employees. The material basis of the jazz age for the many black people who headed north was working in the factories and assembly plants. By 1923, Ford employed 5,000 Detroit-area black men, far more than in other plants.

The influx of black people into Northern cities and jobs was the occasion for middle-class white anxieties. Indeed, at the time they were a source of what Stanley Cohen (1972: 9) has referred to as a ‘moral panic’. A moral panic occurs when some ‘episode, condition, person or group of persons’ is ‘defined as a threat to societal values and interests’ because they are ‘strangers’. Such moral panics are based on the perception that some individual or group, frequently a *minority*, is dangerously *deviant*, and poses a *menace to society*. They often occur as a result of a fear of a loss of control when adapting to significant changes. Typically, as Cohen suggests, authorities create ‘stylized and stereotypical’ representations, raise moral fears, and ‘pronounce judgment’.

Moral panic fed in to the work of Ford’s Sociological Department. They wanted to ensure that the men Ford employed were sober, disciplined men, whose energies would

be conserved and their minds wholly focused on the necessity of being excellent five dollar a day men. They should not be workers who wasted money on booze, dope, and vice, because such were not welcome as Ford employees, as members of the Ford family. Decent white folk knew the type of person most likely to be wasteful of their energies and the kinds of excess in which they would be wasted. African-Americans, jazz, and dope became inexorably intertwined in the popular imagination of, as well as some experience in, black culture. The scapegoating of black cultures, such as jazz, for spreading marijuana usage into white society was emblematic of a deep-seated paranoia (Porter 2002: 9).

The moral panics that grew in the 1920s and 1930s around ‘reefer madness’ and ‘jazz’ were barely coded concerns for the contagion of white society by black bodies and black culture. As Lopes (2005: 1468) suggests, from the Jazz Age of the 1920s ‘the sordid world of jazz and the deviant jazz musician became a common trope in the popular press, pulp fiction, and Hollywood film. Jazz in general served as a trope for the darker side of the American urban experience’. Despite the fact that, as its name suggests, marijuana first came into the US from Mexico, jazz and marijuana became inextricably linked with black people and black music in the popular imagination. The first recorded use of marijuana in the US was in Storyville in 1909 (Abel, 1980), which was the red light district of the port of New Orleans and the birthplace of jazz. Foundational jazz musicians, such as Jelly Roll Morton, honing their craft in the bordellos, created incidental accompaniments to the central commerce conducted there. Rather than drink, dope was the preferred drug. Marijuana didn’t slow down the reflexes and improvisation the way that alcohol could; also it seemed to heighten the creative impulse.

Jazz and dope were not exactly the stuff of a rationalizing impulse. Thus, having a Sociological Department (as well as employing Pinkerton’s to spy on potential trouble makers and unionists and to break up union meetings) seemed a small investment to make

to ensure an efficient, reliable and certain workforce, untroubled by jazz, dope, or booze, or an inability to save, invest and consume. All such irrationalities were to be expected of people who made jazz their culture. It is not surprising that jazz played this role; first, it was associated by respectable white society with unrespectable black society; second, it infused the body with passion, rhythm, movement – a lack of disciplined sobriety. It was wild dance music and its main feature was its exuberant ability to move its fans and musicians to shake their bodies, dance, and beat the rhythm. As Appelrouth (2005: 1497) suggests, ‘manners of the body share the potential for becoming a stage on which the struggle for social legitimacy and control is dramatized’. In the body may be seen the larger social order and its struggles to impose good order, taste and discipline on nature. Pollution of the body is a metaphor for the disruption of the boundaries that shape ‘legitimate’ society, as Douglas (1966) suggests. Thus, following Appelrouth (2005: 1497) ‘we should not be surprised to find anxieties concerning social disruptions expressed through a body-centered discourse. During periods in which challenges are posed to existing social divisions and schemes of classification, attempts to define the body publicly take on heightened significance’. The popular imagination was shaped by a discourse that regarded jazz as disorderly, as Appelrouth notes by citing an article asking: ‘Does jazz put the sin in syncopation?’ from the *Ladies Home Journal* by Anne Shaw Faulkner (1921), who was the national music chairperson of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, in which she said: ‘Jazz disorganizes all regular laws and order; it stimulates to extreme deeds, to a breaking away from all rules and conventions; it is harmful and dangerous, and its influence is wholly bad’ (Faulkner, 1921: 16; from Appelrouth, 2005: 1503). Degenerate brains, an inability to follow rules, and a general lack of moral qualities were not what Mr. Ford required in his employees, so the Sociological Department had much to do. The Sociological Department did not last long, but it hardly

mattered: after 1921 it was discontinued and rolled into the notorious Service Department, run by ex-boxer and security chief Harry Bennett, who formed it into a private army of thugs and gangsters to terrorize workers and prevent unionization. Ford’s Service Department would grow to be the largest private police force in the world at that time. Its major work was spying – no one who worked for Ford was safe from spies, intent on seeing that the \$5 dollars was not being wasted, both literally and metaphorically.

There was increasing societal support for Ford’s ‘sociological’ and ‘service’ projects: Prohibition, (the doomed attempt to ban alcohol consumption from a number of US states) which started in 1920, also intensified a prohibitory gaze that sought to ensure that employees could resist temptations to vice. In fact, the struggle against liquor was also a struggle against jazz – as they were associated in their licentiousness. Gramsci explicitly made the connection to moral panics:

The struggle against alcohol, the most dangerous agent of destruction of laboring power, becomes a function of the state. It is possible for other ‘puritanical’ struggles as well to become functions of the state if private initiatives of the industrialist prove insufficient or if a moral crisis breaks out among the working masses. (Gramsci, 1971: 303–304)

Moral panic was heightened during the 1930s and extended by the banning of cannabis in seventeen states. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics was established in 1930. In 1937 the Marijuana Tax Act effectively banned cannabis throughout the United States. Power in the organization was now effectively buttressed by power in the wider society; in order to ensure the most efficient routines at work, some control over the type of person that was employed was required. Initially, the new power of surveillance over private life was vested in and an extension of the organization; latterly, as Fordist modernity became characteristic of modernity in general, in workshops large and small, the state took over the functions that private capital had hitherto assumed. Small employers or those new to business could not develop their own

Sociological Departments – but the state, as an ideal total moralist, supplemented the work of surveillance over those in whom the churches and associated temperance movements had not succeeded in instilling a governmental soul. Power shifted its focus from the individual to the collective.

We should understand these innovations as extensions of a panoptical complex. They lacked the specificity of Taylor's (1911) targeting of the body and were more oriented to what Foucault (1977) referred to as bio-power, power oriented to the collective body politic. In accord with Gramsci (1971) we can see these new managerial techniques of Taylorism and Fordism seeking to suppress 'the "animality" of man, training him', as Turner (1984: 100) suggests, 'for the regular disciplines of factory life', in an anatomical politics. Even as the state supplemented 'the private initiatives of the industrialist' in framing the political morality of work (in an era before random drug testing of employees had become widespread), newer, more specifically targeted practices were being shaped in opposition to Taylor's political economy of the body, private initiatives by industrialists, and the state's regulatory bio-power.

At its outset, modern management drilled its practice on the body but with the Jazz Age its attention switched to the collective social body. The panopticon was lodged in the apparatus of engineers and engineering, prior to Ford; with Ford it shifted to the social researcher in the Sociological Department. More recently still, as Townley (1994) and Rose (1989) note, the baton passed to the Human Resources Management staff. In turn, just as Ford's staff made use of the new technologies of social research being pioneered by the Chicago School of sociology of their day, contemporary power is able to draw on new techniques for new strangers.

NEWLY EMERGENT DEVIANT IDENTITIES

For a while, until at least the attack of February 26, 1993 on the World Trade Center,

it might have seemed as if the old matters of identity were hardly of any concern. After the second more successful attack of 9/11 few could think that was still the case. Islamic claims to identity were serving as circuit breakers to existing power relations.

What emerged from the Middle East was not so much a reassertion of pre-modern identities but a positioning of a contemporary identity. It is one that expresses a version of Islam as politically grounded within modern frameworks. Religious thoughts are used as political weapons, alongside modern instruments such as the Internet and video, and with a sophisticated grasp of mass media spectacle. For some in diasporic Muslim communities generally, their hostility is such that the identities in question see nothing that resonates positively in the offerings that the market produces in abundance in the host society. Instead, they see an overly sexualized, narcissistic and alienating environment. Revolted by what is on offer in the postmodern market – and we in the West are all embraced by this institution now – for some a retreat to the certainties offered by fundamentalism seemed desirable. Here, as Durkheim (2002) would have expected, an excess of social integration can lead to a surplus of altruistic suicide as some people, in some communities, are prepared to kill and die for their beliefs in the appropriateness of identity.

Today, we live not only in a risk society but also in a state of insecurity, a condition that previously characterized societies quite marginal to Western civilization (George and Clegg, 1997). Generalized risk is further amplified by floating signifiers that attract fear and deliver terror. These signifiers can, in reality, be manifest in the destruction of anyone, irrespective of beliefs, ideologies, or identities. At essence they are to do with that most fundamental element of liberal political philosophy – the security of the body of the individual subjects and the security of the body of the polity as a whole. With these new threats, as they are apparent on the streets, skies and subways of Western cities, the risk society is transmuting into a state of uncertainty. Whereas the enemy

was eternalized with 9/11 into an Islamic fundamentalism that was situated in failing states supporting network organizations of terrorists, after Britain's 7/7 it suddenly transpired that the enemy was within as well as without.

Today, given the decline of traditional party loyalties, young people in general are less likely to find their identity in a voluntary political process of voting and politics. Thus, there are significant groups of people – particularly amongst the young – who are not fully political or democratic subjects in the normal senses of the word – they do not participate in the formal political process because its meaning is estranged from their own sensemaking. In terms of the sense they make, the major sources of meaning are to be found, as Berger (1990) argues, in transcendent ideas of religiosity. By the twenty-first century a group of young Muslim people in Western democracies were neither involved in the signifiers of a secular society nor the positive polyvalence of the market. Yet, they were not just socially disintegrated, anomic, normless, and meaningless subjects. They were not entirely outside of civility but were building on Sunni notions of civil society that had been nurtured from the most fundamentalist strains in contemporary Islamic thought (Ali, 2002). In the West, in societies with large Muslim populations (most of the major EU countries), where a degree of political alienation is allied with a more general cultural and economic estrangement, then it is hardly surprising if such young people do not become fully aspirational 'normal' economic subjects. Moreover, where they are not greatly involved in consumption – because its narcissism and sexualization is a constant affront to the religious sensibilities they are developing elsewhere – then they will hardly be incorporated as subjects of consumption.

There is an interesting dovetailing of two quite different projects in the estrangement of religious and cultural identities. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s the refrain of economic neo-liberalism was that there was no such thing as society. Society could be

conceived of simply in terms of individuals making economic choices, using price signals as allocative mechanisms. In the terms of the 'no society' project it was postulated that only individuals should be conceptualized as existentially real. As free subjects they were able to exercise choices in markets, such that consumption became the key to identity. An unanticipated side effect of the project is to whittle down the grounds for identity formation. If you are what you shop to become then identity formation becomes highly contingent on participation in the rituals of a market society. Thus, for those who refused the market and its choices and were estranged politically, economically and ideologically, there was little or no identity available that could relate to the central projects of the type of society in which they found themselves. For those Muslims with utopian religious worldviews estranged from the dominant orthodoxies, if what is on offer is a reality constructed on narcissism, consumerism, and individualism, then it is not surprising that it should be seen as constituting a hegemon that affronts their existence, faith, and identity. Where utopian ideals turn present-day life into a dystopia, it is hardly surprising if some responses are dysfunctional for the social reality that normalcy constructs.

Where utopian ideology exists in communities that barely interact outside the confines of chosen urban patterns of residence, which, for all the usual reasons are highly concentrated, then dystopian beliefs about identity, the world, and one's place in it as a member of the broader community, can more easily flourish, especially where everything that is needed is found there – food, religion, spouses, culture, and appropriate garb – so there is little need to go outside. Within the embrace of utopianism all faiths develop dystopian groups little involved in the everyday life of a broader society in which they cannot find themselves, where disaffected young people are drawn to radical cliques largely devoid of pluralism, discursively and religiously, because the central role is played by a literalist interpretation of the key text. In such

a situation all interpretive politics become condensed into one game of hermeneutics in which those interpretations that seem ‘purest’ will always attract alienated and anomic individuals.

Finally, as a result of digitalization, individuals have the choice not to be involved in the cultural life of the place where they live, in the larger sense, but are able to participate more vividly in the cultural life of the diasporic community through Al Jazeera and other media, and thus live a reality that, while it is real, is hardly shared at all with the broader context of everyday life. When this reality is treated on the BBC, CNN or France2, let alone FoxNews, it is rarely a personalized but mostly a dehumanized reality – 80 people were blown up by three suicide bombers in Baghdad on the day that I wrote these words – as opposed to the continuing focus on the people who were destroyed in the bombings on one day in London (7/7/2005) or another day in New York (9/11/2001) or Bali (10/12/02).

The electronic panopticon, simulation and the imaginary social collective

Organizations, not just in government, are increasingly making use of available surveillance technologies to seek enhanced supervision and control of all in the name of those perceived as strange, with fundamental Islamism serving as the current candidates. Today, however, the electronic panopticon is going global in an increasingly insecure world, offering opportunities not only for hypersurveillance but also a new kind of organizational simulation, that is hyperreal, a world where we can ‘simulate a space of control, project an indefinite number of courses of action, train for each possibility, and react immediately with preprogrammed responses to the “actual” course of events (which is already over and through a simulacrum)’ (Bogard, 1996: 76). Organizations increasingly need neither a political economy of bodies to *handle* power nor to embed it in a moral economy of the soul

through extensive *surveillance*. Instead, they project information in a mode that has been described as ‘the purest form of anticipation’ (Bogard, 1996: 76).

Almost all large-scale organizations of any sophistication are increasingly premised on work whose doing is simultaneously subject to hypersurveillance of its being done, characteristic of both managerial work and work more generally. The traces of data that all information-laden actions leave automatically as they are enacted become the objects for analysis, for the speeding up of processes, of eradicating porosity through which some effort, time or work might seep, eradicating the gap between the action and its accounts, the work and its record, the deed and the sign. The loop between being, doing and becoming tightens irrevocably on the terms of those elites that can channel and funnel information, closing down the unaccountable moments in the programmed loop between employees and technologies reporting data that managers have to act on. Such information is not confined to the gathering of data from the physical spaces under control, nor is it premised on crude forms of spying. ‘Increasingly virtual realities, artificial intelligence, expert systems, sever us from older forms of control and project that control – refashioned, smoothed and streamlined – onto the plane of simulation ... The god of surveillance is a virtual reality technician’s cyborg dream’ (Bogard, 1996: 77, 57).

It is not only the security apparatuses and the legislative assemblies that multiply dreams within which identities that are constructs of the profiler, the psychological tester, and the human resources manager, become crucial. All large organizations, equipped with the foresight of simulation, can screen out potential deviance from the organization as easily as the society at large. It is the reality of how, increasingly, organizations use informatics’ ‘virtual worlds’ as they construct identities within which our lives will be lived. Our identity, more than ever, will be a social construction, but not necessarily one made under conditions

of our own choosing. Organizations will increasingly adopt bio-surveillance technologies, such as retina, fingerprint, and face scanning, and use this to monitor, restrict and govern access. Such data, together with those identities that are coded from market-based information, credit records, credit cards, and other forms of transactions, will ensure that some elements of identity become less negotiable. Given the likely direction and speed of development of genetics, organizational capabilities will increasingly be prefigurative rather than retrospective; as Bogard (1996: 9) puts it, 'genetic technology offers the fantastic possibilities of pre-identification, i.e., identities assigned in advance, profiles that we have seen can be used to target bodies for all kinds of future interventions and diversions'. Potential pathologies for organizations – such as prediction of earlier than required executive demise due to genetic codes or lifestyle triggers – can be problems eliminated in advance. Normalization will no longer be remedial or therapeutic, no longer require the counseling interview as its major device, but will be anticipatory. Bio-psychological screening is becoming ever more closely intertwined with genetic and security screening. Organizational elites will not only be able to reproduce themselves biologically but also to clone themselves socially, with ever more precise simulations (see *Gattaca* – Nicoll, 1997), even as, of course, these projects of normalization face the risk of new deviance that their controls produce (Clegg and Dunkerley, 1980 saw this imperative as a key to the history of organization theory).

CONCLUSION

Organization today increasingly has to deal with a dangerous world of unpredictability. The dispositions of those whom it encounters cannot be guaranteed. Of course, they never could, as the Jazz Age example of Ford demonstrates. Black society was a source of pervasive moral panic for the new industrial organizations. Today, however, the panic is

more generalized: simulation and profiling can screen out potential deviance but the social impact of most organizations doing this is substantial. Those that have the resources will be able to do it in a sophisticated way, through hypersurveillance and simulation; those that do not will more readily work through raw prejudices. The results, however, are likely to be the same: the exclusion of whole categories of people from the most promising organizational careers on the basis of their ethnicity, postcode and religion. The future for organizational power thus looks bleak: we have seen, in the summer of 2005, on the streets of Paris and other major French cities, where such exclusion leads. Power that excludes, that marginalizes, organizationally, ends up stigmatizing socially. And the outcasts have ways of making their presence felt. Organizational security may, indeed, lead to heightened social insecurity.

All of this points to a new agenda for organizational researchers interested in politics and society. We need to be aware that the cumulative effects of organizational practices that seek to ensure the security of the organization may well have a perverse effect. Making organizations more secure may well lessen social security, as screening and profiling techniques find wider purchase. Hence, the concerns of the organization theorist should not stop at the organizations perimeter, its front door or the factory gates. There is always a societal impact, as the Jazz Age case makes clear. Just as jazz, however, is an evolving improvisatory art form, such that the techniques of a Louis Armstrong gave way to those of Dizzy Gillespie, so are organizational practices of power. In Ford's day the new disciplines of the sociological field research enabled a degree of social exclusion to occur in constructing the vanguard of organizational employment practices. Today, we are more likely to see electronic and simulation technologies at play. Management and organization theory should be alert to the societal effects that their practices amplify. Organizational researchers need to abandon the shackles of their restricted theory and become socially sensitive in those

research questions that they ask. To take at face value the categories that are embedded in the members' usage, in their categorization devices, in their conceptions of what is strange and what is familiar is to surrender analytical autonomy and to accept uncritically the discourse of the tribe. If a field researcher were to come back from Melanesia with a report that reconstituted anthropology in the terms of some primitive categories hitherto strange, it would be a scandal. Such scandals are the norm in that management and organization theory in which the members' categories in use set the terms for debate in such a way that anthropological integrity is routinely compromised. The point is not to accept the categories of the field, in their otherness, but to explicate the possibility and practice of the categories of familiarity and strangeness that the members use.

Also, and this is the moral of the chapter, researchers need to become more reflexive about those strangers that their projects help to create: the deviants of the Jazz Age can too easily be normalized as the problem of diversity and the political nature of what makes the problem problematic be covered over; or, more recently, the enhanced security that post-9/11 organizations espouse can be the occasion for further moral panics with substantial organizational implications. *Organization theorists need to be constantly on guard for those strangers created for them as well those whose deviance they are called on to normalize: whether it is inner states of motivation or outer practices of spirituality, almost anything can become an occasion for deviance.* William Foot Whyte's (1956) *The Organization Man* was a robust critique of earlier urges to conformity; since that time not a great deal of organization theory has chosen to question those familiars – and strangers – it accepts, helps create, sustain and normalize. To not do so is to practice a peculiarly instrumental blindness. An instrumentally blind organization theory may have its short-term and disposable uses, it can even be profitable, but one thing it can never be is an authentic search for enhanced human freedoms because its

essential nature is exclusionary and divisive. The most fundamental political act is to define the other as a familiar – or a friend – or as a stranger – or an enemy.

NOTE

1 In the following quote I have substituted 'organization/organizations' for Bauman's 'society/societies'.

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Identity Hijack

Majken Schultz

One of the conceptual pillars of organizational identity is the notion of ‘we’ – as a group, team or organization embedded in self-referential meaning. As explained by Corley et al. (2006: 3) much of the conceptual debate has concerned how identity is constructed above and beyond its individual members based on the assumption that identity is first and foremost defined by organizational members themselves. In the future I believe that the focus of the debate will shift to a much deeper concern with the other definitional pillar of identity, namely the contextualization of identity. However, contextualization will go beyond impression and mirroring processes with respect to external images, as argued by Hatch and Schultz (2002). Instead we will see a much closer involvement of external stakeholders, which at times will hijack the identity of the organization from its members. This hijack can emerge from emotional attractions, such as consumer communities created to celebrate particular organizational identities; or from an overshadowing of more dominating identities, such as when organizational identities become trapped in national or industrial identities. In both situations, stakeholders considered external to the organization make significant claims to co-define ‘who we are as an organization’.

EMBRACED BY STAKEHOLDER DEVOTION

Studies of how consumers relate to brands have showed how some consumers become infatuated and emotionally devoted not only to the products and services offered by the organization, but also to who it is and what it stands for as an organization, i.e. the ideas, beliefs and claims. In the marketing world, this has been debated as brand-icons or cult-brands, where companies turn customers into what Atkin labels the ‘true believers’ of the organization, using examples such as Harley riders, iPod owners and members of the Mormon Church (Atkin, 2004). But also without encouragement from companies, consumers and other stakeholders form their own brand communities, supported by on-line media and driven by a shared dedication and attraction to the organization and its identity (Muniz and O’Guinn, 2001). Here they interact, meet on occasion and construct ‘who they are’ – and start to exchange identity definitions with the organization (Antorini and Andersen, 2005). Drawing upon their community stakeholders can act in a self-defined role as guardians of the heritage of the organizational identity, as when the Adult Fans of LEGO (AFOL’s) engaged in a huge revolt against change of the classic colors of the LEGO bricks. More important to the innovation and creativity of organizations, community members can also serve as active co-creators of new and central identity dimensions, as when the AFOL’s challenged and expanded the perceptions of play in the LEGO Company, which resulted in a whole new customized digital play concept based in active consumer involvement (LEGO Factory).

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OVERSHADOWED BY STAKEHOLDER RESENTMENT

In contrast to the devoted co-construction of identity within brand communities, the boundaries of organizational identities can also be challenged by external stakeholders enforcing a different categorization of the organization's identity than the one held by organizational members. Such re-categorization can be pursued deliberately by companies, when they seek to transgress the boundaries of an industry identity in the search for new businesses opportunities. However, this may also happen outside the control of the organization in situations where the organizational identity becomes overshadowed by a more dominant identity. For example, when the national or industrial identity that the organization belongs to is confronted with an identity threat or put under pressure, the organizational identity becomes a target of criticism and scrutiny by external stakeholders in ways that encourage organizational members to renegotiate 'who we are' with external stakeholders. One example is how the Danish dairy producer Arla had to renegotiate its organizational identity with central stakeholders in the Muslim world during the crisis in 2006, as its organizational identity became dominated by a negative national identity. Here offensive drawings of the Prophet Muhammed published by a Danish newspaper had thrown Denmark into a severe international crisis resulting in protests, burning down of embassy buildings, flags, etc. in a large number of Muslim countries, where Arla had a leading market position using its Danish identity. As the crisis developed it shifted from an image concern to the company making deliberate efforts to redefine its organizational identity via negotiations with Muslim stakeholders, seeking a clear separation of the organizational and national dimensions of its identity.

THE LOSS OF INNOCENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

These examples illustrate in my opinion that future studies of organizational identity will be less concerned with a further sophisticated development of fine-grained conceptual distinctions and methodological issues, and more concerned with the societal circumstances and exchanges with different stakeholders that influence the construction of organizational identity and its inherent dynamic. In that sense organizational identity will lose its theoretical innocence and become a more integrated part of the turmoil of global societies – which will make the concept even more needed and exciting for future studies.

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The Tyranny of Theory

Olav Sorenson

What do I currently see as the biggest impediment to the advancement of a science of management and organizations? Theory – or at least what I will call the ‘tyranny of theory’.

The tyranny of theory manifests itself in many forms. It is the editor who rejects a manuscript for its lack of theoretical novelty or for its expected – often referred to as ‘obvious’ – empirical findings. It is the reviewer who complains that a paper does not have explicit, or (more absurdly) a large enough number of, hypotheses. It is the author who assigns new terminology to existing ideas. It is the reader denigrating a paper for its lack of a ‘big idea’.

One can most easily see the consequence of this oppression in what does *not* appear in print in the most influential journals in the field. One rarely sees articles identifying important but unexplained empirical regularities, bringing higher quality or more detailed data to bear on ideas proposed in earlier papers, re-examining the magnitude of effects using more appropriate and sophisticated estimation techniques or identification strategies, or replicating the results of prior studies in new settings or on different data sets. Yet the advancement of any science relies on all of these types of papers.

Where did we go astray? The problem resides not with theory itself. Any improvement in our understanding of the world requires that we iterate between observing, developing models (theory) to explain what we observe, and then scrutinizing their ability to predict behavior in new settings. The problem instead stems from the fact that students of management and organizations have come to worship ‘theory’ as an idol – somehow superior to the empirical observation and theory testing stages of the scientific endeavor. Though I cannot say when exactly this belief emerged, one can easily see how it persists. Young scholars feel obliged to acquiesce to accumulate the publications necessary to gain tenure, and through the feedback they receive on their own submissions, future reviewers and editors become indoctrinated into the religion that all papers must propose new theory.

In this fetish, we are not alone. To some extent, the idolization of theory pervades the social sciences. So many economists have engaged in model building that in many subfields at least one causal story exists to explain any conceivable empirical observation. And, as in the management literature, sociologists have a penchant for developing new theory tailored to each specific empirical setting. Though one might reprove their relative frequency, theory testing and other forms of more purely empirical research are nonetheless alive and well in both of these disciplines. In the field of management and organizations, however, this imbalance has reached a level verging on monotheism.

As a consequence, knowledge does not accrete. With few notable exceptions – such as organizational ecology or the research on ‘structural holes’ – we do not engage in research programs. Rather, nearly every paper develops ‘novel’ theory and uses different measures. We cannot compare results across studies. We cannot say whether most theories apply outside the very narrow contexts in which they have been developed. Trying to understand whether the vast majority of the literature amounts to anything beyond idiosyncratic rationalizations of empirical regularities in specific settings amounts to a Sisyphean task.

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The irony then is that the tyranny of theory has actually stonewalled advancement; despite hundreds of papers detailing thousands of person-years of research, our understanding of management and organizations has advanced surprising little in the last two decades.

A remedy exists. Together we can end this tyranny through individual acts of heresy. Authors can write purely empirical papers – replicating existing results in new settings, re-estimating previous models with new techniques, and simply describing interesting phenomena. Reviewers and editors can evaluate papers on the basis of the quality of their data and analysis rather than on their theoretical novelty and importance. Those intent on engaging in theory can allocate their efforts to reducing the existing menagerie of ideas by identifying equivalencies, redundancies, and special cases.

Ten years down the road, we may have – indeed I hope we will have – matured and look back at the current state of the field with a somewhat fond reminiscence of the foolishness of our floundering. Or we may instead find ourselves facing a field-level mid-life crisis – futilely attempting to relive an adolescence when scholars roamed virgin intellectual territory and thought big thoughts.

That's Important! Making a Difference with Organizational Research

Adam M. Grant, Jane E. Dutton, and Brent D. Rosso

Organizational scholars care about doing interesting research that captures attention, engages readers, and generates novel insights (Davis, 1971; Bartunek et al., 2006). There is growing concern in our field, however, that interesting research is not necessarily important research. Some have suggested that our research is irrelevant and may even harm managerial practice (Ghoshal, 2005). In response, attention has begun to shift toward conducting research that truly matters, has impact, and makes a social contribution. Despite energy in the field around conducting research that makes a difference, there is little agreement about what 'making a difference' actually means – is it enriching theory, educating students, offering clear direction for managers, or improving public policy and human well-being? Our objective here is to invite deeper consideration of what scholars can do, individually and collectively, to conduct organizational research that makes a difference.

As we examine calls for organizational research that has impact, two questions come to the forefront. First, *for whom* do we want to make a difference (i.e., who are our beneficiaries)? Second, *how* do we want to make a difference (i.e., what forms of impact can we have)? The different audiences we target as beneficiaries of our efforts shape the form that our impact takes. For example, defining fellow academics as beneficiaries implies making a difference primarily by advancing knowledge, while defining students as beneficiaries implies making a difference by sharing this knowledge and making it relevant to students' lives. Defining managers as beneficiaries implies making a difference by making this knowledge practical, while defining communities and societies as beneficiaries implies making a difference by linking the knowledge to policy. Whom do we want to impact? How do we want to make a difference? We propose that deliberate reflection upon these questions is a critical step in enabling difference-making. However, personal reflection alone is not sufficient; we also need to consider the institutional practices that support or undermine our efforts to make a difference. Although many of us are attracted to the field by the prospect of making a difference, achieving these aspirations is much more challenging. We consider three changes in institutional practices that may enable organizational scholars to more effectively make a difference.

First, we propose changes in doctoral education practices. Every organizational scholar faces two charges: producing knowledge and communicating knowledge. Our doctoral training, however, focuses disproportionately on producing knowledge at the expense of communicating it. Suppose we took the communication dimension of scholarship seriously, redefining writing as an art form and public speaking as a performance. We might design courses to provide training in writing, presentation, and public speaking skills to teach doctoral students to communicate their ideas with greater impact and to a broader range of beneficiaries. Such training might better equip scholars to be public intellectuals, with greater access and impact through effective use of a broader range of media. Such training might also aid in capturing the attention of managers and other organizational

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knowledge users, as scholars might be better equipped to make transparent the relevance of organizational research to managers' daily activities.

Second, we suggest changes in academic incentive systems. Current incentive systems reward us for narrowing our questions and can thwart attempts to make a difference beyond our classrooms. Until we reach tenure, we are discouraged from writing books, consulting for organizations, and speaking to public policy. If our aim is to motivate more organizational scholars to seek and create opportunities to make a difference, we need more incentives and rewards for doing so.

Third, we believe that new forms of academic-practitioner dialogues need to be introduced. In current conversations, academics and practitioners often do not occupy the same dialogical or physical space. Designing conferences at which academics and practitioners can share knowledge and ideas on equal ground is one step toward traversing these boundaries. We might also champion and cultivate new communication forums such as interactive websites and blogs for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to discuss key problems, challenges, and opportunities in organizational life.

These are just a few ideas for how organizational scholars can have a broader and more lasting impact. We encourage organizational scholars to identify other ways to make a difference and reflect on the particular beneficiaries and forms of impact that matter to them – *for whom* and *how* do we want to make a difference? We also encourage organizational scholars to collaborate and innovate in improving doctoral education, incentive systems, and academic-practitioner dialogues. We hope this brief discussion of difference-making will make a difference in how organizational scholars conduct and communicate research, as well as how we structure the institutional practices that undergird our scholarly endeavors.

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Some Thoughts About Trade-Offs

Angelo S. DeNisi

A few years ago, I was asked to participate on a panel that dealt with the trade-offs between relevance and rigor. I thought it would be fun (and it was), but I remembered asking why anyone would consciously choose one over the other. I still wonder why someone would make such a choice, but I realize that much of our research involves some type of trade-off, even if not quite as dramatic as the one discussed at that panel. Yet, I believe that there are some trade-offs we cannot afford to make as a field if we hope to progress. I thought I'd comment on some of these 'non-negotiables'.

I am old enough that, when I was completing my graduate program, most studies employed relatively simple analytical methods. These did not necessarily make these studies better, but it was easier to understand what was actually going on in the study. Statistical techniques have become much more sophisticated and complex. There are many issues, stemming from problems of levels of analysis, that can be addressed by using hierarchical linear modeling, and that would otherwise be difficult to address. Path models help us understand issues of potential causality better than simple regression. Yet, I am concerned that some authors are willing to trade-off clarity for statistical sophistication, and this makes it more difficult for our research to have the impact it should. I am not suggesting that we should abandon more sophisticated statistical techniques, but I do feel that we need to make extra effort to make sure that all our readers understand what we are really saying in our papers.

Another trade-off involving measurement and analysis that we cannot afford to make is between measurement and theory. We use more sophisticated statistical and measurement techniques because they are useful tools to help us address important issues. They are not an end unto themselves, and they cannot replace or compensate for good theory. I often read papers that seem to be more about applying a new technique rather than about answering an important question. Empirical studies still need to be driven by strong theory and construct-valid measures.

The globalization of business has led to a globalization of our field and our research, and this has resulted in another potential trade-off that I don't believe we can afford to make. Some authors seem to believe that unique samples are a good substitute for good theory. Although I see fewer papers that seem to accept this trade-off, the problem persists. Multi-national studies require theory as well as do studies employing single samples. The fact that no one ever compared the levels of job commitment among workers in France and those in Nigeria, for example, is not sufficient justification for conducting a study comparing the two. There needs to be some reason why we would expect there to be such differences and some theory for why these differences might be important.

When I participated in that panel, I think I came down hard on the side of rigor. I guess I still would, but I have come to believe that good theory is at least as important as rigor, and therefore, I think our field is harmed by any trade-off involving strong theory. I believe it was Kurt Lewin who said there is nothing so practical as a good theory. I want to close by echoing that sentiment and adding that there is also no substitute for good theory – if we expect to progress as a field.