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On the shortcomings of our organisational forms: with implications for educational change and school improvement

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This article informs school improvement and educational change from a radically different perspective. Building upon work done recently in neural psychology, primatology and ethology, the article examines four common and general types of organisational form: the cell, the silo, the pyramidal, and the network types of organisational structures. Status and dominance hierarchies are discussed, as are the dynamics of collaboration/competition and collectivism/individualism. Final consideration is given to the concepts of culture and community, especially as they manifest in the school improvement literature.

Keywords: school improvement; leadership; educational change; school culture; organisational theory

Introduction

School improvement is a complicated and complex endeavour: just as there are numerous and varied conceptions of how to accomplish it, there are distinct perspectives that inform and underpin it.[1] Many believe that school reforms are as likely to cause harm as they are to actually improve the lived worlds of students, teachers, and administrators (Ingersoll 2003; Sarason 1996, 2004; Varenne and McDermott 1999).

Improvement of schools, other organisational systems, and, indeed, of individuals themselves can be brought about by recognising and accentuating those systems and processes found to be effectual, and/or by identifying and attenuating those systems, processes and procedures found to be wanting (Schmuck and Runkel 1994). There are numerous scholars who undertake to explore and accentuate the positive aspects of schools and schooling with an eye toward improving these organisations (see Harris 2002; Sergiovanni 1994). Some take the other route (see Ingersoll 2003), or some combination of the two (see Hargreaves and Fullan 1998; Hargreaves and Shirley 2009).

In this article, I take a novel approach, but one solidly situated within the second school improvement approach listed above – that of identifying and attenuating the negative or deleterious aspects of schools and schooling, seeking to identify in order to ameliorate the shortcomings of our organisational forms. In this analysis, I will draw from not only organisational theory, but also more recent and exciting work in ethology, primatology and neural psychology, as well as my anthropological and sociological training and my recent empirical work. Such a wide-ranging and

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comprehensive approach is warranted, given the subject matter, especially in light of Bourdieu's (1999, 181, fn 1) declamation that 'the division among disciplines – ethnology, sociology, history and economy – translates itself back into separated segments that are totally inadequate to the objects of study'. Likewise, the French philosopher Françoise Dastur (2009), citing Heidegger, noted that a philosophical anthropology touches upon at least three dimensions of the objects of study: the biological, the psychological, and the cultural dimensions.

The springboard for this article was the preliminary analysis from an ongoing empirical study of the changes administrators undergo due to their job. The questions guiding that study (which I am still pursuing) are asked in an attempt to get at a phenomenological understanding of educational administration and the effects that educational administration, whatever it is, has upon the incumbent. This led me into research having to do with not just the processes and dispositions of leaders and leadership, but also the ways in which we organise ourselves and our work and the dynamics at play among the forms, the processes, and the person. This will be the focus of the latter part of this article – that is, the interplay between the organisational forms and interactive social processes involved, or what John Dewey (1916, 81) termed 'the implications of human association'.

Space limitations prohibit a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment of all the ways by which we organise ourselves. For example, we continue to segregate school populations by age. Pupils in some classes or in some programs are arranged alphabetically according to their given name. And although to a certain degree all types of organisation or categorisation, like those just mentioned, are arbitrary (Burke 2000), I will focus only on those types which seem to be both the most prevalent in educational organisations and those which seem to have the greatest impact on the way schools work. And though my experiences and the examples I employ are drawn mainly from US contexts, the universality, indeed the ubiquity, of the forms I discuss here makes this analysis applicable to educational institutions around the globe.

Schools as a greedy institution

The first phase of my empirical work was undertaken in my local setting, a public university. The questions driving my research and thinking stemmed from an extrapolation of Willard Waller's (1932) seminal work on the sociology of teaching and the chapter, 'What teaching does to teachers'. This caused me to wonder what effect administration has on school administrators; put another way: What is the nature of educational administration and what effects, if any, does the job have on incumbents?

Waller (1932) noted:

> What does any occupation do to the human being who follows it? Now that differences of caste and rank have become inconspicuous, and differences that go with locale are fading, it is the occupation that most marks the man. The understanding of the effects upon the inner man of the impact of the occupation is thus an important task of social science. It is a problem almost untouched. (Waller 1932, 375)

As with most research efforts, this wondering of mine as to what educational administration does to the administrator as a person led me to look around, first at

the local scene. I noticed what appeared to me to be an odd situation with the administration of my own college of education. First, most of the administrators at the rank of department chair and above were women, and, upon further investigation, I realised that most were what we term 'empty nesters' or were otherwise childless, by chance or by choice.[2] Table 1 shows the situation at the time.

Concerned that perhaps the findings reported in Table 1 were an anomaly, I undertook a survey of a convenience sample of graduate students in our educational administration program – those with whom I was working at the time. I found that the patterns I had observed in our college were generally repeated throughout the numerous public schools in the area (Tables 2 and 3).

As can be seen from the tables below, the overwhelming majority of administrators in the area's public schools represented, both elementary and secondary, and whether male or female, have no children currently in the home.

Unprompted by me, some of the respondents volunteered stories of their own, or of administrators or administrative aspirants they knew personally. One of my students told me that he was counselled by a more senior male administrator not to enter the profession yet because he had young children at home. Another told me that in a lengthy and bitter divorce and custody battle, he had won legal custody of his special needs daughter. Soon after taking an entry-level administrative position (i.e., assistant principal) at the secondary school, he reconsidered, imploring his ex-wife for her help in raising their daughter – in essence, surrendering the legal rights for which he had fought so hard.

These data and their preliminary analysis piqued my interest. I couldn't help but wonder whether these phenomena resulted from the nature of the job; the organisational features of schools; the attributes of the people seeking jobs as school administrators; or from some other factor or combination of factors.

This thinking led me to consider Coser's (1974) notion of the greedy institution. Though dealing more with what Goffman (1962) termed 'total institutions' – Coser presented the priesthood and the military as exemplars – Coser's depiction accurately

Table 1. Administrators in the College of Education, Texas State University, their position title, gender and family status.

Position	Family status
Dean, College of Education	Female, married, grown children
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs	Female, married, grown children
Associate Dean for Research and Development	Male, married, childless
Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs	Female, married, grown children
Assistant Dean for Research and Development	Female, married, childless
Chair, Curriculum and Instruction	Female, married, older children at home
Chair, Educational Administration and Psychological Services	Male, re-married, grown child
Chair, Health, Physical Education and Recreation	Male, married, grown children

Note: Generally, the term *grown children* means that the administrator currently has no children living at home; the children, whether they are biological relations or related by marriage (i.e., step children), may be thought of as emancipated.

Table 2. Administrators at Lehman High School, Hays County (Texas) Independent School District, their position title and family status.

Position	Family status
Principal	Female, unmarried, childless
Academic Dean	Female, married, childless
Assistant Principal 1	Female, single, childless
Assistant Principal 2	Female, single, childless
Assistant Principal 3	Male, married, grown children
Assistant Principal 4	Male, marital status unknown, two children at home

characterises some schools, colleges, and universities today, especially as regards the administrator, but increasingly affecting other actors as well. He stated:

> Total commitments might reduce anxieties that spring from competing role-demands and the pull of differing loyalties and allegiances. But when the desire for wholeness leads to an enlistment in greedy organizations, it may end in an obliteration of the characteristics that mark the private person as an autonomous actor... Commitment to greedy institutions requires that the autonomy gained by men [or women] who stand at the intersection of many circles is relinquished, and is replaced by heteronomous submission to the all-encompassing demands of organizations that greedily devour the whole man [or woman] in order to fully fashion him [or her] into an image that serves their needs. (Coser 1974, 18)

The sociologist Max Weber (1958) referred to, then, modern bureaucracies and bureaucratic society as an iron cage. In a like vein, I once referred to educational administrators as prisoners of the organisation (cited in Ajofrín 2008).

Gronn (2003) commented on the impact of worldwide labour and market trends and their effect on, especially, work in the service-based and knowledge-based economies, including schools. He, too, characterised school organisations as greed institutions. He wrote that: 'rather than diminishing servility, the marketised regulation of public sector agencies and the creation of an enterprise culture breed their own new and unique forms of exploitation and serfdom, which I term greedy work practices' (147). Thomson (2009) likewise suggested that one reason educational administrators (heads) are overworked is that they work for greedy organisations. Citing Gini (2001), Thomson noted how such organisations prize and reward work addiction. She makes the point that heads are implicated in their own overwork.

Table 3. Administrators in Select Elementary Schools in the Del Valle (Texas) Independent School District, their position title and family status.

School	Position	Family status
Elementary School 1	Principal	Female, married, grown children
	Assistant Principal	Female, married, two children at home
Elementary School 2	Principal	Female, married, grown children
	Assistant Principal	Female, single, childless
Elementary School 3	Principal	Male, married, grown children
	Assistant Principal	Male, single, childless

Perhaps there is a tendency to romanticise the home and private life and to demonise work and the workplace (that is, prizing the home over the workplace). Such tendencies may lend commonsense support to Coser's (1974) notion of the greedy institution and, as in the case currently under discussion (i.e., schools and educational administration), the conclusion might be that such work, 'greedy work' in Gronn's (2003, 148) terms, sucks the person away from the home and enslaves her at work.

However, as Hochschild (1997) found in her studies, for some, work can be a haven, a retreat from home life. In Hochschild's study, it was mainly the male CEOs who found fulfillment through work, though the occasional female manager or CEO did so as well. Gronn (2003) commented on the tendency in some sectors of social science research to view the work place as a respite:

> This notion means that the workplace is beginning to be seen as a respite or an escape route, where people are freed from their domestic emotional entanglements and where their identities as persons are affirmed, in some cases, in increasingly supportive workplace communities. (Gronn 2003, 152–3)

However, Gronn chooses to focus on the impact work and work intensification have upon the personal, as in the following:

> ... as one rises to meet the challenges created by work intensification, one may jettison or reduce a range of competing social attachments to make space for a greater commitment to work, which is perhaps made possible for the first time at that point in the career cycle when one's offspring leave the domestic nest. (Gronn 2003, 153)

There is much to recommend a more structural reading of the modern, industrial and post-industrial human condition. From Weber's iron cage, to Whyte's organisation man (Whyte 1956), there has been, according to Bennis (1993, 7), 'a good deal of ... work on organizational behavior ... [that] has been a footnote to the bureaucratic "backlash" which aroused Weber's passion: saving mankind's soul "from the supreme mastery of the bureaucratic way of life" '.

So, then, how are we to view schools as organisations and the effect they have upon the individual?

A more balanced approach might look at the dynamism between the person and his/her work, between the private and the public, and between the agent and the structure. This dynamic between the individual – that individual's wants and needs, and the structure, processes and demands of the workplace, plays out differently for each. That is to say, individuals form distinct and different relations with their jobs – a point captured by Billett (2004) and his notion of co-participation at work. Billett stressed the 'interdependent process of engagement in and learning through work' (197). Coming at the problem from a different perspective, Billett examined how the individual's 'simultaneous participation in other social practice (e.g., family and community life) ... influences how they are able or elect to participate at work' (197). Work, work environments and processes offer, in Billett's terms, certain affordances, though they are usually distributed differentially (not everyone gets the same affordances). Affordances can be perquisites such as salary, status, personal assistants, bonuses, and more. For teachers, these might include: being tapped to teach the top-level classes – such as Advanced Placement classes; being assigned less

onerous duty periods and locales; or being granted stipends for professional development, including travel to conferences, among others (Ingersoll 2003). Billett noted how: 'workplace affordances are constituted and distributed by workplace hierarchies, group affiliations, personal relations, workplace cliques and cultural practices, and kinds of activities in which individuals are able to or are requested to engage' (200).

Billett (2004) considered the worker's contribution in his co-participation calculus: 'individuals' learning is not a process of socialisation or enculturation arising from participation at work. Instead, their agency also shapes how they participate and engage in activities and respond to guidance they are being afforded in their workplace' (200). Workplace affordances, in interaction with the individual's 'relatedness', comprise Billett's co-participatory dynamic. The process is ever iterative and ongoing: 'Inter-psychological processes are interdependently relational, albeit situated in particular social action' (202).

One global work trend Billett (2004) commented upon, one with potential to impact the local, especially the work of school, is a shifting of the responsibility, burden and blame onto the individual for his/her own learning, growth and professional development. Billett reasoned that:

> ...this account is never more salient than when workers are constantly being expected to take responsibility for the currency of their work-related competence (OECD 1998), and at a time when employers are avoiding their traditional responsibilities to assist this development. (Billett 2004, 202)

He continued: 'While individuals are active agents throughout their working life, how workplaces afford opportunities to participate in different kinds of goal-directed activities and engage in interactions plays a central role in what they learn and how they extend that learning' (202–3).

This insight – that how workplaces afford opportunities to participate matters – complements Burrell's and Morgan's (2005) injunction for us to consider how human nature interrelates with the environment, including workplace environments such as schools. Burrell and Morgan discussed the assumptions that are fundamental to various approaches to studying social science and the ontological and epistemological assumptions inherent in these different research approaches or stances. Through this, they remind us that:

> Associated with the ontological and epistemological issues, but conceptually separate from them, is a third set of assumptions concerning *human nature* and, in particular, the relationship between human beings and their environment. All social science, clearly, must be predicated upon this type of assumption... (Burrell and Morgan 2005, 2, original emphasis)

Consideration of these ideas leads to the questions I will address in the next section of this article; that is, how does human nature affect how we organise ourselves? We cannot sidestep the related question: What effects do the way we organise ourselves and our schools have on the human being, the person? Or, as in Dewey's (1916) terms, as mentioned above, what are the implications of the way we organise ourselves for human association? And what are the ramifications for educational change and school improvement?

Common organisational forms

In the following, I will discuss four general forms of organisation and some of their variants (Figure 1): the cell, the silo or stovepipe, the pyramid, and the network. There are, of course, several dynamics that operate across all types of human association or organisational forms, simply because they are fundamental to human nature. These dynamics are, therefore, characteristic of no one organisational form in particular, but are common to all, in varying strengths and guises. Two of the principal dynamics at play across human organisational forms are those having to do with: (a) collectivism and individualism; and (b) competition and collaboration.

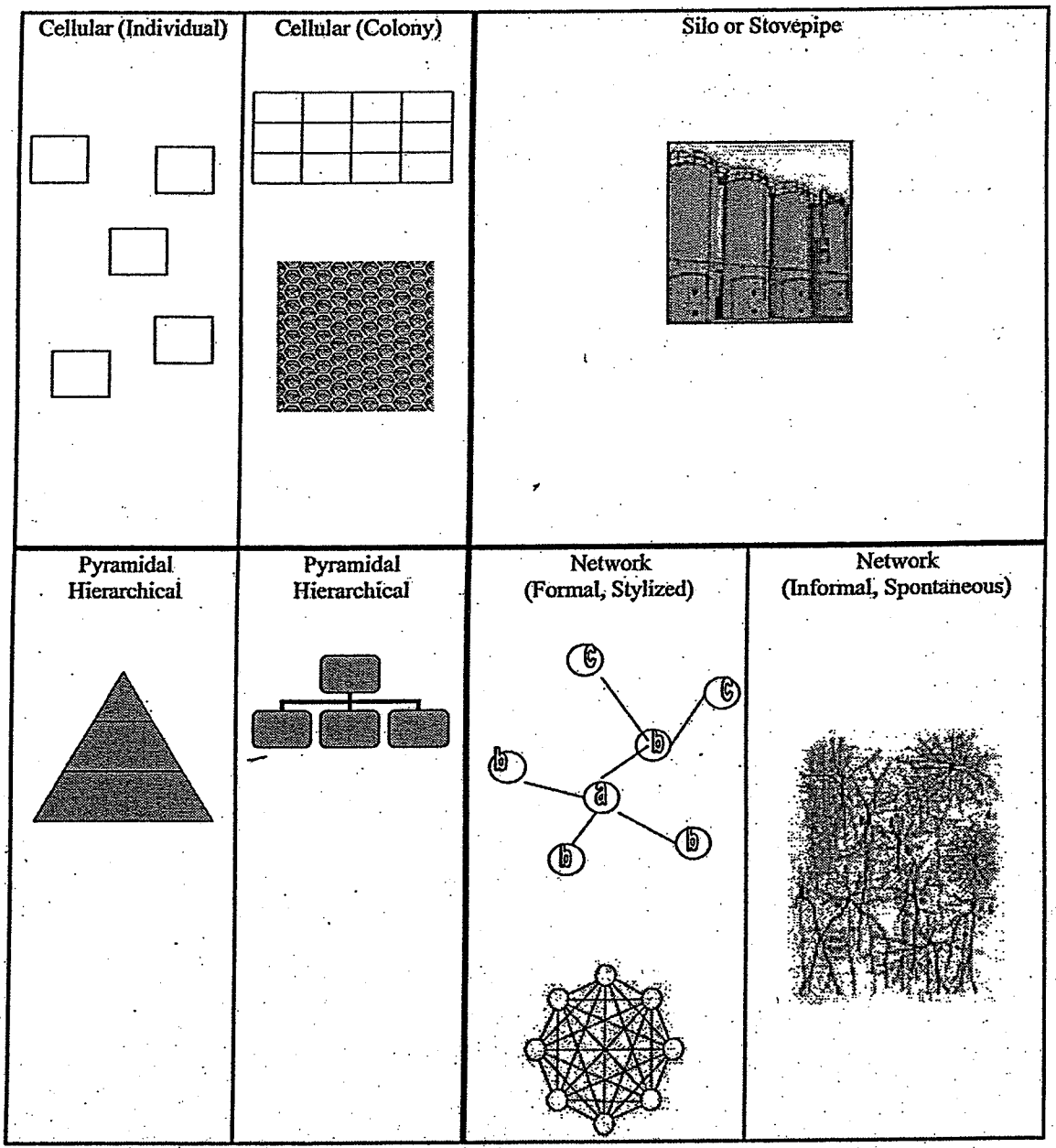

Figure 1. A schematic representation of common organisational forms.

Hofstede (1991) claimed that the collective/individualist orientation was a defining characteristic of countries, cultures, and organisations. Vandello and Cohen (1999) argued for the salience of the collectivist/individualist dynamic and charted its geographical distribution across the US.

As will be shown below, competition both contributes to and is a product of hierarchical organisational forms. Competition might strengthen within-group bonds when external forces, goals or threats are operant (Kaufman 2009); but interpersonal or localised competition has the tendency to rend or strain social bonds as well (Wilkinson 2001). Wilkinson reminds us that the anthropological record testifies to the fact that cooperation (as among egalitarian hunter gathering groups) has been a more prevalent characteristic of human association, and for a much longer period of time, than have competition and status hierarchies. Clearly, competition and collaboration share a dynamic and complex relation.

Just how competition, collaboration, individualism, and collectivism (and other processes) play out through various organisational forms will be discussed next. Though I will discuss the forms as if they were ideal types, they often hybridise, overlap, intermingle, and otherwise morph. Again, the four general organisational types that I will discuss are: the cell, the silo or stovepipe, the pyramid, and the network (Figure 1).

Cellular types of organisation

Cells and cellular types of organising principles are abundant in nature; for example, in bee hives (see Figure 1). Two basic types of cellular organisation are apparent in both animal groupings and in human societies: the isolated individual and the collective. In human societies, cells are exemplified by, for instance, terrorist cells, especially so-called sleeper cells. This type of organisation is an advantage to, in this case, terrorists, because the individuals can better escape detection, due, in part, to the total enforced and intentional lack of communication between individuals and/or individual units. That is, one feature of the individual cellular-type organisation is the insulation of individual members, one from the other.

As with the other organisational forms described here, the cellular type of structure has certain benefits. For example, this type of arrangement can be an aid to the organism's or the organisation's survival. Because of the insulation between cells, threats and damage can be minimised, controlled, or localised.

In schools, cells and cellular-type organisation are evident through their classic 'egg-crate' design, or as Weick (1976) described them, their loosely-coupled systems (see also Pajak and Green 2003). Classrooms and individuals isolate themselves or are isolated by the design of schools and the isolating processes that occur within them (Little 1990).

The unit of analysis of cells and cellular systems can be the sole individual agent or individual, but isolated, groups. This organisational form is likely to produce balkanisation – a phenomenon common to modern high schools, as discussed by Hargreaves (1994). In these schools, balkanisation permits, especially, secondary school academic departments to become separated from one another and to form nearly autonomous entities. Often, in such cases, the teacher's first loyalty lies with his/her academic discipline, and not with the school as an organisation. This bodes ill

for communal identity formation and may hinder reform efforts, as the academic units can be sites of resistance.

The concern this type of organisation poses for school reformers is that innovation is extremely difficult under such conditions. Each unit, being isolated, may insulate itself from reform initiatives (Hargreaves 1994). This type of organisation does not foster collaboration. In Lakomski's (2005) analysis, borrowing from game theory, innovation and change may occur, but slowly and incrementally, communicated from cell to cell to cell across the field. Cells and those who either represent or occupy such positions may communicate with a contiguous neighbour. And so, communication, innovation and change may proceed, if at all, in a kind of domino or ripple fashion.

Hierarchies

Common to both the silo (or stove-pipe) organisational form and the pyramidal form – indeed implied by such forms – is a hierarchical structure. Hierarchies and their use are common even outside organisations; in fact, Fukuyama (1999) suggests that the tendency to organise in hierarchies is human nature. This is perhaps accurate in a limited sense. I would add at least two qualifications to Fukuyama's assertion. I would add that: (1) It is not only humans (*homo sapiens*) that organise so – other animals (non-human primates and other mammals) do so as well; and (2) hierarchies are not innate, but constructed, and socially constructed at that.

The second of these qualifications finds support from Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) in their discussion of good work. They assert that 'it is in our power to create the kind of society that we want, in the way that we want to' (245). This recognises the agential potential of human association. Whether or not the tendency to organise hierarchically is human nature, we would be mistaken (and unnecessarily handicapped) were we to assume that human nature is destiny. That is, we individually and collectively make choices and perform actions that shape our environment – both the natural and the social. Lortie (2009, 6) notes how 'the constraints and obstacles that retard [school] improvement – the inhibiting aspects of present structures – are the result of decisions we have, as a society, made in the past. We can make different decisions in the future'. And this is precisely the point of this article: we would be wise to recognise the potential or tendency toward hierarchical arrangements, and the advantages and disadvantages of such arrangements (and others), in order to opt for more felicitous alternative arrangements whenever possible.

As alluded to above, there are several types of hierarchies, both in the human and in the non-human worlds. Common among these forms are dominance hierarchies and social status hierarchies. Dominance hierarchies appear, perhaps, more commonly in the wild. Non-human primates such as chimpanzees and baboons are organised so (Cheney and Seyfarth 2007). As the name implies, dominance hierarchies typically evolve from the use of force (or threat of force[3]). Social status hierarchies develop from and instantiate other forms of status, power and recognition (e.g., wealth, celebrity, ability, intelligence, strength, seniority, skin tone, etc). Zink et al. (2008) report studies that have shown that 'social hierarchies spontaneously and stably emerge in children as young as 2 years' (273). Likewise, they observe that:

> ... status within a social hierarchy is often made explicit (e.g., via uniforms, honorifics, verbal assignment, or even in some languages via a status-specific grammar) (Pork 1991), but it can also be inferred from cues such as facial features, height, gender, age, and dress (Karafin et al. 2004). In humans, dominance has been linked to heritable personality traits (Mehrabian 1996). (Zink et al. 2008, 273)

Hierarchies differ as to whether they are more rigid and fixed or more flexible and dynamic. Interestingly, in more rigid and inflexible hierarchies, individuals at the lower levels show more signs of stress than those at the upper levels (Cheney and Seyfarth 2007; Zink et al. 2008). The opposite is true for more flexible and dynamic hierarchies: individuals at the upper levels show more signs of stress than those at the lower levels. One implication of this is that flexible hierarchies permit advancement or the possibility of it. This might cause some concern for those in positions of power, as they can be usurped. Inflexible hierarchies offer little or no possibility of advancement for lower-ranking members and this continual relative oppression is the source of stress for those at the lower levels.[4]

In a report of a brain imaging (fMRI) experiment which registered the effect of relative social status and one's perceptions of it, Zink et al. (2008) noted how:

> ... hierarchical status can be either fixed or changeable, and this aspect of social stratification has pronounced implications for individuals. In nonhuman and human primates, the more subordinate position in stable social hierarchies is associated with greater stress, whereas in dynamic hierarchies, the dominant position experiences the more stressors due to increased competition and instability ... during times of reorganization, and may be at greater health risks. (Zink et al. 2008, 277)

In fact, in this experiment, even potential advancements (i.e., upward movement) in social hierarchical position activated the same reward centre of the brain as that activated in winning money, 'confirming the high value accorded social status' (NIH 2008, para. 8). The findings from this experiment, especially, occasioned the headline: 'Human brain appears "hard-wired" for hierarchy' (NIH). Loss of status, or potential loss of status, works the opposite way, depressing people and causing them stress. The report of experiments run by Zink et al. suggests that we humans orient to hierarchy and social hierarchy outcomes (and potential outcomes), and that these assessments (how an outcome might affect our social hierarchy) are ideational and emotional, especially in unstable hierarchies. The authors state that:

> An important feature of the unstable hierarchy setting was that particular outcomes now acquired positive or negative *hierarchical value* based on their potential impact on the participant's status relative to the other ... The fact that only outcome contrasts associated with hierarchical value elicited significant brain responses implicates social relevance as a primary determinant of how the outcome was processed; furthermore, virtually all the resulting activations were social specific. (Zink et al. 2008, 279, original emphasis)

In baboon groups, the dynamics and tone of the group (for instance, whether it's contentious and problematic or whether it's more pacific) depend on the personality of the leader – usually the alpha male (Cheney and Seyfarth 2007). If he is generally easy-going, the group tends to be so. Also, hierarchies tend to be gender based: just as there are male status hierarchies (the alpha and beta males being the most

commonly-known examples), there are also female status hierarchies (with an alpha, beta, etcetera, hierarchy of females). Generally, females are born into their mother's hierarchical status (Cheney and Seyfarth 2007); as such, the daughter of an alpha female has status relative to an adult beta female. The female hierarchy tends to be conservative, with little change, disruption or upheaval. In those cases where lower status females resist or rebel, they generally form alliances with higher ranking females and this works to preserve the status quo (Cheney and Seyfarth 2007). However, along male lines, disruption, upheaval and change of the male status hierarchy occurs more commonly through the introduction of an interloper – generally a strong adolescent male – who vies with high-ranking males for supremacy. As it is, it is common for male adolescent baboons to leave or be forced out of their natal group and, being social animals, to seek to attach themselves to other groups.

One's self concept (an important component of identity) is affected by one's relative status – how the individual sees him/herself relative to important others and how that individual perceives others' impressions of him or her (Takahashi et al. 2009). Relative status is the stuff of hierarchies. A boost in relative status (a promotion or the awarding of a prestigious position or other honor, as examples) activates the same neural substrates as do other rewards such as money and food. A loss (or perceived loss) of relative status registers in the same neural substrate as those activated for pain.

Recent neural psychological research (see Takahashi et al. 2009) suggests that individuals derive pleasure from the diminishment or loss of status (or other misfortune) of another – a concept known by the German *schadenfreude*: '*schadenfreude* occurs when envied persons fall from grace' (para. 1). Conversely, a person is likely to feel some level of pain (that is to say, the same centre of the brain – that of the anterior cingulate cortex – was activated, as it is for pain) when the other referent gains status, prestige or similar reward. This is envy. Takahashi et al. make the point that the characteristics of the other must be self-relevant to the one doing the observing and assessing – being self-relevant implies that not all the fortunes, rewards and status of any other are cause for envy and pain. Not all losses or diminishments of any other are likely to activate our reward centre – only those occurring to someone sharing certain relevant, or self-relevant, characteristics, 'similar attributes, characteristics, group memberships, and interests (for example, gender, age, and social class)' (para. 2).

In addition to the effects social hierarchies have internally, there are tremendous social and social–psychological consequences stemming from the hierarchical orientation, socially constructed, of organisations such as schools and universities, relative to each other. That is, organisations arrange themselves and/or are perceived to be arranged in social hierarchical form, a ranking according to perceived and attributed prestige, for example. So it is that some schools or universities are perceived to be 'better schools'. Under the market conditions occasioned by a shift in governmental policies toward, most recently, New Public Management and neo-liberalism, a disproportionate share of resources, whether public or private, flows to the so-called better schools. Competition for places is more acute at such schools. Use of various metrics, such as high-stakes accountability tests and college entrance exam scores, contributes to such rankings. In public schools, such exam scores and the political and public use of them contribute to (some might say produce) so-called

failing schools (Varenne and McDermott 1999). Recently, and due to economic difficulties for both colleges and the general public, competition for admission to American first-choice colleges (those at or near the top tier of the social hierarchy that is college prestige) has increased. A recent report (Zernike 2009), notes how those who are able to pay full tuition costs (as opposed to those who require some kind of financial aid package in order to attend these prestigious universities) are being given preferential treatment in the admissions process. According to some college admissions officers and other observers:

> ... the inevitable result is that needier students will be shifted down to the less expensive and less prestigious institutions. 'There's going to be a cascading of talented lower-income kids down the social hierarchy of American higher education, and some cascading up of affluent kids,' said Morton Owen Schapiro, president of Williams College and an economist who studies higher education. (Zernike 2009, A16)

Insight into status hierarchies, especially of US colleges and universities, can be had from the examination of an issue facing policy-makers in the state of Texas (and perhaps in other places as well) as they wrestle with the pressures and forces inherent in cultivating/creating more so-called tier-one schools (Haurwitz 2009). That such rankings of colleges and schools are both subjective and socially-constructed is evidenced by this observation:

> There is no precise and universally accepted definition of a tier-one school. One frequently cited benchmark is membership in the Association of American Universities, an organization of 60 major research universities in the United States and two in Canada. Another measure is annual research spending of $100 million or more. ... Faculty honors, such as membership in the National Academy of Sciences, and student performance in high school and on admission tests are important as well. A good showing in various national rankings, such as those compiled by US News & World Report, helps, too. (Haurwitz 2009, A4)

At issue here, for the Texas legislature and other policy-making bodies throughout the world, is how to allocate state resources, especially given the fact that, overall, the federal and state share of funding for higher education has been decreasing over the past decades (Waite, Moos, and Lew 2005). In such status hierarchies, especially when resources are perceived to be fixed or relatively fixed, competition emerges for those resources. The end goal is status, the vehicle to attain status is through allocation of resources (which is both a means and a marker or signifier): generally, higher status individuals or organisations garner more resources (status, wealth, power, influence, etc). This can create a type of snowball effect, wherein the rich get richer.

Those positioned higher on social status hierarchies not only do less work (or, to be more precise, less of the core organisational work – whether automobile assembly, policing via patrol car or walking a beat, teaching, or heavy lifting in construction) (Shirky 2008), they receive higher levels of compensation and are generally held less accountable (Ingersoll 2003). (This is reflected in Scott Adam's Dilbert comic – see Figure 2 – wherein the character Alice claims she is interested in a management position – a higher level in their status hierarchy, for more power, financial gain, and less work.) This seems to be true on both the individual and the collective levels.

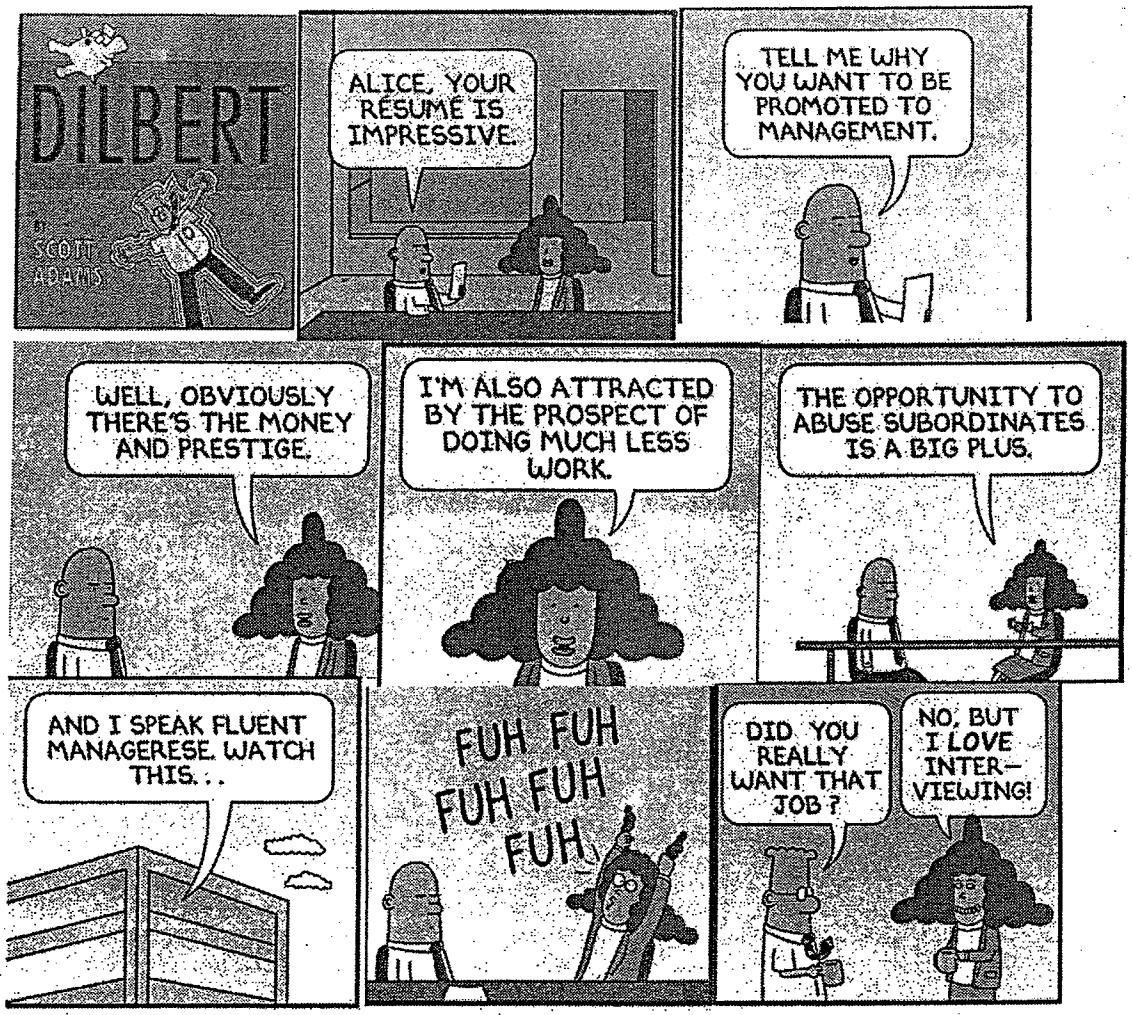

Figure 2. DILBERT.

These phenomena are illustrated through consideration of the immigrant's integration (or lack thereof) into the host or receiving society and the organisations within it. In an article about race and integration into society after the election of Barack Obama in the US, Nadia Azieze, an Algerian-born nurse who lives in France, was quoted as saying that, in all the jobs she's ever had, 'I've always been asked to do more, because I'm an immigrant. We always have to prove ourselves' (Erlanger 2008, A12). As I write this, ethnic Uighers and Han are rioting in western China, in the province of Xinjiang. Scott Tong, a correspondent for American Public Media's Marketplace, reported on a Uighur's experience. He said:

> And when I was in Xinjiang, I went to a construction site, and I talked to some of these Uigher men, and one of them said he makes $7 a day kinda lifting the heaviest stuff. The ethnic Han Chinese who also work at that construction site, they don't have to lift the heavy stuff, and they make three times the money. So that's the argument they make, that they're frozen out of this economic boom we all think about in China. (*Marketplace*, 7 July 2009)

Complementary and competing status criteria

Social status hierarchies are formed according to certain criteria – such as height, physical strength, beauty, skin tone, parentage or genetic stock, financial resources, intelligence, and so on; or, social status can be granted for combinations of attributes. Often, status (as an end) and the processes leading to its bestowal run contrary to the official organising principles of the bureaucratic organisation. Deep cultural, psychological or other leanings and impulses can motivate individuals and groups to grant priority status according to criteria that, in many cases, are unarticulated, tacit, and deeply ingrained. Many times these attributions operate alongside official bureaucratic organisational criteria (say, for example, in job hirings, promotions or other compensation, most certainly in the formation of school and workplace cliques and subcultures). Sometimes these different criteria (the formal and explicit versus the tacit and implicit) work at cross purposes. This type of status hierarchy lens informs, for example, the experiences of women school administrators in more traditional and patriarchal societies – in this instance, those in China (Ribbins 2008) and Pakistan (Shah 2010).[5] Ribbins notes how, 'there is much evidence that in the competition for place and promotion with men for a first principalship women are commonly tested unequally, but it is also clear that some women are treated more unequally than are others' (71). He quoted Osler (1997) to the effect that, '"the narratives of all the senior managers (indicate) that Black and ethnic minorities need to make twice the effort of their White counterparts"' (Osler 1997, as cited in Ribbins 2008, 71). Shah, through her analysis of several Pakistani women educational leaders' narratives, sets forth how:

> ...a female educational leader...in immediate authority over the male principal was denied a professional right and a simple human courtesy because of her gender. The fact is that women bring their femaleness, with its connotations and status in society, with them when they enter professions. There is no doubt that patterns of power and subordination are not just gendered, they are also cut across and transformed by class and other social formations. (Shah 2010, 37–8)

Organisational energy dispersion

In a discussion of newly emerging organisational forms (such as those of social networking sites), Shirky (2008) reminded us that the resources and energies of an organisation dissipate and are consumed in ways that do not advance the organisation's public, stated or agreed-upon mission:

> ...no institution can put all its energies into pursuing its mission: it must expend considerable effort on maintaining discipline and structure. Self-preservation of the institution becomes job number one, while its stated goal is relegated to number two or lower, no matter what the mission statement says. The problems inherent in managing these transaction costs are one of the basic constraints shaping institutions of all kinds. (Shirky 2008, 29–30)

One cause of an organisation's dissipation of energy and resources is what is known as goal displacement – where organisational leaders and other members become seduced by ends or goals that are seemingly similar to the original or principal goals for which the organisation was established. In a sense, the

organisation may become lost or confused. This loss of direction is known to the military as mission creep.

One task of an organisation has to do with identity formation and maintenance (Berquist 1993). Establishing and maintaining an organisational identity is a fundamental ingredient in garnering workers' commitment and motivation. But individuals have different wants, varying needs, and disparate agendas, and these will tend to pull the organisation in different directions. But, again as Shirky reminds us, there are other transactional costs that rob an organisation of its energy – transactional costs having to do with maintenance, for example.

Consider institutions of higher education: conventionally, and in the US, colleges and universities are said to have a tripartite mission, one of teaching, research and service. However, a critical examination of the current functioning of tertiary educational organisations through the lens provided by Shirky (2008) permits us to ask the question: Just how much of the organisation's energies are directed to fulfilling this primary and tripartite mission? Conversely, how much of the members' energies go toward simply maintaining the organisation? When examined through the lens of social status as suggested above, the question for each of us becomes: How much of our work goes toward simply maintaining or elevating the status of the organisation of which we are part? How much of our work contributes to the diversion of the organisation from its core function or mission?

Corruption is yet another way an organisation's resources get squandered. By definition, corruption is the use of public office for private gain (see Waite and Allen 2003; Waite and Waite 2009). In corrupt systems, states, and organisations, private individuals – more likely those situated nearer the top of an organisation's hierarchy – siphon from the resources allocated to the organisation; as these ill-gotten gains go into the corrupt individuals' coffers, these monies never get put to their intended use. Other organisational effects of corruption include: the subversion or coercion of ordinary members – making them complicit (and this may have negative psychic effects on members); the delegitimisation of the organisation, system, or government; and others.[6]

Silo or stovepipe types of organisation

Silo organisational forms have been common to the military – as an example, ever since the Roman Empire organised its military into legions. Today, as in the US, each branch of the armed services is separated from the others in this type of silo or stovepipe form of organisation.[7] Silos tend to be vertically organised, though they may not be broad (Figure 1). Organisations may manifest one or more silos within them. In such arrangements, each component, department or bureau duplicates somewhat what are thought to be the fundamental or necessary organisational functions. In the US military, each service branch ostensibly has a different mission (though there is some overlap). Each service branch has its separate educational or training institution: the army has West Point, the navy has Annapolis, etc. Each service has separate police, intelligence gathering organs, and so on.

One drawback to the silo type of organisation is the insularity within which each unit operates. Units are walled off from one another with often-impermeable boundaries. This makes innovation difficult throughout an organisation. Single units may innovate, but such innovations seldom transfer from one unit to another.

Communication across units is hampered by the organisation's boundaries. Duplication and/or redundancy may result from a stovepipe-type of organisational pattern. Turf issues may result (Mazzetti 2009).

Another possible disadvantage of silo-type organisational forms stems from the combined effects of the insularity of the organisation's units and, hence, its members, and the drive for clearly defined unit missions. To the degree that the organisation and the organisational culture encourage and support role identification and differentiation, the purview or remit of the organisational members is self-limited. That is, there may be jobs, tasks or markets, as examples, that fall between the cracks, that are perceived to be outside either the job description or responsibility of certain members.[8] Such conditions can result in what Bauman (1993, 1995) termed responsibility floating; wherein under such conditions, though each individual is attending to his/her task or job responsibility, and though many are aware of organisational failures, snafus, harm, danger, risks, or shortcomings, no-one accepts responsibility.[9]

In education, a silo type of organisational form is imposed on the curriculum. Each discipline is organised in a stovepipe manner. These curricula also have a hierarchical structure, a form common to silos or stovepipes (more on hybrid forms later). As an example, consider the mathematics curricula in most schools: basic numeracy occupies the lowest levels, theoretical mathematics is generally not found except at the highest levels, at advanced level postgraduate work. Each level is thought to serve as a foundation for the successive levels. The characteristics of silos make, for example, interdisciplinary curricular offerings difficult in schools – extremely so in secondary schools, but difficult even in primary school.

Pyramidal types of organisation

Pyramids are broader at the base than at the top. This is a quintessential hierarchical form. This form characterises an organisation that, like the silo or stovepipe, is hierarchical, but, unlike the silo, it has a broad base. The common organisational chart represents a pyramidal organisational form (see Figure 1), and the pyramid form accurately reflects Max Weber's (1958) notion of the modern bureaucracy. Often, in such a form, the top position has one sole incumbent, be it a president, CEO, school principal, head, district superintendent, or director. It must be acknowledged that this is only the formal and explicitly acknowledged or engineered form; other informal processes and structures exist in any and all organisations, often not depicted, sometimes not even acknowledged, sometimes not even perceived by the organisation's officials and administrators.

Pyramidal forms of organisation permit a concentration of power at the top, with the attendant control of the organisation's other resources. Such organisations are ripe for corruption, as power and all that goes with it is held by a small, tightly controlled group (see Waite and Allen 2002; Waite and Waite 2009). Those at the upper levels generally escape accountability (Ingersoll 2003). Also, the free flow of communication is impeded in such types of organisations, which generally exhibit a 'top-down' flow of communication. Still, communication is filtered at and by each bureaucratic level. As the flow of information from the bottom of the pyramidal organisation to the peak is impeded, sometimes barely existent, those at the top become insulated. If, as is often the case, CEOs surround themselves with people like

them or people who think like them, the leadership vision can become myopic. In extreme cases, this insularity contributes to rationalisation of behaviours and group reinforcement of norms and worldviews that would seem to outsiders and the general public as outrageous or egregious (such as occurs in executive compensation and reimbursement schemes – e.g., Enron, AIG, the Securities Exchange Commission, Goldman Sachs, The British House of Commons and others). All this is already widely known (Morgan 1997; Schein 1999). The unique contribution here is in the application of the newly-revealed effects of status on individual physiology and psychology and the implications these effects have for both the individual and the collective. These influences and effects could not have been anticipated by Weber, or even more recent organisation theorists.

Alternate forms

Contrary to Fukuyama's (1999) belief that humans are somehow 'hardwired' for hierarchy, humans historically have organised in other than hierarchical fashion; however, the dominant mental model of the twenty-first century does appear to be the hierarchy. One must look to marginal groups and to the historical record for alternatives. For example, Wilkinson (2001) reminds us of 'the two distinct types of social organisation found among both human and non-human primates: those based on power and dominance ("agonic") and those based on more egalitarian cooperation ("hedonic")' (22). He recognised, as we do, that primarily:

> ... since class societies have been predominant throughout human history, we tend to take the agonic forms of social organization as the human norm. But this overlooks the evidence that during our hunter-gatherer prehistory – the vast majority of human existence – we lived in hedonic groups. Anthropologists have described modern hunter-gatherer societies as 'assertively' egalitarian. (Fukuyama 1999, 22)

These, then, are the main contrasting types of human and non-human primate organisation – the hierarchical and the egalitarian. As we have seen, the hierarchical form of organisation is exemplified by pyramidal and silo types of organisational schemes (also known by their line authority, chain of command structure). Egalitarian forms of organisation are more likely to be manifest in network structures (keeping in mind that this represents an ideal type). It is not unheard of for these two general forms to morph or hybridise, with a hierarchical form being superimposed onto networks. But of the two predominant forms of organisation, hierarchies tend to be vertically oriented and networks tend toward the horizontal.

Network types of organisation

Networks do not necessarily connect proximate individuals (as colonies do); they sometimes skip over proximate individuals to connect individuals on the basis of some common characteristic or purpose (Figure 1). Networks may be the most complex and complicated organisational form discussed here.

Schematically, networks resemble rhizomatic root systems, spreading out in several directions; or, similarly, such networks resemble the neurons of the human brain (Figure 1). Though characterised as horizontal, networks are by no means two

dimensional. Networks vary considerably by complexity, both as to the linkages (the connectors) and the nodes (those units being connected). The members comprising a network may be local – as in the case of a town, village, school, neighborhood, or other community – or global. Members may share many characteristics (as with the members of a community of indigenous tribal members) or organise according to singular, though pertinent, individual characteristics (such as an on-line chat group devoted to a particular topic). The linkages or connections between individuals or nodes may be hearty and dense (as in so-called first-order relations [Milroy 1980]), or less so, even ephemeral, in second-, third-, fourth-, or *n*th-order relations (in Figure 1, the entities with the 'b' designation are in a first-order relation with 'a'; those with a 'c' label are in a second-order relation with 'a', and so on). Dense, hearty, and strong linkages (factors which contribute to strong networks) are characterised by frequent, reciprocal, and meaningful interactions or exchanges between the members. Conversely, relatively weak networks exhibit infrequent and/or superficial exchanges among members. Any one individual is likely to have relationships (linkages) of various strengths (i.e., some first-order, some second-order, and so on). People can belong to multiple networks simultaneously, as can schools (Evans and Stone-Johnson in press), or other organisations.

As discussed above, networks are potentially more egalitarian types of organisation than, say, hierarchies. Citing anthropological research, Wilkinson (2001) noted a countervailing tendency to that of the supposed human tendency toward hierarchical forms of organisation. One set of social strategies evidenced throughout the historical record – and in both human and non-human primate societies – is that termed 'counter dominance strategies' (23). Anecdotally, perhaps this both accounts for and is a result of the impulse in many societies, especially the more socially cohesive and/or communal, to keep with the herd or group, to not set oneself apart or above or stand out in other ways. (The famous Japanese saw that 'the nail that stands out gets hammered down' is a case in point.) Likewise, the phenomenon of *schadenfreude* (Takahashi et al. 2009), as discussed above, 'a rewarding feeling derived from another's misfortune' (para. 3), operates as a kind of social levelling device – as does what some researchers refer to as the justice instinct and its complement, self-protective retaliation (Carey 2008).[10] Wilkinson also identified friendship and gift giving as egalitarian and reciprocal exchanges.

We might think of networks as a hybrid-type of organisational form (discussed in more detail below), especially as multiple network membership is common today, and as networks themselves are given differential hierarchical social status. Another type of hybrid, an equally complex form, is that of community – and though community is not a bureaucratic organisational form, it is an organisational form that has been adopted and adapted by different organisations, and thus it deserves brief mention here.

Hybrids

There are seldom any pure or ideal types realised in the lived social world. For example, many of us may be simultaneous members of a hierarchical organisation – say, a work environment, while we maintain professional networks with similarly situated colleagues nationally or globally. We are, then, a part of both a professional

network and a hierarchy. Bureaucratic organisations (one of the most rigidly hierarchical of our organisational forms) may be networked, one to another, and may have various networks operant within them. Networks themselves may be hierarchical, with one network granted higher status than another (Evans and Stone-Johnson in press). The nodes or members of various networks may enjoy higher or lower relative status than others in the same network. The more highly valued and/or high frequency network member or node correspondingly exerts more influence upon the network and its members (Hite 2005).

Community

Communities may be thought of as another hybrid type of organisational form; though we may be initially reluctant to think of communities (or community) as an organisational form or structure at all, as community has the image of being somehow more organic than other forms or structures. Like community, the organic metaphor, in and of itself, lacks specificity and this may impede a thorough deconstruction of its meaning, constitution, processes, and effects. We have come to equate the organic with the Good, but we must keep in mind that arsenic and carbon monoxide are organic, too. Communities have their problems. Some communities are so dysfunctional as to be toxic for (certain) members. When functioning optimally or when healthy, the ideal community offers its members support and a sense of belonging. Communities are synergistic, multiplying the energies of the members, and permitting the accomplishment of goals beyond the capabilities of single members.

Communities, especially traditional communities, have one advantage over more individualistically-oriented organisations: they recognise (and honor) the individual *qua* individual, as uniquely situated or positioned. That is to say that within the community, each person has a place. True, there may be problems with the assignment of place or position (rank, status and privilege based on birth rights, etc). (And identity is a thorny issue.) The more individualistic (and even meritocratic) forms of association, especially within current global contexts and trends, skew toward recognising the individual in market terms, as producer or consumer, rather than as an individual *qua* individual with a valued, separate identity and rights.

Perhaps due to our collective tendency to romanticise community in this way (i.e., as organic and, hence, good), this has become a popular term in the organisation and change literature (see Sergiovanni 1994). Communities are shot through with other organisational forms. This fact alone qualifies them as hybrids. But, more than that, communities may be geographical or categorical. Communities and their boundaries include some while simultaneously excluding others (Lyotard 1993).

As there are few, if any pure types, one form of organisation may be influenced by, riddled with or driven by another type. In some cases, these different types may work at cross purposes. Take for example, the relatively recent school reform initiative of professional learning communities (PLCs): as a community, ideally these associative forms strive for egalitarianism and the free give and take of information (learning, teacher growth and professional development, curricular or pedagogical innovation, etc). However, even these laudable ends are not immune from the corrupting influence of status and dominance hierarchies, power, and control.

Culture

Yet another organisational principle, if not a form *per se*, is that of culture. Though not one form, like community, culture deserves brief mention because it is frequently used as a central concept in school improvement and reform schemes (see Hargreaves and Fullan 1998; Harris 2002), often in less technically precise ways. Varenne and McDermott (1999) have gone to great lengths to show how facile, superficial or erroneous conceptions of culture have precipitated severe negative effects that often extend beyond the scope of the original work. More than perhaps any of the other terms and concepts discussed thus far, how various authors, administrators, policy-makers and would-be reformers use the concept of culture belies their ontology, their worldview, sometimes even their intentions. For instance, rather than viewing culture – the culture within a school or other organisation, say – as a chaotic, dynamic, self-organising system, some might view culture as being manipulable or controllable. Such a view, in my opinion, is evidence of what I term managementality (a play on the Foucauldian concept of governmentality), whose ontological earmark is a propensity to frame the lived, social world into problems or issues that can then be managed. It is doubtful that culture or even a culture can be changed, manipulated or engineered in any meaningful, conscious way, for, as a dynamic system, any such effort is likely to produce numerous effects – some intended, no doubt, but many unintended. As with all such dynamic systems, culture is always in flux, and changes to such systems, aside from being unpredictable, also require constant attention, reassessment, and frequent corrective action.

Conclusion

This article is intended to contribute to the discourse of educational leadership and administration, especially that concerned with school, schooling, and school improvement. While the treatment given to the various types of organisational forms here is, of necessity, partial and incomplete, I have attempted to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced view of the processes at play within schools and other types of organisations. Knowledge of the processes presented here is, of itself, insufficient to reform or improve schools, but I am certain that ignorance of these processes dooms school improvement and change efforts from their inception. But I want to be clear that, along with Rancière (1991), I do not believe that there is any perfect system. As he wrote: 'Philosophers are undoubtedly right to denounce the functionaries who try to rationalise the existing order. That order has no reason. But they deceive themselves by pursuing the idea of a social order that would finally be rational' (89). That said, we must not abandon our efforts at educational change and school improvement; but rather than pursuing a utopian ideal, the point I've tried to make here is that we would be well served if we simply improved upon our organisational forms. In this, our efforts resemble those of philosophers, who proceed, according to Burbules (1995, 7, para. 5), 'not towards truth, but away from error'.

Notes

1. This article is based on a keynote address given by me to the X Congreso Interuniversitario de Organización de Instituciones Educativas, Barcelona, Spain, 13 December 2008.
2. An empty-nester is a person who, though a parent, currently has no children living at home, as generally they will have aged, become emancipated or independent, and 'left the nest'.
3. Often the threat of force is sufficient for a dominant individual to retain his/her position unquestioned and unrivalled. A threat of force may cause a lower-status individual to retreat or relent. Use of force is often the least preferred option, and those in power (i.e., higher ranked individuals) may employ proxies or substitutes (sometimes symbolic) before or instead of force. For instance, in baboons, a loud shout or cry, a 'wahoo' in the parlance of primatology, is the weapon of choice. The louder and more sustained the wahoo, the stronger the individual. Wahoo contests between those in power and potential usurpers often take the place of nasty, physical battles (Cheney and Seyfarth 2007).
4. In the human realm, the effects of this phenomenon might be seen in the relative flexibility of US society versus the more fixed, conventional and traditional societies in, for example, Europe – specifically, France, Germany and Italy (Erlanger 2008); though these societies, too, are changing. This is one explanation for the flashpoint nature of race relations in Paris and its suburbs. See Chau (2007) for a novel discussion of the effects (especially the societal benefits) of openness and tolerance in some societies relative to others, tolerance especially in those countries she refers to as hegemons.
5. See Waite et al. (2007) for a discussion of traditional v. post-modern values in international contexts and the interplay among the major social institutions – the state, the church, and business – in education.
6. The delegitimisation of the state is one of the 12 indicators used by *Foreign Policy* magazine to monitor and rank dysfunctional national governments. The other indicators include: demographic pressures, refugees/IDPs (internally-displaced persons), group grievance, human flight, uneven development, economic decline, public services, human rights, security apparatus, factionalised elites, and external intervention (see *Foreign Policy*'s website at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/06/22/2009_failed_states_index_interactive_ map_and_rankings). Corruption is both the product of and a contributor to other pernicious organisational conditions. For instance, power and the abuse of power are implicated in corrupt systems. Also, in addition to siphoning resources flowing from the top down, corrupt officials can generate exorbitant wealth from the bottom up, in a kind of pyramid scheme of corruption (see Waite and Allen 2003). Higher levels of corruption appear to be *negatively* correlated with a wealthy populace (i.e., high median income levels); that is, it appears that a nation's wealth is less evenly distributed the greater the corruption: less corrupt nations tend to be wealthier, poorer nations tend to be more corrupt ones. (For corruption indexes, see Transparency International's website at: http://www.transparency.org/.)
7. I use the terms 'stovepipe' and 'silo' interchangeably in the present discussion for convenience.
8. This structure and its units represent the proverbial 'box' in the clichéd admonishment to think outside the box.
9. Thanks to Coleen Stewart (2008) for alerting me to this concept.
10. This instinct has been found in both humans and other animals. Carey (2008) cited studies that reported such behaviour in guppies; where members share scouting duties in assessing the danger posed by predatory fish, if one member lags and doesn't take its turn in front, others will loop behind and force it to contribute. 'The upshot of all this [research]...', Carey summarised, 'is that human beings prefer cooperation, both in their individual makeup and in the makeup of their social groups' (D6).

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