

Pluperfect Tensions: Organizations M and A

Perhaps it is indicative of the ubiquitously connected and pervasively proximate time in which we now live that Heckscher and Adler (2006) proclaim the conception of contemporary firm as “collaborative community.” A simple search via Scholar’s Portal¹ on titles that contain variations of the word “collaborate” yield nearly 90,000 articles and books published over the last decade alone. This study’s BAH and UCaPP participant organizations both claim to encourage collaboration among their various constituencies. But as Loreen observes,

I think it’s [collaboration] a very misunderstood way of working. That if anyone were to look at that as a vernacular shift from teamwork, it’s completely different from teamwork. I often will ask how we got to a strategy ... what is the process they used to get there. And so a typical response could be, oh we definitely collaborated—we had everyone in the room. Everyone from the team was in the room. So that’s a meeting. It’s not a collaboration. (Loreen-1-95)

Loreen alludes to an important semantic distinction between a team and a collaboration—one that will be examined in greater detail in this, and the subsequent chapters. Yet, in the sort of difference in intent and effect that Loreen, the CEO of Unit 7, perceives lie the significant distinctions that characterize organizations as being either more-BAH or more-UCaPP. The distinctions appear when one considers the meaning-producing contexts of the overtly intended, the unintended, and the sometimes more manipulative, tacitly intended effects created in each organizational environment. These environments range from the most BAH among the participant

¹ An online database of indices pointing to journals published by the major academic publishers, full-text scholarly resources, collections of dissertations, and other miscellaneous publications that are salient to an academic audience.

organizations, through the organization that seems to define the clearly UCAPP form of collaborative management. Each organization tells a unique and revealing story that defines its location on the BAH-through-UCAPP continuum.

**Organization M: The Contemporary Archetype of Bureaucracy,
Administrative Control, and Hierarchy**

In general, BAH organizations can be thought of as being primarily concerned with the instrumentality of their processes; in other words, accomplishing the nominal purposes and objectives assigned to each *bureau* in the bureaucracy. At one time in the government, policy analysts and advisors enacted the role of helping to develop the impetus for government initiatives. Although the political imperative set the thematic direction for public policy, it was the analytic role of the civil service that translated those themes into the motive force that drove legislation and regulations. This has changed, according to Organization M's Mary: "The authority that people had as a policy advisor is pretty well gone. The authority that managers had is pretty well gone. The policy is coming from the top down now, not from the bottom up" (Mary-1-23).

Mary describes how a new government's assumption of partisanship on the part of civil service members created an immediate distrust of their motives, and hence, their presumed ability to perform their jobs appropriately. "Even though I'm in the same position, I could see the mistrust because part of my job was to go to the House and somebody would stand in front of me and I couldn't do my job" (Mary-1-47). This mistrust resulted in the creation of a political functionary layer, inserted between the politicians and the civil service, that assumed the direct responsibility for

policy creation, notably without the thought and analysis that characterizes the civil service's nominal policy role.

From her perspective as a policy advisor, Mary describes the deterioration of the quality and value of her position, as policy is now being directed from the senior hierarchical level of political operatives:

I haven't done a briefing in years and our jobs have been really devalued. There's zero creativity now and ... [there used to be] tons. I used to do Cabinet submissions. And I probably, in the first ten years I was there, might have done twenty or thirty. I probably haven't done more than two or three in the last twenty years. (Mary-1-57)

I would imagine that within our ministry, the people that are actually doing stuff that our ministry takes ownership of, are basically writing as directed. (Mary-1-67)

That direction comes within strictly segregated areas of responsibility that are well-defined and non-redundant among the ministry's various branches. Each branch looks after its own, relatively narrow considerations. This parochial behaviour is consistent with the characteristically BAH assumption – derived from Henri Fayol's (1949) "division of work" principle – that a large and significant issue, when fragmented and decomposed into its component parts, will reveal itself completely through a detailed understanding of each individual piece.

Coordination in such a BAH environment involves delegating responsibility among the branches so that there is minimal, if any, topical redundancy or overlap with respect to those pieces. Simultaneously, the ministry attempts to ensure that each piece is indeed the responsibility of one branch or another.

The reproduction of tasks being mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive with respect to an all-compassing objective inheres in each individual, even to the most junior of personnel. Mina, with only one year's experience in the ministry, defines her role in terms of a "portfolio" of three, distinct jobs². The juxtaposition of the three jobs in one body is a fascinating, fractal microcosm of BAH division of work: they don't particularly relate to one another in theme, synergies, expertise, or any other common attributes or characteristics of the task responsibilities themselves. Rather, they seem to fulfil fractioned, functional requirements of the ministry that are able to co-exist in one position because the individual jobs are mutually exclusive, and collectively exhaust Mina's required work time. In that sense, they indeed comprise a portfolio. They are a basket of unrelated tasks that not only represent the functional decomposition of the organization but, in a sense, functionally decompose the integral individual herself.

Water-tight Bureaucracy

As previously mentioned, policy is dictated directly from the hierarchical layer of political functionaries to be "written as directed." Members of the civil service have increasingly become isolated from each other, and from the general flow of information. "To be honest, now there's such water-tight compartments, I can't even tell you the details of the [policy papers] that are happening, whereas before, we used to—there used to be a lot more sharing" (Mary-1-35). The introduction of the political layer changed not only the traditional, linear, bureaucratic information flow.

² Mina's specific jobs are not identified to protect her confidentiality.

It also transformed delegation of control through vertical organizational channels. Hence, it also changed the relational dynamics of power throughout the organization. As Mary describes, “there’s just such a hierarchy now of people who are political that are running things. They will make a policy decision that they want to do something ... [and] we stopped doing recommendations”(Mary-1-35), significantly reducing the civil service’s influence in public policy.

Mary’s personal experience of deskilling, devaluing, and disempowerment in her work role encouraged her to become active in the union. After listening to various anecdotes, I ask Mary whether the union is paralleling the government in the way it is run, how its members and middle management ranks are being disempowered and deskilled, and how diverse opinions are systematically ignored. She responds: “You know, it actually is. I never thought about it that way, and it wasn’t supposed to be” (Mary-1-96). In fact, the union seems to be replicating the precise power dynamics that are effected in the management structure and operations—a form of “reproduction of the system of means” to which Castells (1996, p. 171) refers.

Thus, if there is dysfunction, inequity, and exercise of privilege in the workplace, it is not unexpected that there might be analogous dysfunction, inequity, and exercise of privilege in the union. Mary realizes this dynamic has indeed occurred:

[The union president] often makes policy, and this is what bugged me on the board. He could have showed [the policy letter] to the board, but he didn’t. So he’s making policy on his own all the time. I guess that sounds pretty much like the current government. Wow. Wow. Yeah, I never thought of that. (Mary-1-107)

Mary's characterization of "water-tight compartments" seems to be a significant innovation in BAH control that, in an ironic way, seems to be perversely consistent with the contemporary, massively interconnected era. In traditional bureaucracies, information and delegation would travel along a linear chain of command as originally described by Fayol (1949), with relatively little substantive change over the decades. Managers at various hierarchical levels would serve as the gatekeepers and governors of that information, giving them considerable control, and therefore, "information power" (French & Raven, 1959).

Individuals in the political layer between the politicians and civil service now have the ability to directly connect with and control those who fill discrete positions anywhere throughout the bureaucratic hierarchy. Although there remains a very clear and explicit status hierarchy in government, and an administrative bureaucracy that involves complicated, procedural rigour, control-from-the-top can be effected as point-to-point connection, isolating an individual from intervening or subordinate bureaucratic levels.

Traditional administrative bureaucracies would typically create so-called silos in which information flows vertically in an organization, but is impeded from horizontal dissemination except for specifically designated "bridges" or "gangplanks" as Fayol originally called them—positions whose control connected two or more functional areas. With the form of direct control present in contemporary government structures, vertical flow of information has become likewise impeded.

To effect this type of direct-from-the-top control of substantial content – that is, the development of public policy – necessitates a particular sort of bureaucratic apathy among those with nominal, legitimated power. Individuals’ power-to-control ambitions must be diverted from directing substantial issues to controlling more trite and trivial aspects of individual behaviours often typified, if not caricatured³, in hierarchical, administrative bureaucracies.

A hiring strategy that effectively destroys institutional memory over time is one way to distract civil servants from the reality of their loss of policy power. Relatively young and inexperienced people, albeit with formal credentials, are being hired and rapidly promoted, according to Mary. With little to no prior experience and no institutional memory among the new senior ranks in the governmental bureaucracy, the politicizing of what used to be the civil service’s policy role – its locus of power and influence with respect to the public interest – is more easily accomplished. The distraction creates a shift that encourages a greater focus on individual status and intra-organizational power dynamics, taking a significant toll in organizational effectiveness and culture.

Organizationally, this control shift has created a new form of what I might term *discrete-office* bureaucracy, in which information flow and delegation can be effected point-to-point, from the top (political layer) of the hierarchy to any arbitrary member situated at any arbitrary lower level. Sean, for example, describes a situation in which he received what appeared to be two separate assignments, one via this

³ Viz. the television program, *The Office*, or the satirical comic, *Dilbert*.

discrete-office dynamic and the other via the normal delegation mechanism from his direct superior. Before expending too much effort on what would have been redundant tasks, he was able to discern that the two seemingly independent requests were, in fact, one and the same. Sean sums up his reaction to this type of dilemma: “The entire information flow process is frustrating sometimes because you just never, well, not never, but at this point I’m not a hundred percent confident that I’m talking to who I should be talking to, when I’m talking to them” (Sean-1-47).

Official hiring approaches in Organization M seems to be divided between the classical divisions of “thinkers” – relatively more senior positions involving analytical and decision-making responsibility – and “doers,” those involved in relatively lower-level tasks. For the latter category, often aimed at recruiting relatively less-qualified people, there are internship programs intended for managers who have justified entry-level positions to fill. However, Mina claims that the program is less about filling required roles within the civil service:

Essentially, it’s a way to bring people into the government. So, you are encouraged to look for work while you’re there as an intern. You can stay in the program as long as you want, up to two years. Or, you can start looking as early as you want. Your mostly direct goal is to get a job. (Mina-1-268)

People could leave their rotation in the middle, or they could leave two months into it. It’s considered ambitious [if they leave early]. It’s good for them, right? It’s a loss for the manager. They were hoping to have them for longer than two months, or however long they were there, but that’s the purpose of the program. It’s the intern’s career, and it’s their choice. (Mina-1-292)

In the description of the program’s operation, the specific intern seems to be irrelevant to the job, and the specific job is irrelevant to the intern—the program is

effectively a staging platform that matches a relatively anonymous person into an arbitrary, permanent job. Structured as it is, with no apparent commitment to the hiring manager or her/his task requirements, the program is designed to foster individualism, and deny any feeling of collective responsibility or collaborative mentality. In other words, it promotes isolation, independence, and tends to preclude fostering a culture of collective benefit throughout the organization.

For more senior, and senior-track positions, there is an emphasis on hiring credentialed, but relatively inexperienced, new members:

With respect to the young people coming in and being hired. I've noticed ... there's a trend that they're all coming from Large University. They generally all have, I think, an MPA [Master of Public Administration degree]. ... People who have been around for a long time will not go for the [more senior and supervisory] jobs; ... they feel that the competitions are skewed so that the younger people will win. (Mary-1-41)

In addition, there has been a concerted effort to eliminate access to paper files that comprise the tangible form of a government's long-term organizational memory (Mary-1-131/135), a plan that many are resisting (Sean-1-207). Mary comments on the "trend that was there about ten years ago to give people early retirement—there goes the institutional memory. But when the paper's gone too ... it's just weird" (Mary-1-141). The combined effect of both the hiring strategy and the elimination of documents is to gradually erase institutional memory from the managerial ranks of the organization, making them more susceptible to being controlled by the political functionary hierarchical layer previously mentioned. Without ready access to historical precedents via either records or direct memory, those who traditionally

might have been considered in the class of “thinkers” now effectively become little more than higher-status “doers,” as Mary has described.

This structural change in the hierarchy does not consider the organization’s members instrumentally, nor does it consider them strictly in interpersonal relational terms. Rather, in *effect*, it seems to make the rather startling statement that not only are people irrelevant, but so too are the espoused purpose and objectives of the organization itself. The organization’s in-use theory appears to have become an instrumental means through which to effect partisan political policy using BAH control mechanisms⁴. The participants’ experience with the internship program, described earlier, is consistent with this rather contentious observation.

An individual employed under the two-year internship program is under no obligation to complete either the first or second one-year work term if s/he locates a job at any time during the year, whether it is related to the assigned work-term tasks or not. There seems to be an air of irrelevance associated with both the task and the specific person: the task is of nominal importance in that it must have prior justification, although there is no imperative for it to be completed; the view of the intern him/herself is simply that of an undifferentiated future bureaucrat.

⁴ I would say that this contention is not unique to Organization M; it seems to be endemic to many, if not most, contemporary, highly partisan, nominally democratic jurisdictions. This observation in turn raises a concern about the nature of democratic process (aside from the periodic exercise of a minority of the public marching to polls and casting ballots). If, as I argue, contemporary societal conditions mandate connections, juxtaposition of meaning-making contexts, and complex analyses of complex problems, the very structure of government organizations may well be inconsistent with the ideals of contemporary democracy and democratic principles. This, however, is a topic for a different thesis.

The ramifications of this shift are that, over time, members become disengaged with the nominal purpose of what should be a purposeful organization. Instead, they become hyper-focused on retaining the hierarchical trappings of office to the point where some managers' assumption of the privilege of absolute control over individuals almost defies credulity in a contemporary context. For example, during a dispute mediation between an individual who is a union member, and her manager,

the mediator told both parties to write their list of what they wanted. The manager came back with her list, and one of the things she wanted my person to sign off on was, the manager is always right. It was weird, like, that was what she wanted, I am always right, whatever I say.
(Mary-1-165)

There is another explanation that is perhaps not quite as stark as the contention that the governmental organization's purpose and its members are irrelevant. What is particularly notable about how the organization has evolved over the past two decades is the change in structural thinking about *organization* caused by partisan political concerns in what might otherwise be considered a typical BAH organization. Organization M seems to view *relationships* – albeit partisan relationships – as its dominant organizing factor, rather than the more usual and expected structuring influences of an office's instrumental responsibility or purpose. In effect, the introduction of the political layer of the hierarchy and discrete-office control creates a new, very contemporary, mutation of the centuries-old BAH organization. This new variation of the traditional form involves two distinct classes of “thinkers” and initiates direct control of individual “doers” by one of the thinker classes, in parallel to the nominal hierarchical chain of command. As I will discuss in a later chapter, implicating relationships as a fundamental structuring element in a

contemporary organizational form represents a significant conceptual change that is definitively characteristic of the UCaPP world.

Speaking With One Voice

Just as many individuals seem to place their personal interests above those of the organization as a whole, each branch vigorously represents its own interests – often in contention with its sister branches – relative to the ministry as a whole. Thus, the ministry’s nominal, politically obligatory objective of representing a single, unified approach to complex issues is a challenge. Given the specificity of functional responsibilities distributed among the branches, there seems to be no space for nuance, negotiating meaning or consensus, or holding polarity tensions (Johnson, 1992) when coordinating complex issues:

Ideally, each person would speak only about their area of expertise, or their branch’s interests. ... So you’ll get two people addressing the same issue, and if they’re taking a different tack on it, you’ve got to find a way to make sure you resolve it, and have only one person speaking... Where there is a contradiction [in approaches] ... it’s just been a matter of whoever has got the technical rights to that particular issue. It’s within their area of jurisdiction, they pull rank and that’s that. It’s designed to be that way ... so that, at the end of the day, the ministry speaks with only one voice, and it’s not a fractured voice. (Sean-1-27/29)

Sean’s description of how such issues are resolved – those who possess the “technical rights” to the issue “pull rank” – is completely consistent with both the status hierarchy and fragmented scopes of responsibility that define a BAH organization. The ministry’s consultative committee process is a useful illustration of these characteristics. As part of the process of drafting legislation, the government often consults with a committee of stakeholders representing various interested and

relevant public constituencies. Because of his technical knowledge and functional role, Sean believes it would make sense for him to directly participate on the committee, and has advocated to be included. However, ministry representation on these committees is restricted:

The consultant that is running the committee process, and the government agency that is helping them run it, are very reluctant to add [ministry] people to the committee, because ... they want to make sure [public committee members'] input is heard, and the more government members that you add, the more you are likely to just sort of be doing a fancy consultation, rather than actually taking their [i.e., the public members'] input seriously (Sean-1-43).

Hierarchical status and class – those whose office nominally defines domain responsibility – determine who represents the ministry on these committees, as opposed to subject matter experts like Sean—those who do the actual analytic work.

The director of my branch is our ministry's member, our ministry's representative. He is assigned work though the committee, and myself, and a colleague with the branch are the ones who are actually doing the work, because he's got the actual running the branch to do. So we look at the actual issues, do the meat of the work. (Sean-1-37)

After each committee meeting, Sean receives minutes and a debrief from his superiors who actually attended. “We try to figure out what's going on, because, you know, the minutes of the meeting are very minimal, and you can't really tell what the interactions are and where the pressures are coming from on particular initiatives in committee” (Sean-1-37). Such fragmentation of responsibility, separating “thinkers” from “doers” *à la* Frederick Taylor, has its consequences. Sean describes one of the more ironic cases in which bureaucratic procedure, nominally designed for efficient transmission of information and coordination of activities, actually *hinders* information conveyance needed to properly contextualize an issue:

As [the committee members] identify issues, I'll go through the minutes, and like, oh, they could have thought about this, they could have approached it this way, this was an option for them too. And my advice, while it does get back to them eventually, it goes through a formal approval process, it goes to my director, and it's noted at the start of the next meeting, at which point it's not the most helpful. It's more distilled and it's distant from when they were actually making those decisions. (Sean-1-49)

Thus, the resolution of ambiguity, ambivalence, nuance, and diverse contexts does not involve direct interaction or conversation with the committee. Instead, it remains a fractured, jurisdictional concern, mediated by bureaucratic, hierarchically defined procedures. The committee may indeed make a clear and distinct decision, but it is without the benefit of appropriately hearing relevant information that would have informed its conclusions or recommendations at the time. According to administrative procedure, information-flow is technically well-coordinated with its ideation of an efficient decision-making process. But as Sean notes, "So there's the ideal process, and the reality is fairly far from it" (Sean-1-91).

To find compromise – a middle ground that perhaps holds a third or fourth alternative to the two distinct positions held by different factions – requires connection, juxtaposition of contexts, meeting of minds, and mutual understanding. The bureaucracy of Organization M, based on what Mary describes as "water-tight compartments" (Mary-1-35), precludes these precursors to comprehensive meaning-making. With a considerably narrowed scope of ground conditions, the sense that the organization is able to make of any given issue becomes, in effect, limited to that particular outcome desired by those in a superior position of control. Processes of deliberation in Organization M are structurally designed to preclude meaningful

connections and deep contextual understanding in favour of distinct, dichotomous, right-and-wrong clarity—a sensibility necessarily requiring unity because “the ministry speaks with only one voice” (Sean-1-29).

The government is making a notable attempt to reduce individual ministries’ insular view of their particular areas of concern, especially with regard to major issues or broad themes of public interest. These more complex matters require multiple ministries to coordinate their policy and program initiatives. Thus, the government has created small, cross-ministry organizations. True to BAH form, all of these working groups respect strict hierarchical levels: members in any given group are of the same senior management rank, constructing Henri Fayol’s equal-rank “gang planks” to effect inter-ministry coordination.

Success by the Numbers

Stan describes the extreme emphasis the organization places on quantification and (supposedly) objective measurements to demonstrate accomplishments. However, he suggests that metrics are specifically selected to illustrate the success of the system and its overseers, rather than the true effectiveness-relative-to-intent of the program. One example⁵ describes how a particular government initiative that funds locally administered programs throughout the province has three metrics: a measurement of local intention, that is, the intended number of people who will be served by the program; a measurement of provider agreements, that is, the number of people that individual service providers agree to serve; and a measurement of actual services

⁵ Details are deliberately vague to respect Stan’s confidentiality.

provided to the public. Funding is provided to local authorities based on the measurement of intention, and the minister reports the success of the program to Parliament in terms of that number. However, Stan relates that in a major Canadian city, less than 25% of the intended number of people are actually served, a number that is relatively hidden from scrutiny.

Similarly, Stan outlines the budget reconciliation process, designed so that the budgeting system – not to mention the government itself – is not embarrassed or shown to be deficient in fiscal control. Managers are given a personal, financial incentive to have their actual annual expenses fall within 2% of their final budget. However, that final budget estimate is actually locked-in less than three months before the end of the fiscal year. Effectively, managers win their bonuses for managing a 2% budget-versus-actual margin over a period of less than one fiscal quarter.

The extreme focus on quantification even extends to whether the organization considers the morale of its members to be important:

I think a lot of managers and directors ... don't want to invest in people, because, investment in people, you cannot quantify it. It's not quantifiable. And you cannot see the outcome right away. But, for [my manager], if she could [increase the number of signed agreements to provide services], it's quantifiable. She can see the outcome of it right away. But whether my morale is going up or down, she couldn't care less. And I think a lot of organizations feel that. (Stan-1-80)

Nominally, as with all quantitative measurements, the numbers do not lie. However, despite the measurement system in Organization M being specifically designed so that the measured results are likely to appear favourable, irrespective of the actual outcomes, Stan laments,

...performance measurement shouldn't be taken in isolation. It should be taken in context with other, broader things. [Service provision] shouldn't be taken in the context of just providing X-number of [services] to people. It should be taken in the context of other things. Health. Community. (Stan-I-47)

It is almost as if the organization is incapable of making sense of a situation or understanding the effects of initiatives – the *quality* of what it is doing – without a nominally objective, external framework, and directed procedures on which to rely. Sense-making in complex environments typically involves assimilating and integrating diverse thinking, and drawing on multiple, meaning-making contexts. However, the more procedural, the more fragmented, and more removed from actual context this interpretive process becomes, the less overall sense is actually made. An organizational view based on extreme administrative instrumentality and objective quantification may be unable to perceive quality. It is perhaps even true that an extreme-BAH organization is neither designed nor instrumented to actually make sense.

Organization A: UCaPP Islands in a Sea of BAH

Organization A is a corporation that has grown considerably through mergers, especially over the past several years. During the last decade, it has assimilated at least six other large organizations, creating, in one sense, a *bricolage*⁶ of organizational cultures, behaviours, and attitudes. Organization A's still-evolving culture is set against a context of an extremely competitive industry, the challenges of serving a

⁶ *Bricolage* generally refers to a visual or musical artistic composition comprised of found objects as both materials and instruments, arranged in diverse styles, and often set in a new context, to provide a new meaning in a manner often characteristic of post-modern expression. In a cultural context, the term is often used to convey the idea of using various materials and objects symbolizing class differences to create new cultural identities, often in opposition to the establishment status quo as a response to perceived or felt hegemony and oppression.

highly knowledgeable and demanding customer market, and management ideas that are rooted in the BAH mindset of the past century. Members of the organization have developed what could almost be called a reflexive response to significant organizational change.

“Hey folks, you understand why we merged and what Wall Street expects from us. It’s our, essentially, common duty how to figure out how to meet that.” (Adam-1-8)

The expectation to which Adam refers is to “obviously achieve what’s euphemistically called the merger synergies, which really translates to the elimination of redundant things—essentially cuts” (Adam-2-8). Such a hegemonically imposed “common duty” results in what Adam calls a “feeding frenzy at merge time. Everybody is trying to find a place, and try[ing] to leverage it to figure out how they can best benefit from it, personal[ly]” (Adam-1-48). People jockey for position in competition with each other for a reduced number of jobs. Perhaps mirroring the competitive market environment of Organization A’s industry, continually competing for survival is one of the key issues front and centre in many people’s minds. In conventional BAH discourse, competition is perceived as a beneficial way of allowing the best ideas, methods, and capabilities to surface. More competitive individuals combine to create a more competitive company that will be better positioned to succeed in a very competitive marketplace. In this, Organization A seems to be following modern BAH contingency theories (e.g., Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) in adapting its internal strategies to match its perception of external realities in the knowledge economy in which it participates.

In a so-called knowledge economy, it is cliché to say that knowledge is power. However, when knowledge is construed as an input commodity, a raw material, or resource that enables production in said economy (e.g., Drucker, 1969), it can become constructed as a rivalrous resource in the context of individuals “competing” with one another for their own jobs, as in the case of post-merger Organization A. In this knowledge-based organization, disruption in information flow creates disruption in the ability to accomplish the work of the organization, in other words, to achieve the organization’s objectives and purpose. Knowledge, an inherently non-rivalrous resource and the organization’s life-blood, is turned into a scarce and rivalrous commodity by an artificially constructed, internal marketplace for employment.

I think it’s motivated by two factors. One of them is that some view it as an opportunity to move on, move up, and others, as an opportunity to protect their current position. So in both cases there’s a certain amount of tension because information is not flowing, and for us that becomes an issue, because information that’s needed to make decisions and recommendations and plans becomes fragmented and becomes a little bit twisted by the interests of the supplier of the information.
(Adam-1-52)

In creating an ironic rejection of Fayol’s (1949) classical management principle of putting the organization’s concerns above those of the individual, the organization engineers this otherwise unintended consequence of information flow reducing to a trickle. At times when people see opportunity to either survive, advance, or protect territory (Adam-1-52), it is literally counter-productive for the senior management of the organization to create conditions of rivalrous knowledge that restrict the flow of information. Employees’ personal concerns make overall organizational objectives almost instantly irrelevant. Adam describes the circumstances of one such situation:

I'm working on this project, and I've been very diligently trying to get one of the folks who's essentially a peer of mine, to include me in his plans, because we're both planning in kind of the same area. So, you know, I wanted to establish a relationship where he feels that we're sharing something. So I made the first opener. I made the second opener. I made the third opener. It's no longer an opener, I suppose. The third contact, and I'm still having trouble getting myself invited to the regular meeting that he's holding. (Adam-2-94)

What information sharing does occur during times of organizational flux is often facilitated by pre-existing allegiances. In general, people's personal attachments to particular organizational entities – divisions, departments, and workgroups – transcends the strictly instrumental association with the particular location of that function in the bureaucratic organization chart. Seeming to ignore this very human dynamic, redistribution of departmental location in post-merger Organization A was arranged by function, consistent with the traditional BAH principle of functional decomposition: "if you think you do [Systems Architecture], you're in this group. Otherwise you don't do [SA]" (Frank-1-180).

Organizational Affinities

This pure, functionally oriented group alignment disrupts people's affective connections to, and identification with, their previous workgroups. In many cases, the disruption creates problematic mixed loyalties and awkward situations, reported by both Adam and Frank. One example demonstrates how knowledge and reorganized hierarchy intersect in a somewhat surprising way. In the organization cultural construct that enshrines (rivalrous) knowledge as power, sharing knowledge becomes a privilege of one's power and relative hierarchical position—almost becoming a matter

of personal identity and self-image. Adam describes what has become the inevitable initial response when asking for information assistance:

It starts out a hundred percent of the time, there's like, should you be talking to me? Why should I talk to you about this kind of stuff? ... It happens all the time. All the time. I know because I'm having discussions with other folks and we mention one person, and there's quiet. And the next thing you hear is, oh yeah, he's in that chain of command, so I know that he's just looked him up [laughs], trying to figure out do they matter or they don't matter ... regardless of whatever they've got to say. (Adam-2-126)

Karen echoes Adam's observation of how people ascribe relevance to an individual and their request for assistance based on their relative location in the organizational hierarchy. "Sometimes when I'm reaching out to someone new, they look me up and they see who my reporting hierarchy is, and they're like, who are you? What do you do? People look me up and say, you do what?" (Karen-1-270).

Karen's experience seems to be contextualized by a somewhat different psychosocial ground than many others. More than most people, she has lived in a place of continual organizational flux over the past decade. Her experiences are not so much the result of specific structural changes in the organization, although she has certainly felt the effects of administrative, bureaucratic, and corporate restructurings over the years. Rather, she situates herself where the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of the organization appears to be less strictly enforced, and is therefore less restricted with respect to the latitude she enjoys in enacting her various roles. It is a place in which Karen creates connections that take on a more network-like quality, better described by Granovetter (1973) or Nardi et al. (2000, 2002), than Fayol (1949).

Karen defines herself in terms of various activities she undertakes on behalf of various constituencies, and the multiplicity of connections she enacts in response to *ad hoc*, often unforeseen, requirements. Uncharacteristic for a primarily BAH organization, she explicitly identifies that the majority of her organizational contributions do not neatly fall into a functionally defined niche that is a proper subset of her manager's decomposed responsibility: "If you consider the work I do ... more than half, and sometimes eighty percent of the stuff I do has nothing to do with his stuff. ... What I do doesn't neatly fit in anybody's function" (Karen-1-248). Instead, Karen locates herself on the basis of exchanges and interactions *in relation*, creating strong connections with sales teams, technical departments, marketing staff, legal counsel, and executive offices.

Nonetheless, even while Karen individually maintains strong relations among various organizational constituencies, on a macro-scale, "the culture clashes have been just awful; painful from my perspective," (Karen-1-180). Karen's relative autonomy and relational connections would indeed make her perception of the organizational culture changes particularly "painful": the organization has shifted from what Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) describe as an open-systems model with greater internal flexibility, an external focus on customers and markets, and an emphasis on ends, to the diametrically opposite internal-process model of high corporate control, an internal focus on processes and procedures, and an emphasis on means⁷.

⁷ These are two quadrants of Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) Competing Values Framework of organizational effectiveness. The other two are the rational-goals, and human-relations models. The authors propose three axes that represent paradoxical dilemmas in organizational design, presented in a model deliberately constructed to highlight the polarity tensions among the

BAH Theories of Coordination and Change

A large part of BAH control is effected through the annual objective-setting exercise. Robert describes his department's process of objective-setting that is, in characteristic fashion, hierarchical. Objectives are set based on the needs of the business perceived from the highest level of the organizational hierarchy, and decomposed level-by-level all the way down.

You go through a large objective setting [exercise], and so I will set the objectives for my organization, and then each of my managers [set theirs] based on those objectives. A lot of times we jointly set the expectations for the organization. Based on those they will set the objectives for their contribution to our bigger division's objectives. And once they do that, then the people that report to them set their objectives to contribute to their manager's objectives. It's almost like a top-down, hierarchical objective setting. Objectives are both in business needs, you know, projects that we do, as well as personal growth. And so first the business need, then the how—your approach to your job, developing leadership, and then personal growth. (Robert-1-57)

Adam agrees:

There is a sort of a top down, development of expectations that start with very elastic statements of intent from the executives that are passed down through the ranks. And every time it goes down a rank, it is recast in some fashion that is relevant to that particular organization. (Adam-1-68)

Thus, the discrete, purposeful, and strictly instrumental involvement of both individuals and entire departments parallels formal organization structure, consistent with received organizational culture. From the historical lens that originally frames this study, this mentality could be considered as a retrieval of the factory

competing considerations of internal vs. external focus, flexible vs. stable structure, and means vs. ends in outcomes.

decomposition of the guild's integrated involvement in a craft that is a hallmark of the Industrial Age. Such a metaphorical connection is consistent with the desired "factory efficiency" of a primary-purposeful organization—even those squarely situated in the so-called knowledge economy. More important, the perceived efficiency of functionally decomposing large organizational objectives ultimately into discrete, individual tasks is a characteristic of more-BAH organizations.

The focus on internal processes, procedures, and consistency – especially with respect to administrative matters – is perhaps no better illustrated than in Robert's account of the organizational history of the Advanced Research and Development (ARD) division:

If I go back, and I have to go back a number of years, we had what we would call the RS community, Research Staff, when we were ARD. And there was very little hierarchy at that time. And, that kind of work, because it was more of an academic environment – this is twenty years ago – people didn't have that need to grow and succeed from a [hierarchical] position perspective. Succeeding from 'doing good work' was good enough, that the salary ranges were pretty open ended, so even though there was only one flat level, there was a huge variance in how much people were paid based on how good they were, and what they contributed to the business...

Then technical community got melded with the business community, and that's when we started to become level conscious like that, because there was nowhere in the structure to support such a wide band of salaries in just one flat thing, so basically we had an organization structure that mimicked the business side. But then the unfortunate thing about that is that in order to progress in your career or get paid more you had to become a manager. It was just the approach to do it. Recently, we went back to the ARD structure, probably about two, three years ago. We stayed hierarchical like that from a responsibility [perspective], but rather than the hierarchy being based on straight management responsibility, really, we enabled a technical ladder based on role in the organization, and based on your technical credentials. You know, the move up levels in our current technical ladder, at least in the Advanced Research and Development community, different levels

require different levels of degrees and experience in order to qualify.
(Robert-1-29)

This account provides almost a textbook case on how BAH requirements alone can drive a change that significantly alters the culture of a (sub)organization, and the morale of its members. To support a higher salary range, the only administrative response available to the BAH environment was to force technical-stream researchers to assume people-management responsibilities, something to which many technically oriented researchers and developers are often ill-suited. Eventually, ARD reverted to a merit- and qualification-based status hierarchy, away from the exclusively administrative-oriented hierarchy, thereby enabling the parallel class- and status-derived salary “ladders.” However, this attempted correction introduces its own dysfunctions, because of the near-exclusive reliance on administrative procedures that precludes human judgement, as Karen relates:

[The old ARD] had gotten away from this rigid hierarchy based on degrees, and people could get technical titles if they had done technically innovative work, had patents, et cetera. I had even known of an individual who got the highest possible technical rank based on his expertise and patents—and he didn’t even have a college degree.

My young colleague, a young man in his twenties, who has patents, he’s brilliant. He came out of the Internet culture, the start-up culture. He never took the time to get a degree. Doesn’t matter that he’s got patents, that he’s invented stuff. They can’t get him on the technical pay plan. He is really, really unhappy and hates the title he has.

There were a bunch of people who left ARD in the late nineties in the tech boom. This gentleman who had been with Organization A, I don’t know how long, maybe twenty years? Had patents, knew the systems and culture and the network. [His former manager] could have put him to work in thirty seconds and he could have been productive, because of his background and experience. But he had the wrong degree so she couldn’t hire him. (Karen-1-97)

According to basic tenets of BAH that emphasize suitability to occupy one's *office*, people are interchangeable and functionally replaceable so long as they have the same specifications, much like machine parts. A BAH organization ideally views its systems as well-understood, well-integrated, and *distinct from the people who occupy them*. Like their mechanical analogues, they are therefore able to be replicated and scaled by duplication with no expected change in outcome or effectiveness, given sufficient quality control; in the BAH organizational context, that means *people control*. This logic sketches what could be considered as the prevailing BAH theory of change—replicate what has worked in the past to accommodate growth in the future. It accounts for the emphasis on credentials – the quality control specifications, so to speak – in Karen's recollections.

However, it is precisely this logic – the BAH theory of change – that “was disastrous,” according to Robert, when Organization A's American operations centres went global. From a ground of functional decomposition, workload productivity measures, and purposeful utility, there was no reason to expect that replicating existing, successfully implemented domestic systems would not work. Yet, the global dissemination of these systems essentially failed. Robert now believes the organization is coming to grips with “how we're influencing each other as we go global. ... When we, the big Organization A, are going to influence throughout the world what we're also finding is, parts of the world are influencing us” (Robert-1-85). This reflection captures a notion that characterizes an essential principle of the massively interconnected world – one to which I will later return – namely *tactility*: one cannot touch without being touched.

Project coordination in Organization A has an almost factory-like, “just-in-time” quality to it. Adam’s role is related to high-level, strategic, project planning. Even though he regards himself as a “generalist,” his involvement is limited specifically to his area of expertise, as and when the next higher hierarchical level considers his specific technical opinions timely and necessary. The workflow is thus considered as a more-or-less linear series of decomposed tasks with relatively limited scope, rather than, say, being regarded holistically relative to an entire project, or with respect to other initiatives occurring elsewhere in the organization. Adam gives the distinct impression that each functional area of project planning works discretely, independent of other areas, save for well-defined interfaces through which one stage of the project passes to the next.

We hardly ever finish a project. The type of projects we get involved in, they tend to be at least a year long, and most of the time, multiple years. ... I personally don’t tend to stay with them until they’re finished. I simply get involved with multiple projects in the initial phases, and they do finish within the planning period, which is usually a year or a year-and-a-half. (Adam-1-118)

Similarly, Robert and his department have no involvement in the development or implementation phases of projects, nor in their final reconciliation. Essentially, once a project passes his area of responsibility, it’s gone. “In my present role as an architect, I am only engaged in the front end of the process. And so, once it gets beyond the requirements and stuff like that, I don’t follow it through into general availability and I don’t track the life cycle” (Robert-1-130). His participation is limited to that which satisfies his officially sanctioned objectives.

Indeed, almost all Organization A participants agree that, to their knowledge, there is no downstream revisiting or verification of the business case made for a given project. “I am unaware of re-evaluating the business case,” says Adam. “As a matter of fact, I am also unaware of systematic, uniform, post-project business case verification. ... Whenever I’ve asked, has anybody ever checked to see if we met the business case or not, most of the time I’m met with silence” (Adam-1-36). When asked about the same issue – whether he has ever heard of a post-mortem analysis performed on the business case used to justify a project – Robert replies, “I have not, but especially in the new Organization A, I would highly doubt that it doesn’t happen, because they’re very conservative on the tracking of [personal expenses], down to the dollar” (Robert-1-130).

This, once again, seems to confirm an inherent faith in the correctness of the system and administrative processes. So long as the plan is well-vetted, everything will proceed exactly as the plan predicts including the forecasted business results, even though such a presumption rarely bears up under scrutiny in common experience. This seems to be a tacit BAH premise of activity coordination—BAH organizations trust their systems, but not necessarily their people.

There is an additional reading of this situation that suggests an interesting power and control dynamic in operation. Bureaucratic administrations often impose mechanisms to give the *appearance* of tight fiscal controls through extensive business case review and vetting processes, combined with an obsessive focus on the minutiae

of individual expense management⁸, thereby effecting a form of *hegemonic* control over personnel. However, those with senior-level, legitimate power are rarely challenged or called to account for the validity of their business decisions, unless such decisions lead to public embarrassment. In effect, the system protects the integrity of the BAH power structure by never retrospectively and reflectively questioning a prior decision. In even more extreme BAH organizations, like Organization M, for instance, this apparent protection-denial mechanism is taken one step further by creating performance metrics specifically designed to demonstrate success, irrespective of whether the *intended* outcome is, or is not, achieved.

Perhaps, then, the previously proposed BAH premise should be slightly revised: so long as the plan is well-vetted, everything will proceed exactly as the plan predicts, subject to checking-up on the people, or ensuring the people will check-up on themselves (See Wilson, 1995).

Learning the (Cargo) Cult of Success

In theory, the BAH coordination approach based on functional decomposition is designed specifically for efficient operations, since individuals provide their specialist contributions precisely where and when they are needed. However, the approach as instantiated in Organization A limits the potential for experiential learning, and creating synergy with subsequent planning processes. Those whose

⁸ Robert on expense policy enforcement: “If you travel, the policy is you can spend \$40 a day. Now, if on one of those days you spend \$41, I don’t care if the next three days you spend \$20, you’ll be put on the list and the list will go up levels of management, and you’ll get a hate-mail from multiple levels above you on what part of the expense policy don’t you understand?” (Robert-1-105).

contributions are sought at a project's beginning rarely have the opportunity to experience and understand its later-phase effects and outcomes. In other words, Organization A seems to have deliberately limited its ability to learn by limiting an individual's future participation in areas that they nonetheless affect. Instead, success or failure in achieving a particular outcome is generally attributable to the accuracy and completeness of determining the component tasks, the performance quality of the workers accomplishing each of those tasks, and the effectiveness of the managers managing the workers.

From this relatively simplistic, linear logic comes the phenomenon of ascribed success: that success in attaining objectives and planned outcomes is, in and of itself, an endorsement of the planning and management methods that were employed. This leads to a sort of circular reasoning. If an organization is successful it is because of its management practices, and the validity of its management practices is conversely demonstrated by its business success. Essentially, success becomes its own justification of the means employed, and that such success can be replicated by emulating those successful means. Such mimicry, or direct emulation, of successful means can be considered to be a form of "cargo cult"⁹ (Worsley, 1968), or in more modern, business parlance, "best practices."

⁹ Cargo cult is the term coined by Worsley to refer to a superstition among the indigenous people of Melanesia after the second world war. They believed that by building replicas of the air-fields, control towers, and airplanes, they could entice the U.S. military personnel to return, bringing with them the valuable goods – cargo – to which they had access during the war years. The term is used metaphorically to refer to any practice that emulates another, previously successful practice with the aim of "enticing" success.

Adopting so-called best practices of other organizations is often founded in the “errant belief that there are certain practices that are truly ‘best’ and that replicating another organization’s processes, strategies, and ideas within your organization will somehow miraculously yield a better reality” (Sanwal, 2008, p. 51). Sanwal debunks “the myth of best practices” as not accounting for specific organizational culture and behaviours, differences in extant processes, and complex interactions among the various intertwined constituencies. Pawlowsky (2001) distinguishes the more deterministic assumptions of conventionally considered “best practices” from the in-depth, reflective, problem solving approaches of, for example, Argyris and Schön (1978, 1996). de Haën, Tsui-Auch, and Alexis (2001) find that, “in fact, strategies and knowledge are often ‘discovered’ in interactive, informal processes and made sense of only retrospectively. Hence it is doubtful that the optimal strategy or ‘best practices’ can be identified” (p. 917). And, the editors of the *Handbook of Organizational Learning and Knowledge* simply conclude, “the expectations of managers have often remained unfulfilled. Hopes of rapid change and smooth, almost effortless transferability of best practices from other organizations have often proved illusory” (Antal, Dierkes, Child, & Nonaka, 2001, p. 928). Rather, they emphasize the importance of organizational culture and embedded sense-making processes, “unlearning” ingrained practices, and problematizing the traditional loci of learning in the organization as crucial to truly assimilating new knowledge. As we will see in subsequent chapters, these authentic learning (as opposed to “best”) practices tend to prevail in more-UCaPP organizations.

Nonetheless, “best practiciness” (Sanwal, 2008) seems to flourish in the procedurally oriented BAH organization that often tends to avoid reflection and critical questioning. To understand how this occurs, consider the two distinct, sense-making mechanisms that predominate in Organization A with respect to acquired companies. The current Organization A is the result of a number of acquisitions, framed as mergers—precursor Company S acquired Companies P, M, A, B, and C over a period of approximately a decade. Consistent with a belief that “success is its own justification,” the processes, methods, systems, and senior management personnel from the more successful precursor organization should tend to dominate after each subsequent merger. Indeed, all Organization A participants confirm this to be the case: in Organization A’s culture, one ascribes greater success, and therefore dominance, to the acquiring company. For instance, Frank identifies the relative success of his precursor organization by pointing out that Company S acquired Company A, thereby demonstrating the superiority of Company S’s management processes. He notes that precursor Company A, “in my view was not real good on the execution side, and that’s why they got bought for billions [of dollars]” (Frank-2-26).

In most cases, Company S’s policies and practices were immediately imposed on the acquired companies. For example, Roxanne, Karen, Frank, and Robert all note the change in telecommuting policy after the acquisition of their respective precursor companies. Company S’s policy – essentially, no telecommuting is permitted – was imposed on all acquired companies as a means to impose more direct managerial control over employees, an ascribed contributor to Company S’s presumed superiority. The policy apparently ignored the fact that, in the merged organization, a

vast number of employees are not physically located in the same part of the country as their direct supervisors, let alone in the same office. It is therefore impossible to accomplish greater supervision and control through this policy because of the geographically dispersed workforce. Nonetheless, the policy stood—a clear indication of cargo-cult mentality at work.

On the other hand, another sense-making mechanism ascribes greater success, and therefore managerial precedence, to the component company that has the most successful product line among the precursor companies. This view holds even if the component companies are in different markets with completely different market dynamics. Company C – the most recently acquired company – is in one of the fastest growing, most successful business sectors in Organization A’s broad industry. Its recent run of success is largely due to one unique product offering to which Company C has exclusive rights. However, the cargo-cult principle of ascribed success has resulted in a number of Company C’s practices being adopted organization-wide. For example, the anti-telecommuting policy has been reversed, since Company C permits – indeed, encourages – telecommuting. Frank describes the conflicting sense-making dynamics that occurred after the acquisition of Company C:

Company C over the last number of years has been [in] a fairly hot and lucrative market. Their culture has been very different in a number of ways, which then means the way they operate and respond to things is different. ... There’s the thought of, well, Company S is the one that bought Company A. Company S is the one that bought Company C. And, of course, as you merge, then obviously you have folks coming from those other companies, and the question is, what is the prevailing overall philosophy of the merged company? And, I’m not saying that there aren’t good things to come from Company C by any means.
(Frank-2-2/24)

But the organization did adopt many other policies and practices from Company C. As well, it rewarded many Company C senior managers with plum, senior positions, despite some of them having little experience in their newly assigned areas, according to Karen (Karen-2-176). Adam observes the result of applying an ascribed-success form of sense-making:

The business unit that has the most successful product line seems to have been favoured as far as taking on increasing leadership position. ... I think what's happening is, they obviously have a product that's more appealing at this point. But Organization A has a whole suite of products. Because that particular product is more appealing and sells better seems to have been the justification to put those folks in more sort of decision-making roles. ... I mean, there is something to that logic, but [chuckles] sometimes it seems a little bit cavalier way of making decisions. (Adam-2-2/8)

Indeterminacy of Initiative

Although such observations among the members might lead to morale-impairing cynicism, one generally cannot completely suppress individual initiative and motivation, especially when it might reflect well on the individual. Adam describes taking initiative when he recognizes an opportunity that has not been identified in the official plan:

When we recognize an opportunity ... we look for executives that might be stakeholders in that, usually up the chain of command. I think that's probably the main way to make yourself known, and you know, somehow demonstrate that you're contributing, that you're aware of the problems. (Adam-1-90)

Taking business initiative, that Adam frames as a "survival tactic," nevertheless requires that the action must be sanctioned by a more senior individual in the hierarchy "up the chain of command." In contrast, Karen often acts autonomously on

opportunities she sees. There are functionally derived positions in the company charged with the nominal responsibility to perform tasks similar to those Karen has taken up. However, she describes the qualitative difference between one of her roles, and that of others who perform what might at first appear to be a similar function:

These business customers ask really hard technical questions as part of their buying process, and they put out these really ugly R[quest] F[or] P[roposal]s, with many, many detailed technical questions. Here is where my role differs from other organizations who are either charged with developing product collateral, or developing technical architectures and designs, or just answering RFPs. I take the questions and answers [that I provide] and turn them into RFP boilerplate material so the entire sales force can benefit by this work. (Karen-1-1)

Karen autonomously identifies the need for this particular RFP coordination effort that is perceptible only in a larger perspective. Her effort might not be strictly justifiable, otherwise it would have been previously defined as part of another department's responsibility. Yet her initially unofficial contributions have proven to be of tremendous value over the years, primarily because of Karen's sensibility, broad knowledge, and self-directed performance in that role as it relates to the various diverse constituencies with whom she is involved. In another, more explicit example of her felt autonomy,

...I reached out to [the technical protocol expert], and he had suggested that I could help communicate the message. And he said, maybe you ought to check with [your boss], and my first thought was, well why would I want to check with [my boss]? I probably haven't had a manager who's been involved in my work since 2003. Why would I get permission to do work? So, mostly, I feel like I know the invisible boundaries for how far I can go. And I just sort of have a sense of how far I can stretch in the ether. (Karen-1-163)

To the best of Karen's knowledge, her apparent autonomy and the resultant breadth of independent initiatives she has undertaken over the years are relatively

anomalous compared to other Organization A employees. In several private correspondences subsequent to the research conversations, Karen reports feeling a strong relational connection to the organization despite feeling a lack of authentic reciprocation on the organization's part¹⁰. Indeed, the other participants unanimously report that Organization A considers its employees in a strictly instrumental context. When asked to reflect on whether the organization cares about its people, Adam responds: "I don't know if it's really genuine, and the caring, it's a little bit cold to the extent to which you can help your supervisor" (Adam-2-50). In short, Adam suggests that the organization's attitude is, "employment at will, and we own you. You do what you need to get done to keep the company going" (Adam-2-70).

Such instrumentality is perhaps best captured in Robert's description of promotion through the technical ranks. To be promoted to a higher level in the technical ladder requires appropriate academic qualification, sufficient years of experience and demonstrated consistent contribution. "But unless there is a need for the business that requires that level of competence, it's just not an automatic" (Robert-1-35). The reasoning is that there is an expectation of a greater contribution if someone is promoted to a higher level. However, if there is not a deemed business need for the greater contribution, there is no promotion.

¹⁰ For example, Karen recently celebrated her 40th anniversary with Organization A (and precursor companies). She was asked to select a present from a catalogue, and received a mass-printed certificate. Although she appreciated the acknowledgement of her length of service, she ruefully recalls how her 20th and 25th anniversaries were commemorated with certificates "which were classy things done on cream-colored parchment or some other quality paper, personally signed by the president of [Organization A]. Those were elegant things. The certificate now is loud and garish, like a brochure" (Personal correspondence, January 10, 2010).

If one subscribes to the notion of paying a person for the imputed value of their contribution to the organization¹¹, the logic behind Organization A's compensation strategy may seem reasonable at first. Nonetheless, it conveys a significantly instrumental – almost mechanistic – view of a person. However, it equally assumes that a person who acquires a higher level of competence through experience or additional education would work below their theoretical potential unless that supposed business need materializes, after which the person would somehow increase their level of “production.” In essence, the BAH organization casts knowledge workers into the classic, Tayloristic frame of “soldiering” assuming that the “indeterminacy of labour problem¹²” applies equally to so-called knowledge workers.

Counting on Quality

Retrieving further aspects of its Industrial Age, factory-oriented heritage, the BAH organization feels compelled to quantitatively track its production – presuming *intangible* production can or should be quantified – among the knowledge workers that comprise Organization A's personnel. In order to comply with the discipline and control of the Accomplishments, Deliverables, and Hard Deadlines (ADHD) system, Karen expends a significant amount of effort accounting for her time and entering it

¹¹ As opposed to alternative compensation schemes such as paying “market value,” equal pay for all workers, or self-determined compensation as in the example of Semco (Semler, 1993).

¹² The “indeterminacy of labour problem” is a key component of Labour Process Theory (Braverman, 1974). It suggests that the performance and production of the entire organization is contingent of the productivity of the slowest worker, since industrial processes are linearly connected, as in a factory assembly line. For knowledge workers, Sewell (2005) suggests that the indeterminacy factor is reversed: knowledge productivity proceeds at the pace of the “smartest” worker, since all others could potentially benefit from that person's expertise, once shared.

into a system that cannot possibly capture the complexity of knowledge-work productivity.

The [ADHD] system is clearly designed for a factory mentality, a factory approach. You did what, how many times, and what's your goal for how many more times. And so as soon as the edict happened that we had to use ADHD, I quickly observed that I was going to have to have things to put in there that I could quantify. So I count how many times I work on executive projects. I count how many times I give speeches. I count how many times I update any document I post on the corporate sales website. I count everything. (Karen-1-69)

The BAH coordinating construct of functional decomposition theoretically presumes high-level organizational “thinkers” have already established that doing so many of a particular sort of activity will ultimately lead to the organization accomplishing its objectives, goals, and desired outcomes. The individual accomplishing and counting his or her decomposed tasks will thus enable the organization to accomplish its ultimate purpose.

What the system cannot capture are the qualitative aspects or business effects of any of these contributions¹³. ADHD places explicit importance on those items that can be quantified, potentially reducing an individual's personal incentive to undertake activities that are, *de facto*, crucial to the success of the organization, but can be neither derived via functional decomposition, nor quantified. As Karen observes, “there's nothing that gives real rational guidance on how knowledge workers should cope with this thing. ... How do I try and describe what I do in a widget manner?” (Karen-1-85).

¹³ Since the research conversations were conducted, the ADHD system has been modified to accommodate a limited form of qualitative goal tracking. However, its focus remains on what individuals deliver as contributions to the organization's deterministically connected, top-down, fractioned objectives.

Organization A's almost exclusive focus on that which can be quantified means it must develop measurements of accomplishments accordingly, much like Organization M. However, such metrics are not able to assess the quality of the accomplishment or judge its effect in other than the most rudimentary, deterministic fashion. Conversely, those projects that may be deemed strategically important, for instance, but cannot be moulded into a quantitative box for evaluation, are effectively ignored.

Roxanne, for example, reports that there is no specific performance reporting of her project (Roxanne-1-55). Presumably, participants' individual activities are accounted for in the overall ADHD system, respectively by the participants' home departments. However, there is no ability to measure "contribution to the business" since this project works in anticipation of long-term, future needs—it cannot be defined according to a functional decomposition of near-to-medium-term business objectives, and is therefore treated as an exception.

However, the organization was only able to perceive the purely instrumental aspect of producing the strategic document. Karen, who was not originally assigned to the project team,

...recognize[d] that project was so strategic and so visible, that it needed to be the best it could be. ... I think the organization knew that the project was important, but no one else in the team had the skills to polish and package it as I did. ... Project management is not the same as editing and polishing obtuse technical writing to be understandable. (Karen-1-234)

Even though the company could understand the strategic priority to accomplish the project, it had no ability to perceive the need for quality editing.

Indeed, none of the quantitative reporting that the Accomplishments, Deliverables, and Hard Deadlines system facilitates would be able to represent relative quality of the work accomplished, effectiveness of the deliverables provided, or whether the results provided by the hard deadlines actually delivered what was *intended* to be accomplished. When considered together with the evaluation processes of the other distinctly BAH organization in this study, Organization M, it again raises the fascinating and crucial question: *does a BAH organization have the ability to perceive quality?*

Like Organization M, Organization A employees are partially evaluated on personal development objectives, also tracked via the ADHD system:

If you want to improve your skills, or want to become expert in a particular situation or you want to pursue a particular project, that's not otherwise identified as coming from the top down, you could also put that as something to be measured against at the end of the year, whether you met that or not. (Adam-1-68)

Robert classifies these as one among several other “quality of life objectives” – including so-called morale objectives – that are framed in terms of fostering professional growth of individuals through training and opportunities in assignments and leadership. Specific examples of these are literally counted against Robert's own objective targets as a manager each year. As one might expect, morale objectives must first be justifiable relative to business needs. Hence, the otherwise nuanced and intangible notions of morale and quality of life, at least in Organization A's context, are bounded by the alignment of business objectives and an individual's attainment of a particular skill. Although this primarily instrumental orientation might be considered preferable to Organization M's seemingly perfunctory approach to

personal development, it is indeed a supreme challenge for an organization in whose culture quantified evaluation has become so engrained, to be able to conceive of mechanisms that can accommodate criteria that are inherently qualitative and subjective.

BAH Motives

The discourse surrounding Organization A's impetus – those considerations that provide the motive force for both individuals and the organization as an entire entity – almost exclusively involve the three most common extrinsic influences: money, competition, and survival. Robert confirms that “Organization A is very driven by the financial community” (Robert-1-105). Roxanne, responding to a question of whose priorities are considered primary in making “tough decisions,” asserts, “the shareholders, of course, the people who have Organization A stock” (Roxanne, 1-125).

The ever-present influence of Wall Street is exacerbated by the prevalent discourse of industry competitiveness and an organization feeling a pressure to respond to each vagary of its customer market as a matter of corporate survival. Although meant to spur employees to ever-increasing levels of performance, such pressures seem to take their toll on productivity and morale. For example, Robert describes the evolution of the Advanced Research and Development division from originally being more oriented towards basic research to becoming focused on specific business-purposeful goals:

The decline, I think, happened over multiple years, probably over a ten year period of time or more. ... From the ARD perspective, there was high pressure, time-to-market opportunities. We gotta get to market quick with different products, and so we would get ready to meet that opportunity, whatever it takes to meet that opportunity. And then the business would change its mind, this is not working, I want to do something else completely different, and then we would rally and try to meet that thing, and then they said, nope, we're gonna try something else. (Robert-1-99)

Similarly, Roxanne speaks about having a sense of futility relative to the overall, long-term relevance of the work in which she is engaged:

I have learned that I don't have control over many things in my life, and this is one of it. We are working just toward a goal that we see and we have seen these achievements, ... but how much control I have from here— You know, I'm giving you the worst case, to be honest with you ... I have seen some other architectures, that they never made it to that point [of implementation]. So I think probably this is the way to protect myself, that if this doesn't happen, I didn't have control. (Roxanne-1-151)

She speaks about this as being “sad,” but a lesson learned from the reality of not being in control—realizing the nature and extent of the organizational limitations she faces. In a relatively more BAH organization, there seems to be a lesser sense of being able to influence long-term outcomes, especially with respect to the lasting contribution of individual efforts. This leads to a sense of futility and long-term apathy, key factors contributing to a loss of quality and, I contend, a systemic reduction in an organization's ability to innovate.

Part of that sense of futility and fatalism comes from the experience of seeing external forces beyond one's control or influence making one's work irrelevant. Consequently, through the BAH principle of ascribed attribution, the person him- or herself becomes irrelevant:

I was part of that organization, which was at some point the best place to be, and it started to die as soon as [that particular] service is declining, and [another service] is the future. The life cycle comes to the end, and some people ... have to leave. (Roxanne-1-187)

Characteristic of BAH organizations, it seems, if there is no more need for the “office,” there is no more need for the individual who happens to have been occupying that office at the time, often irrespective of that individual’s talents and capabilities. Similar to the experience that Roxanne relates, such a situation nearly occurred to Karen several years previously, undoubtedly accounting for her unceasing focus on continually justifying her existence.

Despite the BAH mentality and heritage of Organization A, it is not immune to the effects of existing in a world that is becoming increasingly UCAPP. First, there is the influence of non-Western cultures on traditional, BAH mentalities. Frank reflects on his time on assignment in South Africa as a manager in an Organization A joint-venture. He describes how a relationship-oriented environment affects worker engagement:

If they perceived you just as a boss, then you have a certain type of relationship with them. But if they also perceived you as a friend, and wanting the same things that they want, then their willingness to not only work with you, but support you would increase dramatically. I think that there are people who believe that, particularly in South Africa, relationships play a much bigger role than perhaps we do here in America and the Western world. (Frank-1-88)

Second, there seems to be the beginnings of a recognition that the fragmented BAH mentality imposes its own limitations on a business’s ability to thrive in the contemporary world. For example, Karen relates a new executive’s message to

employees that encourages breaking down bureaucratic barriers and adopting a more integral view of themselves and their work:

He told people to work across the boundaries. There's all these silos and barriers and dividing lines, and he actively encouraged people to work across those boundaries. He said, you guys [use our products and services]. What do you want? You're not only employees, you're consumers. Think about, what do you want? What would make your life better? Bring your whole self to work. Urging people to work across organizational boundaries, I thought was quite revolutionary for Organization A. (Karen-2-2)

Nevertheless, it will yet take considerable time, and a seemingly monumental effort for Organization A to truly transform so that it is more consistent with contemporary times. In the meantime, its members will increasingly feel the disparity between their lived reality within the organization, and life influences outside.

Roxanne reflects this inner conflict, coping psychologically and emotionally by bringing a more humanistic attitude to her direct relationships in a manner that is decidedly UCaPP amidst Organization A's BAH environment:

That is the area where I feel I am still a human. I feel I'm not only selling my labour. I am putting some value in this. I am creating an environment, and putting some value in the job, connecting people together and get connected to people, and that is the part that I enjoy and it's very pleasant for me. ... I worked, and I secured my paycheque at the end of the month. ... But at the end of the day, when I think about the conversations that I had with people, the way the meeting went, and the way we interacted as a bunch of human beings, you know, maybe on a one-on-one basis or as a group, maybe it's psychological value. I feel it has some values for me personally. The other person at the end of the conversation or the interaction may have received the same kind of value. (Roxanne-2-58)