The Importance of Developing Robust Research Methodology for Studying the Communicative Constitution of Organization: An Exemplary Framework and Pilot Study

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THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING ROBUST RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR STUDYING THE COMMUNICATIVE CONSTITUTION OF ORGANIZATION: AN EXEMPLARY FRAMEWORK AND PILOT STUDY

by

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The Importance of Developing Robust Research Methodology for Studying the Communicative Constitution of Organization: An Exemplary Framework and Pilot Study

Thesis directed by Professor Timothy Kuhn

Abstract

Reaching beyond traditional conceptions of the relationship between communication and organization, scholars studying the communicative constitution of organization (or CCO) are charting new intellectual territory. They aim beyond a transmission view (where communication is understood to express already existing organizational realities), beyond an interpretive view (where the emphasis is on what members understand organizations to be and communication is viewed as the medium through which members’ develop shared understandings), and endeavor to articulate a constitutive view (where communication practices are treated as prior to and generative of organizational meaning and reality). Given these goals, is not surprising that CCO scholars have gravitated towards intellectual paradigms that are located outside of the more traditional approaches (e.g. positivism, interpretivism). More specifically, they have consistently preferred a social constructionist approach, in general, and a practice-based approach, in particular.

This approach has resulted in valuable theoretical advances in terms of our understanding about the fundamental role that communication practices play in the constitution of organization. Scholarly attention to the methodological dimensions of this work, however, has been greatly lacking. My project aims to highlight the importance of this dimension, arguing that more deliberate consideration of methodological issues is a crucial part realizing the promise that practice theory holds for understanding CCO. Responding to this imperative, I identify a practice
theory that is common in CCO scholarship (Giddens’ structuration theory, 1979, 1984) and I
develop a carefully-considered methodological model for researchers employing this theory. I
then pilot this model in an empirical study of an organization in a US university—an
organization whose purpose is to coordinate the technology activities of diverse constituents
(academic, administrative, and technical). Using the methodological framework I developed to
guide my analysis (a critical discourse analysis), I examine the competing discursive practices of
various organizational constituents and describe how these both reproduce and revise particular
organizational realities (and the shared knowledge underlying these realities).

Key words: communicative constitution of organization, organizational knowledge,
methodology, structuration theory, dialectic of control, critical discourse analysis, managerialist
discourse
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Chapter One: Introduction

A number of scholars who theorize about social institutions and all that they involve—human activity, material resources, knowledge, power, language, etc.—claim that an analytical focus on social practices is key to understanding these phenomena (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Foucault, 1977, 1980; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Latour, 1987, 2005). Their insistence on a practice focus has not only fostered radically new kinds of understanding about these phenomena but also has served to highlight the importance of communication in the constitution of society and organization. Not surprisingly, these theories have generated a great deal of excitement among those centrally concerned with this discipline.

A small group of organizational communication (OC) scholars, for example, have been eager to interrogate these theories of practice—some with a more general interest in understanding how communication creates and maintains organization (e.g. Cooren, Taylor & VanEvery, 2006; McPhee, 1985, 2004; Taylor & VanEvery, 2000; Putman & Fairhurst, 2001; Poole, Seibold & McPhee, 1985, 1996) and others with a focused interest in the ways in which communication practices are tied to the negotiation of organizational power (e.g. Deetz, 1992, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; Mumby, 1988; Mumby & Stohl, 1991; McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Because they treat communication as “productive (i.e. an ongoing, generative process in which identities are born and transformed)” rather than as “expressive (i.e. a neutral conduit that transmits already formed selves and truths)” (Kuhn, 2003: 39), many from this group have come to be identified as scholars who study the communicative constitution of organization (CCO).1

The diverse efforts of these scholars have resulted in valuable theoretical advances in terms of our understanding about the fundamental role that communication plays in both the

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1 Clearly there are other OC theorists who have contributed greatly to our understanding about how communication constitutes organization (Cheney, 1983, 1991; Cheney & Lair, 2007) and about how practice relates to communication (e.g. Craig, 1999, 2007). While their work is certainly relevant to my project, because they do not directly draw upon theories that are commonly recognized as “practice theories”, my discussion of their work is limited.
constitution and the negotiation of organization. At the same time, however, their work has revealed the challenges that a practice approach raises for empirical research. Corman, Kuhn, McPhee, & Dooley (2002) discuss this problem, writing,

As our emerging theories and models of communication grow in scope to embrace complex collective phenomena, we risk making them unworkable as guides for empirical research. Put simply, we worry that the existing body of communication research methods is incapable of handling the complexity being theorized in the discipline (Corman et al, 2002: 159).

A particular challenge for those using practice-based frameworks is to empirically capture the dynamic relationships these theories describe.

Scholars taking a practice approach acknowledge and endeavor to attend to several sets of dialectical relationships—relationships between agency and structure, stability and change, control and resistance, subject and object, mind and body—each of which they view as being integrally related to the others. All by itself, the agency-structure dialectic, (how the action of social agents influences the structural features of society and vice-versa), raises significant issues for the empirical researcher. Prime among them is the problem of research focus: that is, how to maintain a dynamic focus between two such fundamental elements. Add to that the additional dialectical relationships with which these theories are concerned (and the interrelationships among them) and research quickly becomes a complicated affair.

Despite these challenges, scholars interested in CCO issues have pushed forward and attempted to empirically document several of these relationships. For example, some have tried to capture the complex relationship between agency and structure (e.g. Guney, 2006; Katambe & Taylor, 2006; Kuhn & Corman, 2003; Saludadez & Taylor, 2006)². Others have focused their attention on documenting the tensions between control and resistance (e.g. Ashcraft, 2005;

² A number of scholars studying the constitution of organizational technologies have also investigated the agency-structure dialectic (e.g. Barely, 1986; Heracleous & Barrett, 2000; Orlikowski, 2000, 2002). While their efforts are relevant to my project (a subject I will later discuss in greater detail), they do not have an explicit interest in the communicative constitution of organization.
Banks & Riley, 1993; Deetz, Heath & MacDonald, 2007; Holmer-Nadesan, 1996; Howard & Geist, 1995; Jian, 2007; Knights & Morgan, 1991; McPhee, Corman & Iverson, 2007; Mumby, 1987; Simpson & Cheney, 2007; Thackaberry, 2004; Trethewey, 1999). As with the more theoretically-oriented projects that I reference above, these empirical projects are aimed at enhancing academic (and, in some cases, practical) understanding about the communicative constitution of organization, (although they vary in terms of whether they approach the subject of CCO in an “explicit” or an “embedded” manner, a distinction that I will explore a bit later in my discussion).

Critics, however, cite a tendency of these empirical researchers to favor one side of the dialectical relationship they investigate over the other—this is true both for those attempting to investigate the action-structure dialectic (such studies are reviewed by Fairhurst & Putnam, 2002) as well as those interested in the control-resistance dialectic (reviewed by Mumby, 2005). Given the complex empirical issues these practice-based theories introduce, these pulls are hardly surprising. The potential this line of inquiry has for furthering our understanding about organizational communication (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Banks & Riley, 1993; Cheney & Lair, 2007; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Grant, Keenoy & Oswick, 1998), however, provides strong incentive to continue the work these scholars have begun.

The Need for Deeper Consideration of Methodological Issues

As I demonstrate in my brief review, we can separate the work that draws on the practice theorists according to the kind of focus the scholar has taken: theoretical versus empirical. This kind of distinction is quite common in reviewing OC scholarship. Also common is the association of theory with theoretical work and methods with empirical work. What tends to get

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3 Jackson, Poole & Kuhn’s, 2002 review of scholarship that investigates the constitution of organizational technologies (what might be understood as a related area of research) points out similar tendencies of these projects to “tilt” towards one end of the dialectic or the other.
lost in these distinctions is the idea of research *methodology*. Indeed, contemporary OC scholars tend to use these terms interchangeably (as do most social science researchers) (Grix, 2002: 179; Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight, 1997: 59). Arguably, the distinctions between these dimensions of study are subtle.

Most social science researchers commonly understand methods to be the “techniques or procedures used to collect and analyze data” (Blaikie, 2000: 8). While definitions of methodology are slightly more variable, most emphasize the idea that methodology is the set of *principles* (informed by both the ontological and the epistemological dimensions of a theoretical framework) that ought to inform researchers’ selection and use of their research methods. Because of the overlaps between the concepts, the boundaries between methods and methodology (and also between theory) are best understood as soft rather than hard. Given these conditions, teasing out the differences between these research dimensions is messy business.

For those interested in developing more robust research models to pair with the practice theories discussed above, however, this is necessary work. Scholars who treat organization as communicatively constituted have developed the theoretical foundations to apply towards this goal. Indeed, we have several well-developed CCO theories from which to choose (e.g. Cooren et al, 2006; Deetz, 1992, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Taylor et al, 2001, Taylor & VanEvery, 2002). These and other OC scholars have also begun to respond to the call for increased empirical work that engages these theories (e.g. Ashcraft, 2005; Guney, 2006; Katambe & Taylor, 2006; McPhee, Corman and Iverson, 2007; Saludadez & Taylor, 2006; Thackaberry, 2004). To date, however, most of these empirical projects fail to *explicitly* engage in methodological discussion.
For example, although Katambwe and Taylor (2006) briefly describe the analytical methods that they use to analyze their data (referencing pragmatist scholars within the conversation analysis tradition who influenced their approach, e.g. Austin, 1962; Labov & Fanshel, 1977), they are mute in terms of the methodological issues that guide these choices. In Guney’s (2006) and Saludadez and Taylor’s (2006) studies, even the discussion of analytical methods is quite sparse. Certainly the length of these kinds of case studies prohibits in-depth discussion of methodological issues. A brief mention of how the design of a study is aligned with its theoretical underpinnings and how these, in turn relate to the analytical methods selected is, however, clearly possible and, from my perspective, potentially very valuable. More specifically, I propose that more focused methodological reflection and discussion will help scholars realize the potential that these theories hold for our understanding of the communicative constitution of organization (and organizational power). A handful of OC scholars have begun to engage in this kind of work (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008; Taylor & Trujillo, 2004). The dissertation I propose aims to build on and to extend their efforts.

In general terms, then, my project involves examining the methodological issues associated with practice-based theories that have the potential to improve our understanding of the role that communication plays in the constitution of organization, in general, and of organizational power, in particular. This is obviously a massive project that requires the efforts of many. In this introductory section, I outline and justify my particular focus within this wide-scale project. I begin by discussing my motivations for pursuing such a project and by identifying the particular communication practices I plan to study. Later, I identify the specific dialectical theory I propose to examine and the particular methodological issues it raises.

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4 While this is a relatively new focus in organizational communication studies, scholars in related fields have obviously pursued similar questions. New branches of research often inspire such inquiry, for example, the emergence of composition research as a field lead to Kirsch and Sullivan’s (1992) edited volume on methods and methodology. Although the scope of my project prevents me from conducting a full review of such efforts, future scholars who are interested in pursuing questions of methodology would do well to look beyond their disciplinary boundaries for insights.
Striving for a Balanced Theoretical-Empirical Focus

As I indicated above, a number of CCO scholars are advocating for a closer relationship between the theoretical and empirical work associated with these dialectic projects (Cooren et al, 2006; Corman et al, 2002; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008). Their calls are based on the idea that quality scholarship requires a dynamic exchange between theoretical and empirical work. From this perspective, developing robust theories depends on applying and testing them in real-world, empirical settings.

Over the last several decades, CCO scholars have poured energy into developing (and interpreting and extending) various practice-based theories from a communication perspective (e.g. Cooren et al, 2006; Kuhn, 2008; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Orlikowski, 2000; Taylor et al, 2001, Taylor & VanEvery, 2002). Only recently, however, have CCO scholars begun to direct the same kind of energy towards the empirical application of these theories (e.g. Cooren, 2007; Cooren et al, 2006; Kuhn & Corman, 2003; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008; Orlikowski, 2002; Taylor et al, 2001). What has motivated CCO scholars to pursue these studies, at least in part, is the desire to balance the relationship between theoretical and empirical efforts, with the goal of improving the quality of both. My project is motivated by these same goals.

Focusing on the Intersection between Communication, Organization and Power

When I began my discussion, I pointed out that each of the practice theorists that I reference (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Foucault, 1976, 1980; Giddens, 1979, 1984; Latour, 1987, 2005) is concerned with explaining the process of creating, maintaining, and revising social order, a process that involves a complex weave of human activity, material resources, knowledge, power, and language. Each of the theorists from my list emphasizes different parts of this process. Latour (1987), for example, is particularly interested in the relationship between
human activity and material resources, challenging the distinctions that are commonly made between them. Foucault (1976, 1980), on the other hand, is primarily interested in teasing out the relationship between knowledge and language. While those who take a practice approach may emphasize different dimensions of social practice in their theories, all of them assume that a meaningful theory of social order necessarily involves theorizing about power (and resistance).

In contrast, only some (but certainly not all) OC scholars working to extend the communicative dimensions of these theories are committed to attending to this dimension. My own interest in the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) stems from a desire to better understand how this constitution influences (and is influenced by) the power relations among organizational members. This interest locates me between two different kinds of CCO scholarship.

In their review of CCO scholarship, Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren (2009) distinguish explicit and embedded strains of CCO thinking. They characterize scholars whose primary theoretical focus is on power (and/or culture and networks) as taking an embedded approach to their study of CCO (e.g. Deetz, 1991). They contrast this with studies that “take up the CCO question directly,” identifying two strands of scholarship: “structuration and text/conversation (a.k.a the Montreal School)” (2009: 9). The common thread between these strands, according to Aschraft, Kuhn and Cooren, is their goal of providing:

an account that hones our understanding of how communication constitutes organizational reality, clarifies how communication works as an organizing mechanism, or illuminates communication (rather than, for instance, physical location) as the site of organization” (2009: 23).

While there are scholars within the explicit stream of CCO that pursue such questions with the assumption that they cannot be understood without attending to the issue of power, the majority do not. Indeed, this has been a common criticism of these works (Mumby, 2001).
In my case, I assume a tripartite relationship between communication, organization and power. Linking this to the methodological emphasis I described earlier, I propose to focus on the specific challenges researchers face in trying to empirically document the negotiation of power relations inherent in CCO (and the related control-resistance dialectic). This focus has important consequences in terms of the significance of my proposed project. To illustrate these, it is helpful to tease out some of the assumptions underlying the work that explores the control-resistance dialectic (work that includes scholars who are both primarily as well as secondarily interested in the idea of communication).

Concern About Organizational Members’ Lived Experiences

Most scholars who study the intersection between communication, organization, and power (both from an explicit and embedded approach) focus their analytic attention on the symbolic dimensions of power, theorizing and investigating the degree to which organizational members are able to influence organizational meaning. For these scholars, “Power is conceptualized primarily as a struggle over meaning; the group that is best able to ‘fix’ meaning and articulate it to its own interests is the one that will be best able to maintain and reproduce relations of power” (Mumby, 2001; 601). At the same time, however, the material dimensions of power strongly motivate those who engage in these symbolically-oriented research projects. That is to say, those who pursue these studies (myself included) are concerned about the experiences of locally-situated, organizational members and how their communication practices impact the power they might exercise (or not exercise) in their everyday, organizational lives.

Many CCO scholars acknowledge the need to achieve a better balance between the theoretical and empirical work associated with dialectical theories of practice (Broadfoot, Deetz & Andersen, 2004; Cooren et al, 2007; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008). While this goal is important for
any body of work, it is especially important for the branch of CCO work upon which I propose to focus my dissertation because of the potentially significant consequences that the communication practices being studied have on the conditions of organizational members’ everyday lives. A more tangible example helps to illustrate this idea.

The Example of Managerial Discourse (and Ideology)

Those who assume that communication practices are integrally tied to issues of power are naturally interested in any significant changes in these practices because, from this perspective, there are potentially important consequences involved (in terms of autonomy/control) for organizational members. Numerous scholars studying the communication practices of the higher education (HE) setting have documented a dramatic increase in managerialist discourse (Delanty, 2001; Etzkowitz, 1997; Fairclough, 1993, 2003; Giroux, 2002; Gustavs & Clegg, 2005; Metcalfe, 2006; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Santos, 2006; Trowler, 1998, 2001; Vogel & Kaghan, 2001). Their concern is that managerial discourse—inextricably tied, as it is, to managerial ideology—has the potential to significantly alter the purpose and value of HE practice, and, in so doing, to alter the everyday lives of organizational members. Comparing the values associated with managerialist ideology with those traditionally associated with HE helps to explain these concerns.

Traditionally⁵, one of the primary goals of public and higher education institutions has been to produce well-informed, critical-thinking citizens, ready to participate in democratic society. From this perspective, colleges and universities are a place where students ought to be encouraged to “learn the power of questioning authority, recover the ideals of engaged citizenship, reaffirm the importance of the public good, and expand their capacities to make a

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⁵ Strands of this educational ideology stretch back thousands of years, to the earliest forms of higher education in ancient Athens. John Dewey (1916) is responsible for articulating these traditions as they relate to modern, American education. Many refer to the ideology he outlined as ‘progressivism’.
difference” (Giroux, 2002: 450). Managerialist ideology significantly revises these goals. Rather than knowledge being defined as a tool to ensure democracy, knowledge is recast as a resource for stimulating the economy.

Knowledge as capital in the corporate model is privileged as a form of investment in the economy but appears to have little value when linked to the power of self-definition, social responsibility, or the capacities of individuals to expand the scope of freedom, justice, and the operations of democracy. (2002: 441)

‘Managerialist’ ideology also proposes a significantly different meaning of knowledge and its relationship to society than most educational ideologies. According to Trowler, this understanding is a “reductionist” one based on “rationalistic and market-based assumptions which stress economy, efficiency, and commodification” (2001: 187-188). From this perspective, knowledge is understood as “a resource, like money, which is possessed, stored, accumulated, and exchanged.” In contrast to other similar ideologies, managerialist ideology is often more explicit about the management of these processes. As knowledge is commodified into standard ‘products’ (or specific learning outcomes), the roles that people play in managing these products are altered. Within managerialist ideology, “students are no longer active participants in learning but a totalized category having learning outcomes delivered to them” (2001: 189), in short, they become “consumers” of knowledge. The role that faculty play in this process also becomes much less important: “Standard portions of knowledge packaged into modules, supported by pre-prepared sets of materials and marketed as sets of desirable learning outcomes can be delivered by inter-changeable, non-specialist staff (2001: 190).” At the same time, administrative and technology professions have a great deal more control of the ‘product’ “in order to facilitate market responsiveness and to ensure that structures and processes are honed to maximize economy and efficiency” (2001: 190).

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6 For a more in-depth discussion about this reconceptualization of students, see Cheney, McMillan, & Schwartzman (1997).
What this discussion shows is that the ideology associated with managerial discourse (and related discourses) significantly revises both the purpose and values of HE and the meaning and value of knowledge. Because of the potential implications these changes may have for those who live and work in the HE setting, the influx of managerial discourse has been accompanied by a flurry of concerned discussion in HE circles. Most of this discussion focuses on the ideological changes occurring in the system (as opposed to the discursive nature of these changes), for example Slaughter and Leslie’s (1997) *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies and the Entrepreneurial University*, Hayes and Wynyard’s (2002) *The MacDonaldization of Higher Education*, and Bok’s (2003) *Commercialization of Higher Education* and similarly focused articles (Gustavs & Clegg, 2005; Metcalfe, 2006; Slaughter, Leslie & Rhodes 2000; Santos, 2006; Vogel & Kaghan, 2001). While these works underscore the importance of these changes, because they are ideology versus discourse-focused, they are not directly relevant to communication scholarship.

There are, however, several empirical studies of the influx of managerial discourse that are more discourse-oriented, making them much more interesting from a communication perspective (Fairclough, 1993; Giroux, 2002; Trowler, 1998, 2001)\(^7\). At base, each of these studies is aimed at helping members who work in the HE setting assess the threat that managerial discourse may pose to their ability to influence the purpose and goals of education. They are concerned, thus, with the constitution and negotiation of organizational power (and the dialectical relationships involved in these processes), dovetailing nicely with my research interests. Additionally, two of these projects—Fairclough’s (1993) and Trowler’s (1998, 2001)—are grounded in practice-based theories, making them especially relevant to my

\(^{7}\) Delanty (2001) is another HE author who takes a discursive approach to understanding the changes in the HE setting. His work, however, is largely theoretical, and, therefore, less relevant to my project.
dissertation project.

Assessing the Threat of Changing Discourse Practices

Organizational members working in the HE setting who look to these studies for help in assessing the threat of managerialist discourse, however, will likely find them more frustrating than useful given the deep disparities between findings. The first two researchers, for instance, conclude that these shifts are causing fundamental changes for those who study and work in these settings, arguing that an increase in managerial discourse threatens faculty members’ authority/ability to influence how the meaning and values of higher education knowledge are defined (Fairclough, 1993; Giroux, 2002). Trowler (1998, 2001) reaches starkly different conclusions. According to his research, faculty members’ resistance to the values associated with managerial discourse is alive and well and, hence, so too their influence on what it means to work and study in organizations of higher learning.

In Giroux’s (2002) case, his conclusions are natural, unremarkable even, given the neo-marxist framework he applies. Fairclough (1993), however, borrows from several dialectical theories of practice (e.g. Bourdieu, Foucault, and Giddens) and Trowler (2001) uses Giddens’ (1979, 1984) ST as the foundation for his work. Despite the fact that both studies are grounded in theories that emphasize the dynamic relationship between control and resistance, one project primarily demonstrates the power that administrators (and the discourse they draw upon) have to control organizational meaning and the other, the power of less powerful members to resist these meanings. While Fairclough (1993) and Trowler (2001) lean to the side of this control-resistance continuum that one might expect given their theoretical commitments—Fairclough (who favors Foucault and Bourdieu’s ideas) towards the control end and Trowler (who favors Giddens’ ideas) towards the resistance end, the extremity of the differences—Fairclough’s (2002)
dire predictions about the threat of magerialist discourse, as compared to Trowler’s (2001) solid confidence in actors’ abilities to resist potential dangers—are inconsistent with the practice-based theories that each has chosen.

The Loss of Tension in Empirical Applications of Practice-based theories

Comparing Giroux’s (2002), Fairclough’s (1993), and Trowler’s (2001) projects to research aimed at assessing the threat of managerial discourse in other organizational settings (e.g. Collinson, 1992; Deetz, 1992; DeCock, Fitchett, & Volkman, 2005; Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005; Nadesan, 1999; Simpson & Cheney, 2007; Townley, 1994; Zoller, 2003) shows that the HE researchers are not alone in their susceptibility to strongly favor one side of the control-resistance dialectic they study. If we understand these works as part of the larger body of literature that Mumby (2005) refers to as critical organizational studies, it becomes clear that they are part of a much larger pattern.

In his recent review of empirical research aimed at investigating the production, reproduction and resistance of organizational control, Mumby (2005) writes, “The field of critical organization studies has evolved around an implicit binary opposition that privileges either organizational control processes or employee resistance to such mechanisms of control” (p. 20). In his view, the primary reason for this divide is researchers’ failure to adopt a “dialectical approach” to studying organizational control and resistance (2005: 21). The paradox, as I have been discussing, is that many of the scholars included in these lists have grounded their work in theoretical frameworks explicitly aimed at more effectively explaining the dialectic relationships involved in CCO. At the same time, most have failed to meaningfully analyze these dialectics (e.g. agency-structure, control-resistance).

This is certainly true for scholars who ground their research in some form of practice
theory. Indeed, scholars who are drawn to these theories are often motivated by an explicit desire to avoid the dualisms of more traditional theoretical approaches. Holmer-Nadesan (1996), for example, employs Foucauldian theory as she attempts to document the dialectic of control-resistance involved in the impact of managerialist discourse on the identity work of female ‘service workers’. Giddens’ (1979, 1984) structuration theory has also been a popular theoretical framework (Banks & Riley, 1993, 1988; Howard and Geist, 1995; Mumby, 1987) for studying the control-resistance dialectic. Others have attempted to document Deetz’s communication-oriented version of practice theory (an approach that has strong ties to the work of such theorists as Bourdieu, Foucault and Habermas), applying his theoretical concepts of discursive opening and closure to empirical studies (e.g. Thackaberry, 2004; Leonardi & Jackson, 2004). Despite the use of these dialectical frameworks, however, Mumby argues that most of these studies are strongly biased in favor of the control side of the control-resistance dialectic (2005: 27).

These biases are not surprising given the complex research issues that these practice-based theories introduce. More specifically, projects employing these theories require research methods that are capable of documenting control and resistance, agency and structure and the dialectical tensions between them. Again, developing these methods requires significant dialogue between theoretical, methodological, and methods-oriented projects. While CCO scholars have begun this dialogue, there is more work to be done. Specifically, more attention is needed to the methodological dimensions of this discussion.

A Shortage of Methodological Discussion

Scholars studying the communicative constitution of organization, in general, and its relationship to organizational power, in particular, have a wealth of theoretical resources from which to choose. Many of these scholars have chosen to ground their work in practice
theories— theories that promise to help move them beyond a purely deterministic or interpretive analysis of how organizations are constituted. While the development of communication-focused practice theories has exploded in recent decades, attention to methods associated with these is relatively new. This recent turn in CCO scholarship, and the intersection between issues of theory and methods that it highlights, provides both the foundation and the inspiration for my project. In other words, these newly established intersections between theory and methods open up the possibility of new avenues of inquiry. Following in the footsteps of several OC scholars who are discussing middle-range methodologies (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008; Taylor & Trujillo, 2004), I propose to look at a particular subset of these methodologies: practice-based methodologies.

When I began this introduction, I started with this very broad idea as the rough outline of my project. Through my discussion in this section, I have attempted to sketch my particular focus within this wide-scale project. I have narrowed my focus to the theoretical/empirical intersection associated with studying the dialectical relationship between control and resistance involved in the communicative constitution of organization. I have identified my motivation for focusing on this particular dialectic, namely, my concern for the way in which it impacts the ability/possibility that organizational members have to shape and influence the organizations where they work, and, hence, the content and the quality of their everyday work lives. I have also, in this section, identified a case where such study might be useful: the case of changing organizational communication practices in the HE setting.

Current research (Fairclough, 1993; Giroux, 2002; Trowler, 1998, 2001) evidences the dialectic between control and resistance in this case but does little to help us understand exactly what role communication practice plays in this dialectic (and the constitutive process in
involves). OC scholars who have begun to interrogate the relationship between the theoretical and empirical work associated with practice-based theories have already begun to advance our understanding of these issues. Focusing my attention on the methodology associated with this approach, (as a handful of scholars have begun to do), I hope to extend the work they have begun. In other words, I propose to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between communication practice, the constitution of organization, and the power relations among organizational members. I hope my contribution might also help members of the HE organization I propose to study, (what I refer to as Western University’s Office of Technology Coordination), as well as organizational members in general, to more fully appreciate the relationship between their communication practices and their ability to influence the purpose, meaning and value of the work that they do.
Chapter Two: The Methodological Challenges Associated with Practice-Based Theories

In my introduction, I described the enthusiasm that practice theory has generated among CCO scholars and I began to review the new wave of scholarship that it has inspired. I also introduced the idea that these theories raise significant methodological challenges for empirical researchers. In this section, I take a more in-depth look at each of these ideas. I begin with an overview of practice theory and CCO scholars’ theoretical extensions of its various versions. I then turn my attention to issues of methodology, exploring how practice-based theories relate (and don’t relate) to some of the more established intellectual paradigms as well as the issues that are raised by the ontological and epistemological positions that practice theorists take. I then look at how different researchers have dealt with these complexities. My goal in this part of my review is to more clearly establish the need for scholars to develop individual methodological approaches for the various practice-based theories. I conclude this section by describing my particular focus within this large-scale project.

The Common Thread Connecting Practice Theories

The notion that certain scholarly works might be grouped together under the heading of ‘practice theories’ is a relatively new idea (Barge, 2001, Reckwitz, 2002, Schatzki, Centina, & VonSavigny, 2001). According to Schatzki (2001), practice theory—a term he uses interchangeably with the ‘practice approach’ and the ‘practice perspective’—is an interdisciplinary phenomenon, sparked by philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1958) and Taylor (1985), cultural theorists such as Lyotard (1984, 1988) and Foucault (1976, 1980), science and technology scholars such as Rouse (1996) and Pickering (1995), and social theorists such as

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8 Latour’s (1987, 2005) absence from Schatzki et al’s list of science and technology scholars is surprising given the practice-oriented nature of his actor-network theory. The terminology he and his colleagues prefer—enactment and performance—might help to explain this oversight. Reckwitz, on the other hand, recognizes Latour’s work (along with Garfinkel’s, 1967) as having a powerful influence on the “praxeological family of theories” (2002: 243–44). Because of the importance of this work to Taylor et al’s CCO theory, I include the work of Latour and his colleagues, (Law and Callon) in my review.
What has prompted Schatzki (2001) and others to group these diverse projects is a common thread that runs through them: their analytical focus on social practices.

Reckwitz’s (2002) rather complex definition is useful for appreciating just what is involved in social practices—the everyday activities that societal and organizational members so often take for granted:

A social practice is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, “things” and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge. A practice—a way of cooking, of consuming, of working, investigating, etc.—forms so to speak a ‘block’ whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements (2002: 249-50).

What this definition helps to demonstrate is that social practices are a place where individual and social, symbolic and material phenomena are very much intertwined, a place that Schatzki (2001) describes as a kind of “nexus that connects objects and subjects, transcends action-structure and change-stability, and overcomes theory-practice dualism” (as summarized by Jian, 2008: 4). One of the things that drew all of the scholars from Schatzki’s (2001) list to this complex “weave” was a shared curiosity about how social order is produced, reproduced, and revised. Another common thread was their desire to move beyond the traditional explanations that had been offered in their respective fields, explanations that were riddled with theoretical dualisms of all kinds—for Wittgenstein (1958), the sharp distinction between subjects and objects, in Latour’s (1987, 2005) case, the dualistic treatment of humans and non-humans, for Bourdieu (1977, 1990) and Giddens (1979, 1984), the dualism between agency and structure. Each of these theorists argued that the positivistic approach their predecessors used was responsible for these dualisms (largely because of the sharp distinction that such an approach
draws between objective and subjective realities). So, within different disciplines and for different reasons, all rejected the basic assumptions of positivism. In search of an alternative starting point, many embraced the works of the phenomenologists (Schutz, 1967; Berger & Luckmann, 1966), theories that emphasized the intersubjective and social nature of reality. This, in turn, led to an increased focus on social practices. Because of all they entail (“bodily activities, mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, social understanding, know-how, states of emotion”, etc), social practices represented an appealing foundation for this group of scholars, a diverse group who sought to avoid the dualistic pitfalls of more traditional theoretical approaches.

According to Schatzki (2001) the particular issues and questions that each academic pursued from this shared starting point, however, varied considerably. Latour’s (1987, 2005) work, for example, was focused on expanding the traditional conception of agency (agency as “human”)—a conception that greatly restricted scholarship in his field. He and his colleagues (Law and Callon) used a practice focus to tease apart the various social and material “relations” involved in complex social practices--practices such as scientific studies (Callon, 1986), shipping trade (Law, 1986), and pasteurization (Latour, 1988). Foucault (1976, 1980), on the other hand, sought to innovate in the cultural studies arena. Focusing specifically on discursive practices, his goal was to demonstrate how these produced and reproduced enduring cultural frameworks (or epistemes). Several social theorists (e.g. Bourdieu and Giddens) saw a focus on social practices as an opportunity to transcend the dualities that had long frustrated social theorists (dualities between agency and structure, between the micro and the macro).

Those proposing that we look at these works as a group (Barge, 2001, Reckwitz, 2002, Schatzki et al, 2001) are the first to admit that they represent a diverse collection of ideas. In
Schatzki’s words,

Practice theory is one horizon of present social thought…a loose but nevertheless definable movement of thought that is unified around the idea that the field of practices is the place to investigate such phenomenon as agency, knowledge, language, ethics, power, and science (2001: 13-14).

Again, we might understand this turn as having grown out of the basic precepts of phenomenology. Additionally, a number of these theorists were influenced by (as well as influenced) the linguistic turn of the 1980’s (e.g. Foucault, Wittgenstein). Practice theorists’ involvement with these intellectual currents link them to a number of other contemporary scholars. Prime among them are the CCO theorists I mentioned in my introduction (e.g. Cooren et al, 2006; Deetz, 1992, 2001; Kuhn, 2008; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Taylor & VanEvery, 2000).

The Parallel Interests of CCO Scholars

Similar to the practice theorists, a common thread between the CCO scholars listed above is their assumption that there is no reality “outside” of human experience and social interaction (as contrasted with the functionalist view of reality). Also similar to a number of practice theorists, CCO scholars assume language to be prior to (and bound up in), rather than an outgrowth of, social realities. While this idea was treated as a kind of background assumption by many practice theorists—one that they used to support their investigations of such issues as power, culture, materiality, etc.—for CCO scholars, it is their central concern. Something else that distinguishes the work of CCO scholars from that of the practice theorists is their interest in the constitution of organization, as opposed to the more generalized concept of social order that concerns most practice theorists.

Deetz’s (1992) work neatly exemplifies the similarities and the differences between the CCO theorists and the practice theorists. To develop his theory of organizational communication, he begins where many practice theorists begin, grounding his theory in
phenomenology (Husserl, 1962) and, thereby highlighting the importance of the “experienced” world (in contrast to a “natural” or objective world that is separate from human experience) in the constitution of reality. As a CCO scholar, however, he is particularly interested in the inseparable nature of language and experience and the role these play in organizing practices, in general, and in the practices involved in the institutionalized organization, in particular. Drawing on Berger and Luckmann’s (1967) ideas about the social construction of reality, he emphasizes the importance of communication activity in the constitution of institutionalized organization.

While both theories (Husserl’s and Berger & Luckmann’s) provide the foundation for Deetz’s (1992) work, he charges that each one “comes up short in adequately accounting for the nature of language in the constitution of experience, in its neutrality toward unity and totality, and in its account of power relations” (1992: 129). Building on Foucault’s (1972) concept of discursive formation (how discourse scales from discourse to discourse practice to discourse apparatus) and on Habermas’ (1979) concept of systematically distorted communication, Deetz (1992) addresses these shortcomings, proposing an analytical framework that might be used to study the particular conversational moves (or practices) that close off possibilities of organizational resistance and revision (e.g. disqualification, naturalization, topical avoidance, etc) and that, thereby, reproduce existing power relations. Again, we might understand his theory as more communication and more organization-specific than the earlier practice theories.

Additional OC Extensions of Practice Theory

Deetz (1992) is not alone in exploring the theoretical avenues that a practice-based approach opens for organizational communication scholarship. He is joined by a number of other CCO scholars who are working from various angles to apply and extend the work of practice theorists (e.g. Cooren et al, 2006; Kuhn, 2008; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Taylor et al,
While a few of these scholars have built upon the theoretical foundations laid by such practice theorists as Foucault (Deetz, 1992), and Latour (Taylor et al, 2000, 2001), and brief references to Bourdieu’s ideas can be found in this body of work (Orlikowski, 2000; Kuhn, 2008), by far the most popular practice approach for scholars working to push the boundaries of CCO theory is Giddens’ (1979, 1984) structuration theory (ST).

McPhee and Poole, for example, have been building bridges between structuration and CCO theory for nearly three decades, beginning with their shared conference presentation in 1980, “A Theory of Structuration: The Perspective of Anthony Giddens and its Relevance for Contemporary Communication Research”, and continuing up to the present, with their overlapping research streams (McPhee, 1985, 2004; McPhee & Zaug, 2000; Poole & DeSanctis, 1991; Poole et al, 1985, 1996). With Poole at the helm, the scholars proposed “a theory of group decision-making” rooted in the structure-action dialectic that Giddens discusses, what they described as an “integrative framework” that bridged the gap between existing scholarship that over-emphasizes either the individual or system level influences of group interaction (Poole, Seibold, & McPhee, 1985; Poole, Seibold, & McPhee, 1996). Poole and his colleagues also explored how structuration theory (ST) might be applied to the study of technology (Poole & DeSanctis, 1991; DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Drawing on Giddens’ concept of dialectic of control, they proposed “a theory of social technology”, what they term Adaptive

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9 Although Orlikowski and Poole & DeSanctis are not typically recognized as CCO scholars, I include them in this part of my review because of the parallel issues they explore as well as their commitments to Giddens’ ST.
10 Some but not all of the scholars from this list are explicitly interested in the issues of power and control that are involved in organizing process. For those that are, practice theorists’ direct discussion of these issues is another important connection.
11 Ashcraft et al (2009) identify a number of McPhee’s and Poole’s works as early examples of the “explicit strain” of CCO. I follow their example and include them in my review, pointing out that their work has, at times, had a more narrow focus than the more recent CCO literature, seeking to explain the constitution/negotiation of small groups, for example, and the constitution/negotiation of organizational technology. Their underlying interest in how these practices (and structures) relate to larger organizational practices (and structures) helps to explain how these works might be understood as CCO scholarship. This is similarly true for Orlikowski (2001) whose theorizing about communication technology is also inherently connected the idea of organizing practices.
12 Poole and McPhee have also contributed to our understanding of the empirical issues associated with ST. For the moment, however, my emphasis will be on their theoretical work. Later I will take an in-depth look at both their empirical work and their discussion of methodological issues.
Structuration theory—a theory built on the idea that “the social technology shapes the use, but the user likewise shapes the technology, exerting some degree of control over its use and meaning in social action (1991: 177).”

Concurrently, McPhee (1985, 2004, 2007; McPhee and Zaug, 2000; McPhee, 2004) has pursued his own particular theoretical interests, namely, how to explain the diverse and sometimes disparate practices involved in organizational communication. Combining his basic interest in the relationship between structure and communication with questions about the different styles (or levels) of communication practice in organizations, he proposed that we might distinguish between “four sectors of organizational activity”—internal and external flows that help to explain the persistence (and the evolution) of organizations over time and space (1985:169). His approach “rests on the theory of structuration” (1985: 164), in general, and on Giddens’ concept of time-space distanciation, in particular. He later revised this analytical framework, identifying additional sources of theoretical inspiration (e.g. Weick, 1979; Boden, 1994; Taylor, 1993; Deetz & Mumby, 1990) and reframing it as “four streams of communication flow” (2000: 7). Giddens’ ideas about time-space distanciation continue to strongly influence McPhee’s theoretical formulations (2004a, 2004b, 2006).

While these two streams of research are generally regarded as productive and insightful, they are not without their critics. Banks and Riley (1993), for example, charge that certain works within these streams of research “can sometime drift away from the core sense of ST” (1993: 179). They cite as an example the claims that Poole et al (1985) make about ST being an approach that “combines causal and interpretive frameworks” (1985: 81 as cited in Banks & Riley, 1993: 180, italics added), arguing that,

Giddens’s approach to structuration theory, however, does away with traditional dichotomies by centering on praxis, agency, reflexivity, and their time/space

They are also critical of Poole and DeSanctis’ (1990) treatment of structure, charging that it significantly “transforms” the virtual, enacted structures that Giddens describes. Pozzebon and Pinsonneault (2005) concur, writing,

While DeSanctis and Poole’s (1994) original elaboration of AST draws from Giddens’ ST, its subsequent application in empirical studies has departed from the fundamental premises of Giddens’s theory (2005: 1361).

Orlikowski’s (2002) work aims to address these concerns, challenging the propositions that underlie them, namely, “that technologies become ‘stabilized’ after development and that they ‘embody’ structures which (re)present various social rules and political interests (2000: 405).” Emphasizing the practice-based nature of Giddens’ theory, she highlights the inevitably dynamic nature of the action-structure dialectic that constitutes technology,

In contrast to existing approaches to new media and organizational discourse, a practice lens invites us to focus on different dimensions of discursive activity: its ongoing character; its embodiment within human bodies; its embeddedness in social-political contexts; its relation to the material and symbolic capabilities of artifacts; its dependence on shard practical understandings; its capacity for improvised responses to emergent situations; and its enactment—generation, reinforcement, renewal, and transformation—of social structures through everyday action (Bocz & Orlikowski, 2004: 366).

To underscore these ideas she refers to technology as “technologies-in-practice,” in other words, “enacted structures of technology use” (2000: 407). While Poole and his colleagues certainly deserve the credit for initiating the discussion about how Giddens’ work might benefit communication technology theory, Orlikowski’s work (1992, 2000, 2002) helps to highlight the practice focus that makes it so unique and, in so doing, the action-structure dialectic that this particular view brings into focus.

Taylor et al (2000, 2001) also take up Giddens’ (1976, 1979, 1984) work in their exploration of both organization, in general, and organizational technologies, in particular. Their
approach, however, is different. In contrast to the theorists I have reviewed so far, who seem to begin with the premise that Giddens’ work might enrich CCO scholarship, they invert this relationship, critiquing Giddens’ ideas from a communication perspective. In the theory building work that they undertake in “The Emergent Organization” (2000), for instance, while they align themselves with many of Giddens’ underlying assumptions, they are quick to point out the questions that his theory leaves unanswered, including, “What are the a priori forms of practice that we could recognize as organizational? And how are we to investigate ‘memory traces’ (2000:154)?” and later, “Where does the power to constitute meaning and sanction come from (2000: 155)?” They propose that CCO theory, in general, and their text-conversation framework, in particular, enables scholars to answer to these questions.

The foundation of their text-conversation framework is the idea that communication is the modality of organization (rather than one of three modalities that Giddens identifies: communication, power, and sanction). From this foundation, they essentially replace the different dimensions of Giddens’ duality of structure concept with more communication-centered ideas—substituting his concept of structure with “text” and his concept of action with “conversation.” At the same time, they more strongly emphasize the “equivalence” between communication and organization (Smith, 1993) that Giddens’ agency-structure dialectic suggests (Ashcraft et al, 2009: 13). What these changes enable them to do is to highlight the communicative nature of the practices (and their related modalities) that are central to structuration process. In their words,

The modality which is common to signification, domination, and legitimation is the interactive generation of a text, in a situation of conversation, by means of which the structural relationships of the organization are once again realized in the systemic of the discourse-world thus brought into being, namely, the constitution of knowledge, power, and sanction. In this way, communication has become both the site and the surface of the emergence of society and organization (2000: 156, italics added).
Their critiques of Giddens’ work continue in later work (e.g. Taylor et al, 2001) as they critically analyze various elements of Giddens' theory (e.g. the abstract nature of his time-space discussion, the correlation he makes between knowledge and individual cognition, his treatment of agents as individual actors). By drawing on technology-related scholarship (e.g. Suchmann's work on situated action, 1996, Hutchins, 1995, theory of distributed cognition, Latour's, 1987, actor-network theory), they revise a number of Giddens' ideas, the most popular (among OC scholars) being the attention they draw to the locally situated nature of action and the way in which they expand his conception of agency to include collective and non-human actors.

While Taylor and his colleagues don’t explicitly use the term ‘practice-theory’ to describe their (or Giddens’) theoretical approach13, the influence of this approach on their work is clear. Giddens’ (1979, 1984) ST, as they acknowledge, significantly informs their text-conversation framework. Latour's (1987, 2005) actor-network theory also strongly influences their work, providing the basic foundation for their co-orientation theory. As with the other theorists they draw upon, they also find Latour’s theory lacking in terms of its treatment of communication. Their solution is to suggest that language itself is an “object” or an “agent,” in line with the “other mediating substances that Latour has in mind (2000: 167).” This move, once again, helps them to emphasize the importance of the communicative processes of “speech and writing” in the constitution of organization as the following summary demonstrates,

In the end, every action supposes the mediation of a material agent. Because of their materiality, such agents can act at a distance and over time. They thus serve to transcend the inherent limitations of locally situated action and thus explain the emergence of globally structured organizational forms. Of these agents, *that which is materialized in speech and writing is of particular importance* because it is in this way that head-compliment relations with their attendant rights and obligations are instantiated, and in

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13 They prefer Latour’s terminology, ‘a flatland’ approach to organizational study which they describe as the idea that “all organization must be found at a single level—a flatland—which is invariably situated, circumstantial, and locally realized in a finite time and space, involving real people (2000: 143)."
this way, the authoritative resources of which Giddens writes are made actual (2001: 172, italics added).

The relationship that Taylor and Van Every (2001) describe (between their text-conversation framework and their coorientation theory) is complex. Kuhn (2008) has produced what I consider to be a concise and useful summary of this relationship.

In this summary, Kuhn (2008) reminds us that Taylor and his colleagues (whom he refers to as the Montreal School) understand “coorientation” (“when two actors, A and B, relate to one another through the medium of some objective, X”) to be the process by which “organizations are generated, sustained and changed” and “coorientation systems” (the tiling of one A-B-X system on top of one another) to be the “infrastructure of the organization” (2008: 1232, italics added). This perspective carries with it certain imperatives, as Kuhn points out, “To contend that communication constitutes organizations requires consideration of both how it does so and which components of the complex communicative phenomena are to be highlighted” (2008: 1232). The Montreal school offers coorientation theory as a way of explaining the how of CCO and highlights the concepts of text and conversation as the salient communication phenomena. Again, in Kuhn’s words, the Montreal school argues that “we must examine the conversations and texts of which these [coorientation] systems consist if we wish to understand organizing (2008: 1233)”.

Kuhn’s (2008) discussion is useful not only for those trying to decipher the Montreal School’s version of CCO but also for those interested in the empirical issues that it raises. Of particular interest are the extensions he makes to the group’s concept of texts. In applying their theory to the study of organization, Taylor and his colleagues propose that “organizations can be seen in two ways, either as a ‘macro conversation’ of interaction, or as a text writ large: a series of interrelated textual resources that comprise a map of the organizational territory” (as
summarized by Kuhn, 2008: 1233). While the organization-as-text concept is interesting, incorporating it into empirical research is challenging. Kuhn’s clarifications and extensions of organization-as-text concept are useful for those who wish to do so.

First, he reminds us that the texts that the Montreal School proposes can take two different forms: concrete and figurative. Next Kuhn identifies three “characteristics” of texts (both concrete and figurative): 1) that texts are “relatively permanent”, (they can “endure beyond the immediate setting of conversation”), 2) that texts are “networks of meanings” rather than “unitary or monolithic entities, and 3) that texts are “(re)appropriated and (re)contextualized…across different practice sites” (Kuhn, 1234-35) To review, the Montreal school argues that texts (and conversations) are the phenomena that empirical researchers must attend to in order to understand organizing and organizations. What Kuhn’s discussion does is to help operationalize these phenomena so that researchers have a better idea of what it is they are looking at and looking for. These operationalizations have important implications in terms of research methodology.

For example, because of the concrete and figurative nature of texts, the methodological principles that researchers use to guide their work must be able to account for both material and symbolic phenomena. The various characteristics of texts also suggest methodological imperatives. For example, if we understand the object of investigation (texts) to carry multiple meanings that vary across practice sites, our methodological approach must be one that is capable of attending to these variables. Kuhn’s (2008) insights, however, are new and have yet to be applied to empirical research. In the existing applications of the Montreal School’s CCO theory (Guney, 2006; Katambe & Taylor, 2006; Saludadez & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al, 2001), there is hardly any discussion about methodological issues and hence, a potential lack of
alignment between the methods researchers use and the basic assumptions underlying the theory.

A Good Candidate for Analysis

One of the things that my review of this body of work makes clear is that practice theory, in general, and Giddens' (1979, 1984) ST in particular, has been the catalyst for many valuable new developments in CCO theory. Some use Giddens’ explanation of the dialectic of structure and agency to advance our understanding about various dimensions of organizational communication activities (e.g. Poole et al’s work on group interaction, Orlikowski’s theory of technology use). Others revise his ideas with the goal of making them more communication-specific and therefore more relevant for OC research (McPhee’s concept of the 4 flows of communication, Taylor et al’s text-conversation framework). While many are excited about the potential that Giddens’ theory (both on its own and in combination with other practice theories) holds for advancing our understanding of CCO, most would agree that, in many ways, that potential has yet to be fully realized. Part of the problem is the difficulty scholars encounter when they try to apply Giddens’ theory (and/or CCO extensions of it) to empirical work.

Organizational scholars (CCO, OC and others) are increasingly attempting to do so (e.g. Banks & Riley, 1993; Barley, 1986; Boden, 1994; Guney, 2006; Heracleous & Barret, 2001; Howard & Geist, 1995; Jian, 2006; Katambe & Taylor, 2006; McPhee, Corman & Iverson, 2007; Mumby, 1987; Orlikowski, 2000; 2002; Saludadez & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al, 2001; Trowler, 2001). Most, however, have been criticized for losing the dialectical tensions that ST describes (between agency and structure and between control and resistance). Again, one possible explanation for this is that the methodology that researchers are using is ill-fitted for the practice-based theory that Giddens (1979, 1984) proposes.

In their discussion of the problems associated with practice theories, Kuhn and Jackson
(2008) argue that “existing work provides few explicit methodological frameworks for researchers,” and that “a methodological contribution is needed to both aid individual studies and to contribute to the development of the practice-based perspective” (2008: 4). The project I propose is designed to make such a contribution. Because of my focus on CCO and the influence that Giddens’ (1979, 1984) theory has had in this area of study, ST (and the methodology associated with it) seems a good candidate for closer examination. Giddens’ concept of the dialectic of control is also well suited to the particular issues I propose to investigate--the increase in managerial discourse in the HE setting and the difficulty of empirically documenting to what degree this discourse shapes and is shaped by various constituents within the organization. For these reasons, I propose to focus on the methodology associated with Giddens’ ST (and the CCO extensions of it). Before investigating the particular methodological challenges associated with ST, however, I need to more fully develop my discussion about methodology, in general. Shifting gears from the theoretical focus I have taken thus far in this section, I now turn my attention to these issues.

The Alignment of Assumptions of Inquiry Paradigms

My brief overview of practice theories, in general, and of the applications and extensions that CCO scholars have made to them, helps to highlight why so many are excited about this approach and what has led some to propose that the practice approach represents a novel and unique turn in social theory (Jian, 2008; Reckwitz, 2002, Schatzki, et al, 2001). This approach, however, introduces complex challenges for the empirical researcher. To understand these requires taking a closer look at the notion of methodology and its relationship to social science research. Following Burrell and Morgan (1993) and Lincoln and Guba (1994, 2005), I understand methodology to be integrally related to the concepts of ontology and epistemology, as
well as a defining feature of the various paradigms of inquiry common to social science. Guba and Lincoln (1994) summarize these complex ideas, writing,

The basic beliefs that define inquiry paradigms can be summarized by the responses given to three fundamental questions, which are interconnected in such a way that the answer given to any one question, taken in any order, constrains how the others may be answered (1994: 108).

They go on to articulate these questions as:

1) The ontological question: What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?
2) The epistemological question: What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be-knower and what can be known?
3) The methodological question: How can the inquirer (would-be-knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known (1994: 108)?

The four approaches to social science inquiry—what Guba and Lincoln (1994, 2005) identify as positivist, post-positivist, critical, and constructionist can be differentiated by the different kinds of responses they have to these questions. Burrell and Morgan (1993) carve these paradigms slightly differently, proposing an alignment of the ontology epistemology, and methodology between functionalist, interpretivist, radical structuralist, and radical humanist approaches (1993: 22). In his review of communication scholarship, Deetz (2001) adopts a similar framework, distinguishing between normative, interpretive, critical, and dialogical approaches and proposing that we understand these as different types of social science ‘discourse’ (2001: 16-17).

In terms of being able to compare significantly different inquiry approaches, the benefits of these kinds of analytical frameworks are undeniable. It is important to remember, however,

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14 To these fundamental questions, they later add the issue of axiology (2004: 169).
15 The term that Guba and Lincoln’s (1994, 2005) actually use is ‘constructivism’. Their use of the term ‘constructivism’, however, is consistent with Pearce’s (1995) description of a ‘constructionist’ approach to social theory as opposed to the ‘constructivism’ he defines, which, according to Pearce is a much smaller category that can be used to distinguish between the epistemological stances of various constructionist approaches (1993: 98). Because constructionism is the term more commonly applied to the larger inquiry paradigm and the one that communication scholars prefer, for the remainder of my discussion, I follow Pearce’s example in my use of these terms.
16 Since Deetz’s (2001) framework is specifically designed to describe communication scholarship, it seems the most appropriate for my discussion. Therefore, I use his categories of distinction whenever possible in my discussion. Unlike the other scholars, however, Deetz (2001) does not explicitly organize his framework around the ideas of ontology, epistemology, and methodology. At various points in my discussion, then, I must weave Deetz’s categories together with these ideas, ideas that are more pronounced in the other frameworks.
that the alignment they describe is based on theoretical and methodological *ideals* rather than on the writings of particular social theorists. As several of the authors of these frameworks, themselves, point out, these writings push and stretch the boundaries of these frameworks and the unified assumptions they describe (e.g. Burrell & Morgan, 1993: 23-25; Deetz, 2001: 16-18). This is especially true for scholars taking a constructionist approach, in general, and for those who take a practice approach in particular. For my purposes, what is important about this lack of alignment is the lack of consistent methodological prescription that accompanies it. To better understand the methodological issues associated with the practice approach, it is useful to examine how they align with the traditional inquiry paradigms (as well as the challenges they present).

**Variable Epistemological Assumptions**

In his discussion of the practice approach, Reckwitz (2001) describes it as a “subset of the field of cultural theories”, a group of works linked by the way in which they “explain or understand action and social order by referring to symbolic and cognitive structures and their ‘social construction of reality’” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, as cited in Reckwitz, 2002: 246). Relating this to my discussion about the inquiry paradigms, we might understand cultural theorists (including practice theorists) as being linked by their shared ontological commitment to social constructionism. More specifically, they all begin with similar assumptions about the form and nature of reality, sharing the view that “accounts of ‘reality’ originate in the contingent, indeterminate, and historical flow of continuous communicative activity between human beings” (Shotter & Gergen, 1994 as cited in Pearce, 1995: 90). It makes sense therefore, to understand cultural theorists (including practice theorists) as taking a constructionist (or dialogical) approach to social science. While the *ontological* link between these works is relatively clear, there is less
common ground in terms of their response to the question of epistemology, and less still, in terms of their response to the question of methodology.

Pearce (1995) discusses these issues, pointing first to the problems that a social-constructionist ontology inherently creates for scholars. He writes,

What is the nature of the social world and how can we know it? This question has fretted theorists throughout history, and the social constructionist answer to the first part—that the social world is ‘made’—creates problems for the second part, for our knowledge of a made social world cannot be ‘certain’.

Following the definitions I referenced earlier (page 4), we might understand the first part of this question as ontological and the second part, epistemological. According to Pearce, then, the ontology of social constructionism itself poses a host of epistemological dilemmas for theorists as well as researchers. Pearce (1995) points out that scholars have responded to these dilemmas in a variety of ways. What’s interesting to me is the ripple effect these variations have on questions of methodology.

The Need for Explicit Methodological Discussion

What Pearce’s discussion demonstrates is that the neatness of analytical frameworks like Lincoln and Guba’s (1994, 2005) and Burrell and Morgan’s (1993)—where inquiry approaches can be defined by an alignment of scholars’ interconnected assumptions about ontology, epistemology, and methodology—begins to break down when applied to the constructionist approach, in general, and to practice theories, in particular. An important result of this breakdown is that issues of methodology are considerably less straightforward for the practice-based scholar (as compared to scholars operating from the interpretivist or positivist perspective). That is to say, because the epistemology of these theories is so variable, the research issues raised by each theory are diverse. It is important, therefore, for researchers using these approaches to be explicit about their methodological choices (and to tie these to the
particular epistemological positions of the theories they employ). To do so, each of the different practice theories ought to be considered individually in order to ascertain the appropriate methodological guidelines.

Earlier in my review, I proposed to focus on Giddens’ (1979, 1984) practice-based approach for my dissertation project, in large part because of its enormous popularity with CCO scholars but also because of how nicely his concept of the dialectic of control pairs with my research interests (to what degree managerial discourse impacts how members understand the meaning and value of their organization). Relating Giddens’ work to my discussion about the conventional inquiry paradigms, his theory was explicitly designed to push beyond them, rejecting both the micro-focus associated with the interpretive paradigm and the macro-focus associated with the critical paradigm (as influenced by the Frankfurt school). This creates significant challenges for those employing ST in their empirical research and makes it especially interesting from a methodological point of view. To complicate matters, in his effort to break new intellectual ground, Giddens (1979, 1984) devoted considerably more discussion time to issues of ontology and epistemology than to issues of methodology. So how are organizational researchers who ground empirical works in Giddens’ approach coping?

Coping through Quilting and Bricolage

Like many organizational scholars working with practice theories, those who ground their studies in Giddens’ (1979, 1984) work are struggling to develop empirical approaches that will accommodate its multi-faceted nature. Taylor and Trujillo’s (2004) discussion about the evolution of qualitative research in the field helps to contextualize their efforts. Using Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) framework, they examine how scholars researching organizational communication have moved through several different “moments” in terms of their relationship
with qualitative research: a period in which they strongly preferred quantitative methodologies (the modernist trend), the moment they first began to employ qualitative methods (the blurring of genres), the moment they were forced to rethink their basic assumptions about social science research (the crisis of legitimation and representation), and the present, a moment they refer to as “coping”. Describing this moment, they write,

We in organizational communication, just like scholars in other disciplines, have arrived at the present moment of “coping,” as we try to address the challenges of critical theory, feminism, ethnic studies, and postmodernism in the context of modernist and naturalistic traditions of qualitative research in organizational communication (2004: 165-66).

Throughout the “blurring of genres”, “crisis of representation”, and “coping” moments, organizational scholars have been experimenting with mixing various research approaches, borrowing across traditional research programs as well as across disciplinary lines. Drawing from Derrida (1967), Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe these kinds of research practices as “bricolage”. In writing specifically about the methodologies associated with cultural studies, the term that Saauko (2005: 343) uses to describe the mixing of methods and methodologies is “integrative quilting” (2005: 354). These eclectic approaches have become commonplace among OC scholars.

For example, some scholars have responded to the problems that more complex organizational theories introduce by employing multi-modal methods to analyze a single body of research. The empirical demonstrations of Papa et al (1987), Livesly (2002), and Broadfoot, Deetz and Anderson (2004) exemplify this kind of approach.

Others have taken a more blended approach. For example, Taylor and Trujillo (2004) identify a host of critical theorists who have combined ethnographic methods with critical ones (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Barker & Cheney, 1984; Deetz; 1994; Willis, 1977) and vice-versa (Conquergood, 1989, 1991; Taylor, 1990, 1993; Trujillo, 1993). The critical discourse analysis
methods that OC scholars employ (e.g. Fairclough, 1992, 2002; Gee, 2004)) also represent a novel combination of research traditions. While not all of these approaches are specifically designed to pair with practice-theories, the ways in which they begin to address multiple research dimensions make them useful for those working with these kinds of theories. Saukko identifies Willis’ (1977) research as an early exemplar in this regard:

The methodological innovativeness of these early works lies in their ability to take seriously a popular, often ignored practice, such as disobedience at school…trying to understand its significance from the point of view of the people involved as well as against the backdrop of the wider social context (2005: 345).

In this way, Willis (1977) begins to embrace two of the three dimensions (contextual, dialogic and self-reflexivity) that Saukko claims are necessary for robust cultural studies research: contextual and dialogic. Because of his neglect of the third dimension, (self-reflexivity), however, he contends that Willis’ approach falls short of answering the question of “how to forge the micro and the macro in a way that does not reduce local experiences to props for social theories” (2005: 344).

The innovative combinations of qualitative and quantitative methods pioneered by Poole et al (Poole, Seibold & McPhee, 1985; Poole & DeSanctis, 1990; DeSanctis & Poole, 1994), Corman et al (2002), and Kuhn and Corman (2003) also evidence efforts to develop hybrid research approaches that might be paired with practice-based theories (in the first case, methods aimed specifically at ST and, in the second, methods that might be used with a myriad of middle-range approaches). Using Saukko’s (2005) criteria to evaluate these, however, both might be said to be lacking in terms of how they attend to the dimension of context.

In contrast, scholars working with embedded (vs. explicit) strains of CCO tend to favor

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17 Saukko refers to these dimensions as three “validities”: The hermeneutic impulse in cultural studies evaluates the value of research in terms of how sensitive it is to the lived realities of its informants (dialogic). The poststructualist bent on the paradigm assesses research in terms of how efficiently it exposes the discourses through which we construct and perceive realities. The contextual and realist commitment of cultural studies closely mirrors the traditional criteria for validity in that it evaluates how accurately or truthfully research makes sense of the historical and social reality (2005: 344).
the context dimension. But like their colleagues, they, too, have begun to reach beyond the familiar and to experiment with alternative methods. For example, scholars studying organization from a rhetorical perspective, have begun to employ data collection methods not traditionally associated with rhetorical criticism such as open-ended interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Simpson & Cheney, 2007) as well as novel, data-analysis frameworks such as critical discourse analysis (Simpson & Cheney, 2007; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001).

Compatible Issues Raised by Bricolage

Clearly then, organizational scholars have been innovating on the methods front. In general, however, explicit discussion about the methodological issues associated with these efforts is rare. One of the potential problems is that without such consideration, the methods researchers pair with various theories may be incompatible with their underlying assumptions (ontological and epistemological). To demonstrate this claim, I return to the organizational studies I reviewed earlier (Fairclough’s, 1993 and Trowler’s, 2001).

To review, both scholars are concerned with the influx of managerialist discourse in the HE organizations they study and its impact on the organizational power that various constituencies might exercise. Motivated by their goal of helping organizational members assess the threat this discourse poses to the meaning and value of HE, they focus their attention of the constitution (and negotiation) of organizational meaning as it relates to managerial discourse. Both choose to ground their research in practice-based theory in general—theory that is aimed at transcending a dualistic view of organizational structure and agency as well as organizational control and resistance—and in Giddens’ work in particular. In Fairclough’s case, he draws not only from Giddens’ (1984, 1991, 1993) theory but also from two other practice-based
approaches, Bourdieu’s (1991), and Foucault’s (1972, 1979). Fairclough embraces these theorists’ shared commitment to a practice-focus and to a dialectic research approach (1993: 135, 138-140). He writes,

Viewing language use as social practice implies, first that it is a mode of action and, secondly, that it is always a socially and historically situated mode of action, in a dialectical relationship with other facets of ‘the social’ (its ‘social context’) — it is socially shaped, but it is also socially shaping, or constitutive. It is vital that critical discourse analysis explore the tension between these two sides of language use, the socially shaped and socially constitutive, rather than opting one-sidedly for a structuralist or ‘actionist’ position (1993: 134).

Trowler (2001) is similarly committed to exploring the co-constitutive relationship between agency and structure (and between control and resistance), borrowing heavily from Giddens’ structuration theory (ST). Following Giddens’ lead, he also focuses on social practices, what he equates with (and refers to as) activity systems (Blackler, 1993; Blackler, Crump, & McDonald, 2000). The definition he provides of these systems has clear parallels to the social practices definition I referenced earlier:

An activity system comprises...a number of basic elements, including a given practitioner or subject, the object or motive of activity, its mediating artifacts (e.g. tools, signs and symbols), the rules generally following in carrying out the activity, the community of co-workers and colleagues involved in the activity, and the division of labor within the activity (Hart-Landsberg, 1992: 7 as cited in Trowler, 2001: 194).

While both researchers are clearly interested in the complex weave that Giddens (and the other practice-theorists) proposes, the richness of this weave is, unfortunately, lost in their research studies, with Fairclough (1993) focusing almost exclusively on structure (and control) and Trowler primarily on agency (and resistance).¹⁸ My question is, what part might the research approach that these scholars employ (and, more specifically, the methodology that guides their research activities) play in this loss?

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¹⁸ This loss of richness also plagues OC scholars who ground empirical work in Giddens’ theory (Banks & Riley, 1993; Howard & Geist, 1995; 2006; McPhee, Cormin & Iverson, 2007; Mumber, 1987) who tend to overemphasize issues of control at the expense of describing the resistance inherent in the interactions they describe. I review these and other studies more closely in my next chapter.
A Hybrid Research Approach: Ideals versus Practices

In both cases, the researchers attempt to employ what might be understood as hybrid research methods. In Fairclough’s (1993, 2003) case, for example, his study of HE discourse is part of a larger intellectual project: developing what he calls “Critical Discourse Analysis” (CDA)\(^ {19} \)—an analytical method that is designed to transcend the duality of structure and agency by studying social problems through the analysis of local discourse. Trowler (1998, 2001) also aims beyond the traditional research approach used by his predecessors. Frustrated by the “top down” research methods that are common in HE research and the limited view these methods produce, part of his goal in pursuing his research is to pioneer methods that can capture the dialectical relationship between “top down” and “from within” activities. With few examples to follow, he writes, “in a sense, the tools to do the job had to be largely invented” (1998: 2). While both his (and Fairclough’s) methods-oriented efforts represent an essential first step in improving the relationship between empirical and theoretical work, they, like their CCO colleagues, neglect to explicitly tease apart the methodological considerations inherent in this work.

Contrasting Sets of Methodological Principles

Examining each of these studies at the methodological level reveals that despite the innovative research ideals to which they aspire, each researcher takes a fairly traditional approach: critical methodology\(^ {20} \), in the first case, and ethnography, in the second. In their debate, *Ethnography Versus Critical Theory: Debating Organizational Research*, Putnam et al (1993) neatly summarize the basic (and, in some ways, the irreconcilable) differences between these research approaches. The issues that distinguish them—how each understands the role of

\(^ {19} \) For more about the tradition of critical discourse analysis within which Fairclough’s project fits, see pages 82-84.

\(^ {20} \) I use this term—critical methodology—to represent the family of related methodologies that Kincheloe & McLaren link to critical theory, including the historical analysis associated with the neo-Marxist tradition, the genealogical approach described by Foucault, and/or the post-structural deconstruction associated with Derrida, or some combination of these (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005: 305). In their article, Taylor and Trujillo (2004) describe the common thread between these approaches as “some form of ‘deconstruction’” (2004: 168).
theory in research, what each understands to be as the goals of research, and what kind of standards each uses to judge the quality of research reports—can be read as contrasting sets of methodological principles (with clear connections to the ontological and epistemological assumptions of each of the different paradigms). Drawing from these uni-dimensional methodologies, Fairclough’s (1993) and Trowler's (2001) studies neatly demonstrate these differences.

For example, their treatment of the role of theory in their projects clearly evidences the methodological traditions to which they adhere. In his opening paragraph, Fairclough (1993) identifies his commitment to critical theory, citing the “moral and social imperatives” that drive his work (1993; 133). He calls for a critical, social and historical turn in the methods that scholars use to study discourse, arguing that, “a critical awareness of language and discursive practices is becoming a prerequisite for democratic citizenship” (1993: 142). As he introduces his study of the “marketization” of HE discourse, he proposes to examine two questions:

(a) What is happening to the authority of academic institutions and academics and to authority relations between academic students, academic institutions, and the public, etc.? (b) What is happening to the professional identities of academics and to collective identities of institutions (1993: 143)?

Foregrounding the individual and social freedoms (and current threats to those freedoms) that motivate his study, he defines his research as work that seeks to illuminate those threats and to safeguard those freedoms.

This approach contrasts sharply with Trowler's (1998) commitment to "discovering" theory through his fieldwork. In a section devoted to describing his research methods, he writes,

During the survey stage of the research (Fetterman, 1989) my observation was conducted in a fairly unstructured way. However, after completing the literature review and an in-depth analysis of the first five interviews, observation became increasingly focused. The clear specification of the research questions plus the progressive development of concepts and theoretical approaches led to a far greater sensitivity to what was more, or less,
significant for the research. At the same time, however, I was aware of and allowed for the danger of premature cognitive closure (1998: 160).

Taking a classically ethnographic stance, his early observations are guided by the methodological principle that he must approach his data without theoretical preconceptions.

Closely related to the differences in how each approaches the role of theory in research are the underlying goals of their studies (and the criteria each uses to evaluate whether or not they have been achieved). As mentioned above, Fairclough (1993) seeks to illuminate and protect the opportunity of diverse organizational members to exercise their authority in shaping the organizations in which they work and live. For him then, success means that faculty (and students) mindfully engage in this process and actively resist discursive practices that might compromise their interests. The last sentence of his paper calls on them to do so,

Critical discourse analysis cannot solve this problem, but it can perhaps point to the need for a struggle to develop such a new ‘language’ as a key element in building resistance to marketization without simply falling back on tradition, and perhaps give a better understanding of what might be involved in doing so (1993: 159).

In contrast to this goal of emancipation, Trowler (2001) pursues goals typical of ethnographers: striving to provide a faithful representation of individual members and their collective challenges. He contrasts his efforts with previous studies of HE practice that highlight administrative stories at the expense of faculty/student stories. Success, in this case, depends on providing a rich and varied account of organizational practice.

Pairing Uni-Dimensional Methodologies with Practice-based theories

Earlier, I asked what part might the methodological approaches that Fairclough (1993) and Trowler (1998) employ play in the loss of dialectic tension in each of their studies. In Fairclough’s (1993) case, the assumptions associated with the critical methodology that guides his work might be understood as strongly influencing the emphasis he places on the abstract
structures that shape organizational reality (and his relative inattention to organizational members’ local responses to these). Similarly, Trowler’s clear favoring of the microactivities of organizational members (over the structural features he discusses) might be viewed as directly connected to the principles of ethnography he embraces. Hence, we might say that the methodologies that the scholars employ are responsible, at least in part, for pushing both scholars off their dialectical mark.

The difficulty these uni-focal methodologies have in documenting the dialectical relationships that Giddens’ theory (and other practice-based theories) seeks to describe is hardly surprising. They simply weren’t designed for the task. The unfortunate consequence of these limitations, as Fairclough’s (1993) and Trowler’s (1998) work demonstrates, is that they can essentially derail research projects that are aimed at empirically documenting innovative theories (such as Giddens’), and hence, the potential advancement of the theories themselves. As I discussed earlier, Fairclough (1993) and Trowler (1998) are not alone in their experience of losing the dialectical tension(s) they aimed to capture. A parallel comparison might be made, for example, between Mumby’s (1987) study and Boden’s (1994) empirical examples (the methodological approach of the former being similar to Fairclough’s and the latter, more closely related to Trowler’s)—scholars who are more commonly associated with the field of OC. In my next chapter I conduct a more complete review of the methodological issues that may be interfering with potential advances in the field of OC (and CCO) scholarship. For the moment, I suggest that more explicit attention to these kinds of issues will help a broad range of researchers recover the promise of practice theories, in general, and of Giddens’ (1984) theory in particular.

Using Ontology and Epistemology to Inform Methodological Innovation

Part of the challenge of more explicit methodological discussion is that it cannot be
meaningfully conducted without also raising the companion issues of ontology and epistemology. As previously discussed, these are difficult topics to tease apart in many contemporary communication theories. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) begin to broach this subject in their discussion about the tensions between the various theoretical traditions that have shaped qualitative communication research, which they list as: social phenomenology, ethnomethodology, modernist critical theory, postmodernist critical theory, feminism, cultural studies (2002: 30). They acknowledge that sorting through the relationships between epistemology and methods/methodology can be daunting but argue that it is a researchers’ responsibility to do so (2002: 28).

Practice-based theories are especially challenging in this regard, as they often draw from a number of these traditions. Giddens’ (1979, 1984) approach is particularly diverse, in terms of the theoretical traditions that inform his theory, making the methodological issues associated with it especially complex (another good reason for making it the focus of my project).

While few empirical researchers are discussing these kinds of complex relationships, a handful of scholars working at a more macro-level of analysis have started taking steps in this direction. Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), for example, begin to explore the compatibility issues associated with the practice of research bricolage in their discussion of critical theory and qualitative research. First, they discuss the notion of ontology, as a dimension that critical researchers must attend to. They write,

As bricoleurs prepare to explore that which is not readily apparent to the ethnographic eye, that realm of complexity in knowledge production that insists on initiating a conversation about what it is that qualitative researchers are observing and interpreting in the world, this clarification of complex ontology is needed.

Clarifying these issues of ontology (defined as what can be known) also involves the researcher in the realm of epistemology (defined as the relationship between the knower and what can be
know)), as Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) go on to discuss. Describing the challenges researchers face as they “watch the world flow by like a river in which the contents of the water are never the same,” and try to understand and represent it in “as thick a way as possible” (2005: 319), they conclude that,

> The design and methods used to analyze this social fabric cannot be separated from the way reality is constructed. Thus, ontology and epistemology are linked inextricably in ways that shape the task of the researcher. The bricoleur must understand these features in the pursuit of rigor. (2005: 220).

Understanding these features, again, is a complicated task for any researcher. This is particularly true for researchers who ground their work in practice-based theories because of the unconventional theoretical positions they take (as I discussed earlier). What this means for researchers, in general, is that developing appropriate methodological programs to pair with these approaches requires that they familiarize themselves with the particular theoretical positions of the theories they employ. What this means for my project, in particular, is that an in-depth understanding of Giddens’ ontological and epistemological commitments is a necessary precursor to developing a robust methodology to pair with his theory.

Conclusions

In the first part of this chapter, I discussed the concept of a practice-approach to social science research and reviewed CCO scholars’ theoretical extensions of its various versions. As Giddens’ work (both alone, and in combination with other practice approaches) is central to numerous CCO theories and as it has become an increasingly popular foundation for empirical studies of organization, I proposed to make it the focus of my project.

To meaningfully discuss the methodological dimensions of Giddens’ (and other practice theorists’) work, I’ve taken a purposeful detour in my discussion, examining the general concept of methodology and how it relates to issues of ontology and epistemology.
ontology/epistemology/methodology relationship of some of the main social science perspectives used by organizational scholars (e.g. positivistic, interpretive, constructionist), I’ve highlighted the methodological challenges that the practice approach raises for the empirical researcher. I’ve then examined how current OC scholars are dealing with these challenges (in methodological terms), in absence of clearly articulated, dialectical methodologies. What my brief analysis of Trowler’s (1998) and Fairclough’s (1993) studies shows is that despite considerable attention to what they each understood to be innovative research approaches, both fell short of their goal of empirically capturing the dialectical tensions that motivated their studies. My conclusion is that the absence of dialectical methodologies played a role (at least in part) in their failures (and the similar experiences of other scholars studying OC).

Using this review as my foundation, I now suggest that in order to develop methodologies capable of capturing the dialectical tensions described by the various practice theories, researchers must look closely at the ontology and epistemology underlying the particular theories that guide their empirical work. The next logical step in my discussion, then, is to and examine the ontology and epistemology of Giddens’ approach as well as the imperatives that these create for those seeking to develop consistent methodologies. In the next chapter, I turn my attention to these tasks.
Chapter Three: Developing Robust Methodology for Giddens’ Structuration Theory

In the previous chapter, I proposed to examine the intersections between the theoretical and methodological dimensions of Giddens’ (1979, 1984) structuration theory. To begin this project, I turn to Giddens’ own writings about these kinds of connections. The first of these appears in the final chapter of *The Constitution of Society*, (1984) where he enumerates ten different “aspects” of ST (what might be understood as the theoretical foundations of ST), many of which raise challenges for the empirical researcher (1984: 281-284). Addressing the difficulties inherent in applying his theory to empirical study, he proposes a number of related methodological considerations, what he refers to as “guidelines for the overall orientation of social research” (1984: 284). Giddens (1989) also engages in explicit methodological discussion in the final section of “A Reply to My Critics,” where he outlines the “principal empirical concerns upon which social science should be focused” (1989: 297), what he later refers to as “a structurationist programme of research for modern social science” (1989: 300). I draw on both of these discussions in order to highlight the theoretical underpinnings of his methodological recommendations.

Connecting the Theory and Methodology of Giddens’ Work

*Methodological Implications of the Agency-Structure Dialectic*

To fully appreciate these issues, a brief review of Giddens’ basic ontological assumptions is useful. As discussed earlier, part of what links the practice theorists is their insistence that reality is socially constructed rather than objective or separate from human experience as the positivists proposed. (This is, again, what makes these theories attractive to CCO theorists). While all of the practice theorists begin with this common assumption, they develop it in different ways. An essential part of Giddens’ approach is his unique treatment of the relationship
between the two most basic elements of social theory. In his words, “The dualism of the ‘individual’ and ‘society’ is reconceptualized as the duality of agency and structure” (1984:162). This theoretical move has profound consequences for CCO researchers (as well as others) interested in documenting his theory.

For starters, the traditional “object” of research focus of social science theory is substituted with a new one: social practices. As Giddens explains, “The basic domain of study of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but *social practices* ordered across space and time (1984: 2).” This new “domain of study” introduces novel methodological issues for social science researchers. For example, from this perspective, it is no longer adequate to focus research attention on *either* the actions of individual agents *or* the structural features of societies, what Giddens describes as the ‘analysis of strategic conduct’ (where “the focus is placed upon the modes in which actors draw upon structural properties in the constitution of social relations”) versus the ‘institutional analysis’ (where “structural properties are treated as chronically reproduced features of social systems”) (1984:288). Rather, the study focus that researchers take must honor the dialectic relationship that ST describes.

Giddens makes explicit methodological recommendations regarding this point. In discussing the differences between an analysis of strategic conduct versus an institutional analysis, he writes,

> Since this is a difference in emphasis, there is no-clear cut line that can be drawn between these, and each, crucially has to be in principle rounded out by a concentration upon the

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21 In his discussions about empirical research, Giddens’ clearly differentiates between methods and methodology. He repeatedly emphasizes that he does not intend to prescribe particular methods for structurationist studies. For example, he states, I have an eclectic approach to method, which again rests upon the premise that research enquiries are contextually oriented. For some purposes, detailed ethnographic work is appropriate, while for others archival research, or the sophisticated statistical analysis of secondary materials might be more suitable. He reiterates this idea in a later work, reminding readers that his theory should not be used to provide “detailed guidelines for research procedure (294, italics added)”. Through these and other statements, Giddens attempts to remain “neutral” in his discussion of specific research methods. His stance on research methodology, however, is much less open-ended.
duality of structure.

Here, he clearly highlights the principles that ought to guide research practices as opposed to prescribing particular research methods. This principle of “rounding out” one’s research focus “by a concentration upon the duality of structure” might then be understood as part what guides researchers, in general, and, in my case, CCO researchers, in the methods they select.

Methodological Implications of Giddens’ Treatment of Social Reproduction

As previously discussed, Giddens (1984, 1989) suggests that a research focus on social practices is necessary for understanding the duality between agency and structure: “As an operational principle of research that ST suggests is that we should place emphasis squarely upon the constitution and reconstitution of social practices” (1989: 298). Towards that end, he proposes that,

Study of the ‘everyday’ or the ‘day-to-day’ forms a basic part of the analysis here, many seemingly trivial or mundane features of what people do being the actual ‘groundwork’ of larger-scale institutions (1984: 298).

This emphasis on everyday practices is, again, one of the features links him to other practice theorists as well as to many CCO scholars. What distinguishes him, in part, from his practice-oriented colleagues is the explanation he offers about how these practices are “ordered across space and time” (1984: 2).

To emphasize the ongoing nature of social practices, Giddens proposes that “Social activity occurs as a duree, a continuous flow of conduct” (1984: 3). Through this concept of duree (and the related concept of longue duree), he replaces the more traditional understanding of the relationship between the routines of daily life and the institutional forms of social practice as merely cumulative with a view that emphasizes the flow of human activity—a flow which Giddens insists is not unidirectional but rather ‘recursive’. For Giddens, all human activity is
constructed from the conditions of previous activities. Hence a major feature of social activity, and a central interest for Giddens, is the reproduction process inherent in social practice. As with his concept of the duality of structure, these ideas have significant methodological implications for researchers interested in empirically documenting this process. And again, Giddens (1989) gives explicit guidance—guidance that is highly relevant for CCO researchers.

In the short list of “guidelines” he proposes in his initial discussion about methodology, time-space issues have a prominent presence—they are the focus of the third of three recommendations that Giddens (1989) makes: “The social analyst must also be sensitive to the time-space constitution of social life…Time-space relations cannot be ‘pulled out’ of social analysis without undermining the whole enterprise (286).” In his later essay, he spells out what this means, in terms of research methodology, writing, “In empirical terms, this immediately means an ‘opening out’ across time and space. In other words, it necessitates an historical or developmental perspective and a sensitivity to variations of location” (1989: 298). A time-space sensitive approach, therefore, might be understood as another critical piece of a sound methodological program for ST-based research. Giddens discusses it as such when he writes,

What would a structurationist programme of research for modern social science look like? First, it would concentrate on the orderings of institutions across time and space, rather than taking as its object the study of ‘human societies’.

To summarize my review so far, both Giddens’ conceptualization of the agency-structure relationship and his treatment of the social reproduction process as a recursive one have important implications for the empirical researcher studying the communicative constitution of organization. In the first case, the dialectical relationship that Giddens proposes indicates a particular type of research focus—namely, a focus on social practices. The same is true for the recursive, locally situated process he describes, requiring those who aim to faithfully employ his
theory to design research frameworks capable of examining practices through time and across space. In addition to these issues, Giddens’ treatment of knowledgeability—a concept that is inextricably connected to his discussion of agency and, hence, integrally involved in the social reproduction model he proposes—introduces certain methodological imperatives. I turn now to examining his complex treatment of this concept and the issues this raises for researchers.

**Methodological Implications of Giddens’ Treatment of Knowledgeability**

Reviewing Giddens’ work shows clearly that the concept of knowledgeability is essential to the theoretical framework that he proposes. Indeed, he argues, “It is the specifically reflexive form of knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices” (1984: 3, italics added). The glossary definition Giddens provides of the concept of knowledgeability helps to shed light on this claim. He defines knowledgeability as:

Everything which actors know (believe) about the circumstances of their action and that of others, drawn upon in the production and reproduction of that action, including tacit as well as discursively available knowledge (1986, 375).

Part of what this definition highlights is Giddens’ assumption of an inherent connection between knowledge and action. Throughout his work he focuses his discussion on the dynamic phenomena of knowing, knowledgeability, and reflexivity (as opposed to the more static notion of ‘knowledge’ that was often the focus of scholars taking a positivistic approach). What we don’t really get from this particular definition, but what also clearly comes through in Giddens’ discussion about knowledgeability, is his treatment of it as a social process and his related interest in the mutual knowledge that enables social actors to ‘go on’ in any given social situation. This emphasis on the interconnections between knowledge and action and his interest in socially-shared knowledge are, again, similar to other practice theorists (as well as to most CCO scholars).
One of the things that distinguishes Giddens’ treatment of knowledge, however, is the degree of knowledgeability he accords to social actors. For him, actors are “deeply” knowledgeable about process of social reproduction in which they are engaged. Throughout his writings, he reminds readers that,

All human beings are knowledgable agents. That is to say, all social actors know a great deal about the conditions and the consequences of what they do in their day-to-day lives.

While this idea is frequently referenced, one key assumption behind the idea often lost—namely, Giddens’ explanation of how actors know. According to Giddens, there are two forms of knowledge, discursive (intentional) and practical (habitual). While both are important, in terms of the social reproduction process, the latter is especially so. In Giddens’ own words,

The vast bulk of the ‘stocks of knowledge’, in Schutz’ phrase, or what I prefer to call the mutual knowledge incorporated in encounters, is not directly accessible to the consciousness of actors. Most such knowledge is practical in character; it is inherent in the capability to go on within the routines of social life (1984: 4).

Therefore, when Giddens talks about actors being “knowledgeable agents”, (as in the quote above), he is referring, in large part, to their tacit, socially-shared knowledge. Likewise when he talks about “knowledgeability being deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices”, we can assume, again, that he is largely referring to the tacit knowledge that underlies everyday practice.

In his methodological discussion, Giddens insists that researchers attend to this dimension of his theoretical model, claiming, “No study of the structural properties of social systems can be successfully carried on, or its results interpreted, without reference to the knowledgeability of the relevant agents” (1984: 329). This imperative raises significant challenges for the empirical researcher interested in documenting CCO—namely, how to study this kind of taken-for-granted, below-the-surface knowledge. The highly abstract caution that
Giddens offers researchers—“to avoid impoverished descriptions of agents’ knowledgeability” (1984: 289)—acknowledges the complexity of this task but does little to help CCO researchers (and others) tease it apart. The same is true for the suggestions he gives researchers regarding the study of unintended consequences.

On numerous occasions in his methodological writings, Giddens highlights for researchers the importance of studying unintended consequences. For example, he writes, “Effective empirical analysis of institutional change means grasping the relations between reflexively monitored transformations and unintended consequences” (1989: 297). He reiterates this idea a few pages later, writing,

In empirical work, as in theoretical reflection, it is crucial to identify how unintended consequences interlace with the forms of knowledge which, both on practical and discursive levels, actors bring to bear upon the contexts of their behavior (1989: 299).

Unintended consequences, thus, are closely related to the concept of knowledgeability discussed above. They are, therefore, an important element in the social reproduction process that Giddens theorizes. Giddens ties the concept of unintended consequences together with the other main concepts of his theory—the duality of structure, social practices across time and space, and knowledgeability—in the following description:

The duality of structure is always the main grounding of continuities in social reproduction across time-space. It in turn presupposes the reflexive monitoring of agents in, and as constituting, the duree of daily social activity. But human knowledgeability is always bounded. The flow of action continually produces consequences which are unintended by actors, and these unintended consequences also may form unacknowledged conditions of action in a feedback fashion. Human history is created by intentional activities but in not an intended project; it persistently eludes efforts to bring it under conscious direction. 27

Given the complexity of the process that Giddens describes and the centrality that such abstract phenomena as knowledgeability and unintended consequences play in it, it is hardly surprising that researchers, in general, and CCO scholars, in particular, have had difficulty in documenting
Before discussing these challenges more pointedly, I take a moment to summarize my review of Giddens’ methodological recommendations.

The Beginning Contours of a Research Program

If we put the methodological recommendations I just finished discussing (recommendations that are grounded in Giddens’ unique conceptualization of the relationship between knowledge, action and intention) together with the suggestions that I reviewed earlier (suggestions that grow out of the theoretical constructs of action/structure and time-space distanciation), we have the beginning contours of a theoretically grounded research program for ST-inspired empirical research. In such a program, the underlying goal of research is to investigate the role that the dialectical relationship between agency and structure plays in social reproduction. Investigating this relationship requires a focus on social practices, which, in turn, requires a particular kind of research framework—namely, one that is compatible with the nature of the research object (social practices), a phenomenon that occurs over time and across space. Because of Giddens’ emphasis on the inherent ties between knowledgeability, unintended consequences, and agency-structure relations, CCO researchers who propose to study the agency-structure dialectic (as Giddens describes it) must also attend to these issues (of knowledgeability and unintended consequences) in their methodological design. The program I have outlined parallels Giddens’ broad-stroke suggestions for “how social research might proceed when consciously informed by the structurationist outlook” (1989: 297). I present the following key excerpts from the concluding remarks he offers at the end of his most recent methodological discussion:

The prime underlying orientation, both of the planning of the investigation and the interpretation of the results, would be towards examining the complexities of action/structure relations... As an operational principle of research what ST suggests we should place emphasis squarely upon the constitution and reconstitution of social
practices…In empirical terms, this immediately means an ‘opening out’ across time and space. In other words, it necessitates a historical or developmental perspective and a sensitivity to variations of location…In empirical work, as in theoretical reflection, it is crucial to identify how unintended consequences interlace with the forms of knowledge which, both on practical and discursive levels, actors bring to bear upon the contexts of their behavior (1989: 297-299) (italics added).

Boiling this passage down to its most basic claims, I offer the following summary of Giddens’ methodological guidelines:

**Underlying Research Goal:**
To examine the role that agency-structure relations play in social reproduction.

**Primary Research Focus:**
The constitution and reconstitution of social practices, over time and across space.

**Key Research Phenomena:**
The research design enables researchers to investigate and to analyze the basic phenomena involved in the social reproduction process (as Giddens describes it):
- The agency-structure dialectic,
- Social actors’ knowledgeability,
- Unintended consequences of social interaction.

This is a tall order for CCO researchers, one that raises a couple of basic questions: 1) Are there any existing research projects that actually conform to this program? And 2) am I suggesting that all ST-inspired empirical research should be guided by all of these principles?

**The Methodology of Existing ST Studies**

I start with the first of these questions: are there any existing research projects that conform to all of the methodological guidelines that Giddens recommends? In terms of the underlying goal of research that Giddens identifies (to examine the role that agency-structure relations play in social reproduction), most scholars who ground their research in ST (both in the field of IT and in the field of organizational studies) have an underlying interest these relations. As an example, Banks and Riley’s (1993) study looks at how social practices in a parent company (located in Japan) are reproduced in a subsidiary organization (located in the US).
closely analyzing the discourse of an organizational meeting, they endeavor to tease out the agency-structure dialectic involved in this reproduction. Each of the three case studies that Taylor et al (2001) present are also aimed at examining in the intersection of institutionalized structures and actions of local actors. Heaton’s (1995) study of two dramatically different design teams (in terms of design culture), for instance, examines how the institutionalized “features of their environments get played out in the design process” of each team (2001: 115). Groleau’s (1995) study of the computerization of a purchasing department has a similar goal, to tease apart how “the structures of computerization are filtered through the institutional constraints and systematic practices of a multitude of disparate users” (2001: 146).

The ST studies that seem to have had the greatest and most lasting impact are those that have attended to some of the other methodological guidelines on Giddens’ list. In particular, those that have adopted the particular kind of research focus that Giddens discusses—a focus on the constitution and reconstitution of social practices, over time and across space—have garnered wide-spread respect (e.g. Barley, 1986; Heracleous & Barrett, 2001; Howard and Geist, 1995; Orlikowski, 2000, 2002). Barley’s (1986) work is a case in point. Like many others who have employed ST, he explores the notion of the duality of structure in his study. In contrast to some, however, his research design also clearly attends to issues of time and space—a longitudinal and cross-sectional design that compares the activities of two groups of radiologists and technicians in two different hospitals before and after the introduction of the particular structural “occasion” he studies (CT scanners). Barley aligns these methodological choices with the theoretical platform he has chosen (what he describes as a blend of “negotiated order and structuration theories”), writing, “Since structuring implies a process, its temporal nature enjoins researchers to adopt longitudinal as well as cross-sectional perspectives” (1986: 81).
Like Barley’s (1986) study, Orlikowski’s empirical projects (2000, 2002) might also be described as being aligned with both the research goal and the research focus that Giddens’ recommends. In her study of Notes technology (2000), for example, she emphasizes the importance of focusing on social practices, proposing a research framework for studying “technologies-in-practice” and using it to examine several different enactments of the Notes technology. To document these practices, she develops a research design that is sensitive to the time/space distanciation that characterizes structuration process. She proposes to study, “…recurrent interaction in similar and different contexts, at the same time over time” (2000, 420). Her practice-based focus and her sensitivity to issues of time and space are also present in her 2002 study where she proposes to document the process of “organizational knowing” in a geographically dispersed organization.

Reviewing a number of other empirical projects grounded in ST (e.g. Boden, 1994; Katambe & Taylor, 2006; Banks & Riley, 1993; Jian, 2007; McPhee, Corman & Iverson, 2007; Mumby, 1987), what I find is that this time/space sensitive approach is more the exception than the rule. This is hardly surprising given the significant time and resources involved in conducting a longitudinal study. My review also indicates that few projects empirically attend to all three of the elements that Giddens recommends in his methodological discussion (the agency-structure dialectic, agents’ knowledgability, and unintended consequences). Much more common is for researchers to focus on one of the various phenomena involved in the social reproduction process. For example, Howard and Geist’s (1995) study of how members ideologically position themselves in the face of an organizational merger might be understood as being focused on the issue of agents’ knowledgability and its influence on organizational

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22 The methodological designs of several of these studies do attempt to research across space (but not through time). For example, Banks and Riley’s (1993) study examines several interrelated organizations but analyzes their interaction over a relatively short moment of time (a single, organizational meeting).
reproduction. In contrast, Jian’s (2007) study draws on ST to target the issue of unintended consequences.

Pozzebon and Pinsonneault’s (2005) review of information technology (IT) research that adopts an ST approach reflects these more singularly-focused methodological approaches. In it they distinguish between three different concepts from Giddens’ work that empirical researchers have attempted to document: the duality of structure, time/space distanitation, and actors’ knowledgeability (2005: 1357). Given the complexity of Giddens’ explanation of the agency-structure dialectic, these more narrowly focused research approaches are not only natural but also valuable in advancing our understanding of each of the different phenomenon involved in Giddens’ (1979, 1984) model. They also serve to remind us that meaningful academic insights have been produced in spite of the departures that scholars have made from Giddens’ (1984, 1989) suggestions. This brings me back to the question of when the application of all of these recommendations might be necessary, or, at least, significantly useful.

Applying Giddens’ Methodological Guidelines to Study the Dialectic of Control

As I demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 2, researchers are drawn to Giddens’ (1979, 1984, 1991) work for a variety of reasons. While the issues of power and control are central to Giddens’ own understanding of structuration process, (issues that he addresses in his model of social reproduction largely through his concept of the dialectic of control), those who empirically employ his ideas may or may not be interested in explicitly attending to this dimension. Such is the case for many of the researchers I reference above. Where the negotiation of power relations is key to a researcher’s interests, however, Giddens’ recommendations in their entirety—including the standards regarding knowledgeability and unintended consequences—are highly relevant. To defend this claim requires a brief overview of Giddens’ ideas about the dialectic of
control and how this dialectic is connected to the issues of knowledgeability and unintended consequences that he highlights in his model of social reproduction.

One of the distinguishing features of Giddens’ work is his innovative treatment of the concept of structural constraint. As he explains,

Most forms of structural sociology, from Durkheim onwards, have been inspired by the idea that structural properties of society form constraining influences over action. In contrast to this view, structuration theory is based on the proposition that structure is always both enabling and constraining, in virtue of the inherent relation between structure and agency (and between agency and power) (1984:169).

Giddens proposes the concept of duality of control as a way of describing this “two-way character” of power distribution, a way of explaining how structure is always both enabling and constraining. More specifically, he argues that structure is enabling because of the ways in which “all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors (1984: 16).” At the same time, however, structure constrains by “placing limits upon the range of options open to an actor” (1984: 177). Giddens emphasizes the mutual participation involved in the perpetuation of such constraints,

We should not conceive of the structures of domination built into social institutions as in some way grinding out ‘docile bodies’ who behave like automata suggested by objectivist social science. Power within social systems which enjoy some continuity over time and space presumes regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities in contexts of social interaction (1984:16).

In other words, all social agents actively contribute to the reproduction of constraint, not just those who serve to benefit from particular constraints.

Given social actors’ deeply knowledgeable nature, this means that agents sometimes knowingly act in ways that constrain their future actions. To explain this apparent contradiction, Giddens offers the concept of unintended consequences. He argues that as knowledgeable actors engage in the everyday practices of their social lives, they draw upon/enact various structures...
(the medium of their practices) for various purposes. Because some of these enactments are more conscious than others (recall the distinction between discursive and practical consciousness) some of the outcomes associated with these enactments (structure, which is both the medium and outcome of social practices) are intentional and others are not. It is largely through these unintended consequences that actors contribute to structural constraint, as Giddens explains,

The flow of action continually produces consequences which are unintended by actors, and these unintended consequences also may form unacknowledged conditions of action in a feedback fashion.

Hence, the way in which structural properties are constraining or enabling (the dialectic of control that Giddens describes), is closely tied both to actors’ knowledgeability and to the various outcomes (intentional and unintentional) resulting from their knowledgeable actions.

For researchers concerned with trying to document Giddens’ dialectic of control, the research standards that he outlines—standards that reflect the fundamental phenomena involved in this dialectic—are quite valuable. Since the case of the HE debate that I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 is one that clearly involves these issues, I propose to pilot these guidelines in my dissertation project. There is more conceptual work to be done, however, before I can do so.

Focusing and Tightening Giddens’ Methodological Discussion

Reviving Giddens’ methodological discussion is useful in that it provides a beginning foundation for empirical researchers—a foundation that I have argued is particularly useful for researchers interested in documenting the dialectic of control. The methodological picture that Giddens (1984, 1989) paints, however, as I have mentioned, is done in rather broad-strokes. To be useful to social science practitioners, some of the concepts referenced in these guidelines (e.g. social practices, knowledgeability, and unintended consequences) need to be refined. Several
scholars have taken steps in this direction (Jian, 2006; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008; Orlikowski, 2002)—Kuhn and Jackson (2008) through an explicit discussion of methodological issues, and the others, more indirectly, through the empirical projects they conduct and the inevitable methodological choices their empirical work involves.

In her study, for example, Orlikowski (2002) provides specific definitions of key concepts (e.g. social practices and knowledgeability), sample lists of analytical categories (e.g. types of organizational practices and organizational knowing), and a case-study example. In so doing, she begins to narrow the rather broad focus that Giddens recommends (on ‘social practices’), to the tighter focus of organizational practices. The analytical framework that Orlikowski (2002) proposes also clearly attends to the issue of “knowledgeability”, paralleling the organizational practices she analyzes with various kinds of knowing. In contrast with Giddens’ sometimes static treatment of actors’ knowledgeability (although he clearly recommends a dynamic approach to understanding knowledge, in practice, Giddens sometimes treats it as a static phenomenon), Orlikowski (2002) is solidly committed to examining knowledge as a “social accomplishment” (2002: 249). Her model, therefore, is valuable for those endeavoring to study these dynamic phenomena.

At first glance, the framework Orlikowski (2002) develops, also seems to address the issue of unintended consequences. In each section of her analysis, for example, she briefly describes the way in which the practices she studies might be “enabling” and “constraining”. What is missing in her methodological design, however, is a mechanism for examining how these enablements and constraints relate to the process of organizational reproduction that she examines. The same might be said of Jian’s (2006) study, a research project explicitly aimed at

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23 While Orlikowski advocates for a research focus on social practices, what she actually examines in this study are reports of social practices (versus the social practices themselves). This is a significant limitation of her study.
exploring the relationship between communication practice and unintended consequences. A benefit of Jian’s work is that it provides a useful model for examining the “clashes” between organizational members’ various interpretive schemes that occur in “moments of system integration” (2006: 22). It is successful, then, in the sense of highlighting and teasing apart the issues of knowledgeability involved in organizational reproduction. As with Orlikowski’s study, however, the study merely lists the unintended consequences associated with these practices (e.g. widened trust gap, lost productivity, increased work stress, 2006: 16) rather than examining the impact that these outcomes have on the reproduction process itself and on the power relations among organizational members. In his defense, the dialectic of control that interests me is not a central concern for Jian (nor is it for Orlikowski); therefore, analyzing this dimension of the unintended consequences he studies is not particularly important for this work. For studies where this is key, however, this kind of analysis is crucial.

Kuhn and Jackson (2008) propose a framework that might be fruitfully applied to this kind of study. The research framework they propose is different from those that Orlikowski (2002) and Jian (2006) develop in a number of ways. To begin with, it is explicitly focused on issues of method and methodology. Also, instead of being focused on Giddens’ (1979, 1984) theory, the framework they propose is designed for use with a variety of practice-based theories. In line with this focus, they examine how practice theorists generally conceive of knowledge (and knowledge construction) and they connect this directly with how researchers ought to approach empirical studies of this kind of process. Similar to Orlikowski (2002) and Jian (2006), Kuhn and Jackson (2008) attempt to tease apart just what it is that researchers are studying when they study social practices (and the knowledgability inherent in them). But Kuhn and Jackson also go one step further, addressing the question of why researchers study social practice,
underscoring in their answer the aim of documenting the reproduction and negotiation of organizational control. The way they accomplish this is to further tighten the focus of research so that it is explicitly designed to target these negotiations. Analyzing the specifics of their framework is useful for scholars interested in pursuing this type of research.

Similar to Orlikowski, (2002), Kuhn and Jackson (2008) insist on a focus on social practices. They then narrow this focus to organizational practices and highlight the essential role that knowing plays in these practices, focusing their attention on the “knowledge-accomplishing activities” of organizational life. From here, they go on to define knowing as “situated problem-solving”, emphasizing the inherent contest involved in knowledge-accomplishing practices—the beginning of what might be understood as the critical turn in their approach. Providing a framework to examine the range of contests one might encounter in studying these kinds of practices (from determinate to indeterminate episodes of interaction), they arm the researcher with tools to sort through where s/he might productively focus her/his analytical attention. For example, the interaction data that an empirical researcher collects will likely contain a wide variety of problem-solving situations—some that are strongly determinate (where the framing and resolution of a given interaction/situation is largely shared and, therefore, relatively uncontested), some moderately indeterminate (where there are small but resolvable differences about the framing and resolve of the situation), and others, highly indeterminate (where the framing and the resolve of the situation are greatly uncertain and highly contested). For the researcher interested in the negotiation of organizational control, they propose that the episodes of interaction that are indeterminate would be a good place for them to begin their analysis in that these episodes would be most likely to evidence the process of negotiation the researcher seeks to capture.
Circling back to my discussion about the need to tighten Giddens’ rather general methodological guidelines and, specifically, to his recommendation that researchers focus on “social practices”, Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) analytical model might be used to help researchers interested in this particular type of research to further tighten their research focus from the social practices that Giddens recommends, to organizational practices, to problem-solving situations, to knowledge-accomplishing episodes, and finally, to indeterminate episodes of interaction. Given their underlying interest in improving the methodology we have for studying the communicative construction of knowledge, their model can also be used to tighten Giddens recommendations that researchers “attend to the dimension of knowledgeability”.

**Tightening the Methodology for Studying Knowledgeability**

In his introductory chapter, Giddens (1984) presents the following diagram to convey his concept of the duality of structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Signification/Domination/Legitimation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules/Resources</td>
<td>Rules/Authoritative Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality</td>
<td>Interpretive Schemes/Facilities/Norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Communication/Power/Sanction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1984: 29)

This conceptual framework is useful to the empirical researcher in several ways. To begin with, it starts to tease apart the dimension of knowledgeability that is so central to structuration process by identifying several different kinds of relevant rules and resources: interpretive schemes, facilities, and norms. The diagram also suggests how the empirical researcher might go about

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24 I’ve slightly adapted the diagram that Giddens presents to include his ideas about the relationship between structure and rules and resources as well as his claims about the interconnected nature of rules and resources. More specifically, Giddens defines structure as the “rules and resources recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems” (1984: 377). While he distinguishes between rules and resources for analytical purposes, he also reminds readers that, “rules cannot be conceptualized apart from resources” (1984: 18). The slight changes I make to Giddens’ diagram are designed to emphasize these ideas.
documenting these highly abstract phenomena: by observing and analyzing the *interaction* phenomena that are associated with these modalities, the tri-partite phenomena of communication, power and sanction. More simply, what Giddens’ framework implies is that researchers focus on communication practices (and the dimensions of power and sanction inherent in these practices) in order to understand the inextricable relationship between actors’ knowledgeability and the process of social reproduction25.

The analytical framework that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) propose (a framework that borrows elements from Lazega’s, 1992, work) is concerned with documenting many of the same phenomena (rules, resources, interpretive schemes, norms, etc.). Focusing on the process of knowledge construction, itself, they propose that researchers can track the way in which actors’ employ certain “knowledge accomplishing resources” (identification, legitimation, and accountability26) as they negotiate particular organizational knowledge (or, using Giddens’ term: knowledgeability) within particular discursive situations (which they also demonstrate in the case-study they present). While I will later describe these knowledge accomplishing resources in greater detail, what is important for readers to understand here is that the knowledge accomplishing resources that Kuhn and Jackson examine are closely related to the various kinds of authoritative resources Giddens describes:

1. Organization of social time-space (temporal-spatial constitution of paths and regions);
2. Production /reproduction of the body (organization and relation of human beings in mutual association);

A significant benefit of Kuhn & Jackson’s (2008) analytical framework is that in contrast to the rather general research focus that Giddens’ framework implies—to examine communication

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25 I follow Taylor et al’s (2000: 155-56) lead in my interpretation of this part of Giddens’ framework.
26 Kuhn and Jackson (2008) use the categories that Lazega (1992) proposes for understanding the various operations that actors use to judge appropriate behavior. For more about these, see Lazega (1992: 39-42).
practice in order to understand how actors’ draw upon rules/resources—their framework highlights specific communication practices (the moments where actors initiate, negotiate, and close problematic situations) that researchers might examine as well as the particular knowledge-accomplishing resources associated with them (again, what they describe as identification, accountability and legitimacy). In this way, the framework Kuhn and Jackson (2008) propose not only addresses the phenomenon of knowledgeability that Giddens (1979, 1984) highlights in his methodological recommendations but also operationalizes it in a way that it useful for communication researchers who are interested in teasing out the power relations inherent in the organizational reproduction process. By linking the study of knowledgeability to the analysis of authoritative resources, Kuhn and Jackson claim to make “knowledge, context, and power ‘observable’ in episodes of interaction” (2008: 25). For all of these reasons, their analytical framework is a useful tool for empirically examining and teasing apart the knowledge construction process (and the knowledgeability accomplished through this process) that is so central to the dialectic of control that Giddens describes.

Folding Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) suggestions into Giddens’ methodological framework (the framework that I summarize on page 54), helps to hone the methodological directives associated with the phenomenon of knowledgeability (one of the key research phenomena that Giddens identifies for researchers):

**Key Research Phenomena**
The Social Construction of Actors’ Knowledgeability,
- Knowledge accomplishing episodes represent a robust unit of analysis for studying the knowledgeability of organizational actors.
- These episodes can be analyzed in terms of:
  - the problematic situations that regularly arise during these episodes;
  - the knowledge-based resources upon which actors draw as they initiate, negotiate and resolve these situations (identification, legitimation, accountability);
  - the degree of determinancy involved the problematic situation (from largely determinate, to moderately indeterminate, to greatly indeterminate);
Because indeterminate episodes of practice are likely to evidence competing attempts to reproduce or to revise shared stocks of knowledge, they are good place for researchers interested in the negotiation of power relations to focus their initial analytical attention;

_Tightening the Methodology for Studying Unintended Consequences_

In addition to being a useful model for understanding the moment-to-moment negotiation of power relations, Kuhn and Jackson (2008) argue that their model might also be used to better understand the unintended consequences associated with knowledge-accomplishing practices. In their words,

Examining the patterns of practices that accomplish knowledge in problematic situations...can provide insight on organizational change, retention of routines, and the roles of tradition and authority (see also Kuhn, 2006). With attention to arrays of knowledge-accomplishing activities, our framework can help generate insights into the unintended consequences of routine organizational action, one of the persistent concerns of organizational theory (Conrad & Haynes, 2001; Reed, 1996) (2008: 22).

In its current form, however, the approach they describe does not directly attend to the issue of unintended consequences. For researchers interested in empirically examining this phenomenon, an additional methodological step is required—a step that might help them to tease apart the process of generating unintended consequences.

Examples of contemporary studies that analyze this process are hard to find. As I discussed earlier in my review, although several scholars reference the idea of unintended consequences in their ST-based studies, direct analytical attention of the particular phenomenon involved in the production of these is missing from the research models they propose (e.g. Barley, 1986; Jian, 2005; Orlikowski, 2002). In his discussion of this kind of analysis, Giddens (1984: 289-304) again points to Willis (1977) as an exemplar, describing his study as a work that not only explores its subjects’ knowledgeability but also the unintended consequences that impact structuration process.
According to Giddens (1984), Willis (1977) establishes the foundation for examining these kinds of consequences by identifying the intentionality (including reasons and motivations) underlying actors’ use of resources. If we look at this phenomenon within the larger process that Giddens (1984) describes, what’s interesting to him about these purposive actions are not so much the actions themselves but the consequences associated with them—consequences that inevitably go beyond what actors intend. Willis’ (1977) attention to these kinds of unintended consequences is something that impresses Giddens. He also likes the fact that Willis (1977) study seems to highlight the “unacknowledged conditions” (created by unintended consequences) that feed back into structuration process. Through his analysis of Willis (1977) work, then, Giddens (1984) highlights the basic phenomena involved in studying the bounds of actors’ knowledgeability (e.g. purposive action, unintended consequences, and unacknowledged conditions).

Several problems arise, however, in trying to apply Willis (1977) methodological approach to my study. For starters, his treatment of the concept of knowledge is more in line with a cognitive approach rather than the more social approach that the practice theorists (including Giddens) emphasize as is his treatment of the notion of intention. Although Giddens (1984) seems to overlook these shortcomings in his analysis of Willis (1977) study, since my project is aimed at capturing the co-constructed knowledgeability inherent in organizational reproduction and change, Willis’ (1977) cognitive-based approach is ill-fitted to my study. My commitment to exploring the social process of knowledge constitution requires that I also treat the notion of intentionality as a social process. In absence of any empirical examples that take

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27 It should be noted that Willis (1977), himself, does not explicitly discuss any of the phenomena that Giddens (1984) identifies in his study nor does he provide much discussion at all about the methodology (and methods) he uses in his research.  
28 Again, while Giddens’ proposes to treat knowledge as a social phenomenon, in his own writing, he is inconsistent about taking this kind of approach.
this approach, the methods I will use for studying this kind of intentionality will have to be largely invented (a task that I will attend to in my next chapter).

An additional shortcoming of Willis (1977) study (in terms of using it as a model for my project), is that he is not centrally concerned with the role that communication plays in social reproduction (as I am). I propose that I can still incorporate Giddens’ (1984) insights about the various phenomena involved in the bounds of agents’ knowledgeability (e.g. purposive action, unintended consequences, and unacknowledged conditions) into the model I am developing. To apply these insights to the model I have articulated, however, (a model focused on the communicative dimension of social reproduction), requires specifying the relationship between these phenomena and the communication activity I propose to study.

Looking back at Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) work, in their implications section, they discuss the fact that their model might be used to identify “patterns of problem-solving situations”, as well as “typified responses to recurrent (or even intermittent) situations” (2008: 22). I propose that these patterns might provide the necessary focal point for transforming Giddens’ (1989) insights about the various phenomena involved in the bounds of agents’ knowledgeability into concrete, communication-oriented, methodological guidelines. More specifically, I will begin my analysis of unintended consequences by searching for patterns in actors’ approaches to negotiating and closing problematic situations. These patterns, in turn, will help me to identify which consequences (and conditions) may be relevant in future interactions.

Proposing Methodological Guidelines for Giddens’ Theory

At the beginning of this chapter, I proposed to pilot Giddens’ (1984, 1989) methodological guidelines in my dissertation project, acknowledging a significant problem inherent in that proposition—namely that the broad-stroke principles he outlines are not exactly
“research ready”. To address these shortcomings, I combined Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) analytical framework with Giddens’ (1984, 1989) to create a refined set of methodological directives that might be used to study the knowledgeability that is so integral to structuration process. Their work also provides insights about where to begin one’s analysis (in terms of communication activities) of the other key phenomenon that impacts structuration process: the unintended consequences of social interaction. Adding these to my evolving framework produces what I argue is a set of grounded—both theoretically and practically—methodological principles for studying the dialectic of control that Giddens’ describes. I summarize these principles on the following page.

If we go back to the distinction I made in Chapter 1 between methods and methodology (see page 3), some of the refinements that I have added to Giddens’ outline might be understood as methodological, whereas others are more analytical and therefore, might be properly understood as methods suggestions. Giddens (1984) argues that while there is one set of methodology that is appropriate for his theory, a variety of methods might be applied. In the model I outline, I draw heavily on the methods that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) describe. Following Giddens’ (1986) argument, these represent some but certainly not all of the methods that might be used. What makes these methods especially valuable, again, is that they are neatly aligned with Giddens’ (1984, 1989) methodological framework and, therefore, also his theoretical framework. It has taken a lot of energy to get here, however, and will take a great deal more to implement the guidelines outlined above. This begs the question, why is this alignment so important? In other words, what are the benefits of developing and employing such carefully crafted methodological guidelines?
Methodological Guidelines for Researchers Using Giddens’ Structuration Theory
To Study the Communicative Constitution of Organization

Underlying Research Goal:
To examine the role that agency-structure relations (viewed from a communication lens) play in the constitution of organization, in general, and the constitution of organizational power relations, in particular.

Primary Research Focus:
Organizational members’ social practices (with a focus on the discursive dimensions of these practices), over time and across space.

- A longitudinal research design is recommended for studying these practices over time.
- Observation of multiple constituencies is recommended for studying these practices across space.
- Researchers interested in documenting the negotiation of power relations in organizations can narrow this focus on social practices first to organizational practices, then to problem-solving situations within these practices, and finally to episodes of interaction within these situations.

Key Research Phenomena:
A successful research design is one that enables researchers to investigate and to analyze the basic phenomena involved in the process of organizational constitution (as Giddens describes it), namely:
1. The dialectic of control,
Researchers interested in teasing apart the constitution of organizational power relations must account for the integral relationship that Giddens’ describes between the dialectic of structure and the dialectic of control. Researchers can examine this relationship by investigating and analyzing two other key phenomena:
2. The co-construction of organizational knowledge,
The negotiation of shared organizational knowledge (a co-constructed and evolving process) is closely tied to the dialectics of structure and control that Giddens’ describes. The research design, therefore, should enable the researcher to investigate and to analyze this constitutive process. Episodes of interaction represent a robust unit of analysis for studying this knowledge construction process. These episodes can be analyzed in terms of:
   a. the problematic situations that regularly arise during these episodes;
   b. the discursive resources upon which actors draw as they initiate, negotiate and resolve these situations (identification, legitimation, accountability);
   c. the degree of determinacy involved in framing and resolving the problematic situation (from determinate to indeterminate);
   d. the shared knowledge that the group “accomplishes” through the interaction.
3. The unintended consequences inherent in the knowledge construction process,
The unintended consequences associated with the co-construction of knowledge are also a key element in the dialectic of control. The research design, therefore, should enable the researcher to investigate and to analyze these unintended consequences. Examining knowledge accomplishing episodes across time, researchers should focus their analytical attention on:
   a. patterns in actors’ use of knowledge-based resources;
   b. the unintended outcomes (or consequences) associated with these repeating actions;
   c. the ways in which these outcomes influence future interactions and the evolution of knowledge associated with these interactions.
The Value of the Proposed Methodological Framework

This brings me full circle, back to my initial discussion about what motivates my study. As I have discussed in previous chapters, part of the attraction of Giddens’ theory for organizational communication scholars is the potential it (and other practice theories) holds for increasing our understanding about the role that communication plays in the constitution of organization and in the negotiation of power relations (processes which are integrally related). It has been challenging for scholars to fully realize this potential, however, because of the theoretical complexity of ST. The dialectical relations that are the foundation of the theory are the primary source of this difficulty. Teasing apart what these various dialectical relations mean, how they interact, and how communication practice is bound up with them is tricky; empirically documenting this process can be daunting. Giddens’ (1984, 1989) methodological suggestions bring researchers one step closer to being able to document these relations. Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) additions lay the foundation for more substantial analysis of the dialectic of control, and therefore, increase the potential for a greater understanding of the role communication plays in this dialectic.

Why should we care? How well we understand CCO has real-life implications, as the HE case that I discuss in my review clearly demonstrates. In that case, the concern is that as organizational members in the HE setting draw on the resources associated with managerial Discourse in their everyday interactions, they are fundamentally altering the purpose and value of higher education practice. These alterations, in turn, radically alter the power relations among organizational members, decreasing the power that faculty members have in shaping the practice of higher education and increasing the power that administrators (and others) have. As I discuss in previous chapters, current research on the subject has produced conflicting conclusions, some
studies evidencing a dramatic decline in faculty power (Fairclough, 1993; Giroux, 2002) and others assuring that no such decline has occurred (Trowler, 1998, 2001). Given the potential consequences in this case, researchers need to continue to interrogate this dialectic. The methodological framework that I have developed by combining Giddens’ (1984, 1989) and Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) discussions enables researchers to do this, providing both useful methodological principles as well as focused analytical tools for the job.

Conclusion

My proposal, then, is to demonstrate the effectiveness of this framework and the benefits it produces for communication research. I plan to do so by applying this framework to study the changes in communication practice at a particular organization in the higher education setting, what I will call the Office of Technology Coordination (OTC) at Western U. Using the framework I have described, I propose to investigate the following research question: How do both dominant and subordinate members/constituents of the organization “exert control” in the constitution of organizational authority (as Giddens insists they do)? In other words, how is organizational authority co-constructed by OTC members and constituents (both dominant and subordinate)? As a communication scholar, I propose that a focus on communication practices is key to answering these questions. Reformulating my question to foreground this focus, my question becomes: how do the communication practices of each group of OTC members and constituents (both dominant and subordinate) shape the constitution of organizational authority?

Approaching this research question from a practice perspective, I treat these authority relations as dynamic, socially constructed phenomena, the meanings of which are continually disputed and negotiated. Hence, my study is aimed at teasing apart the relationship between participants’ communication practices and their shared understanding of authority relations.
Adapting Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) analytical framework for my research purposes, I propose to examine these communication practices in terms of the discursive resources that members and constituents employ as they negotiate this kind of knowledge. Following Giddens’ (1984, 1989) claim that this kind of constitutive process inevitably involves the production of unintended consequences that, in turn, feedback into and shape future interactions, I will also attempt to identify any unintended consequences associated with participants’ communication practices that seem to have a significant effect on the knowledge construction process that I am proposing to examine (and the dialectic of control that underlies it).

My hope is that the methodological framework I have developed will enable researchers to more thoroughly analyze the dialectic of control that underlies the constitution of organizational authority than has been previously possible with existing methodological models. My claim is that what makes these advances possible is the model’s close alignment with Giddens’ theoretical framework (a practice-based framework) as well as its focused attention on the mechanism fundamental to the reproduction process he describes: communication practice.
Chapter Four: Methods and Methodology Discussion

My goal in the previous chapters has been to establish the need for the research I am proposing. I have explored the challenging methodological issues that practice theories raise and I have argued for increased scholarly attention towards these issues. Focusing on Giddens’ (1979, 1984) theory, I then developed a set of methodological principles that might guide CCO researchers as they apply ST to study the dialectic of control, using his own discussion as a foundation and Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) framework to focus and tighten his ideas. Finally, I proposed to evaluate this methodological framework by applying it in an empirical case study.

In this chapter, I describe the various steps in my research process, from selecting my research site, to outlining my research design, to collecting and analyzing my research data. Given the nature of my project, (what I describe as a hybrid, social-constructionist approach), I do not simply take for granted my position as a researcher. Instead, I attempt a reflexive stance, situating each of my various research choices within my inevitably personal situation. The voice I take in this section—a less formal, less distant, and more openly subjective voice than I have adopted thus far in my writing—reflects this position.

Selecting my Research Site

In contrast to many graduate students who select a research site after they have clarified their dissertation topic, I identified some of the basic parameters of my site before even entering my graduate program. Prior to coming to the Communication department at CU, I worked as an instructional design consultant on several educational technology projects. I also taught and incorporated these emerging technologies into my own teaching practices. Both experiences stimulated my interest in the changing communication practices occurring in the higher
education setting. I entered my graduate program with the broad goal of investigating these changes.

As I progressed through my coursework, all of the papers that I wrote and all of the research projects I pursued were tied to this goal. Having identified this interest early on, I also selected a research site where I might study these changes: a cross-institutional academic program located in a nearby higher education institution (what I refer to as “Western U”). I began collecting data from this site in my second year (through a course-based, Human Research Committee approval29) with the idea that by the end of my coursework, I might have the beginnings of a potential data set for my dissertation project. In fall of 2006, I obtained approval from the HRC not only to continue this research but also to extend its reach slightly, studying the connections between the organizing activities of the academic program I had begun to study and Western U’s main technology group: “Central IT”. At the time, I assumed I was laying down the foundation for my dissertation project. While this turned out to be true, it was not exactly the foundation I had originally conceived. Permit me to explain.

As I progressed through my graduate program, the influx of managerial discourse in the higher education setting had become more pronounced for me, through my readings, through my experience as a member of my own university community, and through my experiences on other university campuses. My coursework in the Communication department provided me with the opportunity to pursue an empirical study of this phenomenon, analyzing the changes in a popular higher education journal over a decade. This project deepened my interest in the changes in discourse in the HE setting as well as provided first-hand exposure to the challenges of empirically studying these changes. Through this and several other course-based research

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29 In courses where research projects that study human subjects are required, the instructor submits a request for the class (instead of each student submitting an individual request).
projects, my interest in issues of methods and methodology intensified. The focus for my dissertation project was beginning to take shape.

During the same timeframe, the chancellor of Western U had launched a university-wide initiative designed to make the institution more competitive in the higher education market. This initiative was chock full of managerial discourse and, as such, caught my attention. My first exposure to this discourse came through my initial HRC-approved project. A number of the Central IT staff I interviewed in conjunction with my early research project talked about the chancellor’s plan. Being in the midst of their own strategic planning initiative, there was considerable discussion about how the two efforts were aligned. When I inquired about where I might go to hear more interactive discussion about these issues, I was directed to a monthly meeting that was coordinated by what I will refer to as the “Office of Technology Coordination” (OTC), the parent organization of Western U’s Central IT. In doing a little research about the group, I discovered that the faculty representative at this meeting was someone from the program I had been studying, making it an interesting discussion from the point of view of my research project at the time (a project that was aimed at understanding the organizational ties between the academic program I had been studying and Central IT). After gaining permission from all meeting participants to attend and record the meeting, (it didn’t hurt that my previous employer from my consulting days was the director of this meeting), I began observing the group’s interactions with this research focus in mind.

After attending the meeting for several sessions, I realized that the relationship that I had initially chosen to study was part of a much larger set of organizational activities. This larger set of activities—what OTC was charged to “coordinate”—involved not only groups such as the program I had been studying (a cross-campus, academic program) and Central IT (the group
responsible for supporting central IT services) but also diverse administrative offices on campus (e.g. Enrollment, Housing and Dining, Libraries, etc.), the full gamut of academic departments and research centers (from Anthropology to Astrophysics, Telecommunications to Theater and Dance), and a host of technology-related groups (e.g. Networking, Infrastructure, Project Planning). From an organizational perspective, this complexity fascinated me. The more frequent references to managerial discourse that I encountered in these meetings (as contrasted with my earlier research) were also appealing. At about the same time that I decided to submit a new proposal to the HRC—substituting the OTC as my organizational site in place of the cross-campus academic program I had been studying—the Office’s director announced his resignation and the monthly meetings I had begun to attend were suspended.

In terms of where I was in my graduate studies, this transition occurred just as I had finished my coursework and was starting to prepare for my Comprehensive Exams. I put my decision about a research site on hold until after I had gotten to the other side of my exams. Once I came back up for air, I returned to the task of preparing a new Request for Review, also beginning my work on my Prospectus. By the end of the year (2008), the HRC had approved my proposal to study Western U’s OTC and I had a beginning draft of my Prospectus in hand.

Outlining my Research Design

While I wasn’t consciously making research design decisions at this stage, these early research practices helped shape the beginning contours of my methodological approach. For example, the early data I collected on the academic program I had been studying (fieldnotes and audio-recordings of organizational meetings) and the methods I used to collect it (participant observation, audio-taping, and follow-up interviews with meeting participants) were largely determined by the courses I was enrolled in at the time: a course on organizational meetings and
another on discourse analysis. Having completed the requisite course in research methods, I understood that the approach I had adopted was qualitative and that my interest in the power relations among organizational members gave my papers a critical bent, but I didn’t really have a sense for the larger methodological frameworks with which I was dealing. I was also far from a substantial research question that might stimulate more thoughtful reflection about my methodological choices.

Like most students, however, there were theorists who resonated with me more than others. From early on in my coursework, I was attracted to the CCO theorists and I took an interest in Giddens’ (1979, 1984) theory and the potential it seemed to hold for understanding the relationship between communication, organization and power. In reading about the various ways it had been applied, I was struck by the sometimes dramatic differences in empirical methods (what kinds of data were collected and how they were analyzed) but I didn’t appreciate the difficulties it posed, methodologically speaking, until later. Indeed, at that time, I was mainly focused on issues of method and didn’t give much time to contemplating how these might be guided by more macro-level considerations.

Fortunately, however, despite my lack of conscious research planning, many of the basic methodological procedures that I tacitly developed over the past couple of years are remarkably compatible with Giddens’ (1979, 1984) framework. As I describe above, my original plan to select the research site for my dissertation project towards the beginning of my coursework did not pan out. Because of the particular circumstances of my data collection, however, (coupled with my slow progress through the program), I was able to gather close to a year’s worth of data before my comprehensive exams (even though I didn’t formally identify a new research site until
later). I continued to add to this data set while writing my prospectus, creating the foundation for a robust, longitudinal study.

The cross-sectional nature of this dataset was also, in some ways, more happenstance than planned. As I describe above, I stumbled onto the monthly technology meeting somewhat by accident. After having sat in on this discussion several times, however, I realized that such a meeting constellation (one that included constituents from myriad areas of the university) provided a comparatively well-rounded view of various organizational interests (as opposed to meetings where diverse representatives were not present). From then on, I sought out conversations that involved different organizational players with diverse organizational agendas. While I hadn’t yet reviewed Giddens’ (1984, 1989) discussions about methodology, my beginning dataset set me up to conduct the kind of long-term, cross-institutional research that he recommends.

Subsequently conducting my literature review and analyzing Giddens’ (1984, 1989) methodological discussions has underscored for me the importance of this kind of approach. More specifically, my review has clarified the importance of the time and space dimensions to the epistemology underlying Giddens’ (1984, 1989) theory, in general, and to his ideas about the dialectic of control, in particular. Because of how central they are to Giddens’ theoretical framework, I have argued that those endeavoring to empirically study this dialectic must account for them in their methodological design, as I have modeled in my last chapter. Using Giddens’ (1984, 1989) work as my guide, I also identified two other epistemological phenomena that are fundamental to his conception of the dialectic of control: the social construction of actors’ knowledgeability and the unintended consequences produced by this process. These I also address in the methodological model I describe in the previous chapter. While I have begun to
describe the particulars of this model, (including not only the basic methodological principles, but also a beginning set of research methods that are aligned with these principles), I’ve yet to discuss how this model compares to other, more well-known approaches. I turn my attention now to this task.

Situation My Design Within Existing Frameworks

Methodological Traditions

In terms of where we might locate this framework within the more-established methodological traditions, because of the centrality of Giddens’ (1984, 1989) work, it is useful to review his discussion about these issues. In situating his model, the traditions that he focuses on are the quantitative and qualitative research traditions. From his perspective, the often sharp divisions between these two approaches can be understood as a “residue of the dualism of structure and agency” (1984: 330), with researchers studying the more enduring structural features of society strongly favoring quantitative research and those interested in the situated and meaningful character of social interaction preferring qualitative research. As I have discussed, Giddens (1979, 1984) rejects this dualism on a theoretical level, offering the alternative conception of a dialectic relationship in place of it. At the same time, he also rejects the dualism between a macro and micro research focus, insisting that one cannot be understood without the other.

When Giddens (1984, 1989) discussed the methodological implications of his theory, it was several years before Burrell and Morgan (1993) and Lincoln and Guba (1994) proposed their schema for understanding social science research. In absence of these frameworks, Giddens (1984, 1989) suggested that his model belonged “outside” both the more established traditions. Taking these more recent frameworks into account, I propose that based on his focus on social
practices and his emphasis on the knowledgeability involved in constitution of society, it makes good sense to understand Giddens approach as qualitative, belonging within the constructionist tradition of social science that Guba and Lincoln (1994, 2005) describe. Certainly once we revise Giddens’ (1984, 1989) framework in the ways that I have, adding Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) emphasis on the communicative constitution of organization, my suggestion to characterize the methodological model that I have outlined as a social constructionist seems warranted.

In Chapter 2, I reviewed some of the basic assumptions of social constructionism. These assumptions form an important part of the foundational principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) that Fairclough and Wodak (1997) describe:

- CDA addresses social problems;
- Power relations are discursive;
- Discourse constitutes society and culture;
- Discourse does ideological work;
- Discourse is historical;
- Discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory and uses a systematic methodology;
- CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm (as cited in Rogers, 2004: 2).

Building upon these, CDA scholars add an explicit, critical focus and an emphasis on methodology. In Roger’s words (2004),

> Although there is no formula for conducting CDA, researchers who use CDA are concerned with critical theory of the social world, the relationship of language and discourse in the construction and representation of this social world, and a methodology that allows them to describe, interpret, and explain such relationships. Approaches to CDA may vary at the ‘critical’, ‘discourse’, or ‘analysis’ sections of the method, but must include all three parts to be considered a CDA (Rogers, 2004: 3).

By building out Giddens’ (1984, 1989) critically-oriented, methodological framework in the way that I have (adding elements from Kuhn and Jackson’s, 2008, framework to analyze the discourse involved in the social reproduction process that Giddens describes), and by

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30 Given the OC focus of the model, we might also use Deetz’ (2000) categories to understand it; using this framework, it would be labeled as a “dialogical” model.
endeavoring to create a systematic methodological approach, I suggest that we might understand
the model I have introduced as a new form of CDA.

Highlighting the connections between the methodology I propose and other CDA
approaches is useful in terms of describing the family of social constructionist approaches to
which it belongs—a loosely connected group that includes such scholars as Fairclough (1992,
As with the larger family of social constructionism, however, the methodologies used in CDA
are quite diverse from one approach to the next. How they differ—in terms of the ‘critical’,
‘discourse’ and ‘analysis’ dimensions of their approaches—is influenced, in large part, by the
researcher’s theoretical commitments. According to Rogers (2004), we can separate the
approaches listed above into several different forms of CDA, forms based on: French discourse
analysis (e.g. Foucault, 1972, Pecheux, 1975), social semiotics (Hodge & Kress, 1988), socio-
cognitive studies (Van Dijk, 1993), and the discourse historical method (Wodak, 1996, 1999)
(2004: 2).

The approach that I have knitted together is also based on the assumptions and
commitments of the theory that underlies it, in this case: Giddens’ (1984, 1989) ST theory (and
CCO theorists’ extensions of it).31 As I proposed in the previous chapter, those interested in
empirically documenting the negotiation of organizational control from a structurational
perspective must attend to the particular phenomena involved in the social reproduction process,
as Giddens (1984, 1989) describes them: the dialectic of control, agents’ knowledgeability, and
the the unintended consequences inherent in social interaction.

31 While Giddens’ talks generally about the role that communication plays in social reproduction, I lean on the work of CCO scholars in order to
develop this dimension of the framework I propose: on Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) work, directly, and on Orlikowski’s, (2000, 2002) and Taylor and VanEvery’s (2000) more indirectly.
In addition to articulating these principles (the methodological guidelines I propose in the previous chapter), I have also begun to discuss how a researcher might proceed to more empirical ground. Using Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) work, I suggest a number of moves that a researcher might make to tease apart the knowledgeability inherent in ST. As I discussed earlier, the boundaries between methodology and methods are far from distinct. The moves that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) describe, however, begin to bring us more clearly into the realm of methods. As I have done with the overall methodological framework, we can also begin to situate these methods within existing traditions. It is useful to do so before describing these methods in greater detail, a task that will occupy a good part of this methodology chapter.  

*Data Collection/Analysis Methods*

As I pointed out earlier in my discussion, it has become more and more common for CCO scholars to use “hybrid” methodologies in their empirical work, combining analytical approaches that are often distinct. In Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) case, the kind of data they analyze (transcribed conversation data versus actors’ reports of conversations) as well as the close-up, turn-by-turn analysis that they model might be understood as being rooted in the tradition of conversation analysis (although the conversation details they attend to are considerably less detailed than those that Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, describe). Also in line with this tradition, and, more specifically, in line with the tradition of ethnomethodology upon which it is built\(^\text{32}\), Kuhn and Jackson (2008) focus a great deal of analytical attention on how actors “frame” the problematic situations they encounter. Different from most

\(^{32}\text{In the summary they provide of the two main branches of discourse analysis (what they describe as ethnomethodology and critical studies), Taylor et al (2000) tease apart the myriad academic influences that shaped the tradition of conversation analysis. According to their account, Sacks’ (1974) conversation analysis represents a systematization of Garfinkel’s (1967) insights about how conversation participants negotiate/achieve a shared account, which, in turn, extends Schutz’s (1967, 1970) ideas about the co-constructed, continuously evolving phenomenon of intersubjectivity, which has roots in Husserl’s (1964, 1976) emphasis on how we know the world (phenomenology). Above, I identify the connection between the methods Sacks (1974) describes and the methods that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) employ; their work also has clear ties to the other traditions out of which Sacks’ methods were born.}
ethnomethodologists, however, they link these framing activities with the struggle for organizational control. In their words,

As actors encounter and negotiate the contours of a problematic situation, their discursive moves necessarily employ classifications: they draw on subject positions, make linguistic distinctions, and employ forms of reasoning that are rendered invisible in most research on knowledge and knowing. The three situation-framing resources [identification, legitimacy, accountability] can provide a vocabulary for analyzing these moves (2008: 21).

Their interest in this kind of vocabulary has clear connections to the critical tradition, the second perspective that informs their hybrid approach. Their analytical attention to discursive moves that foreclose discussion is also rooted in the critical tradition. In terms of the methods they use to analyze these moves, they employ the categories that Deetz (1992) describes in his discussion of discursive closure (e.g. disqualification, naturalization, neutralization, etc.).

The framework I propose, as I have discussed, is primarily designed to provide methodological guidelines for researchers interested in empirically studying the dialectic of control. At the same time, however, for each of the key research phenomena highlighted, a beginning list of methods is suggested. In this section I have contextualized both the methodology and the methods outlined in the framework I have introduced, describing the methodology broadly as social constructionist, and more specifically as a new form of critical discourse analysis. Like many social constructionist (and CDA) models, the one that I have articulated combines methods that are often distinct, methods associated with two types of interpretive approaches (conversation analysis and ethnomethodology) as well as the authority-focused analysis employed by critical scholars. To demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach and the benefits it produces for communication research (namely, the way in which it highlights the role of communication practice in the dialectic of control), I have proposed to apply the methodological framework I have knitted together to an actual case study: an
organization in the higher education setting. Having sketched an outline of my methodological framework (in the previous chapter) and having located this framework within its larger research traditions (in this section), I turn now to describing this organization and the particular communication practices that are relevant to my project.

Defining the Particulars of My Project

The organization I have chosen to focus my research on is what I call the Office of Technology Coordination (OTC), the umbrella organization that coordinates IT activities within the larger organization of Western U. (Again, these activities include not only those that occur within the university’s designated IT organizations but also those within Western U’s wide array of administrative offices, academic departments, and research centers.) During my data collection, the OTC went through several transitions in leadership. In the summer of 2007, the director of 25 years stepped down. For the next two years, the CFO of Western U acted as the interim director of OTC (adopting the title of Vice Provost of Academic and Campus Technology). In August of 2009, a new director, with a new title, was appointed: the university’s first, ‘official’ Chief Information Officer. Along with each of these changes came changes in organizational structure, making it difficult to succinctly describe the organization I am studying (an issue that I will attend to later in my discussion). At the same time, however, these transitions have helped to shed light on what is often more difficult to observe in times of relative organizational stability: the negotiation of organizational meaning and of relations among organizational members.

More specifically, in these transition years, a significant amount of discussion was aimed (both directly and indirectly) towards such questions such as: What is the OTC and what is its purpose? Who is a member of the OTC and how are these members related? And, perhaps most
importantly, to what degree can various organizational members participate in defining the purpose/meaning of the organization? Following Giddens (1979, 1984), my interest has focused on the institutionalized rules/resources that members draw on in their everyday interactions to answer these questions and the ways in which these practices reconstitute and/or reproduce (enable and constrain) members’ existing power relations. Translating this into communication terms (using Alvesson & Karreman’s, 2000, distinctions33), I am interested in the Discourse(s) that members draw upon in their everyday discourse and how this impacts their ability to participate in how their organization is defined and what their work means (which, over time, becomes sedimented into institutionalized Discourse that members draw on in their everyday discourse, and on and on.)

The Discourses Upon Which Members Draw

In the case of Western U, there are a myriad of Discourses upon which members draw. For this study, I will focus my attention on two of these: the ‘managerialist’ discourse born in the private business sector and transplanted to the higher education setting and the ‘progressivist’ discourse of higher education34 (as I describe in my introduction). We might think of these as two different sets of structural rules and resources, unified by two different ideological frameworks (what Kuhn, 2006, refers to as “discursive resources”35). An important part of my analytical work in this project will be to identify and describe the particular rules and resources

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33 For this study, I focus on the distinctions that Alvesson and Karreman (2000) make in terms of the formative range of these two kinds of discourse. From this perspective, discourse is defined as “language in use…understood in relationship to the specific process and social context in which discourse is produced” (2000: 1133). In contrast, Discourse is the “rather universal, if historically situated, set of vocabularies, standing loosely coupled to, referring to or constituting a particular phenomenon” (2000: 1333).

34 Although this discourse goes by many names, I follow Trowlers’ (1998) lead and use the term progressivist. This term has origins in Dewey’s (1916) work. To begin with, it reflects his conception of learning as “progress”. In his words, “Since learning is coming to know, it involves a passage from ignorance to wisdom, from privation to fullness from defect to perfection, from non-being to being, in the Greek way of putting it.” The notion of progressivism is also consistent with Dewey’s emphasis on the continuous adjustment required for the democratic constitution of society. This is one of “two traits that characterize the democratically constituted society”, the other being “the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control” (Dewey, 1916).

35 Heretofore, I have used Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) term to describe these resources: “knowledge-accomplishing resources”. This term emphasizes what these resources do. In various parts of my discussion, however, (such as above), I focus my attention on what these resources are. Kuhn’s (2006) term, “discursive resources”, is a more apt term for these moments in my discussion. He defines these as, “concepts, expressions, or other linguistic devices that, when deployed in talk, present explanations for past and/or future activity that guide interactants’ interpretation of experience while molding individual and collective action (2006: 1341).
associated with each of these two discourses, a task that I will attend to later in this chapter. Here, I want to merely identify the Discourses with which my study is concerned and to briefly review the role they play in the social reproduction process I propose to study.

In my introduction, I described how each framework defines the purpose and meaning of higher education differently—the progressivist approach emphasizing the purpose of preparing critically-thinking citizens to participate in democratic society and managerialist ideology focusing on training productive workers to ensure economic prosperity. Relating this to the particular analytical model that I have spent the last several chapters developing, this means that the resources of identification, accountability and legitimacy are differently defined in each of the different frameworks. To understand how members reproduce and/or revise the dialectic of control, I will examine how members draw on each of the resource sets associated with managerialist and progressivist Discourse in their everyday discourse practices. I turn now to describing these discourse practices.

Members’ Everyday discourse Practices

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, the discourse practices that I plan to focus on are organizational meeting activities. Several scholars have influenced my choice of focus. Schwartzman’s (1989) book on meetings makes a strong case for the importance that these “communication events” have on the constitution of organization. They are, in her view, the place where members make sense of their organizational activities, where they attempt to coordinate their individual understandings and efforts into some comprehensible whole. Drawing on such theorists as Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1979), Schwartzman situates her interest in meetings within the turn towards practice theory, arguing that “because of their recursiveness in daily life and their central position…as a place for ‘the practice of structure and the structure of
practice”” (Sahlins, 1981: 72 as cited in Schwartzman, 1989: 24-25), meetings represent an ideal focus for researchers adopting a practice perspective.

Throughout her work, Schwartzman (1989) also highlights the political nature of meetings, insisting that, “meetings are responsible for both the construction of order and disorder in social systems, and so they must be conceptualized as occasions with both conservative and transformative capacities” (1989: 36). Tracy and Dimock (2003) help translate this idea into the everyday practices of organizational life, writing,

Through meetings groups solve and create problems, give information and misinformation, develop and rework policies, make and retool decisions, and while doing these focal activities build or fracture a sense of community among participants, and solidify or cause tension among the communities that comprise any group (2003: 127).

They argue, in a nutshell, that meetings are “playgrounds for power games, where individuals and subgroups struggle to get more power and resist the moves of others” (2003: 142). From this perspective, a focus on meetings is highly appropriate for someone interested in documenting the communicative construction of organization, in general, and of the negotiation of power relations in particular. With these interests in mind, I have selected meetings that not only are overtly focused on the coordination of organizational interests but that involve diverse constituents in the process. In the next section, I describe these meetings and the methods I use to study them in greater detail.

Data Collection Methods and Periods of Study

In my project, I followed Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) suggestions for data collection: observing and recording “actual interaction…over an extended period of time” (2008: 19), data that provides the researcher with the “ability to ‘see’ actors defining and responding to a problematic situation” (2008: 18). In line with the conversation analysis tradition that informs their methods, I not only observed these meetings but I also made audio recordings of them that I
later transcribed into verbatim transcripts. To supplement these transcriptions, I also conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with diverse organizational members and obtained copies of relevant organizational documents (practices that Kuhn and Jackson, 2008, also recommend).

In terms of the level of detail that I included in these transcripts, again, I followed Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) lead: my goal was to mainly capture the words that members use in their speaking turns as opposed to the more subtle conversational mechanisms (e.g. pauses, utterances, etc.). The documents I prepared, therefore, have relatively few transcription symbols added to the text. I did, however, use some of the more basic, conventional symbols such as: a period to mark falling intonation, a question mark for rising intonation, a comma for continuing intonation, brackets for simultaneous or overlapping speech, an empty parenthesis to signal a non-transcribable segment of talk, and a double parenthesis for description of non-speech activity (following Atkinson & Heritage’s, 1999 and Tracy’s, 2002 descriptions of transcription notation conventions).

As I indicated earlier, the organization I am studying has undergone a great deal of transition since I began my data collection. Through each of the various moments, I have had to negotiate (and renegotiate) my presence as a researcher. To facilitate my discussion of this process, I identify and discuss three different periods of data collection, periods I label: 1) End of an Era, 2) Transitional Leadership, 3) CIO at the Helm.


As I describe above, my course-based research project on the University’s Writing Program provided the stepping-stone for my entry into the office at Western U that coordinated the planning and the activities associated with academic and administrative technology: the Office of Technology Coordination (OTC). Using previous work connections, (again, the
director for OTC oversaw several research projects where I had been an instructional design consultant), I was able to gain access to the groups’ IT Council Meetings, a monthly meeting attended by diverse constituents with various interests in technology. The list of participants (referred to here by pseudonyms) included a half a dozen administrators from a broad range of offices (e.g. University Libraries, Office of Enrollment and Access, Office of Housing and Dining, University Communications Office, etc.), two faculty representatives and several representatives from the university’s central technology organizations. The first meeting I attended occurred in a fancy boardroom in Western U’s newly constructed Technology Center. With the directors’ blessing, (he had introduced my research project to members the month before my coming), I passed out my consent forms to meeting participants, all of which were signed with no questions asked.

Although I didn’t realize it when I negotiated entry into this meeting, this first set of data represents the end of an organizational era. More specifically, during the first IT Council Meeting that I attended, in May of 2007, the director of 25 years announced that he would be leaving the organization. I had the opportunity to observe him facilitate two more of these monthly meetings (in June and July of 2007) and to conduct a brief interview with him before he left. That fall, the interim director took a turn at facilitating one of these meeting, then, shortly after, “temporarily” suspended the meeting until a “new group could be formed” (memo to IT Council members).

Seeing the opportunity to collect a good amount of explicit organizational discourse, and knowing that the meeting I had originally gained access to might or might not resume, I asked around to see what other meetings might provide a similar window onto the organizations’
conversational activity, interviewing one organizational member and speaking informally with several others.

_Transitional Leadership (August 2008-September 2009)_

When the longtime director of OTC stepped down, his logical successor (at least for the interim) would have been his longtime partner, the director of the university’s central IT organization. When the chancellor named instead the university’s Chief Financial Officer as the interim director and moved the director of Central IT into a subordinate position under him (that of Chief Technology Officer), many people were caught off-guard. Shortly after, the interim leadership team announced further restructuring of the organization, moving several directors from various arms of the university’s central IT organization into positions that ultimately reported to OTC’s new interim director. One of the unfortunate results of these changes, in terms of my access to organizational conversation, was what I experienced as a generalized defensiveness on the part of many senior IT staff. Whereas most had been very welcoming before this transition, after it, there was a great deal more scrutiny of my reasons for wanting to listen in. Despite my efforts to pacify people’s fears, the doors to director-level discussions were closed to me during this time.

In lieu of these kinds of discussions, I obtained permission to attend and to record a more public meeting, what I will refer to as the Community Gathering meeting, a once-per-semester coming together of all members of the Central IT community as well as the technology liaisons from individual departments and offices around campus (usually attended by about 200 constituents). The participants in this meeting came from all levels of the IT organization, satisfying my requirement of a diverse constituency (at least within this important part of the larger OTC organization). The format for this meeting, however, was far more presentational
than the previous meetings I observed. While I was able to track the ‘official’, public discourse about the changes occurring in the organization (both through the discussion in these meetings, through the written materials presented to participants, and through the changes on OTC’s website), the interaction data I was able to collect during this period was limited.

After speaking with some of my contacts, I learned of another meeting that might include more interaction between organizational members, a somewhat smaller monthly meeting that the Central IT director facilitated with his staff (a group of approximately 60 participants). I obtained the necessary permissions to observe and to record this meeting, which I began attending in November of 2008. In addition to attending these meetings, during the spring of 2009, I conducted individual interviews (using the semi-structured interview questions that had been approved by the HRC) with several key stakeholders in the organization, including the interim director (the university’s CFO), the CTO (previously the director of Central IT), two of the newly appointed directors (within OTC), and three members of the now-defunct IT Council group.

During this time, OTC officially began its search for a new CIO. By the beginning of the summer (2009), the search committee had selected two candidates to interview. As a way of tracking this important conversational thread, I attended (and recorded) the public questioning sessions for each of the candidates (getting permission from each of them to do so).

_CIO Takes the Helm (September 2009)_

In September, Western U announced the appointment of a new CIO, scheduled to begin work in November. Based on what this candidate talked about during his interview process, I had expected that some form of IT Council would resume shortly after his arrival. My goal was to observe and record these conversations—conversations that, in my mind, represented the ideal
bookend for my dataset. What I hadn’t realized was that the OTC’s required quadrennial strategic planning process—a process that was to begin just after the new CIO was hired—would have a significant impact on these activities.

Abiding by a state requirement, the OTC at Western U organized and led a campus-wide, IT planning process every four years. The directors of the OTC had been crafting the topics to be addressed in this process (through committee discussion), right at the time of the hiring of the new CIO. Following the structure of previous plans, one of these was “Governance”. Rather than reinstating the old governance structures (which included the IT Council), the new CIO decided to use the planning process in order to “research” the governance issues on campus and to produce a new set of governing bodies for the OTC. Once I learned that he was to chair the committee devoted to discussing issues of governance, I asked for permission to attend and record these meetings. To my disappointment, I was denied access to these meetings (although I was given permission to attend and record several other committee discussions). Fortunately for my research goals, however, the CIO’s “research” efforts took many forms, including numerous conversations with key constituents—conversations that I was permitted to attend and record. These included the OTC’s Community Gathering meeting and its monthly staff meetings (both of which I had been attending and recording prior to the new CIO’s arrival), as well as two faculty council meetings (the executive meeting and the general council meeting). I was also given permission to attend (but not record) each of the coordinating meetings of the leads and co-leads participating in the strategic planning process (a total of four meetings occurring during the spring and summer semesters). During the summer of 2010, I also conducted follow-up interviews with some of the participants in these meetings as well as with the new CIO, himself.
Summary of Existing Dataset

As I have described, my observation and audio-recording of organizational meetings has been my primary method of data collection in each period. To date, I have recorded approximately 60 hours of meeting conversation over the course of three years. I have also conducted semi-structured interviews with various organizational members (a total of 11) and gathered written documents (approximately 200 pages) throughout my research process. One such set of documents was the copies that I made of OTC’s website at three different times (in June of 2007, July of 2008, and January of 2011). These documents are valuable historically as they represent the official description (at each time) of the organization’s function, its members, their relations (both internally and with other university constituents), and their primary organizational activities. Another set of documents that are similarly valuable are the written summaries of the OTC’s strategic planning initiatives completed in the fall of 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2010 (more specifically, the executive summaries and the chapters on governance from these reports). As the OTC’s 2010 initiative was designed to be closely aligned with Western U’s institutional planning process (what I will call, WesternU: Tomorrow and Beyond), I also included key sections from the main document from this effort. And finally, I made copies of all relevant email memos (that I had access to) that chronicled changes in the organization.

The dataset that I describe clearly reflects the methodological guidelines that I have proposed to follow (page 70). More specifically, it conforms to the first two research mechanisms recommended to accomplish the research focus guidelines:

**Research Focus Guidelines:** Researchers study the constitution and reconstitution of social practices (with a focus on knowledge-accomplishing activities), over time and across space.

- A longitudinal research design is recommended for studying these practices over time.
- Observation of multiple constituencies is recommended for studying these
practices across space.
- Researchers interested in documenting the negotiation of power relations in organizations can narrow this focus on social practices first to organizational practices, then to problem-solving situations within these practices, and finally to knowledge-accomplishing episodes within these situations.

The third guideline is derived from the analytical dimensions of Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) framework—dimensions that I use to guide my data analysis, the next subject in my discussion of methods and methodology.

Data Analysis

Narrowing My Analytical Focus

In addition to following Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) methods for data collection, I also adopt the approach that they demonstrate for data analysis, an approach that attempts to lay out the analytical moves (both gross-level and fine-level) that a researcher interested in the negotiation of organizational power (and its relationship to knowledge-accomplishing activities) ought to take. Because of the significant difference in the kind of data that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) use to demonstrate their model (the analysis of phone calls and concurrent intercollegial interactions in a call center as compared with the meeting interactions of my study), I also turn to Huttunen’s (2010) work (another scholar who uses their model to analyze organizational meetings) for additional analytical guidance.

Beginning where these scholars begin (and where Giddens, 1984, and the other practice theorists do), I start with a focus on social practices. As an organizational researcher, I narrow this first to a focus on organizational practices and then to a focus on the practice of regular organizational meetings. From there, Kuhn and Jackson (2008) recommend identifying groups of “problematic situations” within these practices, what they define as “the state of affairs formed by a stream of past and projected practices in which actors perceive a need to take action
to address a (current or potential) threat to ongoing action” (2008: 6). Lastly, they direct the researcher’s attention to analyzing “knowledge episodes” (or episodes of interaction) within these situations, following Kuhn and Jackson’s description,

Knowledge episodes arise in the event of a problematic situation, they move from initiation to termination, and they display the continuous nature of system structuring (Knorr-Cetina, 1981; Pentland, 1992, 1995; as cited in Kuhn & Jackson, 2008: 10).

While these rather straightforward steps are adequate for the kind of interactions that Kuhn and Jackson study, as Huttunen (2010) points out, slight modifications are necessary in order to study the “more ‘messy’” interactions of meeting activities (2010:100). Huttunen’s study provides a model for applying Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) framework to this kind of study, a model that more thoroughly articulates the steps necessary for sorting organizational meeting data.

In her study, she suggests that the micro-level, knowledge-accomplishing episodes with which Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) model is concerned are often nested in larger knowledge episodes. In analyzing the interactions of organizational meetings it is useful, then, to identify these more gross level episodes before identifying the smaller units within them. Using Linell’s (1998) definition of an episode—“a bounded sequence, a discourse event with a beginning and an end surrounding a spate of talk, which is usually focused on the treatment of some problem, issue, or topic” (Linell, 1998: 183 as cited in Huttunen, 2010: 104)—Huttunen suggests that it is useful to identify the organizational “topics” that are the focus of the knowledge accomplishing episodes that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) discuss. Building on this idea, she first organizes her data in terms of meeting “topics” (both large and small), distinguishing between formal agenda topics and topics that “emerge in the discussion” (2010: 113).

While these distinctions are very useful, her interest in organizational “topics”, as opposed to organizational “problems” or “issues” (the two other terms that Linell uses in his
definition of an episode), is a bit confusing, given the study’s underlying emphasis on problematic situations. To orient her analysis back to this emphasis, Huttunen (2010) adds an additional analytical step of identifying “problematic situations” within the topics she has identified—what she describes as moments “where the team ‘hits a snag’ of some sort” or where, in her words, “confusion, ambiguity, or non-understandings” arise in the interaction (2010: 118).

In reviewing Huttunen’s (2010) work (and in my early attempts to apply her analytical model to my data), what I found was that it was impossible to tease apart which came first, the emergent topic or the differences in understanding (or lack of shared understanding). Given the integral relationship between emergent “topics” and differences in understanding, we might then understand them as inherently problematic.

Revising Huttunen’s (2010) model slightly, I will follow her lead in identifying different levels of “topics” that participants address distinguishing between those that are high-level/planned versus those that are local/emergent (associating these with high-level versus emergent knowledge episodes). In my study, however, I will label them respectively as “planned topics” and “emergent issues”, terms that more accurately capture the more high-level nature of the former as well as the inherently problematic nature of the latter. This idea of “emergent issues” lines up nicely the problematic situations (and the knowledge accomplishing episodes) that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) describe, as they are immediate problems (in understanding) that the group must resolve in order to “go on” in their interaction, problems that provide opportunities for conversation participants to negotiate particular dimensions of organizational knowledge (and meaning). Combining these analytical steps with the more gross-level sorting steps that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) suggest (see diagram below), I ready my data for analysis.

Data sorting steps (moving from coarse to fine-grained sorting)
Social practices
Organizational practices
Organizational meetings
Planned organizational topics
(the focus of high-level knowledge episodes)
Emergent organizational issues (inherently problematic)
(the focus of more immediate knowledge episodes)
- Initiation
(attempts to frame problematic situations)
- Negotiation
(attempts to reframe problematic situations)
- Termination
(tentative framework the group articulates)

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources

Once the researcher has sorted the data in this way, the true work of “discourse analysis”
begins. Kuhn and Jackson (2008) describe the relationship between this level of analysis and the
previous level, writing,

Within knowledge episodes, discursive moves frame, re-frame, and resolve perceived
problematic situations. These discursive moves are knowledge-accomplishing activities:
segments of episodes in which discursive moves apply and/or generate knowledge in an
attempt to realize a capacity to act (2008: 10).

For their purposes, Kuhn and Jackson (2008) distinguish between four different kinds of
“knowledge accomplishing activities” (or knowledge “episodes”), what they label: information
transmission, information request, instruction and improvisation. These levels are not
particularly relevant for my study so I do not take this step in my analysis. What is interesting in
my study, however, are the levels of determinancy involved in the episodes. Using the
distinctions that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) make between “determinate”, “moderately
indeterminate” and “greatly indeterminate”, I begin to tease out the level of determinancy
involved in the episode, focusing my attention (at least initially) on the more highly
indeterminate episodes (for these are the richest, in terms of negotiation activity). I then proceed
to analyze the situation-framing resources (identification, accountability, and legitimacy) that
actors draw on as they struggle to shape the meaning of the problematic situation (or emergent situation) at hand. Kuhn and Jackson (2008) summarize this process in the following passage:

First actors assess their own and one another’s *identifications* as they frame situations. Identities are allegiances, manifest in talk, that index an organizations control over individuals. Actors assess discursively produced identifications to predict others likely action and interpretation and to project valued identities as they frame situations (Alvesson, 1993). Second, the legitimacy of action refers to its motivation. Actors tacitly ask, “What does the group or organization expect of me here?” Third, sources of accountability acknowledge that individuals look to particular members of an audience for direction and validation (2008: 5, italics added).

Following Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) example, I focus my analytical attention on the ways in which members employ these resources to “deploy” and/or “develop” organizational knowledge, highlighting “moves that interrogate the problem, advance (and foreclose) particular interests, examine the quality of existing knowledge, and seek short- and long-term solutions” (2008: 19).

In terms of analytical procedures that I use for this task, I follow those that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) model in their empirical example: beginning by identifying the particular resources that subjects employ as well as the logic they invoke. In contrast to their analysis, however, mine involves distinguishing between two, specific sets of structural resources from which members draw: the two competing Discourses of managerialism and progressivism. Before I can analyze these resources in the ways that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) recommend, it is necessary first to identify and describe the particular resources within each Discourse, a task towards which I turn my attention now. (In order to operationalize these resources, significant theoretical discussion is required—what some might see as out of place in a methodology chapter. Because the goal of this analysis is ultimately empirical, however, I argue that it belongs here.)

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36 Here, I describe this analytical process as a linear series of steps. In practice the analysis is much more recursive process.
Deetz’s (1992) work is extremely useful in teasing apart the specific resources associated with managerialist discourse as it exists in the corporate organizational setting. Slight revisions of his ideas are required, however, when looking at this discourse as it exists in the HE setting. Trowler’s (1998) discussion about managerialist discourse in the higher education setting (what UK scholars typically refer to as ‘enterprise’ discourse\(^ {37} \)) can be usefully applied to this task. These ideas are part of a larger discussion that Trowler (1998) has about the various educational ideologies that influence higher education practice. In this discussion, he also describes the ideology of progressivism. In operationalizing my definition of managerialist and progressivist discourses (again, with the goal of developing empirical distinctions), I draw from the work of both scholars.

*Operationalizing Managerialist Discourse*

The way in which Deetz (1992) defines managerialism is a useful place to begin. Classifying it as a “discursive genre”, he writes, “Managerialism, as the term is used here, is best seen as a set of discursive moves that interpellates a particular type of subject and produces a particular world” (1992: 222). According to Deetz, there are two primary subjects of this discourse: managers and workers. The way in which managers are constituted is important. In Deetz’s words, “the corporation and management become a unitary identity”. This subject constitution downplays the idea that managers are individuals with personal interests. Instead, they are cast as “a special actor in the potential battle of stakeholders—one with a different kind of structural stake, a stake in the process rather than the outcome, not unlike a lawyer in the modern judiciary system” (1991: 226).

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\(^{37}\) In his discussion about enterprise culture, DuGay (2000) describes the origins of the term, ‘enterprise discourse’, pointing to the underlying logic of the political programs introduced by Margaret Thatcher (2000: 167). Scholars in the UK (and neighboring countries) tend to prefer this term to “managerialist discourse” (e.g., Doolin, 2002; Fairclough, 1993; Henkel, 2000; Trowler, 1998). Both define “market-driven managerial societies” in similar ways. The differences are mainly in which part of these phenomena they emphasize. According to Deetz, “the emphasis should be on managerial rather than market-driven” (1991: 237), whereas those who study enterprise discourse tend to focus on the latter.
Along with this constitutional framework come certain expectations in terms of behavior. Legitimated by their interest in the organization as a whole, management (or managers) takes on the role of “‘system corrective’, ‘putting out fires’, and ‘remediation’” (1992: 227). This is in line with managerialism’s underlying logic, a logic that Deetz characterizes as ‘instrumental’ or ‘technical’ (drawing on Habermas’ distinctions between technical, practical, and emancipatory reasoning) (Habermas, 1971, as cited in Deetz, 1992: 230). This way of reasoning—with its aim towards “control, mastery, growth, and material gain” (1992: 230)—legitimizes the actions of the manager, an actor who coordinates, controls, and suppresses potential conflicts (1992: 225). It also informs the subjectivity of the ‘worker’—a subject, within the technical-instrumental frame of reasoning, that needs to “be controlled” (1992: 229). Because of his interest in the issues of identification, legitimation and accountability, Deetz’s discussion pairs well with Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) analytical model. More specifically, we can use his analysis to understand several of the particular resources involved in managerial discourse, namely: those associated with subjects’ identities and with the work priorities of the dominant subjects in this Discourse.

Applying these ideas to the HE setting, as I mentioned, requires some translation. The ‘managers’ of the academic world, for example, might be understood as academic administrators, and its ‘workers’, faculty members. The simplicity of this framework, however, belies the growth of another important stakeholder in HE organizations: the ‘support professional’. According to Rhoades (2007), these professionals are the fastest growing population in today’s HE organization:

From 1975 to 1985, the numbers of administrative, managerial, and executive positions grew at three times the pace of faculty. But the number of support professionals increased more than three times that of administrators…By 2000, faculty accounted for

38 The administrator-as-manager/faculty-as-worker framework also belies the existence of what Trowler describes as the “enterprise academic”, a faculty member who might also be understood as a manager, in terms of how they manage the classroom and how they approach their research endeavors. For a portrait of this subject, see Trowler (1998: 72-74).
53 percent of all professional employees in higher education. Support professionals for nearly 30 percent of the professional positions on campus and more than three times the number of administrative positions (Rhoades, 1998, as cited by Rhoades, 2007: 129).

While Deetz’s (1992) discussion of managerialist discourse does not directly account for these subjects, Trowler’s (1998) discussion—a discussion focused on managerialist discourse in the HE setting—begins to. More specifically, he identifies the technology professional as an essential player in the HE setting.

In his discussion about the various educational ideologies that shape HE practice, Trowler (1998) talks about ‘enterprise’ ideology and its related discourse. (This term is the term generally preferred by UK scholars when talking about managerialism, although Trowler uses both interchangeably). While his discussion is differently structured than Deetz’s—he approaches the discussion in terms of how managerialist ideology influences “the nature and purposes of education” (1998: 65) as opposed to Deetz’s (1992) focus on its effect on subjectivity—it highlights the important role that technology and technology professionals play in this discourse. Echoing Deetz’s (1992) description of the technical-instrumental reasoning that underlies managerialist discourse and the values associated with it (efficiency, profitability, etc.), Trowler (1998) links this reasoning with actors’ approach to technology. In his words, “new technology and new approaches to learning are valued as more efficient and more effective tools (73)”. Consequently, the actors most familiar with these tools—the growing cadre of technology professionals—represent an additional, and significant subject of this discourse. They (and their work) are constituted as the means to the efficient and profitable ends so highly prized in this discourse.
**Operationalizing Progressivist Discourse**

Adding Trowler’s (1998) contextually-specific insights to Deetz’s (1992) in-depth discussion is useful for understanding the particular resources associated with managerialist discourse (e.g. identification, legitimation, and accountability resources) in the higher education setting. As for the resources associated with progressivist discourse, there is no such explicit discussion about subjectivity upon which to build. We do, however, have Dewey’s (1916) writings about his educational philosophy (what has come to be known as ‘progressivism’) and Trowler’s (1998) summary of how Dewey’s ideas continue to influence contemporary university settings\(^{39}\). I draw on both works as I attempt to operationalize progressivist discourse. To do so, I follow Deetz’s (1992) example and discuss three interconnected elements of the discourse: its primary subjects, their underlying mode of reasoning, and the relationship between actors’ identifications and their actions.

The primary subjects\(^{40}\) of progressivist discourse that my study is concerned with are faculty members and administrators. In this discourse, faculty members identify as protectors of civic engagement and democratic process. They do so both by being stimulators of critical thinking and by being unencumbered (in other words, free) explorers of new knowledge. In Dewey’s (1916) time, before the massification of higher education, there simply weren’t the large numbers of administrators that we now see on college and university campuses. He does occasionally refer to their activities but they play a supporting rather than lead role in his discussion. While their significance to organizational life in higher education setting has

\(^{39}\)According to Trowler (1998), progressivism (what he defines as an ideology that emphasizes students’ freedom of choice and personal development with the goal of preparing them to participate as citizens in democratic society) continues to be a predominant ideology in the HE setting. In addition, he lists three others that shape the various Discourses of higher education: traditionalism (focuses on preserving disciplinary heritage), enterprise (concerned with vocationally relevant and economically valuable skills), progressivism social reconstructionism (claims that education can be a force for social change, in general, and for resisting class-based oppression, in particular) (1998: 66-80). The term of managerialist Discourse, a term that is more common among communication scholars, has much in common with the enterprise ideology that Trowler describes.

\(^{40}\)There are, obviously, other important subjects that Dewey (1916) discusses, most importantly: students. Because of the organizational focus of my study and the lack of direct participation that student subjects have in the organization I am studying, I focus on the subjects of faculty and administrators.
obviously substantially grown over time, in the progressivist discourse shaping today’s HE organizations, they retain at least a hint of their subordinate status to faculty. In terms of identification, they are those who keep the institution afloat, attracting and managing students, maintaining buildings, fundraising, etc. They, too, might identify as protectors of civic engagement and democratic process but typically they do so acknowledging their indirect role.

As in the managerialist discourse that Deetz (1992) describes, organizational members draw on these identifications to legitimize their actions. For example, as knowledge explorers, faculty must freely question and, sometimes, radically criticize (both outside and within the university). They also insist on relatively unsupervised relationships with their students drawing on their privileged status as the mentors of society’s future citizens. Administrators are, on the one hand, expected to respect faculty members’ expertise as well as the autonomy that makes it possible. At the same time, they are responsible for the maintenance as well as the day-to-day running of the institution. Their bureaucratic control is typically tolerated by faculty when it is seen as being in service of these maintenance and operations goals. It becomes unacceptable, however, if it encroaches upon their professional autonomy or on the privileged relationships they have with their students.

In the early version of progressivist discourse, technology professionals are not explicitly identified as subjects. A dozen years ago they might have been regarded as a kind of vague, background subject associated with the maintenance and operations of administration. As their presence has increased, however, they have come to be understood as another kind of administrator. In this light, they are expected to conduct their activities in service of the value of academic freedom and hence, in support of faculty autonomy. From this perspective, many
faculty members have interpreted technology professionals’ interest in centralizing technology systems as an active threat to their autonomy.

In the case of managerialist discourse, Deetz characterizes its underlying logic as technical-instrumental (1992: 230). In contrast, the predominant modes of reasoning in progressivist discourse are practical (aimed at developing broadly beneficial understanding) and emancipatory (aimed at safeguarding freedom and self-determination). Dewey (2004) connects these two logics in his philosophy of education, arguing,

…that a government resting upon popular suffrage cannot be successful unless those who elect and who obey their governors are educated. Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education (2004: 83).

Part of what my analysis of these two discourses helps to demonstrate is that the power relations between faculty members and other organizational members (e.g. administrators, technology professionals, faculty) are differently defined in each of the different ideological frameworks. In progressivist discourse, members who identify as faculty members are self-managing and, hence, have at least a similar level of organizational control/voice other members who identify as administrators (if not more so). Technology professionals, on the other hand, play a supporting role in the activities of HE. In contrast, from a managerialist point of view, faculty members are managed by, and therefore, subordinate to administrators. The new experts—technology professionals—also wield a great deal more influence than most faculty members. The exception is when a faculty member achieves both disciplinary and technical expertise.

Along with the two different conceptions of power relations (as well as with the different values and logics of each Discourse) come additional expectations about other kinds of behavior, namely: decision-making and communication practices. In managerialist Discourse,
(in line with the value of efficiency), decision-making authority is based on a person’s position in the organization. In other words, high level managers/administrators have greater decision-making authority than lower level employees. In this case, high-level managers/administrators are expected to determine organizational priorities for organizational constituents (faculty and students). In contrast, in progressivist Discourse (which emphasizes the importance of participation), decision-making authority is based on consensus. From this perspective, it is expected that faculty members and administrators engage in participatory decision-making process, and, together, determine organizational priorities with one another. Top-down information delivery, on a need-to-know-only basis, is typical in the first case, whereas, unencumbered information access and transparency is expected in the second.

For the purpose of analysis, it is useful to condense the differences between the two discourses along the lines that I have been discussing (as I have done on the following page). While the distinctions I make in this comparative table are admittedly gross, they provide the kind of framework that I need in order to proceed with the analysis that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) recommend. Again, this analysis involves examining the discursive moves that actors make (initiation, negotiation, termination) in their attempts to negotiate indeterminate episodes of interaction, negotiations that are inextricably tied to the knowledgetaibility that this model enables me to investigate.

Identifying Patterns in Discursive Practices

Picking up where I left off (prior to discussing how one might distinguish between these two sets of resources), I was in the process of describing the various steps in my analysis. As I discussed, my analysis (following Kuhn and Jackson’s, 2008, example) begins by sorting the data into episodes of problem solving situations. I then analyze these episodes in terms of the
discursive resources that participants employ as they initiate, negotiate, and attempt to close (or resolve) the problematic situations that arise (resources that are drawn from the larger sets of Discourse I have just finished describing).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Reasoning/Associated Values</th>
<th>Progressivist Discourse:</th>
<th>Managerialist Discourse:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifications</strong></td>
<td>Faculty: autonomous professionals, facilitators (and protectors) of free-thinking institution (and society); Admin: maintenance and operation people; ensure that faculty/students can accomplish their academic mission; TechPros: technical assistants who ensure that faculty/students can accomplish their academic mission.</td>
<td>Faculty: intelligent and necessary for university work/life but unruly and inefficient. Admin: unitary identity with the university itself, facilitators of economically prosperous institution (and society); TechPros: a crucial means for increasing efficiency;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject relations</strong></td>
<td>Admin subtly subordinate to faculty; Techpros subordinate to faculty.</td>
<td>Faculty subordinate to admin; Techpros aligned with admin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expected work priorities</strong></td>
<td>Faculty: freely explore, question, and criticize; teach students to do the same; Admin: facilitate day-to-day activities of university work/life; TechPros: provide background support for teaching/learning and research activities.</td>
<td>Faculty: deliver knowledge (understood as information) to students; produce economically useful research. Admin: control disorder (within the university), increase profit, align with broader business interests (outside the university); TechPros: design and build profitable tools/systems for learning;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision-making authority</strong></td>
<td>Authority based on democratic consensus achieved through open participatory process, emphasis on transparency in decision-making process.</td>
<td>Authority based on hierarchical position, decision-making process led by high-level admin, some information is privileged in decision-making process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty: Faculty members; Admin: Administrators; TechPros: Technology Professionals

According to Kuhn and Jackson (2008), the analytical steps I have just described lay the foundation for the “examination of the political nature of knowing,” what they describe as an additional level that their analytical model affords (2008: 10). They begin by recommending that researchers study the “classifications” inherent in the negotiation of organizational knowledge, pointing out that, “classifications make claims on identities and discursive moves during
knowledge episodes such that particular and often dominant expressions are elicited, fostered, promoted, discouraged or resisted (Forrester & Ramsden, 2001, as cited in Kuhn and Jackson, 2008: 10). They go on to recommend examining the situation-framing resources in terms of these kinds of classifications.

Labeling the discursive resources that participants use to resolve problematic situations as either progressivist or managerialist begins to shed light on these kinds of classifications. Once I have made these distinctions in my analysis, I am able to turn my attention to the issue of authority relations more directly. I begin this process by looking for patterns in participants’ use of particular resources (initially, in the individual meetings, themselves, and later over the course of many meetings). Treating repeating patterns of use of each set of discursive resources as actions that serve to promote different goals/ends (in terms of authority relations), I highlight the particular ends towards which these actions are oriented. As I discuss in my review, the way in which I conceptualize (and study) these goal-oriented actions is in line with my commitment to a practice-based perspective as well as with my focus on communication activity.

What this means for this part of my analysis is that I focus on the aims/goals of the each Discourse itself, as opposed to the aims/goals of individual actors—a cognitive phenomenon which would be very difficult to study empirically. In the case of the discursive resources associated with progressivist Discourse, for example, I examine the ways in which members’ repeating use of these resources aims to sustain and reproduce the slight advantage that faculty have in the balance of authority that characterizes the OTC (based on the assumption that this particular Discourse “wants” to maintain this advantage). I do so by examining the patterns of discursive resource use first within the immediate context of each of the individual meetings I analyze, and as my analysis progresses, on a longer term/larger scale. Based on the different
ends towards which managerialist Discourse is aimed (e.g. strengthening administrative authority and substantially elevating the authority of technology professionals), I also discuss the impact of actors’ repetitive use of the resources associated with this Discourse (again, both the immediate impact on the problematic situations I analyze and the impact on a longer term/larger relations among organizational members/constituents). Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) study provides a rough trail to follow, in terms of which resources from managerialist Discourse may be particularly relevant.

More specifically, they recommend using Deetz’s (1992) categories of discursive closure as a way of studying these power-laden classifications.

Deetz (1992) identifies several forms of discursive closure, all of which suppress potential conflict and action possibilities, the formulation of problems, the questioning of possible responses, the inclusion of diverse voices, and the examination of significance (Forester, 1993)…One way to understand these struggles over meaning and the meaning distortions occasioned by power is through consideration of discursive closures in discussion (Kuhn and Jackson, 2008: 10).

Following their lead, I will (as I examine the situation-framing resources that organizational members and constituents employ) also highlight any examples of discursive closure that I see. Doing so, I can begin to track the ways in which the dominant actors involved in these conversations, through their use of these discursive strategies, discourage examination and discussion of changing authority relations—relational changes that favor their managerial interests.

*Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge*

In addition to providing researchers with the opportunity to examine the political nature of knowing, another benefit of Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) model is that it enables researchers to examine the dynamic nature of knowing. Examining a group’s moves over time, Kuhn and Jackson (2008) claim that their model enables researchers to track how the group’s shared
understanding (or knowledgeability) evolves. Using the problematic situations that arise in the flow of the interactions I have recorded, I will attempt to articulate this kind of evolution (how the group’s shared knowledge evolves over time), what might be understood as an additional step in my analytical methods.

Relating these steps (the analysis of situation framing resources that actors employ in problematic situations and the articulation of the particular knowledgeability around which these actions are centered) back to the methodological model I propose (page 70), my primary aim in this part of my analysis is to tease apart the dynamic, communicatively-constructed knowledgeability inherent in these interactions, the first dimension required for empirically examining the social reproduction process that Giddens (1984, 1989) describes. A brief summary of the analytical moves I have described so far is useful before turning my attention to the final steps in my analysis. The preliminary moves that I describe are designed to assist me in sorting the conversational data I have collected into a potentially rich set of knowledge-accomplishing episodes to examine (rich in terms of the level of negotiation involved in the dialectic of control that I am studying). By using the discourse analysis methods that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) recommend, I then analyze the discursive resources from two different Discourses (progressivist and managerialist) that actors use in their attempts to influence or to “realize a capacity to act” within the problematic situations that arise in the interactions I examine. This analysis also provides the foundation for the next two levels of analysis: teasing out the organizational ends (in terms of authority relations) towards which resources are aimed and articulating the evolving knowledge that organizational actors “accomplish” in these episodes. All together, these steps help me to empirically explore the complex relationship between knowledge, structure, and action that Giddens describes. But to understand the
unintended consequences produced by these interactions, the other key phenomenon in strucuration process, an additional set of analytical steps is required—the second dimension of the methodological model I proposed.

Analyzing Unintended Consequences

As I have discussed in previous chapters, examples of empirical studies that analyze the phenomenon of unintended consequences are rare, hence, I will need to largely invent the methods I use for this part of my analysis. Kuhn and Jackson (2008) suggest that their model might provide a starting place for analyzing unintended consequences because of the way in which it attends to process of knowledge construction. Their discussion about how this knowledge construction process (and the related phenomenon of unintended consequences) relates to the larger process of organizational construction is quite limited, however. They are also theoretically non-specific about these processes (which fits with their goal of providing a model that might be employed with a variety of practice theories). In contrast, my project is highly specific in terms of theory: my interest in the phenomenon of knowledgeability and unintended consequences is firmly grounded in Giddens’ theory of strucuration. This theoretical commitment strongly influences the way in which I approach this part of my analysis.

Using the first part of my analysis as a foundation, I begin the second part of my analysis by looking at the patterns in communication practice that I identified alongside the group’s evolving knowledge outcomes. My underlying goal (in line with Giddens’ ideas) is to identify potential communication practices that may have produced unintended consequences in terms of the group’s evolving knowledge. At first, the focus of my analysis will be relatively narrow, examining the patterns between communication practices and knowledge outcomes at a fairly close range (for example, looking at the relationship between just a few interactions). Hopefully
this kind of analysis will reveal at least one potential practice/outcome pattern to pursue on a more macro level. I will then examine longer sets of interactions, looking for similar relationships. In each case, I will use Giddens’ (1984, 1989) model of structuration process to understand these relationships. In other words, my analytical focus will be on how organizational members/constituents recursively draw on rules and resources from one interaction to the next and how these actions reproduce and/or revise these resources.

Adding this set of analytical steps (a set aimed at analyzing the unintended consequences inherent in interactions I will be studying) to the previous set (the set aimed at analyzing the process of knowledge construction in which organizational members engage), I reach the end of my data analysis as well as the end of the methodological guidelines that I have outlined.

Conclusion

Clearly, many of the analytical moves that I outline above in the previous sections involve what some refer to as a “double-hermeneutic”. In other words, in conducting the kind of analysis I propose, I am walking on the shaky ground of interpreting participants’ interpretations. I do so acknowledging that as a researcher, I too am an *actor*. As such, I am caught up in my own process(es) of social reproduction. My interpretations, or the way I frame things, are thus by no means neutral, and, as a result, cannot be understood as definitive. Following the well-worn path of countless qualitative researchers, I offer them as one set of possible interpretations among many.

To conclude this chapter I propose the following argument: that the benefits of the study I describe far outweigh the possible risks of interpretive errors and the ethical implications associated with them. More specifically, I argue that the analytical methods I propose to pilot—methods that are closely aligned with the methodological framework I propose for researchers
studying Giddens’ dialectic of control—will potentially help communication scholars (and any organizational members involved in the study who wish to read my analysis) to better understand the role that communication practice plays in the constitution of organization and of the power relations among organizational members.
Chapter Five: Introduction to the Office of Technology Coordination

For this project, I have developed (based on Giddens’, 1984, 1989, and Kuhn and Jacksons’, 2008, work) a set of theoretically-grounded, methodological guidelines for using Giddens’ structuration theory in empirical study—a theory that holds great potential for those taking a critical, discourse-oriented approach to studying the communicative constitution of organization. A central goal of my project is to test out the model I have articulated by applying it to a case where authority relations are at issue: the influx of managerialist Discourse in the HE setting, in general, and in the organization practices of the Office of Technology Coordination at WesternU, in particular. More specifically, the research question I have proposed to examine is: how do the communication practices of both dominant and subordinate OTC members and constituents shape the constitution of organizational authority?

In this chapter, I lay the basic foundation for this work. More specifically, I deepen my discussion about each of the key parts to my research question: the Office of Technology Coordination (OTC), its members and constituents, the changes in their communication practices, and the evolving authority relations between them. To describe these things, I begin with a look at the early history of the OTC. Using this history as a jumping-off platform, I introduce readers to both the organization and to its members and constituents. I then examine the early communication practices of OTC members (in terms of the discursive resources used) and take a brief look at how they evolve during the organization’s first decade of existence (also examining related changes in the members’ understanding about organizational authority). Again, my goal in this chapter is to provide the background and context that is necessary for readers to appreciate the organization I began studying in 2007. After laying this foundation (in
this chapter), I then proceed with the heart of my analysis (in chapters six, seven and eight), using the analytical framework I describe in my methodology chapter.

The Formation of the OTC

Given that a solid understanding of the OTC’s authority relations is such a crucial part of my research question, I begin my discussion here. Given that these relationship patterns began long before I started my research project, I start with a brief look at the history of IT organization at WesternU. To document this history, I draw from the stories that organizational members told in the meetings I recorded, from interview discussions I had with participants, and from the written documents I described earlier (in my methodology chapter).

The first IT organization at WesternU was a small department, associated with several central, administrative offices. An old timer described it in this way,

Back then, there was really just one computer organization on campus, the Center for Administrative Data Processing. It was in the basement of Wilson Hall. There were really, really big machines and no windows. A lot of people would go in there and we’d never see them again… As far as the computing environment, back then there were three, count ‘em, three computer systems, mainframe, all with a central-systems orientation.

It wasn’t long before people outside of central administration began experimenting on their own with technology. In the eyes of these actors, the path they blazed was “revolutionary”,

So, 1980, there’s a revolution afoot. There’s a renegade department at CU-boulder. It had decided to build its own computer system for its own stuff. Fortunately, there was also a renegade computer group willing to design and implement that system. That radical department was the Physical Plant, what we now know as Campus Facilities. That rebel group was a huge group—it consisted of two people, myself and one other. That radical computer was the first departmental, administrative system here at Western U.

After that, several more department-level, administrative offices followed suit, creating what one senior administrator described (in an interview conversation with me) as “a great tension between Central IT and all of the administrative systems that had proliferated all across campus during that time.” From the outset, then, the organization of IT at WesternU was characterized
by a tension between centrally and locally-controlled technology systems. This tension directly reflected the long-established tensions of the larger university system (WesternU), tensions that are characteristic of higher education institutions, in general (both of which I will discuss in further detail in my next section).

While there were a handful of research labs that had started to develop their own technology systems alongside the ‘rogue’ administrative offices, at that time most academic departments were either uninterested or unable (in terms of technical skills) to create local systems. The small number of faculty members who were beginning to experiment with technology typically used the instructional technology systems designed, developed and managed by the university’s central IT organization.

In the 1990’s, the numbers of technology users (in both academic and administrative departments) increased exponentially; so too did the demands that the central IT organization represent the interests of various campus constituents. In response to these concerns, WesternU launched its first campus-wide, IT strategic planning initiative (in 1998). With respect to my study, there were two extremely important outcomes associated with this planning process: the formalization of “principles” that were to guide IT development at WesternU in the future and the establishment of two organizational bodies designed to ensure Central IT’s adherence to these principles: the OTC and IT Council.

The OTC’s Members and Constituents

The OTC was (and is) an administrative organization within the larger organization of Western U. It was originally created (in 1998) as an Office under the Executive Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, who, alongside the Senior Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer, reported directly to the university’s Chancellor. In the first phase of my study (“End of an Era”),
the formal members of the OTC included the CIO of WesternU (and the director of the OTC), his two staff, (the Director of Educational Technology and the Director of Policy and Planning), and the director of Central IT (the centralized technology organization created to meet the varied needs of constituents across campus). During the second phase of my study (“The Transition Years”), under the direction of the interim CIO of WesternU, the OTC expanded to include the Chief Technology Officer (the previous director of Central IT), a new director of Central IT, the three directors that reported to him, and the director of Policy, Planning and Communication (who was moved down a level, in terms of reporting structure). In the last phase of my study (“The New CIO”), these members remained part of the OTC. The CIO also reinstated the OTC’s Planning, Policy, and Communication to a director-level position (shifting a number of key staff members under his direction).

Initially, the organizational mission of the OTC was to “oversee” the activities of Central IT and to “coordinate” the smaller, department-level administrative systems, in the interest of two key stakeholders: faculty members (both in their teaching and their research work) and students (both graduate and undergraduate). Although members’/constituents’ understanding about this mission shifted over time (in terms of which groups oversaw and which were overseen), the various categories of organizational constituents remained relatively constant: 1) administrators (e.g. WesternU’s CIO, the OTC’s directors, Central IT’s directors41), 2) IT professionals (e.g. Central IT staff members, department-level IT professionals), and 3) faculty members and students. The meetings that I recorded included all but the last group of constituents (students). Since my data set was already quite large and my time, limited, I

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41 Since IT directors might be understood as both administrators and IT professionals, this group of constituents does not neatly fit within any one category. Here I include them in the administrators group because of how primary their administrative responsibilities are to their everyday work. In certain cases, however, it might make sense to understand them as IT professionals.
focused the bulk of my analysis on those participants to whom I had access: administrators, faculty members and IT professionals.

Analyzing the OTC’s Early Discourse Practices

Having described the OTC’s early history and introduced the members and constituents upon which my study focuses, I turn now to examining the early discourse practices that characterized the OTC. The primary source of data that I used to understand these practices were the written documents associated with the formation and the early history of the OTC (three strategic planning reports that the OTC published during its first decade as well as the text from the websites associated with these plans). It is important to point out that these documents represent a somewhat narrow picture of the organization: the “official”, more formalized version of the purpose and meaning of the organization versus the one that might be captured through day-to-day interactions involving diverse constituents. Since the documents were authored by the OTC’s IT directors and high-level administrators, their particular understanding of the organization is mainly what the documents present. Despite the limitations of this kind of data (in terms of the rather singular and static perspective it represents), it is a useful place to start as it provides a necessary background for describing the organization I encountered when I began my data collection.

Given the nature of this data (primarily written documents versus transcripts of face-to-face interactions) as well as the goal of this section (to provide a basic, historical context for the organization I encountered when I first began my study), for this preliminary analysis I employed the analytical steps from the model I described in my methodology/methods section in only a very limited way. The way in which I identified passages of text to examine was much simpler, for example. Rather than taking the time that Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) model
required for identifying particular passages to analyze, I shortened the text-selection process greatly,42 limiting my “close” reading to the executive summaries of the strategic reports, these reports’ chapters on governance, and the main pages of the closely related websites. As I read, I searched for moments where the authors employed the language and/or logic from each of the Discourses I have proposed to examine. I also downloaded these documents and conducted electronic searches of key terms from each of these Discourses using the qualitative analysis software that I describe in my methodology chapter (e.g. “efficient” and “efficiency” in the case of managerialist Discourse and “participate” and “participation” in the case of progressivist Discourse).

In contrast to the data that I analyze in chapters 6-8 (transcripts from interactive meeting discussions where members’/constituents’ negotiations of organizational meanings are ‘visible’ in the talk and, therefore, available for analysis), the passages I examine in this chapter are much more two-dimensional. In absence of interactional data, I focus my analysis here mainly on the discursive resources employed in the texts—an approach that, once again, represents a significantly truncated version of the multi-dimensional analytical approach that I will later use. My goal, at this point, however, is not an in-depth analysis (of actors’ shared knowledgeability nor of the diverse perspectives that inform the constitution of organizational authority) but rather simply to establish a general baseline from which to launch my more complete analysis.

The Progressivist Foundations of the OTC (1998-2001)

I begin this “baseline” analysis with a brief look at WU’s 1998 Information Technology Strategic Planning report43, the report to which I referred earlier that proposed the establishment of the OTC. Again, one of the goals of this report was to establish a set of principles that would

42 While it may have been possible to use Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) model to sort through these written documents, it was simply not practical, given my time constraints. Knowing what would be required in terms of my analysis of the interaction data I had collected—the true heart of my data set—I made a conscious decision to simplify my methods for this part of my analysis.
43 All quotes in this section were taken from this document.
guide the technology activities at WU. These principles were firmly grounded in the traditional values of higher education. For instance, they underscored the importance of continuing the University’s long-established, academic missions: “teaching, learning, research, and student life” as well as supporting the “risk-taking” that goes along with them. They clarified that IT at WesternU was to be in “service” and in “support” of these missions, rather than the other way around. They also committed to maintaining the broadly-informed decision-making process that characterizes the HE setting, proposing that those in charge of IT planning should not only be guided by “specific and localized needs” but actively “solicit and be considerate of constituent input”.

Relating this to my previous discussion about progressivist Discourse, the text of this early strategic planning document clearly includes many of its core ideological elements. While it doesn’t explicitly refer to the ways in which the University’s missions are tied to ensuring a democratic society (by developing critically thinking citizens), it references many of the democratic ideals of progressivist Discourse, calling for a “participatory”, “ethical”, and equitable IT processes and systems based on a “framework of promoting the common good”. In the words of those who authored the principles that ought to guide IT at WesternU, “Timeless in nature, these principles are fundamental to the culture of the campus.” We might say, then, that the OTC was established by actors who were clearly knowledgeable about the institutionalized relations that characterize the higher-education setting. Indeed, the underlying purpose of the organization seemed to be to ensure that these power relations would continue, despite technological changes in HE practices (for details about these relations, refer to characteristics of progressivist discourse described on page 106).
In sum, the earliest documents associated with the OTC demonstrate that those who first conceived of the organization (a mix of administrators, IT professionals, and faculty members) drew heavily on progressivist Discourse, mirroring the communication practices (and the related authority systems) of the larger system within which the OTC is created. References to managerialist ideology in the earliest OTC documents, on the other hand, were practically non-existent. Comparing the 1998 report with later reports, however, shows that use of discursive resources from managerialist Discourse grew steadily during the organizations’ first decade. Both the written documents from this timeframe (the Strategic Planning Documents from 2002 and 2006), and the early conversations that I recorded when I began my research of the OTC evidence a significant increase in constituents’ use of this Discourse over time. I turn my attention to more directly examining these changes in discourse practice in the following section.

Changes in the IT Environment at WU (2002-2006)

To appreciate the change in discourse practices that I encountered in the written documents I reviewed it is useful to describe some of the changes that took place in the IT environment at WU in the ten years since the OTC had been established. During this time, technology use at WesternU had virtually exploded. The number of computer servers on campus nearly quadrupled. The majority of departments (both administrative and academic) relied on some form of technology system to accomplish their day to day work. The number of faculty using technology in their classrooms also multiplied dramatically. As the IT environment on campus grew, the conversation about it grew more technical. While many faculty members continued to be uninterested in technology, those who were often were unable to keep pace with the rapid changes in the industry and stay abreast of their own areas of expertise. Whereas the original IT Council began with a healthy balance of faculty members and administrators, both
the OTC’s 2002 and 2006 Strategic Planning Reports mention a sharp decline in faculty participation. My interviews with veteran OTC members confirmed this trend.

Because the increase in technology use at the university lagged slightly behind that of the business sector, some (mostly administrators and IT directors) began to look to that sector for clues about how to manage the rapid growth, borrowing not only concepts, but also discursive practices. The economic situation at WesternU also provided fertile ground for the logic of managerialist Discourse (a logic based on technical reasoning) to take root. At the same time as technology users had been growing steadily during this timeframe, the university’s budget had been shrinking substantially. When I began my study (in 2007), WesternU, alongside most other publically funded universities in the US, faced a daunting budget crisis. As with those in IT, a number of administrators at the institutional level at WesternU also began eyeing the organizational practices of private business.

Having personally witnessed the decline in faculty participation in the IT conversation at WesternU (and other universities), and having read about the close correlations between technology professionals and managerialist Discourse, I had expected that this combination of situations would be result in an “explosion” in this kind of Discourse, particularly by the growing, “new” cadre on campus: IT professionals (indeed, that was part of what led me to choose the OTC as my site of study). While there was a notable increase in the discursive resources from managerialist Discourse in the written documents produced by the OTC in 2002 and 2006 (as compared with the 1998 report), their presence was more a steadily growing co-presence rather than a ‘take-over’, in terms of the resources traditional to the higher education setting.
The Influx of Managerialist Discourse (2002-2006)

Comparing the websites associated with the 1998 Strategic Planning Report with those associated with the 2002 and 2006 reports clearly shows the influx of managerialist Discourse in the organization’s communication practices. The opening screen of the 1998 plan, for example, begins with a one paragraph summary of the strategic planning process, citing the project’s purpose: “to create and maintain effective and responsive IT infrastructure and service delivery systems for the campus based on users’ needs.” Below this is the mission statement, a statement that reinforces the idea of developing technology that “properly supports the campus’ core mission, special characteristics and values”. Finally, there is an invitation to “Students, Faculty, and Staff” soliciting their participation in the process.

Whereas the 1998 opening page highlights the values guiding the effort and the people involved in it, the opening screens for the 2002 report has a different focus. Like the previous report, the summary page begins with a brief statement of how the plan was developed. But this time, its connection to the university’s values and mission is no longer explicitly stated. From here, the page presents links to the report itself (the executive summary, etc.), highlighting the individual chapters, the majority of which have titles that are technology related. The 2006 page is similarly structured, emphasizing the technologies rather than the constituents involved in the planning process. On the first page of the 2006 report itself, technology is portrayed as a “requirement” to the activities of higher education (as opposed to what was in the 1998 report: a potential benefit and/or possible threat requiring close monitoring). On this page, there is a special text box that reads:

One of the greatest challenges to college and university leaders is to determine, implement, and sustain the IT infrastructure necessary for successful teaching and research in the digital age. As technology becomes more pervasive in both the academic and administrative activities of the contemporary university, the investment in IT
infrastructures becomes less of a luxury and more of an absolute requirement of learning and scholarship, not to mention the operation and management of the institution. (Duderstadt, Atkins, and Van Houweling, 2002, as cited in the 2006 ITSP Report, italics added)

In reading through the executive summaries as well as the individual chapters of the 2002 and 2006 reports, the language and the logic that the authors often employ also have clear connections to managerialist Discourse. The value of efficiency as well as the top-down, bureaucratic management practices that characterize the business setting, for example, are both captured in the following recommendation regarding “Coordination and Communication”:

**Centrally coordinate** specific aspects of IT to achieve efficiency and decrease duplication; **centrally manage** other aspects to achieve reliability and stability of the campus IT infrastructure; continue to **distribute responsibility** for some departmental specific tasks (ITSP Report, 2002, bolded text is in the original).

Rather than the dialogic communication practices that are assumed in progressivist Discourse, in these reports, communication is treated as information delivery from management to campus constituents, now described as “end-users”:

Communication from both [Central IT] and the [OTC] must be targeted and frequent. A comprehensive communication plan ensures that faculty, staff, and students know what IT resources, services, and support are available to them, and where they can access them; that the campus is aware of the appropriate use of academic and administrative IT resources; and that end-users know and understand pertinent information about policies, guidelines, and processes (ITSP Report, 2002).

Likewise, decision-making process is assumed to be top-down rather than participatory and is based on technical rather than emancipatory reasoning as the following two excerpts suggest.

The first excerpt gives background on the issue at hand:

The campus is well underway in the effort to develop security-related policies, best practices, and guidelines. However, much of the campus lacks awareness of and understanding of these policies and guidelines. Consequently system administrators and users often make uninformed decisions that have a detrimental impact on the security and integrity of the campus IT infrastructure and other IT systems.

The second proposes a related recommendation:
Enhance security and efficiency by developing a unified IT architecture and set of central data services: The campus will have greater data security if all sensitive data resides in one place that can be easily accessed by the appropriate set of people. Beyond increased data security, an added advantage of a unified IT architecture and central data service is that data would be available in real-time, rather than batch information that may be hours to weeks old. For departments, this update to our campus IT environment could be a significant increase in efficiency because personnel and IT equipment costs would be reduced by accessing one authoritative system, rather than departments creating and managing their own shadow systems.

Again, the justification provided for the recommendation (increased efficiency and cost reduction) demonstrates the kind of reasoning that is typical of managerialist Discourse.

Two Discursive Resource Sets in Tension

Although many sections of the 2002 and 2006 reports demonstrate an increase in the use of managerialist Discourse, as I mentioned earlier, the progressivist Discourse that had long characterized higher education conversations had certainly not disappeared from the text. For example, the executive summary of the 2002 report begins with a statement that directly references the university’s mission: “The IT Strategic Planning process examines plans and priorities for the use and support of information technology in support of the mission of [WU].” This language is repeated in the 2006 summary: “Over the past spring and summer, campus IT leaders solicited the opinions and expertise of faculty, staff, and students to examine the plans and priorities for the use of information technology in support of the mission of [WU].” These statements might be interpreted as both a recognition of and a nod to longstanding power relations.

References to the shared authority that faculty members and administrators must negotiate (according to the progressivist paradigm) can also be found in the 2002 report. In the section devoted to describing the campus’ network and middleware, for example, the authors exhibit their knowledgeability of the “delicate balance” that characterizes this relationship:
In the implementation and expansion of network and middleware services, the campus must strike a delicate balance between:

- Central authority, coordination, policy, and guidelines;
- Cross-campus collaboration; and
- Flexibility to meet needs of campus units and users. (2002 Strategic Planning Report, italics added)

When recommending more centralized services, the authors are clearly aware of how these might be understood as challenging the highly prized autonomy that departments have traditionally enjoyed, writing, “Concurrent with these recommendations, the campus needs to ensure the autonomy of departments and their ability to customize services to meet their individual needs.”

What these examples help to illustrate is that the discursive resources from managerialist Discourse by no means replaced the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse but rather were used right alongside them, introducing a tension between the two (and between the different authority relations advocated by each)—a tension that not only reflected the longstanding tensions between academic and administrative authority but also revised these slightly, adding technology professionals to the mix.

Relating Changes in Discourse Practices to Changes in Authority Relations

In this project, I have proposed to examine the relationship between the discursive practices of OTC members/constituents and the authority relations that characterize the organization. Although the kind of data I have been analyzing is limited in its usefulness for deeply exploring this relationship (as I pointed out earlier), it does allow me to begin to sketch a rough outline of this relationship. More specifically, what my analysis shows is that the use of different discursive resources sets (in the case of the 1998 report, primarily resources from progressivist Discourse and in the 2002 and 2006 reports a mix of resources from both progressivist and managerialist Discourse) parallels the authority relations that are proposed in each of the various plans. This makes sense, given that each of the different discourses that I proposed to examine
describe the power relations among the various constituent groups (faculty members, administrators, and IT professionals) quite differently (see page 103 for a more detailed comparison). In progressivist Discourse, for instance, faculty members have a distinct advantage in negotiating the meaning and purpose of higher education, given their more direct knowledge and experience with academic work as well as the critical role this work plays in the larger society. In principle, the teaching and research work that they do is to guide the work of administrators, including those who work as technology professionals. The authority relations that are proposed in the 1998 report (where resources from progressivist Discourse are abundant) are very much in line with these ideals. Likewise, as the use of discursive resources from managerialist Discourse increase (first in the 2002 report and later, more significantly, in the 2006 report), the authority relations that are described shift accordingly. To examine these changes more closely, I take a brief look in the next section at the governance chapters from the 2002 and 2006 reports.

Proposed Changes in Governance Structures (2002-2006)

In contrast the 1998 report that seems to clearly favor faculty (or academic) authority, the authority relations described in the 2002 report elevate the authority of administrators and IT professionals so that it is more on par with that of faculty members (in contrast to their clearly subordinate role in progressivist ideology). To begin with the governance chapter starts out by acknowledging that there has been a decline in faculty and student participation in IT Council and recommends several strategies for increasing their involvement, one of which is that “…the campus consider re-configuring its IT oversight structure to provide broader, and deeper input into decisions about the campus’s IT environment and its development, and about IT communication and policy enforcement issues.” At the same time, however, a number of
suggestions are made (in terms of the governance mechanisms of the OTC) that would increase
the input and authority of the administrators and directors associated with the organization.

For example, the authors propose that the OTC “oversee campus-wide IT initiatives”. This is a subtle but important change from the original planning documents which describe the
OTC as overseeing Central IT to ensure that their activities support the university’s mission.
The 2002 report also describes the director of Central IT as “implicitly and explicitly providing
direction for IT at WU”, again, elevating the directors’ original organizational role. In
describing the role that IT Council plays, a distinction is made between “tactical” and “strategic”
leadership, with the latter being associated with the kind of leadership that IT Council ought to
provide. Combining these two recommendations—to strengthen faculty and student
participation on IT Council and to increase the authority that Central IT has in shaping campus
technology—the governance system that is proposed in the 2002 report seems to be one where
power is relatively equally shared by IT directors/professionals and academic constituents
(versus one that is primarily determined by academic needs). The mix of discursive resources
that characterize the report are in line with these ideals (a subtle increase in the resources from
managerialist Discourse alongside the continued use of progressivist resources).

My analysis of the 2006 report, on the other hand (a report where the increase in
discursive resources from managerialist resources is more marked), indicates that the authors
(again, mostly central administrators and IT directors) seem to be pushing this one step further,
aiming to shift the “delicate balance” that characterizes HE in their favor—in other words, to
revise the institutionalized relations so that administrators and IT professionals have not just an

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44 My assessment of this mix is based on my experience of having read all three reports numerous times rather than any kind of formal measure. The methods I use in the analysis I conduct in the coming chapters (in terms of determining the frequency of each set of resources) are much more robust.

45 Although the presence of these resources significantly increased in the 2006 report (as compared to the earlier reports), as with the 2002 report, references to progressivist ideals do not disappear but rather co-exist alongside the “newer” discursive resources.
equal but the upper hand in shaping the purpose and the meaning of the OTC. The Governance chapter in the 2006 report begins, for example, by making the recommendation that: “WU should build upon and improve its existing IT governance structure.” The rest of the chapter describes these “improvements”. Although the decline of faculty participation in the governance process is noted, no specific recommendations are made to correct this imbalance. Rather, the authors of the report recommend that two additional groups have input into the governance process, both of which are comprised of IT professionals. The first is a group that has previously served as an advisory body to Central IT. The authors of the governance chapter recommend that this group’s advisory power be broadened and shifted to the OTC. The second is an IT group that is closely involved with the planning and developing the infrastructure for the campus. Whereas the original purpose of the IT Council was for diverse campus constituents (faculty members, students and local administrators) to advise the IT professionals on campus (a model based on progressivist logic), the proposed shift would greatly alter that model. In the new structure, IT professionals move from being advised to being the advisors (a move that makes sense, in terms of managerialist logic, from the point of view of their seniority and expertise).

Acknowledging the difference of these structures (as compared to the existing governance structures), the authors also recommend a more formal process for coordinating the activities of these groups as well as the need to “Evaluate, rewrite as necessary, and post mission and roles documents for all governance bodies.” Relating the changes proposed in this and other chapters of the 2006 report back to the idea of organizational ends (and the relative lack of attention to the decline of faculty/student participation in governance process), one might conclude that the authors of the 2006 report are lobbying to change the institutionalized power relations so that they favor the interests of IT professionals and administrators. Again, these
changes correspond with a significant increase in the use of discursive resources from managerialist Discourse.

Moving from Static to Interactive Data

In the previous sections, I have compared the structural resources that OTC members and constituents employed in their formal, written documents at three different moments since the establishment of the organization (1998, 2002 and 2006). My goal in doing so was to establish a baseline understanding of the OTC’s early communication practices (as best I could from the available data). My analysis of the organization’s strategic planning documents indicated that the OTC that I began studying in 2007 was an organization that had originally been primarily rooted in progressivist Discourse (and the ideals and authority relations that characterize this Discourse). Examining the later reports showed that the use of both the language and the logic of managerialist Discourse increased gradually yet steadily. The proposed changes that these documents described in terms of authority relations among organizational members/constituents (a shift in the OTC’s governance structures that increasingly favored the authority of administrators and IT professionals) were in line with these changes in discourse practice. More specifically, beginning in the 2002 report, the tension between academic and administrative (including IT administrators) authority became much more evident (as compared with the original report). By 2006, the balance of authority that was proposed had clearly shifted in favor of administrative authority.

In absence of interaction data from this time period, I have analyzed the OTC’s written planning documents from these three moments in time, documents that were authored by a fairly narrow group of constituents (primarily by administrators of the OTC and leaders from Central IT). These reports have provided me with the opportunity to document the influx of
managerialist Discourse in these members’ communication practices during the organization’s first decade as well as the changes in authority relations that they proposed—both of which are useful for appreciating the organization that I encountered when I first began my study. To what degree the discursive practices captured in the documents I reviewed reflect the practices of the broader OTC organization (and to what degree the understanding that is described in these documents reflected a broader organizational understanding), however, is unclear. We might say then that the written documents I have been analyzing provide a rather flat (and static) view of the knowledgeability I am interested in studying. To examine the negotiated and dynamic nature of knowledgeability that I have proposed to examine (and the dialectic of control associated with these phenomena), requires that I turn my attention next to the more interactive data that I observed and recorded between 2007 and 2011 (where members’/constituents’ use of particular discursive resources are situated within immediate, local interactions). Having described the OTC in terms of its origins, its members and constituents, and their early communication practices, in my next chapter, I turn my attention to this task.

Preliminary Data-Sorting

In contrast to the methods that I have just used to sort and to select sections of the OTC’s written documents (closely reading key parts of the documents and conducting simple word/concept searches of the written text using both manual and electronic methods), to sort the data for my upcoming analysis, I followed the more complex, data-sorting steps that I described in my methodology chapter. As I described in that chapter, there were a number of preliminary data sorting steps that a researcher must take. To begin to sort my data, I used the organizational tools that NVivo offered to help group my data into different types, importing my data as four different kinds of “Sources”: mixed-group meetings, single-group meetings, interviews, and
written documents. Once I organized the data in this way, I focused my attention on the mixed-group meeting files, as they were the richest in terms of evidencing negotiations between and among different organizational constituents. Using the “Nodes” function in NVivo (a function that allows the user to create word/concept hierarchies), I created an “Issues/Topics” node and begin identifying and coding the planned issues around which talk was organized in the meetings I had transcribed (following Huttenen’s, 2010, example). In meetings where there was a formal agenda, I used this as a resource to identify the issues that participants’ plan to address. In other meetings, I used the preliminary frame that the meeting’s facilitators presented to introduce the meeting. In both cases, I also tracked the initiation of new issues/topics, often framed by participants as “sub-topics” (or sub-issues).

To help me understand how these episodes related to one another and to the evolution of the organization, I looked for patterns in the issues that were discussed. Early on the codes I attached to each of the issues I identified (large and small) were quite individual and specific (e.g. What are the potential faculty reactions to discontinuing the modem pool? What amount of student participation is necessary for planning the next university portal? How should controversial new, network policy be introduced to campus constituents?). As I progressed through the data, however, and began to tease out patterns in the kinds of organizational issues that members/constituents address, I created categories that were a bit more generic/broad. For example:

- What technologies should the organization provide/support?
- How should data be managed?
- What’s a good model for IT infrastructure?
- How should technologies be funded?
- How are policies enforced?
- What is the organization’s governance model?
- What are the guiding values of the organization?
- Who participates in planning and decision-making?
These categories reflected the underlying interests of my study, namely, the negotiation of organizational meaning and control. They might be grouped into two types of issues: those where conversations directly address issues of organizational structure and power relations and those where their negotiations are more indirect. Trying to stay true to members’/constituents’ framing of these issues (framing that is not always consistent with the social constructionist view that I take), I listed the issues they raised in the meetings as questions. This helped to communicate the negotiable quality of these issues and their close relationship to knowledge accomplishing activities I was studying.

Treating these issues as different levels of knowledge accomplishing episodes, I then focused my attention on the micro-issues (or emergent issues), searching for ‘snags’, or moments where there seemed to be misunderstanding, confusion or disagreement over the issue at hand, labeling them as problematic situations. My next step was to then tease out the level of indeterminacy involved in each episode (from determinate to somewhat indeterminate to strongly indeterminate). Doing so helped me to significantly reduce the number of episodes requiring close analysis (since a little more than half of them were episodes where participants “deployed” knowledge versus where they “developed” it). Still, I was left with a considerable number to choose from. To cull these down to a more reasonable number for close analysis, I selected types of organizational issues situations that seemed to be common to the time period I was analyzing. In addition, I tried to choose episodes that seemed to have a relatively long problematic “lifetime”—in other words, those that continued from one meeting to the next, and, when possible, from one period of organizational development to the next. From there, as I described in my methodology chapter, I analyzed the discursive moves that members and constituents made to negotiate/resolve the problematic situation at hand, distinguishing between
the kind of discursive resources they employ (progressivist versus managerialist).
Chapter Six: Analysis of Knowledge Episodes from the First Period of my Dataset

I begin my analysis of the knowledgeability involved in structuration process by analyzing the knowledge accomplishing activities that occur in the mixed-group meetings from the first part of my data set, what I have labeled, The End of an Era. Focusing on members’ and constituents’ back-and forth turns at talk, I analyze the discursive resources various participants employ as they initiate, negotiate and attempt to resolve the problematic situations that arise in these interactions (what I refer to as emergent issues), paying particular attention to the authority relations involved in these negotiations. Anticipating the next steps in my analysis (the analysis of unintended consequences), I also identify patterns in the discursive practices of various constituencies and begin to examine how these recurrent practices serve to promote different goals/ends (in terms of authority relations). Towards the end of my analysis of each interaction, I also highlight how levels of determinancy seem to change over the course of the episode. I then look at these changes within the context of the evolution of the group’s shared knowledge, the final step in my analysis. I turn my attention now to analyzing interactions from my first set of data: the data I collected during the spring and summer of 2007.

Narrowing My Analytical Focus

The mixed-group meeting conversations that I examined from this time period were the three, hour-and-a half-long IT Council meetings facilitated by the OTC’s original CIO. While this is an admittedly small sample of discussion, it nonetheless provided me with a window through which to observe interaction between the CIO and what was left of his IT Council group (after faculty attendance slowly declined over time). Participants in these meetings included the CIO, his two staff members, several IT professionals, half-a-dozen administrators from local departments (only one from an academic department), and one non-tenure track instructor. In
addition to these conversations, I also referenced my interview with the CIO and with the
director of Policy and Planning to supplement my understanding of members’ and constituents’
relations.

Using the model I have described, I began my analysis by identifying the planned
organizational topics (what might also be understood as high-level knowledge episodes) that
members/constituents address in each of the three meetings from this time period. Using the
meetings’ agendas as a guide, I identified five planned discussion issues in the first meeting, six
in the second, and five in the third. Due to the numerous planned topics that participants address
in each meeting, the discussion of each issue was relatively brief (ranging from approximately 10
to 25 minutes). Breaking these down into the emergent issues that were nested within these
larger topics, I identified 15 emergent issues in the first meeting (the issue of my research being
one of them), 16 in the second, and 17 in the third (with an average of about three emergent
issues within each planned issue). Again, these were the issues around which knowledge
accomplishing episodes revolved, issues that I understood to be inherently problematic.

My next task was to analyze the level of indeterminancy in each knowledge
accomplishing episode. I labeled 25 of the episodes as determinate, 12 as moderately
indeterminate, and 6 as greatly indeterminate. Combining these three meeting discussions,
therefore, provided me with eighteen indeterminate episodes to choose from. From these, I
selected several for close analysis, favoring the types of issues that seemed to be common in the
discussions from this time period as well as those that seem to carry across the different meeting
discussions. Because of the frequency of the emergent issue of “Who participates in decision-
making and policy?” in this set of discussions (out of the eighteen interdeterminate episodes,
twelve of them involved this issue), the episode that I selected for close analysis (an episode
from the April 2007 meeting) is one that addresses this issue. The passage I selected also addresses the issue of “What are the organization’s guiding values?” (another common type of issue from this time period). My next challenge, in this part of my analysis, was to tease out what discursive resources participants used as they attempted to negotiate and to resolve their differences in understanding (or their lack of understanding) that ran throughout these issues.

Analyzing Interactions from the OTC’s IT Council Meeting, April 2007

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources

After reviewing my analysis of the OTC’s early written documents (an analysis that displayed a substantial increase in managerialist discourse as well as a decline in faculty participation in IT Council discussions), one might expect the presence of managerialist Discourse to be very strong in these conversations, with only an occasional contest for control of organizational meaning (given what seemed to be a fairly uniform set of representatives in the discussion). What I found instead was that although a few, key organizational members sometimes employed the language and the logic that characterize this Discourse in these negotiations (e.g. the CIO and one of his staff members), nearly all of the Council members preferred the more long-established Discourse of the HE setting: progressivist Discourse. Although the majority of these Council members were local-level administrators, what I came to realize through my analysis was that they clearly saw themselves as representatives of faculty and student interests. For those who worked in offices that were focused on academic activities, this was not surprising. Others, however, simply seemed to feel obligated to represent academic interests given the absence of academic representatives.

In addition to there being more speakers employing the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse than I had anticipated, the knowledge-accomplishing episodes were also
more indeterminate than I would have guessed. Although over half of the problematic situations (or emergent issues) that members/constituents negotiate were determinate (meaning that participants “employ similar interpretive schemes, use a common code, agree about the grounds and meanings of activities, and understand action requirements”, Kuhn & Jackson, 2008: 6), a significant percentage were either moderately or highly indeterminate. To demonstrate these patterns, I analyze an exemplary excerpt from the first meeting I attended (please see Appendix 1 for full transcript).

To fully appreciate this discussion, there is a piece of background information that is important to describe. When the OTC was first established, the CIO reported to the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, an audience charged with prioritizing academic concerns and, hence, one that lined up neatly with the purpose of the OTC (to ensure that Central IT’s activities reflected the academic/research needs of the campus). While the formal reporting structure had not changed, over time, the VC for Budget and Planning came to be much more involved in the OTC’s activities than the VC for Academic Affairs. (This was the case when I began my research.) According to my interview with an OTC staff member, this was due to “personality issues” rather than “politics”. Nonetheless, there were political ramifications that resulted from this change. More specifically, the Budget Office (an office charged with prioritizing the economic health of the university), now had a place at the table (albeit unofficial), in terms of negotiating the campus’ IT plans and policies. These changes were reflected in many of the early knowledge accomplishing episodes that I recorded, including the exemplary excerpt I have chosen for analysis.

On the formal agenda for the meeting I recorded, the emergent issues I chose to analyze are nested within the group’s discussion about a planned topic that was listed on the written
agenda for the meeting as “Network Task Force Summary” (the fourth of five planned agenda items). Because of the funding model at the heart of this summary, I labeled this high-level topic more generically as “Summary of Technology Funding Model”. Although I treated the focus of this turn as a “topic” rather than an “issue” (to emphasize that it is the focus of a high-level, rather than immediate knowledge accomplishing episode), I began my analysis in the same way, identifying the particular resources that the speaker uses to initiate the idea.

In his introduction to the topic, the CIO (who has the pseudonym of “Geoffrey” in my transcript) presented the agenda item in this way, “As opposed to the last two items where this is the group that things go through, this group doesn’t really have any say over these issues…” At this point, he didn’t clarify whether or not he included himself as a part of “this group” (in other words, whether, he, himself, had any say over these issues or not). As he distributed the related handout to the group, however, he emphasized that he was “reporting on recommendations made by others” (referring to the VC for Budget and Planning). We might understand this move as an attempt to frame the discussion issue he has initiated. To describe the policy he introduced, he drew on the resources of managerialist Discourse, proposing that the decision-making process was a top-down process rather than a participatory one, proposing that the topic he had introduced is a policy “mandate” as opposed to a policy “discussion”. He also situated himself as an actor within this framework, identifying himself as a subordinate to other higher authorities.

To understand Council members’ strong reaction to the way that Geoffrey framed this topic, a brief review of the group’s history with the topic is useful. Earlier that year, the OTC had created a special task force to discuss potential funding models for the campus network (a task force that included one of the IT Council members). In the previous IT Council meeting,
the group had reviewed and discussed several funding models that the task force had proposed. Geoffrey’s framing of the issue as “something this group doesn’t really have any say over”, hence, met with understandable resistance.

Following Geoffrey’s introduction of the issue, several members took issue with the frame he had proposed, initiating the first of several emergent issues, each of which can be understood a problematic situation that the group had to resolve together in order to proceed with their discussion. Discussion of the first emergent issue—what we might understand as the focus of an immediate, knowledge accomplishing episode—proceeded in this way (the text that I have bolded is text that I have identified as particularly relevant for my analysis):

Martin: This, **how are you justifying the impact** of this funding structure on both the auxiliaries and the general student body? It just doesn’t seem fair. I mean by the time we’ve gotten this far we’ve gotten into an almost political discussion as **opposed to a debate about funding policy**. Geoffrey: There really is no debate. We, **we all looked at the weighted model and signed off on it** as an option and the increases that those groups will face are minimal.

Colleen: I’d beg to differ. I did I just did the math if you look at the ( ) (refers to the print document that participants are reviewing), that would mean **an increase in charges to resident students** of $$per year. I’d call that a significant increase.

Geoffrey: But that doesn’t account for the subsidy that the plan creates ((again refers to the print document)).

Colleen: I don’t know why it’s a “subsidy”. Who was it that called it that, was it Porter? Even if you look at that total, that the numbers there don’t really help us much either. And what about this ( ) cost? Its different than what came out of the task force we’re it impacts us differently.

The issue (what I labeled as “What are the organization’s guiding values?” because of the way it problematizes the values underlying the policy—in this case, the value of “fairness”) was initiated by Martin who challenged the frame that Geoffrey had used to describe the planned discussion topic. Ignoring Geoffrey’s attempt to foreclose “discussion” about the policy, he raises the issue of how the funding model will effect constituents that IT Council members are charged to represent, challenging Geoffrey to “justify the impact of this funding structure” (line
181). In doing so he highlights the responsibility Geoffrey has to look out for the interests of these constituents as the leader of the Council (as understood in progressivist terms) as well as his own identification as a protector of faculty/student interests. He then invokes a central value of progressivist Discourse: fairness (or equity) (line 182). Finally, he proposes an alternative understanding of the topic, describing the funding discussion as a “political discussion” rather than a “policy debate” (line 183-184). Through these moves, then, Martin rejects both Geoffrey’s frame of the issue and the identification moves he makes (leading me to characterize the episode as moderately indeterminate).

In response to these challenges, Geoffrey reiterates his original frame of the issue: that this is a mandate rather than a “debate” (line 185), in other words, a top-down decision rather than a participatory process. The way in which he attempts to legitimize (or rationalize) the framework he proposes (in the second part of his turn) is quite interesting. Instead of drawing on managerialist resources/ideals, as he did in his first turn, to make his case in this turn, he borrows the resources/ideals from progressivist Discourse (specifically those concerning participatory decision-making) that Martin has introduced. In particular, he reminds members of their role in the process: “we all looked…and signed off on it” (line 185), implying that the responsibility for the policy change is not just his alone, but the group’s as a whole. Because the underlying action Geoffrey is justifying (top-down decision making) is more in line with managerialist than progressivist Discourse and because the move serves to privilege his managerial authority, I characterize it as being aimed at foreclosing discussion through what Deetz (1992) describes as “legitimation”: “the rationalization of decisions and practices through the invocation of higher order explanatory devices” (1992: 195), in this case, the devices (or resources) drawn from progressivist Discourse. Deetz goes on to say that actors employ such devices in order to “make
sense out of difficult-to-interpret activities and conceal contradictions and conflict” (1992: 195-196)

In her turn (line 187), Colleen challenges the newly packaged frame that Geoffrey has reiterated (that this is a mandate), returning to the issue of fairness (or guiding values). She begins, as Martin did, by establishing herself as a concerned representative of student interests (estimating the increases they might face, line 189), aligning herself with the identity that progressivist Discourse prescribes: a protector of student interests. Before the problem of fairness is resolved, Colleen introduces a new, slightly different issue within the larger discussion at hand, what I label (from my more generic list) as “Who participates in planning and decision-making”. We see the beginnings of this idea at the end of Colleen’s last turn, where she points out that the plan she and others signed off on was different than the plan that was approved (lines 194-195). The discussion continues in this way,

Colleen: …And what about this ( ) cost? **Its different than what came out of the task force** we’re it impacts us differently.

Geoffrey: **We should have Porter here to defend himself. I’m not sure why** it wasn’t in any of the initial calculations.

Colleen: **I’m just not sure this is right** I, and I also feel that you and Porter charged this group to investigate these issues and to come up with solutions that reflected the needs of the campus groups each of us is here to represent. **The model has been** I don’t want to say, **disregarded** but I’m afraid that may have been what happened. I mean we **there’s a group of people who were very dedicated to this process** and who put a lot of time and energy into researching and discussing these issues so I’m hoping that these models were seriously considered. Now there’s new information?

Geoffrey: The two I can say that the two models went forward. What I can’t say is **whether there was a thorough consideration of both of those models. We quickly jumped to number five.**

Mark: If we look at model five, there were a handful of adjustments ((Mark goes on to explain the details of these.))

Because of the way in which Colleen, in these turns, fundamentally challenges the resources that Geoffrey has employed, I characterize the emergent issue she introduces as indeterminate (somewhere between moderately and greatly indeterminate). Again, we can analyze the episode
in terms of the discursive resources that participants employ as they attempt to negotiate the issue at hand.

In her second turn in the excerpt above, Colleen draws on the values of “rightness” (line 198) to defend her case (a central value in progressivist Discourse). She then again highlights her identity as a “dedicated” representative as well as the participatory process that seems to have been—incredulously, in her eyes—“disregarded” (lines 200-203). By invoking this process, and Geoffrey’s role in it, she challenges the “pawn” identity that he presents initially. More specifically, she faults him (and Porter) for failing to uphold his responsibility to consider/listen to the feedback they solicited.

Challenged in this way, Geoffrey first attempts to pass responsibility off on Porter, and then to some vague force (line 206), but eventually, he acknowledges his part in the decision, saying “*We* quickly jumped to model five,” (line 206-207). In this move, Geoffrey seems to acknowledge participants’ efforts to reframe the situation and his role in it (from a powerless pawn to a responsible, accountable negotiator). The way he concludes the discussion, however, reflects the dilemma (in terms of his identification) that he faces. After Mark (the CTO) takes a turn at trying to explain some of the details of model five, the discussion ends in this way:

---

Adam: This, frankly this discussion hasn’t convinced me. I just don’t see how it’s a wash you know I just don’t see it.

Michelle: This is Porter’s decision he in the end and he’s got to live with it. But if

Colleen can’t explain why this this is why the student budget increased this amount and here’s what you’re getting for it/

Colleen: I’ve got to answer to the student body as a whole and that’s going to be hard. If the that our allocations are based on projected usage I’m gonna its gonna take some real finesse.

Michelle: Its back to that pair of pants we had issues with last month. Its different pockets but it’s the same pair of pants.

Geoffrey: Okay, so. You want me to pass your concerns on about the impacts on the auxiliaries and on students. I can do that. Its its just one of those things where you start out where you’re just gonna make it dead simple you know like tax law and as it unfolds it gets increasingly complex.
This exchange helps to highlight a central feature of the participatory decision-making that characterizes the HE setting, namely that it is a process that assumes that decision-makers not only consult a broad range of constituents regarding their needs but also listen the feedback they provide and integrate this into their decisions and actions. It also underscores the domino effect that occurs when this process has been compromised. As Colleen and Michelle point out, they are responsible for listening to (and “answering to”) their constituents (lines 267 and 269) and, in turn, Geoffrey is responsible for listening and answering to them, and, finally, the VC for listening and answering to him (274). By invoking a progressivist framework to describe the situation, they not only highlight the responsibility they have to act in the best interest of students, but also the responsibility that Geoffrey (and others) has to act in their interests (what might be understood as a move aimed at clarifying actors’ accountability).

Geoffrey is in a bit of a bind here. As the director of the OTC, he is charged with acting in the interests of faculty members and students. As I mentioned earlier, however, at this point in the life of the organization, the VC of Budget and Planning has become more involved in the OTC’s decision-making process than the VC of Academic Affairs and his priorities are economic rather than academic. The mixed message of Geoffrey’s concluding comments reflects this dilemma. On the one hand, he acknowledges the participatory decision making structure that the group has invoked, agreeing to “pass on their concerns” to the Vice Chancellor (274). At the same time, however, he suggests that this listening/responding process is more “complex” than group members may understand (274-276), leaving the door open for things other than constituent feedback (e.g. the economic priorities that the CFO is responsible for attending to) to guide the decision-making process.
One of the things that allows Geoffrey to combine these two seemingly incommensurate ideas is the indirect way in which he refers to the other interests involved: he highlights the economic interests that may now play a role in the process without actually referring to them directly. Using Deetz’s (1992) categories of discursive closure, we might understand this as an example as “meaning denial/plausible deniability”, where “a message is present and disclaimed, said and not said…thus enabling the produced speaker control without responsibility and precluding the critical examination of what was said (because it was not said),” (1992: 194-195). If we understand the second part of the turn in this way, Geoffrey’s initial invocation of progressivist decision-making (where he suggests that he has heard and will “pass on” the groups’ concerns) begins to look a lot like what we saw earlier (in Geoffrey’s turn on line 185), where he uses progressivist resources to legitimize his actions—actions that privilege his interests as a manager over others’—and to make these actions “appear” acceptable to Council members (a group that holds the value of participatory decision-making dear).

Defining the Knowledge at Issue in the Interactions

In my analysis of this meeting talk, I have identified several interrelated topics/issues that the group seems to be addressing: 1) the higher-level topic of the “technology funding policy” and the emergent issues of 2) “What are the guiding values of the organization?” and 3) “Who participates in planning and decision-making”? While each of these is relevant to the discussion, the issue that seems to occupy the lion’s share of participants’ attention is the issue of decision-making process. Relating this to the idea of knowledge/knowledgeability, in the interactions that I have just finishing examining actors seem to be primarily negotiating their shared understanding of the decision and policy-making authority in the OTC. Because of the
complexity of this knowledge in this particular setting, a brief discussion of its various elements is useful at this point.

As in the larger higher education setting, there are two types of authority that contribute to the OTC’s decision and policy-making: academic authority and administrative authority. And as in the larger setting, both are recognized as fully legitimate, an assumption that produces a constant tension between the two. The knowledge that is at issue in the interactions I have analyzed is the knowledge that relates to this tenuous balance of authority. In Figure 1 (see below), I have attempted to graphically represent the knowledge that members/constituents seem to be negotiating through these interactions. My underlying question is this: to what degree do the communication practices of members/constituents in these meetings reproduce and/or subtly revise their existing understanding of this balance. In my next section, I summarize the patterns in these practices, as a first step towards answering this question.

![Image](image.jpg)

Figure 1
Members’/Constituents’ Shared Understanding of the Balance of Decision-Making Authority

**Identifying Patterns in Discursive Practices**

As I examined the interactions from the April IT Council meeting, I analyzed the particular resources that OTC members/constituents employed as they negotiated the problematic situations that arise in their interactions. As I discussed in my methodology chapter, the next
step in my analysis is to begin to identify patterns in the use of particular discursive resources by various constituencies. To identify these kinds of patterns, I reviewed each of the turns I have analyzed in this April conversation and categorized them as drawing primarily on either progressivist or managerialist resources. I also identified the various constituencies employing various resources (faculty, [or in this case academic representatives], administrators, and IT professionals). Translating this information into a form that can be easily interpreted (and later compared with other summaries of my analytical interpretations), produces the following Figure (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>Type of Discursive Resource Used (P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April IT Council Meeting, 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoffrey 205</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Colleen 269</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Michelle 266</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Colleen 198</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Colleen 192</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Colleen 187</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Michelle 272</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin 181</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Geoffrey 147 FT</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unclear/ &gt;Five words</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Faculty/Student Reps
System-level Administrators
IT Professionals/Administrators

(*When background is shaded in graph cell, it indicates an attempt at discursive closure.)

Figure 2: Discursive Resources Employed in the Negotiation of Emergent Issues, IT Council Meeting, April 2007

In many cases, speakers clearly employed the discursive resources from either progressivist or managerialist Discourse in a single turn, making it relatively straightforward for me to categorize the turn. In some cases, however, at first glance, discursive resources from both...
Discourses seemed to be present in one turn. Closer analysis, however, revealed that when resources were combined in this way, the speaker often invoked the higher order values of progressivist resources in an attempt to legitimize actions that privileged their interests (and, therefore to conceal the potential conflicts of these actions). In these cases, I categorized the turn as managerialist (even though, technically, both resources were employed). In a handful of cases, it was difficult to discern which category to assign to a turn. Sometimes this was because the turn was quite short (2 out of the 5 such turns were less than 12 words). In a number of cases (the other 3 out of the 5), the resources upon which actors drew simply lacked clear links to either progressivist or managerialist Discourse. Although far from air tight (methodologically speaking), classifying the resources that actors employ in this way is a useful exercise. It enables me to both summarize this part of my analysis and it sets up a framework for comparing this moment to later moments from my dataset.

In addition to tracking which resources various constituencies employ, we can also begin to look at when they employ them and how—both of which are strongly influenced by the current authority relations (and related behavioral expectations) among members/constituents. In the case of this IT Council meeting, as Figure 2 shows, participants representing faculty/student interests strongly prefer the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse in their meaning-making negotiations. As we saw in my analysis, they employed them both to initiate problematic situations and to negotiate them. In contrast, the OTC’s director (a high level administrator) seems to prefer the resources from managerialist Discourse. He employs them directly, as he initiates the discussion, and indirectly, as he attempts to close the problematic situations that arise. These patterns begin to tell us something about the existing authority relations among OTC members/participants, namely, that while Council members have the
authority to initiate and negotiate problematic situations (authority that they clearly exercise), only the director has the authority to close these situations. On several occasions, he attempts to use this authority to foreclose discussion, discursive actions that are met with strong resistance by Council members. This resistance is important in terms of the next step in my analysis, assessing the level of determinancy of the episodes I have examined.

*Highlighting Changes in Levels of Determinancy*

Tracking the resources that members/constituents employ in their various turns, we can begin to get a feel for the level of determinancy that characterizes these interactions. On several occasions in this meeting, we see Council members reject the framework that Geoffrey proposes and call into question the resources he employs. As the discussion proceeds, in fact, they seem to reject them more strongly. Based on my analysis, then, a rough map of this set of episodes (in terms of the progression of the degree to which the episodes were indeterminate or determinate) might look something like this:

![Graph showing changes in level of indeterminancy](image)

**Figure #3: Changes in Level of Indeterminancy in April 2007 IT Council meeting**

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46 I refer to this as a rough map since this graph is meant to condense the claims I made about changing levels of determinancy (in my analytical discussion of the interaction) into something more quickly digestable for readers. It is primarily meant to highlight how the level of determinancy changed over the course of the meeting so that I might later compare the changes in this interaction to shifts in later interactions.
Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge

So where do these summaries of my analysis take us in terms of the shared knowledge about decision-making process the group “accomplishes”? My analysis of these early IT Council meetings clearly illustrates the tension between academic and administrative authority in decision-making process. Through their frequent and consistent use of progressivist resources in this meeting, for example, Council members reinforce progressivist values, in general, and a commitment to maintaining the involvement of faculty (and students) in participatory decision-making process, in particular. Through these repeating practices and, importantly, through the CIO’s tolerance of them, we might say that the group reifies the knowledge that academic authority plays a critical role in decision-making process. Indeed, we see even the CIO, himself, ironically invoking this knowledge as he attempts to justify the funding policy he supports (a policy shaped by top-down decision-making process).

Council members strongly challenge these moves. More specifically, they challenge the *grounds* that the CIO uses to legitimize his actions (e.g. when he attempts to use progressivist resources to legitimize his managerialist actions), as the rising level of indeterminancy that characterizes the interaction reflects. Ultimately, however, Geoffrey uses his authority (and the authority of administrators “above” him) to close off further discussion about the issue of decision-making process, suggesting, in his last turn, that while academic authority is important, in this case, administrative authority has trumped it. And ultimately, Council members acquiesce—albeit tacitly—to the CIO’s framing of the situation. In sum, then, the interactions in this first IT Council meeting reproduce what might be understood as knowledge about decision-making process that not only reflects the longstanding tensions between academic and administrative authority but also acknowledges that those with administrative authority have a
slight advantage in decision-making process. The indeterminancy in the interaction suggests that this balance is slightly different from how Council members may have previously understood it. Going back to the illustration of this balance that I proposed earlier (Figure 1 on page 146), we might represent this as a slight shift towards the administrative end of the authority continuum of authority.

Analyzing the Interactions from the IT Council Meeting, May 2007

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources

Given the inherent tension in the knowledge that the group negotiates in the April meeting (along with the indeterminancy that characterizes the interaction) it is not surprising that conversation participants take up the issues again in the second meeting I attended (as well as the third). In this meeting, we see Geoffrey again wrestling with his potentially conflicting roles of acting in the academic interests of faculty members (as director of the OTC) and answering to the VC of Budget and Planning (an office where economic interests reign). This conflict seems to be intensified by the presence of a representative from the Budget and Planning office who has been invited to attend the meeting.

As Geoffrey begins the meeting, he chooses to present his update on the controversial funding issue (the planned topic that initiates the discussion) in a sarcastic way, framing the action as a harsh policy that is “coming down” on the university community from above, creating unhappiness for all.

174 Geoffrey: Brief update on the network task force. Oh, I forgot my other update, I think
175 the policy that’s coming down on June 30 is a policy that says that we’re not
176 allowed to smile on our way to work. ((Geoffrey’s joke references a previous
177 comment. Lots of laughter from the group.))
178 Stevie: We’re being recorded, Geoffrey.
179 Geoffrey: I know we’re being recorded but I also think/
180 Kyle: So smile now, huh?/ ((more laughter))
181 Will: He said with chuckle/
Michelle: **Don’t say his name afterwards/**

Kyle: But we can smile on our way home ((more laughter)); generally more appropriate than on the way in.

Here Geoffrey employs his knowledge of what is effective (and what is not) in communicating with this group. Rather than presenting the actual mandate in a dictatorial manner, a manner likely to produce strong resistance from this group, he chooses, *himself*, to frame the issue at hand (the issue of who participated in the recent policy-making process) as “problematic”. He does so, however, in an indirect, facetious manner, characterizing the funding policy as “a policy that says we’re not allowed to smile on our way to work” (lines 75-76), what might be interpreted as an “extreme” progressivist read of the new policy. While he is clearly initiating a new topic in this turn, his sarcastic frame of the situation might also be understood as a simultaneous attempt to close down discussion of the topic. More specifically, using Deetz’s (1992) categories, I would classify it as an attempt at discursive closure through “pacification” because of the way in which it attempts (through humor) to “discount the significance of an issue” (1992: 196) and “divert attention away from things that interactants can change” (1992: 197), in this case, the controversial policy at hand.

Rather than resisting Geoffrey’s sarcastic frame of the problematic situation, IT Council members play along with it, jokingly highlighting the conflict (and even shame) of his part in the new, controversial policy (line 78), (leading me to characterize this part of the knowledge accomplishing episode as fairly determinate). Allowing administrative interests to trump the academic ones that Council members had raised (as Geoffrey did) was, after all, in direct conflict with Geoffrey’s identification as a responsive, responsible leader—not an action that someone who embraced that identify would want captured for posterity, particularly with their name associated with it, as IT Council members are quick to point out (line 185) (behavior that is in
line with the progressivist-grounded identity that they embrace). The group’s sarcastic approach to negotiating this problem, combined with their facetious treatment of Geoffrey’s actions, however, serves ultimately to minimize the importance of these transgressions.

In his next turns, Geoffrey attempts to clarify to the group the model that was used to develop the policy as well as the various steps involved in the process (reviving both the issues of guiding values and participation in decision-making process that were raised in the previous meeting). He begins by presenting an “only slightly facetious summary” (line 182) of the process:

Geoffrey: Okay, if I were to give the most brief and only slightly facetious summary of where we’ve gone in the last month-and-a-half on the Network Taskforce, it is that the taskforce came out with a bunch of models, one of which model five was here, \[draws an imaginary mark on the table with his left finger\] then it got handed over to me and Porter who because of our own whatever, and with a little help from [Residential] took it on a journey that went all the way around there, there, there \[moves his right finger in a circle in front of him, emphasizing points each time he says, ‘there’\] and ended up about there \[draws another mark with his right hand right next to his left hand\]. \[Laughter from the group\]. So essentially back to, extremely close to where we started.

In this summary, Geoffrey highlights the fact that he (and Porter) did their due diligence, engaging in significant discussion/negotiation with the group that was most concerned about the fairness of the policy (“journeying all the way around, there, there and there”, line 190). Even though the journey seems to have taken the discussion into new territory, however, in the end, it came back to a place that was extremely close to where it started (lines 194) (implying that the funding model had not changed significantly). Here again, Geoffrey seems to highlight his engagement in the expected discussion process as a way of both rationalizing his actions and attempting to avoid discussion of the outcome implying that he and the representative from Residential worked things out together (what might be understood as a move aimed at discursive closure through legitimation). The representative’s uncharacteristic silence at this meeting and
her crossed arms seemed to communicate something quite different to Council members, nonverbally challenging the framework of “partnership” that Geoffrey has proposed.

In response to this discrepancy, (and following the facetious path that Geoffrey has blazed), one Council member (not the member who was directly involved in the negotiations) takes off his shoe and bangs it on the boardroom table, saying, “I bang my shoe on this table”, symbolically and facetiously enacting (although not directly stating) his protest to the funding model—a model that in many Council members’ eyes continued to be “unfair”. Geoffrey’s response to this symbolic protest is particularly interesting from the point of view of how he associates (and doesn’t associate) himself with the policy-making process. He says,

205 Geoffrey: …Anyhow, what model five was about was that was the usage model where
206 we’re billing basically about head count, and we had something worked into that
207 model where [residential], which was getting billed at a fraction, I think it was about
208 half of what everyone else is, and some of you who knew the history knew where
209 that came from and that already represented an increase, not a trivial increase, of
210 where [residential] was being billed before. And in the interim we looked, Porter
211 actually came in next and looked at removing the general subsidy, for those of you
212 who knew about that, but by the time it has come full circle, I don’t think, I know
213 we’re not doing that, in fact. And there’s a detail in here but my understanding is
214 that we’re not, to get the numbers to work out to where we think they are, we’re no
215 longer billing a quarter of that general fund subsidy back to the auxiliaries but we’ll
216 need to check on that.

In the beginning of this turn, the “we” that Geoffrey uses (lines 205 and 206) is not specifically defined (see bolded text above). It could be interpreted as either himself and higher-level administrators or himself and the IT Council group. In the next instance, he first includes himself in the action of looking at “removing the general subsidy” (an action that would have been very costly for constituents) (line 210) then self-corrects, stating that it was “actually” Porter who looked at this as a possibility (210-211). He continues to distance himself from this consideration, stating, “I don’t think”, but then self-corrects saying “I know” we’re not doing that (line 212). Regarding the controversial “detail” in the policy about billing back to the
auxiliaries, he first distances himself saying “my understanding is that” (line 213), then owns his part in the action saying “we’re no longer billing” (lines 214-215). He then concludes by aligning himself with the group saying, “we’ll need to check on that” (215-216). The roaming identifications that these moves display might be understood as a reflection of the CIO’s conflicting roles (of acting in the interests of campus constituents versus answering to the VC of Budget and Planning). Knowing what this group expects of him and anticipating their response to a top-down dictate, he hesitates to identify directly with these actions. Having the representative from the Budget Office present at the meeting, however, forces him to own his part in the process. (These inconsistencies in identification, along with the Council member’s symbolic protest, prompts me to label this part of the episode as slightly more indeterminate than the earlier turns).

As Geoffrey concludes the conversation, however, this indeterminancy seems to disappear. In discussing the economic impact of the funding policy, he chooses to highlight the participatory role that the Office of Student Residences (or “residential”) played in shaping the details of the policy (line 222) in order to justify these impacts (and his support of the policy that produces them):

218  Geoffrey: …Just so you know where the numbers are, if we look four years out, the
219      auxiliaries, other than [residential], would increase over that four year period by
220      29%, the general fund would increase by 29%, there was a little bit of fool’s luck
221      in the final numbers of that return debt, [residential] would increase by a larger
222      percentage than that but **one that has been negotiated and agreed upon by**
223      [residential].

As we have seen in previous examples, here, he seems to invoke the progressivist paradigm with which he (more often than not) and IT Council members identify, (ostensibly to appeal to the values that Council members hold dear) in order to “conceal the contradictions” (Deetz, 1992: 196) inherent in his supporting such a controversial policy. Again, we might characterize these
moves generally as a form of discursive closure, and, specifically, as “legitimation” (Deetz, 1992), (a strategy he has now used four separate times during these two meetings to close various issues). The representative from WU’s Budget Office (a person who was invited to attend this second discussion) seems to employ elements of progressivist Discourse in a similar manner. He does so in response to Geoffrey’s invitation to speak, after he wraps up the discussion:

Geoffrey: …Mark or Nathan, did you want to add anything else?
Nathan: I guess the only thing I would add to that, as Geoffrey said, we’ve got this four year approach where we kind of step it up a quarter each year, and what I’ve talked to Porter about, and he’s concurred, is that there’s about a $xxx general fund subsidy that’s going to be continued over that period. As we get close to the end of that phase in, I would hope we’d bring a like group back together again to examine the appropriateness of potentially phasing out the general fund subsidy for the network, as such. So that’s something that’s been put on the shelf for now but, maybe its appropriate and it stays that way forever, but its something that should be reconsidered, not in this four year period but later on.

What he is proposing here is to ultimately “phase out the general fund subsidy”, an action that puts more of the financial burden of financing the network on the departments themselves.

Knowing that this action is likely to produce resistance if presented as a top-down mandate, he invokes the higher order devices from progressivist Discourse (proposing that he will employ a shared, decision-making process when the time comes), as a way of legitimizing this actions in their eyes, despite the conflict these actions represent. Giving Nathan the chance to have the last word on the subject, as Geoffrey has done, is also not insignificant. More specifically, it serves to underscore his (and his Office’s) authority in the matter.

Defining the Knowledge at Issue in the Interactions

In my analysis of this meeting, I have examined how participants raise problematic issues that must be collectively resolved for the group to “go on” with their meeting activity. As in the first meeting, the planned topic of the OTC’s “technology policy” is what the CIO introduces to
kick off the discussion. Unlike the first meeting, where the initiation of the first problematic situation was fairly clear, in this meeting, the first several turns taken all together seem to revive the issue of who participates in policy/decision making at the same time as they temporarily resolve it. As the discussion proceeds, various participants continue to reopen and negotiate the issue. Like the first meeting, the primary knowledge at issue—members/constituents’ shared understanding of decision-making process—is periodically intertwined with other related issues (e.g. the organization’s guiding values, in general, and the issue of fairness in particular). While the beginnings and endings of problematic situations are less distinct in this interaction than in the first interaction I examined, the knowledge at issue is the same, that is: who participates in policy and decision-making?

Identifying Patterns in Discursive Practices

Having analyzed this second set of interactions, I can (as I did earlier) also look for patterns in the particular resources that participants use to negotiate this knowledge (please see Figures 2 and 4 below). As in the first set of interactions I analyzed, the high level administrators who participated in the discussion seemed to clearly favor managerialist resources (often combining these with progressivist values in order to foreclose discussion). Categorizing the resources that IT Council members used was a little more challenging. While they seemed to maintain their preference for progressivist resources, they also followed the CIO’s lead in employing these in a facetious manner. Because they employed these resources to question the issue of top-down decision-making (albeit in a joking tone) rather than to promote it, in the end, it made sense to me to categorize them as progressivist, as the figures below (2 and 4) illustrate.

In addition to showing that each group’s initial preference for the discursive resources from particular Discourses continued, the graphs below also indicate that the incidence of
discursive closure has increased significantly. As in the first interaction I analyzed, the high level administrators were the only ones who had the authority to close problematic issues (whereas Council members were free to initiate and negotiate them). Using various mechanisms of discursive closure to do so (most frequently, the mechanism of legitimation), their actions served to maintain their existing authoritative advantage. In contrast to the previous meeting, however, in this meeting Council members no longer seem to constantly question the grounds that the CIO uses to legitimize his actions. This represents an important change in terms of the level of determinancy that characterized the interaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>April IT Council Meeting, 2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geoffrey 205</td>
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<td>Colleen 269</td>
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<td>Martin 181</td>
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<td><strong>Type of Discursive Resource Used</strong> (P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathan 235</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kyle 184</td>
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<td>Michelle 182</td>
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<td>Stevie 178</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Discursive Resource Used</strong> (P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*Faculty/Student Reps*
*System-level Administrators*
IT Professionals/Administrators

Figures 2 and 4: Comparison of Discursive Resources Employed in IT Council Meetings, April and May 2007

**Highlighting Changes in Levels of Determinancy**

In the first part of the interaction I examine, Geoffrey himself indirectly frames his actions as problematic. Instead of questioning his ironic use of these resources (as they did in the
first interaction), Council members play along with Geoffrey’s framing of the situation. When
the Council member bangs his shoe on the table, we might say that the action represents a
moderate challenge to the way in which Geoffrey, in the preceding turn, has drawn on
progressivist resources to legitimize his actions. Towards the middle of the interaction,
Geoffrey, himself, seems briefly ambivalent about the accountability of his actions. In the end,
however, there are no significant issues raised or questions about the resources he employs.
More specifically, the discussion about what constitutes the grounds for identification,
legitimacy, and accountability in each of the different sets of resources (discussion that was
relatively pronounced in the first meeting) seems to have all but disappeared in the interaction
from the second meeting. Tracking the level of determinancy over the course of these two
meetings, then, we might say that the relatively high level of indeterminancy that initially
characterized the interaction has significantly decreased in the second meeting as illustrated in
the following figure (Figure 5):

![Figure 5: Changes in Level of Indeterminancy in Spring (2007) IT Council Meetings](chart)

Having identified patterns in the structural resources that actors use as they negotiate problematic
situations and having tracked how the level of determinancy has shifted over the course of these
two similarly oriented interactions, I turn my attention now towards attempting to synthesize the shared knowledge that the group “accomplishes” through these interactions.

*Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge*

To review, the knowledge at issue in this interaction is the group’s shared understanding of policy/decision-making process. Again, the question is not which group has authority to decide—in this setting, it is assumed that both do—but rather which group has the advantage. As in the first meeting, the discursive resources that are often employed to initiate and to negotiate the group’s shared understanding of this balance of authority are those from progressivist Discourse. And as in my earlier discussion, I propose that we understand the consistent and repeating use of these resources as actions that serve to legitimize academic authority in decision making. While these resources (and actions) are important, the resources used to resolve the issue of decision-making authority are perhaps even more so.

To resolve this recurring issue, the CIO consistently draws on managerialist resources. In terms of decision-making authority, the resources from this Discourse aim to strengthen the authority of administrators, increase the authority of IT professionals, and decrease the authority of academic constituents. Although the administrator from the Budget and Planning Office speaks only one time during the meeting, he too employs these resources. (His mere presence at the meeting, a highly unusual occurrence, might even be understood as reinforcing the administrative end of the authority continuum.) If we look at the ultimate outcome of these interactions (both of the episodes from the IT Council meetings I have examined as well as the interaction outside the meeting that the CIO describes), ultimately the CIO rejects the funding model that Council members developed (a model grounded in the diverse needs and interests of faculty and students) in favor of the more purely economically-driven model developed by the
Budget and Planning office. The balance of authority that is achieved through these actions seems to be very much in line with the balance towards which managerialist Discourse aims. Looking at how and when particular resources are employed in this interaction, therefore, can suggest a great deal about what knowledge is constituted in these interactions. More specifically, through the combined resources that participants employ they reproduce not only the longstanding tension between academic and administrative authority but they also confirm the clear advantage that administrators have exercised in this particular decision-making process—an advantage that seems to relatively new, in terms of the group’s understanding (as I discussed in my analysis of the April meeting).

An additional benefit of my analysis (and of my focus on the back-and-forth exchanges between participants) is that is also demonstrates the co-constructed nature of this knowledge. Tracking changing levels of determinancy in the interactions is one way to shed light on this co-creation. Whereas in the previous interaction, Council members problematized the resources that the CIO used for closure (resisting his attempts to foreclose discussion), in this interaction, they are less reactive towards the CIO’s use of progressivist resources to legitimize his actions (as evidence by the decrease in indeterminancy in this episode); indeed, at one point in the interaction they seem to play along with the frames he introduces. These moves not only indicate the presence of a shared understanding about organizational decision-making but also acquiescence on the part of IT Council members to the reduction of their authority in this process.

Conclusion

As I discuss in my literature review, researchers studying structuration process often focus their analytical attention on either the patterns in discursive resources that actors employ
(adopting a muscular view of discourse) or on the highly contextualized back-and-forth exchanges involved in local interactions. As I have examined the interaction data from the IT Council meetings that took place during the spring and summer of 2007, I have used the methodological framework that I developed in earlier chapters, a framework that requires me to move back and forth between the two levels of discourse. Although is it still quite early in my analysis, it seems that this methodology has helped me to begin to highlight the ways in which the dialectic of control that I have proposed to study (and the closely related dialectic of structure) influences the way in which knowledge is constructed. In my next chapter, I continue to examine this dialectic as I employ the same framework (and the same analytical moves) to analyze the second period of my dataset.
Chapter Seven: Analysis of Knowledge Episodes from the Second Period of My Dataset

In my last chapter, I employed a structurational framework of analysis for examining the co-construction of knowledge that seemed to be taking place in the meetings I recorded during the first period of my data collection (The End of an Era). My interest in teasing apart this knowledge construction process was to expose the ways in which it contributed to the dialectic of control that Giddens describes. Based on the analysis I conducted in Chapter 6, I tentatively proposed that the model I have developed seemed up to the challenge of these research tasks. More specifically, it enabled me as a researcher to examine both the top-down structuring happening in interaction (as members/constituents repeatedly employed the discursive resources from particular Discourses) as well as the bottom up structuring (that happened through social interaction). I continue to put this model to the test in this chapter, analyzing the data that comes from the second part of my data set: The Transition Years.

Analyzing Interactions from the OTC’s Community Gathering Meeting, August 2007

As I described earlier, the conversations (from the spring of 2007) that I analyzed in the previous chapter come at the end of the original CIO’s tenure. After he left, the organization entered an extended period of organizational transition (from August of 2007 to Nov 2009). Before moving on to analyze particular conversations from this time period (using the same framework I have heretofore employed), it is useful to describe the “new” organization that transitional leaders proposed to members and constituents. These leaders presented their vision to members from various levels of the Central IT “community” (as well as a diverse group of administrative assistants and technology professionals who acted as “liaisons” between individual academic and administrative offices and Central IT) during a half-day Community Gathering meeting that occurred just before the 2007 fall semester. During this meeting,
presentations were made by the university’s Chancellor, the interim CIO, the executive director of Central IT, and all of his “direct reports”. In addition to these presentations, there was a brief question-and-answer session towards the end of this meeting that involved more interactive exchange. All of this conversation provided valuable background/context information about the organizational transition taking place at this time. Additionally, while some of the participants in this meeting were the same as in the IT Council meeting, this interaction also involved other constituencies, helping to fill out the process of organizational constitution that I am attempting to examine. Treating the event as one extended meeting (with some parts being more interactive than others), I begin by examining the resources that various leaders employed in their introductory presentations.

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources (The Opening Presentations)

To kick off the half-day meeting, the executive director of Central IT (recently promoted to the position of CTO), briefly presented the new OTC organizational chart to his audience, saying:

Mark:...So essentially, what I have up here is really the current organization. The chancellor asked Porter to play his role as the interim CIO in addition to his day job, which is the Senior Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance, so Porter is playing both of those roles. And I will be reporting to him as the Chief Technology Officer with really a perspective of having a broader campus role as opposed to my previous role. What you have in this, sort of, middle layer here is, it’s important to note the names that are on there because this is really the IT leadership for the campus in the various areas. These are the people that you should be looking for looking to for direction and vision on these things.

In terms of the analytical framework I have been employing, we might understand this as a planned topic (even though there is no direct interaction involved). I labeled it as “an overview of the current organization”. Comparing the “new” organization that the chancellor described with the original OTC organization, there were several important differences. To begin with, the
number of IT directors who had input into high-level IT discussions had increased significantly (from one to five)—those who were listed in the “middle area” (lines 72-74). In addition, their role in the organization had changed. They went from being “overseen” by the OTC to being “the people that you should be looking for looking to for direction and vision on these things” (lines 74-75). Another notable change was that the CTO (temporarily at the top of the OTC chart) now reports to the VC of Budget and Finance (who also assumed the responsibility of interim CIO) instead of the VC of Academic Affairs (lines 69-70). Given the very different priorities of these two offices, this, too, represented a significant change for the organization.

Immediately following this brief overview of “the current organization”, the university’s Chancellor, (in a 25-minute presentation), described the wider, institutional context in which these proposed OTC changes were taking place. Different from the previous era, where the OTC operated relatively independent from the larger institution, in this transition era, there was a great deal of discussion about the “integral” relationship between the two levels of organization. Because of the importance of this idea to the organizational conversations during this time frame, I provide readers with a brief overview of the institutional plan that was just emerging at WU when the OTC’s transition occurred.

In 2006, a freshly appointed President of WesternU charged its Chancellor with developing a new strategic plan for the University. Involving constituents from both “inside” and “outside” the university (from business and government), the Chancellor responded with a plan that was a significant departure from the University’s business-as-usual, what he called WesternU’s “Tomorrow and Beyond” initiative. In his words, it was a plan that was “unlike any since the initial formation of the university in 1878”, one that “literally reinvents the institution over the next two decades” (text quoted from the publically-available website dedicated to
describing the Tomorrow and Beyond initiative). It did so, according to its authors, by taking a two-pronged approach to planning and decision-making: focusing, in the short-term, on making sure that WU “remains competitive” and, in the long-term, on “distinguishing” itself as a “visionary” institution. In emphasizing these kinds of interests (as opposed to the goals of improving critical thinking or contributing to a more just and equitable society, for example), we might understand the Tomorrow and Beyond initiative as being rooted, in a basic way, in the functionalist logic and economically-focused purpose of managerialist Discourse.

The elevated role that information technology played in the plan, and, more specifically, that information technology experts played in the activities of higher education, was also in line with managerialist Discourse. The Chancellor emphasized this shift a number of times during the presentation he made during the Community Gathering meeting. In describing the Tomorrow and Beyond planning process (what I identify as another planned topic), the Chancellor initially described the role that technology professionals would play in it as “tremendously important—as important as any group on campus”. This was a significant shift in status from the background support role that they play in progressivist Discourse. No longer a background player, taking direction from academic experts, technology professionals had been moved to an elevated position. Again, in the words of the Chancellor (from his presentation to technology professionals in the August, 2007, Community Gathering meeting),

Your input [to the planning process] is going to be incredibly important because the technology and the development of the technology is going to shape the university of the future. It’s going to determine how we teach, how we educate, how we interact, and how we live and work and learn with each other as we go forward. So, if you haven’t yet had a chance or taken the opportunity to look at some of the information that’s there, some of the open forums that we’ll be having through the fall, I strongly encourage you to do that, I really ask you to do that because I think that you more than any other group on campus, have the opportunity to try and project out and think about what the environment’s going to be like in 25 years from now.
While the role for IT professionals that he describes here (lines 238-239) is quite different from their traditional role, the process he describes for involving them in decision-making is not. The open forums he refers to (line 237) and the larger participatory process of which these are a part have long been the norm for decision-making in this setting. The seemingly contradictory combination of resources that the Chancellor employs—“strongly encouraging” IT professionals to exercise their power in the system (line 237) (actions that would be in line with their role as viewed from a managerialist perspective) but encouraging them to do so by increasing their participation in the democratic style planning process that has been planned (a process typically associated with progressivist Discourse)—is similar to what we saw in the earlier meetings I analyzed. Again, we might understand his invocation of progressivist-rooted process (the open forums he refers to) as a way of legitimizing his actions (based on his knowledge about what is expected in this setting). The roles and relations he described (e.g. that the input from IT professionals will now “determine how we teach, how we educate, how we interact, and how we live and work and learn with each other”), however, are grounded in managerialist Discourse, a Discourse aimed at significantly increasing the authority IT professionals have in the organization.

Given the dramatic shift in authority relations that the Chancellor described, not surprisingly, the plan stirred up a variety of reactions from constituents across campus (even though the language and logic that I observed high-level administrators using with faculty audiences to describe the proposed plan was much more subtle). The brief question and answer session that occurred at the end of the Community Gathering meeting I recorded in 2007 provided a small window onto the responses of various constituents to these changes. I examine the transcript from this session, focusing on the discursive resources that OTC members and
constituents employed as they negotiated the problematic situations that arose during these interactions.

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources (The Question-and-Answer Session)

During this session, a group of five IT directors (including the executive director) fielded questions from the diverse array of campus constituents attending the meeting. As I mentioned earlier, these constituents included members from various levels of the Central IT “community” as well as a diverse group of administrative assistants and technology professionals who acted as “liaisons” between individual academic and administrative offices and Central IT. In terms of the first group (staff members who work for Central IT), a large number of these were recent graduates from WesternU who were well-versed in the progressivist discourse of HE (as opposed to employees who had been “transplanted” from the private sector). To cope with the campus’ ever-increasing support needs, Central IT also drew from the academic departments themselves, appointing a “go-to” technology person who was to act as a liaison between faculty members and the Central IT organization (often the administrative support person in the department who was most familiar with technology). Through my meeting observations and my individual interviews with these employees, it was clear that their allegiances—regardless of their technical prowess—were with the faculty members and students that they serve and to the organizational purpose underlying their academic work (the nurturing of critical-thinking individuals and the uninhibited, exploration of new knowledge). Hence, while there are no faculty members participating in the Community Gathering meeting, the department “liaisons” often spoke as representatives of academic interests.

Most of the questions that were posed during the question and answer session were posed by this group of constituents. Many had questions about new IT policies that they understood to
be “coming down” from administration. Concerned about how people in their departments might react to such policies, several posed questions about what their new roles might be in enforcing these policies. In the current authority structure, after all, they were, as one audience member described it, “the bottom rung on [department-level] totem pole”. Referring to the upcoming “mandatory” security policy that Central IT was planning to introduce in the fall, one liaison initiated the following discussion:

Ira: I’m Ira, from the [English] department. I have a question about policies. The campus in the last few months has put out quite a lot of policies, and they’re all over on Central IT’s website, not only to be read by users but to be signed and then to become part of their personnel file. But to be honest, in our department at least, I don’t know of anybody who has read or signed those. And I can’t imagine how these are going to enforced, at the bottom level, to the people who really have to sign?

Mark (Exec Director of IT): Are you talking specifically about security policy?

Ira: Yeah, there are tons of policies out there, especially new computer policies: how to use the web, how do you handle passwords, lots of stuff, and many of those are designed so they have to be signed by the employee, and then should become part of the personnel file, that’s what it says at least.

I label the emergent issue the speaker raises in this passage as “Who enforces technology policies”? This issue is inevitably tied to a broader category of problem, namely, “What are the authority relations among members/constituents”? As in the previous chapter, I begin my analysis of these issues (and the knowledge accomplishing episodes to which they relate) by examining the various structural resources upon which members draw in their attempts to shape the outcome of these episodes. The conversation participant who initiates the discussion, for example, identifies himself as a member of an academic department (as opposed to an IT liaison) (line 32). He then invokes the autonomous nature of this department, speculating that no one in his department has even “read” much less “signed” the new policies that Central IT has put out (lines 35-36). Continuing to use a progressivist framework to frame his question, he raises the conflict these new policies raise in terms of the existing authority structure. More specifically he
points out that he (as administrative assistant at the bottom of the departmental totem pole) doesn’t have the authority to tell “those who have to sign” (in other words, faculty members) what to do (lines 37-38). Because of the way in which he challenges the Chancellor’s earlier description of their accountability, I characterize this part of the interaction as moderately indeterminate.

The interaction continues in this way:

Mark: So I’ll try and kick this off and then I’ll pass it to Karl. There are some collectively new system policies, and in there it actually states in there that it’s the responsibility of what they call the organizational unit, or OU, has responsibility for those IT professionals and those providing IT services, that in their position description it needs to actually explicitly say what some of their responsibilities are. So what it does is, it integrates it into our current HR fabric if you will, so that people specifically know they have responsibilities for security and so on and so forth.

Ira: Okay but how are you going to plan to educate people [e.g. faculty] about these, other than from the bottom up? Or are you ever going to have a director’s seminar or something that comes from the top down?

Mark: Talking about top down, the chancellor was just here and one of the things he and I were just talking about was the initial communication around the security initiative which will be coming from the chancellor, and it will be going to the deans and directors basically telling them now that this is their responsibility. From there obviously there’s a lot of steps we need to do. As far as that process Karl can probably explain that better than I can.

Karl: So, just to follow up on that, we will need to have more of an educational campaign around that, that will incorporate the messages from the chancellor as well as (      ) all type of meetings. The other thing that’s important to realize, is that, particularly for that first group, the high risk areas where we have social security numbers and credit cards, that information is actually coming from my office from me to the department chairs, so I’m not relying on you all to, you know, get this letter and say ‘I need you to sign this,’ that will obviously come from me to that individual saying ‘here’s how things have changed and here’s what you need to do.’ (15:19)

Looking at Mark’s (the CTO’s) response to this issue, rather than addressing the potentially controversial change in the relationship between IT professionals and faculty that the speaker has identified, he chooses to describe the policies themselves. In his description, he carefully avoids identifying an author for the new top-down policies, describing them as
something that just “are” (“there are...new policies”, lines 44-45). Mostly, the policy speaks for itself (e.g. “it states”, line 45 and “it integrates”, line 49). In the one moment that Mark does associate authors with the policy, they are identified simply as “they” (line 46), a qualifier that suggests that Mark, himself, was not involved in as an author. Combined, these moves construct the policy as “a given” rather than a socially constructed object, thereby reducing the opportunity for discussion (what Deetz, 1992:191, refers to as “naturalization”).

Something else that is noteworthy is that in this relatively short turn, the speaker refers to the idea of responsibility four different times (two times in line 46, and once in line 48 and 50). Despite the frequency of his references, however is very unclear who (or what) is responsible for who (and what). When challenged by Ira to clarify the responsibility of enforcing these new policies, (what he frames as “educating” faculty about the policies, line 52), instead of directly addressing the potentially controversial authority relations between IT directors and faculty members, he invokes the authority relations between the “Chancellor” and the “Deans and Directors”. Highlighting these authoritative figures as participants in the process serves to legitimize the policy (drawing on a managerialist conception of legitimate authority) and, in so doing, reduces the need to discuss potential conflicts.

While at first glance, the security director (Karl) seems to tackle the issue more directly, implying that he (an IT professional) will be telling faculty members “how things have changed” and “what they need to do” (line 63). Close analysis of this turn, however, reveals that he, too, hesitates to openly declare this change in authority. He establishes some “wiggle room” for himself, largely through the ambiguous references he uses to describe the various constituents involved. In referring to the faculty members involved in the issue, he calls them “that first group” (line 64). As he describes who he’ll be telling “how things have changed and what they
need to do‖, he says, “that will come from me to that individual” (line 67). This lack of clarity suggests a change in authority relations without directly stating it, (what we might understand, in terms of Deetz’s, 1992, categories as meaning denial or plausible deniability).

Although both speakers seem to have worked to quiet the conflict in authority relations that Ira’s comments have illuminated, their turns are met with strong resistance from another audience member nonetheless. In response to Karl’s turn she asserts that “Central IT is just kind of representative of the administrations’ filtering down of things”, eventually charging that the organizational changes that various leaders propose have described during the meeting as “trying to move all this stuff to a rather dangerous business model instead on an educational one.” In terms of the issues being discussed, the speaker addresses the issue of authority relations that was raised earlier; she also raises another, closely related issue, that of “who participates in planning and decision-making”, as this excerpt demonstrates:

Eddie:…I’ve been here for ten years, I’ve seen an awful lot of reorgs and every time you guys reorganize, everything you add these organizational layers of upper management that are more and more difficult to filter through where these information and directives are coming from, and words like clarity and transparency are used a lot while ever obscuring any clarity or transparency. And I am terrified, having come from the private sector, that we’re trying to move all this stuff to a rather dangerous business model instead of an educational one. And I know that we here are all talking about a lot of technical and sort of a business-oriented processes, but I’m really concerned that a lot of things are going to be sacrificed, a lot of sort of ideas that come from the bottom up from the end-user, the end-user that we’re supposed to be seeking out to be serving and um and I just kind of want to know what is, where is this re-org going to leave us?...

In this turn, the speaker contrasts the “business model” of organization with “an educational one” (line 78). She associates the business model of organizing with unnecessary “layers of upper management” (lines 74-75), with “obscuring clarity and transparency” (line 77), and “bottom-up ideas” being “sacrificed” (lines 81-82). Linking the actions surrounding the “reorg” with these kinds of characteristics, and invoking the group’s shared responsibility of “serving” the end-user
(in other words, faculty) (line 83), she boldly challenges the various transitional leaders who have presented their new vision of the OTC to respond to her concerns (more specifically, she throws into question the “expected” behaviors, or accountability, that they have described). At the end of her turn, she softens this challenge somewhat with a series of less direct questions and less focused ideas (lines 84-94 in full transcript).

In response to her charge that “words like clarity and transparency are used a lot while ever obscuring any clarity or transparency”, Mark, (the executive director), attempts to clarify what he means when he uses these terms, linking his definition of clarity with the idea of “services” (lines 96-97 below):

Mark: … I think organizations and how you organize really should be developed around the services you provide, so we talk about clarity, we talk about providing input and being involved, it’s really around the services. I don’t view that as being around what is the organizational structure. The organizational structure should be agnostic to the services you provide, and at times we need to create organizations around the people we have, the skill sets we have and so forth…

From here he rambles on a bit about how the both the people involved in the organization “evolve” as well as the “service needs” themselves, emphasizing that the moving-target nature of the “organization” (lines 101-106 in full transcript). He then returns to the idea of “clarity around services” (see below, line 106), framing the concerns that the directors have heard in the question and answer session as stemming from a lack of clarity:

Mark:…So, it’s really about clarity around the services. You know, the question about some of these policies, and so on, and so forth, those are the kinds things that it’s good for us to hear is to know where there’s not clarity around things, where there is not clarity on the type of services we have, what kind of funding model it has, what does it mean to the auxiliary. That’s where the clarity needs to be…

In the last part of this turn, Mark jumps around from idea to idea (lines 110-126 full transcript), (talking about the availability, or lack thereof, of director’s phone numbers, about the “organization” not an individual “person” providing services, about units who have piloted
services, and more), returning, eventually, to the idea of clarity (please see full transcript for details). Similar to one of his previous turns, in the midst of these ambiguous references (what might be understood as moves to close the discussion through plausible deniability), he also keeps returning to the idea of clarity, an idea that the previous speaker raised. Because this is a fairly central value of progressivist Discourse, we might understand his repeated invocation of it as an attempt to legitimize, and therefore remove from scrutiny, the relational changes that the previous speaker so strongly condemned.

Following Mark’s turn, Karl (the director of security) also takes a turn at providing closure to the issue:

Karl: I also want to say that I take your words as a caution and warning about making sure that that we don’t move back, that we really do move forward. That we take this as an opportunity, to, as I talked about with clarity purpose clarity and roles, making sure that those roles and those purposes understand that we’re, we’re working less in a vacuum rather than more in a vacuum. I do believe that as I say as I’ve talked to chairs some have said that that’s the first time they’ve had somebody come talk to them and and my intent is to increase that and I know [Mark’s] intent at the CTO level is to increase that, so, I think that there’s as good a chance as not that this will actually start to address some of what you talked about even more rather than less.

He begins by addressing the speaker, acknowledging the challenge she has raised (line 127). He reframes the issue, however, in terms of “moving forward” versus “moving back” (line 128) (in contrast to the speaker’s educational/business model frame). Invoking the progressivist values of broadly informed decision-making, he loosely links the idea of clarity (what he reframes as the tripartite idea of “clarity, purpose, and roles”) with his attempts to “work less in a vacuum” (line 131), citing his recent discussions with chairs as evidence that he is working towards that goal (and thereby identifying with this Discourse), moves that seem to aimed at legitimizing his actions (as well as potentially pacifying Eddie’s concerns). In his last comment, however, he leaves the door open to pursue things in a different way, in the future, saying, “there’s as good a
chance as not” that the speaker’s concerns will be addressed (lines 134-136). While he has invoked the values of participatory decision-making in closing the issue, in the end, he promises nothing. Indeed, his statement suggests there’s a strong chance that he will not address the concerns the speaker has raised and will continue to make decisions grounded in managerialist ideals (a fairly antagonistic claim that he has worked hard to soften through the combined discursive mechanisms of legitimation and plausible deniability).

**Defining the Knowledge at Issue in the Interactions**

In contrast with the previous meetings I analyzed, a considerable portion of this meeting was presentational rather than interactive. Drawing from the presentations of two prominent transitional leaders (the CTO and the Chancellor), I identified two key topics that were presented: 1) an overview of the current organization, and 2) a summary of the Tomorrow and Beyond planning process. The knowledge accomplishing episodes I analyzed from the question-and-answer session were essentially moments where audience members had a chance to engage in discussion with transitional leaders about the changes they had proposed, in other words, to negotiate the group’s shared understanding of the “new” organization. The problematic issues that emerged in the discussion were similar to the meetings I analyzed in the previous chapter. As with these earlier interactions, the issues of authority relations and decision-making were both prominent and often very much intertwined. The related issue of who enforces technology policies was also raised in this meeting and also closely connected to the other knowledge at issue. Whereas members’/constituents’ understanding of decision-making process was clearly the focus in the interactions I analyzed from the first period in my dataset (in previous chapter), in this meeting, conversation participants seem to be primarily focused on resolving how the
group understood the closely related concept of the authority relations among members and constituents.

**Identifying Patterns in Discursive Practices**

As they engaged in negotiating this knowledge, audience members largely drew on resources from progressivist Discourse. In contrast, organizational leaders largely favored the discursive resources of managerialist Discourse in these interactions as the following figure illustrates (Figure 6):

![Figure 6](image-url)

The Figure above also shows that transitional leaders (both the high level administrator and the IT director) often employed discursive strategies that suppressed (rather than resolved) conflict in order to close the problematic issues raised. For example, Mark’s attempts to naturalize the problematic new policies that had been introduced might be understood in this way. Leaders also seemed to employ ambiguity to foreclose discussion. The issue of who enforces technology policies, for instance (and the closely related issue of how authority relations may be changing), ended ambiguously, suggesting but not clearly declaring that IT directors now had the authority to enforce mandatory policies with faculty members. The parallel issue of who participates in
decision and policy making was also tenuously resolved through vague hints (but no direct discussion) about possible changes in decision-making process. And both leaders drew on progressivist resources as they attempted to legitimize, and therefore prevent further discussion about their actions (e.g. when Karl, as he suggests that he will make decisions independent of constituent feedback, highlights his interactions with campus constituents as actions that were in line with a commitment to the participatory process).

**Highlighting Changes in Levels of Determinancy**

In reviewing my full analysis, I categorized five of the eight problematic situations that emerged in the question and answer session as indeterminate (versus determinate); three of these appeared to be moderately indeterminate and two greatly indeterminate. In the episodes I analyzed in the previous section, there was one of each. In both cases, each episode was “resolved” through discursive closure.

![Figure 7: Changes in Levels of Indeterminancy in August 2007 Community Gathering Meeting](image)

**Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge**

At the beginning of the Community Gathering Meeting, transitional leaders propose a new vision of the authority relations among OTC members and constituents. In the new structure that leaders propose, IT directors have vision-setting as well as decision-making
authority. In contrast to the previous role they played in the organization (taking direction from their constituents), they provide direction in the “new” OTC (e.g. developing and enforcing “mandatory” IT policies). The status of lower level IT professionals is also improved, going from simply serving faculty needs to shaping the academic environment of the future. Not surprisingly, the changes that transitional leaders propose are met with fairly strong resistance from those who represent faculty and students (the groups that stand to lose the most in the newly proposed structures), as evidenced by the questions posed during the question and answer session. Several lower level IT professionals also express concerns about changing the current system, unsure how they would navigate the entrenched relations. So what is the shared knowledge that is “accomplished” through these interactions?

Synthesizing the summaries I have outlined above begins to shed light on this question. My analysis shows that different constituents strongly prefer the discursive resources from different Discourses. Whereas audience members (acting as representatives of academic constituents) prefer the resources from progressivist Discourse, transitional leaders (including IT directors) prefer those from managerialist Discourse. These consistent, repeating discourse practices serve to reify the knowledge that organizational authority in the OTC (and the related decision-making practices) involves a tension between academic and administrative authority. At the same time, by using their existing authority to close the knowledge episodes that arise, (using the resources from managerialist Discourse to do so), transitional leaders appear to maintain (and in the case of IT directors, increase\(^7\)) their slight authority advantage—an arrangement that all participants seem to understand (as evidenced by their ability to “go on” in

\(^7\) An important difference in this interaction, as compared with those from the first period of my data set, is the leadership status accorded to IT professionals/administrators in this discussion. They establish this authority, in part, through the numerous occasions in which they bring closure to the various issues that arise (frequently by using discursive closure to foreclose further discussion).
the interaction), even if not everyone seems to support (as evidenced by the moderate to high levels of indeterminancy). Ultimately, then, my analysis of these interactions indicates that the group co-constructed a slightly revised set of knowledge about the tenuous balance between academic (local) and administrative (central) authority than previously characterized the organization, similar to what we saw in the April and May IT Council meetings. In this meeting, however, not only did participants seem to understand that the authority of high level administrators had slightly increased, but also that the authority of the organization’s IT directors had also been elevated.

To further explore these evolving relations, I turn my attention now to examining the transcripts from the subsequent Community Gathering Meeting that occurred the following year. To do so, I temporarily skip over several IT Council meetings that occurred at the end of 2007. I will return to these at the end of this chapter.

Analyzing Interactions from The Community Gathering Meeting, April 2008

The Community Gathering meeting from that occurred during the spring of 2008 involved the same participants as the meeting I just analyzed and was similarly structured, in terms of presentation format. As with the previous meeting, the group continued to address (in a broad sense) the “problem” of organizational transition. This time, however, rather than being primarily future-looking the talk that occurred had a mixed focus, as the title of the meeting demonstrates, “A Time to Reflect and a Time to Look Forward”. In honor of the CTO’s upcoming retirement (after 30 years at the university), the first few presentations were about his role in the OTC’s early history. The other presentations during the morning echoed many of the ideas that are raised in the 2007 meeting, for example, “the importance of risk-management of the campus’ data assets” and the related “imperative” of centralized security; the message that
“change is coming” in terms of certain technologies (e.g. email and calendaring); the discussion of “scalability” of commonly used technologies, and the goal of “streamlining services to increase efficiency” (most of which might be linked to the increased influence of managerialist Discourse). And as with the previous meeting, many presentations involved the related questions of organizational authority and decision-making process.

Whereas the question and answer session in the 2007 Community Gathering meeting was one place that I heard constituents’ uncensored reactions to these kinds of issues, in the 2008 meeting, the session was quite a bit more controlled. Rather than taking questions from the audience (thereby providing them with the opportunity to raise problematic issues), directors read and responded to questions that had been “submitted before the meeting” (questions they had been given the chance to review before responding). Several of the questions sounded almost as if they had been written by the directors themselves, questions like: “What is the most important characteristic that contributes to the success of an IT employee?” and “What is one piece of technology that you’re excited about for the immediate future?” Many asked about the status of particular technology projects, for instance, “Can you talk a little bit about where the Microsoft contract stands?” and “Can you tell us what the status is of the QRS project for the campus network?” There were a couple questions that involved (albeit somewhat indirectly) the issue of decision-making that I have been tracking. These were the ones I selected for closer analysis.

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources

Although it’s a stretch to treat these as emergent issues (since they were prepared before the meeting and read by one of the conference facilitators), I examine a few examples using the analytical methods I have established for the purpose of comparison. This first one was this:
Stephan: This next question I think is best for Giles. The question is Central IT considering SharePoint as a campus service?

Giles: Well so the short answer is yes, we're planning it but you saw the list of projects and the timeframe for that project is that SharePoint is an inactive project right now so I can't even make any predictions about when we might offer it as a service.

But but it is something we know there’s demand for it on campus, we know there are departments who are implementing it themselves. So it's on the roadmap but I can't even begin to tell you when we might offer it.

Treating the question as one that involves the decision-making process that Central IT uses to prioritize different technologies, I examine Giles’s response in that vein. Giles’ short answer of “yes” (line 58) and his later comment about “knowing that there’s a demand for it” (line 61) seem aimed at establishing himself as a leader who is responsive to constituent feedback (what might be understood as being in line with the consensus style decision-making that characterizes progressivist Discourse). At the same time, however, he suggests that there are figures higher up in the organizational hierarchy, with greater organizational authority, who are making decisions about which technologies become a priority and which do not (58-60). It’s unclear exactly what the criteria is that these higher administrators use to make such decisions, (in line with the non-transparency that organizational members in these high positions are afforded in managerialist Discourse) (lines 60 and 62-63); it does seem clear, however, that a great demand from academic constituents isn’t all that important. For that reason, I characterize the response as drawing primarily upon managerialist resources. Returning to the speaker’s initial invocation of responsiveness, this seems to be invoked as an attempt to legitimize the managerialist-based decision-making process that is described, a discursive closure mechanism that I have come to understand as common for this constituency of speakers to employ.

Another important difference from the previous session (that occurred in August, 2007) was that the person who facilitated the meeting left no room for comment from the audience members, jumping quickly to the next question once Directors had finished their responses. For
my analysis of the next example, I include his concluding comment as well. The exchange begins in this way:

Stephan: With the probable budget challenges ahead, what is the vision or what are the policies that will be used to shape and make decisions for the next year?
Mark: That’s a great question what’s the next question ((laughter from the audience))? So it shouldn’t be any surprise that the university is looking at potential budget constraints over the next year…

Mark takes a while to, in his words, “ramp up to what the question actually was”, talking about the different sources of revenue coming into the university and the impact these will have on the budget. The part of his response that addresses this issue of decision-making comes towards the end of his turn:

…I think we have to look anytime we have budget constraints to look very programmatically about what we can provide, what services we can provide, not to look at those and say okay we’re gonna do across the board cuts of 5% or 10% or whatever it may be. If we get to that stage, we will have to look at the services we provide and very carefully determine what we stop doing over time. There are so many things that we do that are critical, the network, telephone systems, email, those kind of things cannot see a cut because they are imperative to the mission of the campus, we would have to look at other areas. We haven’t been asked to do that because at this point in time the prediction is that we expect the revenues to at least be flat and we also expect to see a strong incoming class for the fall. So right now, we’re a little bit in hold mode but if we are asked to do that, we’ll be taking a very programmatic approach to it.

Stephan: Alright, the next question is from an architectural point of view. It asks, can you tell us what the status of the QRS project for the campus network?

Throughout the turn, Mark uses the pronoun of “we”, as he addresses the issue of decision-making. Although he never comes out and says it directly, the “we” he seems to be referring to in the majority of cases seems to be “we”, the IT directors and high level administrators. My interpretation is based on the fact that this we is able to “make budget cuts” (line 22); it is the we to whom administrators in the larger institution speak (or “ask to do things”, lines 27 and 30). Based on this interpretation, Mark seems to draw on the same source of decision-making
authority as Giles does in the earlier example: that of organizational position rather than consensus.

Identifying Patterns in Discursive Practices

In both of the cases I analyze above, the discursive resources used for the question itself did not seem to have clear links to any particular discourse. It did seem, however, that the both the IT director and high level administrator continued to draw upon managerialist Discourse in their responses, as they had done in previous meetings. The similarities and differences between these patterns in practice and previous patterns are represented in the graphs below (Figures 6 and 8). Since it was unclear who posed the questions (since the questions were represented as inquiries that were made by members from the audience at an earlier time), I don’t attribute them to any particular constituency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>Community Gathering Meeting, August 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karl 127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie 73</td>
<td>Karl 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ira 52</td>
<td>Mark 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ira 32</td>
<td>Mark 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ira 32</td>
<td>Mark 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Discursive Resource Used</td>
<td>(P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>Community Gathering Meeting, April 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stephan 32</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mark 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giles 58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stephan 56</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Discursive Resource Used</td>
<td>(P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Faculty/Student Reps
System-level Administrators
IT Professionals/Administrators

Figures 6 and 8: Comparison of Discursive Resources Employed in IT Council Meetings, April and May 2007

Because of the lack of back-and-forth conversation, the incidence of discursive closure is a little more difficult to track. It does seem that Giles attempts such a move in his turn and we might
also read the quickness of the facilitator to jump in with new questions as a way of limiting discussions and questions. In addition, the very nature of the session (pre-written questions and prepared answers) serves to close down a lot of potential disagreement.

**Highlighting Changes in Levels of Determinancy**

Again, it is a bit of a stretch to treat these exchanges as emergent issues since the problems (or questions) don’t really emerge in interaction. For comparison purposes, however, it is useful to try and map them in a similar way as the others. With few opportunities for discussion in the interaction, there are also few opportunities to problematise the resources that managers employ. In terms of the level of determinancy in these episodes, then, we might say that in comparison with the interactions I analyzed from the previous Community Gathering meeting, the level of indeterminancy has dropped off sharply, as is represented by the following figures:

![Figure 9: Changes in Levels of Indeterminancy in Community Gathering Meetings (August 2007 & April 2008)](image)

**Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge**

Because of the prevalence of the issue of decision-making in the interactions I analyze, I selected questions from this question-and-answer session that related to this issue. Analyzing the
speaker’s turns, they clearly associate decision-making authority with organizational status (in other words, the higher the position one holds in the organization, the greater the decision-making authority one has, and vice-versa). But what about the audience participants? What understanding of decision-making did they construct as they observed this interaction? Without any dialogue, it is difficult to say for sure what they understood. The uncharacteristic lack of exchange in this session (the fact that audience participants weren’t interjecting with additional questions or asking the speakers for points of clarification), strongly suggests, however, that they tacitly understood that the authority relations that characterized the OTC of earlier days had shifted fairly significantly.

Not wanting to make assumptions based on one meeting alone, I sought to shore up these interpretations by attending additional meetings with similar constituents. A colleague had informed me that Central IT’s “Coffee and Conversation” meetings (a smaller meeting that involved most of the same participants with the exception of the department-level liaisons) might be a good place to observe more interactive discussion among these constituents. During the first such meeting I observed and recorded (also during the spring of 2008), the executive director presented about the “Enterprise versus Business” model that he had recently developed (a model he had briefly referenced in the earlier Community Gathering meeting), describing it as a “new set of pictures to communicate what we do across campus” and a “conversation that’s really driving understanding”. It is important to note that in the new “conversation” that he described each of the academic departments at WU is referred to as a “business”, clearly drawing on managerialist (versus progressivist) Discourse. The director also describes this model of understanding as having become “extremely important as we set our priorities…not only our own priorities but helping other people get around our priorities, to help them get along side with
us.” The authority relations (in terms of decision-making process) that he describes here—where managers set priorities and other people (e.g. faculty and students) follow along—are in line with the changes in understanding that I documented through my analysis of earlier exchanges.

In contrast to the lively debates that characterized the early IT Council meetings and the first Community Gathering meeting I observed, there was very little involvement from the audience both during and after the director’s presentation in the Coffee and Conversation meeting. This surprised me as I had been told by another director that these meetings were one of the more “interactive forums” associated with the campus’ IT conversation (as the title of the meeting also suggests). During this moment in the organization’s development, however, nothing could have been further from what I observed. The other two meetings I observed that spring were similarly non-dialogic. While there may have been conversations between OTC members and constituents where more back and forth dialogue was occurring, despite my best efforts, I could not locate any during this time period. These additional observations seemed to confirm my earlier interpretation, namely that lower level employees understood that managers, based on their status in the organization, could participate in decision-making but they could not (indeed, they seemed to understand that even their authority to participate in regular meeting discussion had greatly decreased)—a fairly dramatic change in behavioral norms.

Analyzing Interactions from the OTC’s IT Council Meeting, November 2007

In the following section, I return to the earlier IT Council meetings I skipped over earlier in my analysis, continuing to employ the analytical methods that were informed by the methodological model I developed in my review. For this analysis, I examine the transcripts from two, hour-and-a-half long IT Council meetings: one from November 2007, that is co-facilitated by the interim CIO and the CTO and a second from December, facilitated by the CTO.
In contrast to the earlier IT Council meetings that I analyze, (where there were numerous items on the discussion agenda), there is no formal agenda for these meetings. Instead, the interim CIO, the facilitator for the meeting, introduces the agenda in his first turn:

Porter: Let’s go ahead and get going. I think we’re going to be pretty light today. I’m actually going to have to leave in about 45 minutes so we’ll see if we can get our work done in that time if not, Mark can continue the conversation. In September, when we last spoke, we talked about where this group was going, what its future was, what its role was, how it can help the institution and I still think that those questions will continue to be out there although hopefully not forever [laughs]. We won’t be wandering forever, we’ll have some direction at some point but in the meantime, and maybe to help us define that, Mark and I have spoke about how we can get in synch with the planning process that’s going on institution wide, that’s the [Tomorrow and Beyond] effort.

In this introduction, the interim CIO raises the issue of organizational purpose by talking about such things as “where this group is going, what its future is, what its role is” (lines 36-37). At the same time, he proposes a solution to this problem, namely that in absence of a clear organizational “direction”, the organizational plan that the larger institution has been developing might be used for guidance (lines 40-41).

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources

In advocating for this solution, Porter draws on a variety of discursive resources. He begins by describing “Phase 1 of the [Tomorrow and Beyond] planning process”, emphasizing the diversity of constituents who participated in the discussions. He also describes the next phase, a phase that will “involve folks from every corner of this campus” in focus groups, committee discussions, and proposal writing—proposals that will be open to public comment by WU’s faculty body and, eventually, need to be approved by its Board of Regents (please see appendix for transcript details). In emphasizing these aspects of the planning process he invokes the values of progressivist Discourse (values that underlie the institutionalized process for decision-making at WU).
While the process he describes is rooted in the longstanding traditions of this setting, the “two ideas that have guided the plan” seem to be novel. Focused on the goal of economic prosperity, he describes the fundamental questions that shape the plan in this way:

The first is **what we know we need to do in order to stay competitive**, the stuff we need or where we’re falling behind, and then, **what will help distinguish us**, what will help us stand out, those became known as these [10 big ideas], that’s what got the attention, much of the focus was built around those. More recently, though, the reality is that the majority of what we spend will be on that first part.

The emphasis on channeling what we spend towards “staying competitive” (line 57) seems to be more closely related to managerialist rather than progressivist values. His conception of the role that technology might play in these changes also draws on managerialist Discourse. Connecting the institutional planning effort he describes to Council members with the OTC’s organizational agenda, he frames technology as the “key” to achieving these initiatives and IT Council members as “an important group of experts who are uniquely positioned to help these things come true” (please see appendix for details from full transcript). Circling back to the agenda for this meeting, he proposes that Council members review and approve the related “matrix” that Mark (the OTC’s CTO) and Stevie (the OTC’s director of Planning and Policy) have developed, what Mark describes as “a conceptual tool” and a “map” that will be used to describe the relationship between IT and the Tomorrow and Beyond plan to “the campus”.

Porter’s proposal to treat IT Council members as “expert” reviewers for the CTO’s matrix represents a considerable departure from the role that Council members were originally commissioned to play. More specifically, IT Council members were gathered to represent the interests of faculty members (and other constituents) in the OTC’s formulation of the campus’ IT plans and policies, to ensure that their priorities informed such plans (as opposed to reviewing and helping to realize technology-centric plans crafted by IT directors in collaboration with high-
level administrators). In the interactions that follow Porter’s proposal, several Council members take issue with this discrepancy. The episode I have selected to analyze is initiated by Colleen.

As she initiates the problematic situation, Colleen invokes progressivist ideology, pointing out the non-representative nature of the IT Council group (in terms of the kind of campus constituents who are represented). Questioning whether or not they have the authority to create and/or comment on such an important tool, she specifically points out the lack of academic representation:

Colleen: One piece that’s jumping out for me is do we have the right representatives at the table to look at this and I’m I thought that was one of the things we were supposed to be talking about was the membership of IT Council, and as we look at these initiatives, do we have the right folks at the table to do that? The one that, for example, the global crossroads one and the internationalization of the campus, you know do we have anybody at the table who really brings expertise to that discussion or at least perspective from that those initiatives to help us look at the IT commitments as well,

Porter: Okay/

Colleen: I don’t want to add a 5th matrix but I think that should be a discussion/

Porter: Sure ya/

Colleen: Before we get into the discussion.

Acknowledging the importance of her concern, Porter responds in this way:

Porter: Okay, sure. Well that wasn’t just a little comment that’s a big (laughs), a big issue so let’s take five minutes or ten minutes or however long you want to talk about that. We did talk about that last time and I said it again at the beginning but kind of went by it. I do think we’re still trying to figure out what this committee is, who’s around the table, what it is we’re trying to accomplish. I was trying to take advantage of the fact that this group has been together for a while and some conversations have been happening here, some information has been shared and there should be some expertise around this table to be able to be able to help inform this process. But sure, we can ask that question. I’ll put it to rest of the group, we’re a little bit light, today, not everybody is here that should be here, but is this the right group to do something like this? I mean put yourself out of business if you want, (laughter from one group member), or not. Step up and say we’re the right ones no we’re not. What do you think?

In his response, Porter frames the issue that Colleen has raised as “a big, big issue” (line 165) and supports (at least on the surface) the idea of discussing it more directly, indicating that he
“kind of went by it” at the beginning of the discussion (lines 178-179). In this way he acknowledges the weight that this group (and other groups on campus) give to the idea of participatory process, demonstrating his knowledge of expected relations/behavior and, in so doing, attempting to legitimize his authority. At the same time he indirectly challenges group members to either identify as either representatives of other experts or as experts themselves, implying that he understands them as the latter (“there should be some expertise around this table”, lines 182-83).

In spite of Porter’s turn, group members seem to continue to embrace their identification as representatives of campus constituents, identifying what groups are and are not represented, naming key academic groups on campus that ought have some input into the conversation (e.g. Engineering, Business, Law, student representatives, etc.) (lines 196-218 in full transcript). Council members then brainstorm ways in which they might address the absence of these voices, drawing on the established feedback mechanisms of the existing organization, for example, preparing “survey questions” for faculty and student constituents to respond to, conducting “focus groups” (lines 225-227, and 236-243 in full transcript), and “presenting a set of draft ideas at the Arts and Sciences Chairs and Directors meeting” (line 249 in full transcript)—what one Council member refers to as the “lions and arenas” suggestion (line 250 in full transcript). After listening to the group’s discussion which starts to invoke more and more complex (in terms of participants) and costly (in terms of time) solutions, Porter interjects. In his turn, he describes the “extremes” to which the process might go, if they were to faithfully represent all of the interests on campus:

258 Porter: Well, I think this goes all the way back to the question that started this part of the conversation is you know if, I’m mean that’s the whole goal is to find out what the faculty want to support to find out what the students are willing to support, I mean that’s what, we, here as IT representatives are here to try and enable, them to be
able to do what they’re here to do, and if they’re not willing to support the things
that we come up with here?/

Michelle: We’re off base/

Porter: It’s not going anywhere (laughs) I’ll tell you right now, I mean, you know, you ask
are the right people at the table, when push comes to shove, what you want around this
table are probably the whole council of deans? you know/

Michelle: Yeah, that’s 50 people/

Porter: Maybe the staff council representatives? The student representatives? You know,
it’s the chancellors executive committee, that’s what you want, cause ultimately
they’re going to be the ones to decide where the resources go that that makes it happen
or not. But how do we start informing those groups to kind of build towards it. I I
guess I want to stay on the question for just another minutes because not enough people
have weighed in on that, are there the right people around the table, is this group the
right group to be talking about doing something like this? Or not.

At the beginning of his turn, Porter acknowledges the progressivist framework upon
members have insisted, demonstrating his knowledge of the original purpose of the OTC: “the
whole goal is to find out what the faculty want to support… I mean that’s what, we, here as IT
representatives are here to try and enable, them to be able to do what they’re here to do” (lines
259-262). He then goes on to describe the vast number of representatives that would be required
(the “council of deans”, line 267, the “staff council representatives”, line 269, the “student
representatives”, line 269), ultimately a group that represents all the groups on campus, much
like the “chancellor’s executive committee”, (line 270). By the emphasizing the cumbersome
nature of the process, however, Porter uses these turns to imply that such a process is just too
ambitious, impossible even. Building on this idea, he attempts to reframe the task he has
proposed to the group (to act as expert reviewers) as simply one step in this direction, in his
words, discussion that would start to “build towards this”, line 272). Hence, he seems to invoke
the values of progressivist discourse as a way of legitimizing the actions he proposes, actions that
ultimately are at odds with the very decision-making process he invokes. I therefore understand
his use of these resources in this turn as moves aimed at closing the issue through the discursive
mechanism of legitimation, the same discursive closure mechanism that his predecessor seemed to prefer.

One the one hand, Porter has made time for the group to process the issue (in line with what they expect from the leader of the OTC), demonstrating his knowledge of how things are normally decided in this setting. Ultimately, however, in his closing comments about the issue, he characterizes the discussion as taking the group “off track”, much like he did with the concerns that the other Council member had introduced. Facing the end of the time he has allotted to attend the meeting, Porter leaves the group to continue their discussion which they do for the remainder of the meeting (45 more minutes). The more they talk, however, the more thorny issues are raised (e.g. the purpose of the matrix, the core values underlying it, etc.). In the end, the group comes to little resolve about any of the issues they have raised. Mark proposes that they continue their discussion of them “on-line”, with the goal of creating a summary of their ideas that they could present to Porter at the next meeting.

Defining the Knowledge at Issue in the Interactions

In the IT Council meeting I have just been examining, the interim CIO begins by raising the issue of the OTC’s organizational purpose (or lack thereof), suggesting that the institutional planning process might be used to clarify the purpose of the OTC and asking the current group of IT Council members to help strategize about how these two efforts might be merged. In response to this request, several Council members suggest that the CIO’s request is problematic, given the current membership of the group (as well as other non-represented “dependencies”). In doing so they raise the issue of “Who participates in organizational planning and decision-making”. As we have seen, this knowledge has been at issue before (in the IT Council meetings that occurred in the spring, as well as in the Community Gathering meetings). Indeed, it
continues to surface again and again as a persistent issue in these interactions. This meeting provides the opportunity to examine if and how Council members’ approach to resolving it has changed as well as a chance to compare the original CIO’s discursive practices with the interim CIO’s.

Identifying Patterns in Discursive Practices

Consistent with the patterns we’ve seen before, in negotiating the group’s understanding of this issue, Council members repeatedly draw on the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse, whereas the interim CIO prefers those from managerialist Discourse (that is when his turns are long enough to determine; more so than in other interactions, in this interaction he does a lot of listening, occasionally responding with comments like “Umhmm”), as the following figure (Figure 10) illustrates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>IT Council Meeting, November 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharon 247 FT</td>
<td>Porter 244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle 236</td>
<td>Porter 234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle 225 FT</td>
<td>Porter 219 FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russ 210 FT</td>
<td>Mark 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam 200 FT</td>
<td>Porter closing Mark 194 FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klaus 196 FT</td>
<td>Porter 258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen 188</td>
<td>Porter 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen 165</td>
<td>Porter 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of Discursive Resource Used
(P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)

Faculty/Student Reps
System-level Administrators
IT Professionals/Administrators

Figure 10: Discursive Resources Employed in IT Council Meeting, November 2007
(Note: in counting the turns from the full transcript, because there were so many quick turns in this interaction, I counted only new speakers or new ideas from those who had spoken in this portion of the exchange.) Also consistent with previous interactions, participants employ these resources for different purposes: in the case of Council members, they employ resources from progressivist Discourse to initiate and negotiate problematic situations; for the CIO’s part, when he uses resources from managerialist Discourse it is in his attempts to resolve/close these issues, where he frequently employs various mechanisms of discursive closure (legitimation, on two occasions, and disqualification on one).

*Highlighting Changes in Levels of Determinancy*

Council member’s resistance to these attempts at discursive closure follows a similar trajectory as we saw in the April IT Council meeting. The problems they raise with the interim CIO’s proposal to treat the group as a legitimate voice for decision-making (in other words the issues they have with the legitimacy resources he attempts to use), as well as their persistence in discussing them, indicate a fairly high level of indeterminancy in this set of inter-related knowledge episodes, a level that seems to become more rather than less indeterminate over the course of the discussion.

![Figure 11: Changes in Level of Indeterminancy in November 2008 IT Council Meeting](image)
Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge

Based on my analysis, we might say that the interaction I have examined reinforces the group’s knowledge that the decision-making process in the organization involves a tension between authority based on consensus (derived from soliciting the input from a broad range of constituents) and authority based on hierarchy (based on a person’s organizational position, in this case, the interim CIO). Based on the way Porter ultimately closed each issue, it also seems to reinforce the group’s understanding that the OTC’s decision-making process slightly favors hierarchy-based authority over consensus-based authority (shared knowledge that we saw constituted in the earlier IT Council meeting)—knowledge that all members recognize by the end of this meeting, even if they don’t all agree with it.

Analyzing Interactions from the OTC’s IT Council Meeting, December 2007

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources

Given the unfinished nature of the November discussion, I expected the discussion to continue in the meeting that was scheduled for December. While it did, indeed, continue, the group’s treatment of the issue looked quite different from what I saw in the November meeting. From the outset, the meeting was different in some important ways. To begin with, it was Mark (the CTO) rather than Porter (the CIO) who facilitated the meeting. Although Mark ran the meeting, it was clear from his initial comments to the group that Porter has given him an agenda to follow, rather than giving him authority to “lead” the meeting, as this excerpt demonstrates:

Michelle: Were there no new notes for today? Are we’re just continuing where we left off?
Mark: Yes we’re continuing, Porter has given us a little different path.
Michelle: Oh?
Adam: Does this mean a slanted path?
Mark: Change of direction
Colleen: A veer
Michelle: That is a veer
Mark: I’m slanted, he straightened me out
Michelle: I see okay.

Through this interaction, the group seems to pick up (albeit indirectly) the main thread that I tracked in the previous meeting, namely, who participates in organizational planning and decision-making? In contrast to the previous interactions, however, where the resources for addressing the issue were significantly contested (leading me to characterize the early episodes surrounding the issue as indeterminate), this interaction seems to be considerably more determinate. For example, in response to Mark’s announcement “Porter has given us a little different path”, Michelle signals her surprise at this move (line 4); she does not, however, question Porter’s authority to make such a change. Other group members also seem to embrace the directive without contest, joking about the direction of the path rather than protesting its grounds (lines 5-9).

After some small talk about the upcoming break while waiting for other group members to arrive, the discussion continues in this way:

Mark: Ok so, the last time we met, we came up with, collectively, this brilliant idea that we were going to all get together as a group and work on some stuff and when I talked to [Porter] and debriefed him he said “Naw, I want to take this in a different direction”, so that’s good.
Michelle: I wondered about that, I was thinking about that this morning, I never got any email from you.
Mark: I didn’t email you, the reason why is that our discussions here were getting a little ahead of the discussions around the Future and Beyond initiative and quite honestly, its getting close to being in glossy form.
Colleen: It’d be nice to have a copy.
Mark: So really we’re at the point now, yeah, that’s even been updated. Actually you have three things in this packet and I’ll talk through them and talk about what we’re going to accomplish today. So we’re still on the same theme what we want to try and accomplish to see how IT Council can support the efforts of [Tomorrow and Beyond]. So let me tell you what you have in front of you.

Again, in contrast to the previous meeting where there seemed to be a considerable lack of agreement about the resources upon which participants drew as well as a high degree of
indeterminancy in how the issues the group discussed might be resolved, here the resources upon which participants draw are relatively uncontested. As a result, the group resolves the issue at hand in a relatively straightforward manner. For instance, when Mark invokes Porter’s authority to “take this in a different direction” (51-52), no one questions the legitimacy of his authority (as they did in the previous meeting). Although Colleen expresses frustration about being outside the loop of decision-making (line 58), she no longer problematizes her role (or others’) in this new decision-making structure (as she has done before). Likewise, as the discussion proceeds, no one questions the underlying assumption that IT Council ought to support the efforts of Tomorrow and Beyond (the framework that Mark proposes in line 62). Rather members seem to accept this assumption as a given part of their discussion, (what we might understand as a shared reinforcement of the roles, identities, and expected behaviors as prescribed by managerialist Discourse.)

For my purposes, the rest of this meeting (where Council members discuss the details of how they might provide their input into the task force meetings associated with the Tomorrow and Beyond planning process) is less interesting than the these early interactions, interactions that are more directly related to the group’s evolving knowledge about organizational decision-making.

Identifying Patterns in Discursive Practices

Comparing the resources that participants employ in this interaction as compared with their negotiations the previous month shows similar patterns in practices that we have seen before, as the graph on the following page illustrates (Figures 12). (While I have analyzed and mapped only the interaction in this meeting that was directly related to the thread of discussion

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48 Because the turns in the first part of the interaction are so short and therefore difficult to categorize in terms of the resources participants employ, I counted (and graphed) only the longer turns.
about decision-making from the previous meeting, a brief review of the larger interaction indicates very similar patterns in terms of the resources that various constituents prefer.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>IT Council Meeting, November 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharon 247 FT</td>
<td>Porter 244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle 236</td>
<td>Porter 234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle 225 FT</td>
<td>Porter 219 FT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russ 210 FT</td>
<td>Mark 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam 200 FT</td>
<td>Porter closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klaus 196 FT</td>
<td>Mark 175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen 188</td>
<td>Porter 176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleen 165</td>
<td>Porter 172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>M Unclear/ Five words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Type of Discursive Resource Used (P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>IT Council Meeting, December 2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colleen 58</td>
<td>Mark 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 59</td>
<td>Colleen 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle 53</td>
<td>Mark 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>M Unclear/ Five words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Type of Discursive Resource Used (P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)*

Faculty/Student Reps; System-level Administrator; IT Professionals/Administrators

Figures 10 and 12: Comparison of Discursive Resources Employed in IT Council Meetings (November and December 2007)

**Highlighting Changes in Levels of Determinancy**

The change in the level of determinancy of this knowledge episode as compared with those from the previous meeting, however, was striking, as the figure (Figure 12) on the following page shows.

**Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge**

If we relate my analysis of these interactions back to the interactions that occur during the previous meeting, we might say that the knowledge that the group had begun to enact in the
November meeting (regarding the more established advantage\textsuperscript{49} that high level administrators have in the balance between academic and administrative authority) is not only reproduced in this meeting but intensified. More specifically, the knowledge the group accomplishes is that IT Council members have gone from being invited to help shape the Tomorrow and Beyond planning process (by giving input into an important document that will be shared with campus constituents), to essentially being scratched off the developer list, after the interim CIO has had a chance to hear their input. In other words, through their interactions, the group collectively constructs the knowledge that the authority that has guided organizational decision-making in this decision was clearly based on hierarchical position rather than democratic consensus.

What’s surprising, given their actions in the previous meeting, is the way in which they seem to so easily concede to the new authority that has been established (and in so doing, participate in the construction of this new knowledge). Their insistence on invoking the academic authority they saw themselves as representing that characterized the earlier meetings and their resistance to actions aimed at reducing this authority seems to have all but disappeared (at least in the interactions I examined from this meeting).

\textsuperscript{49} More established in comparison with the earlier IT Council meetings where participants knowledge of this advantage seemed rather novel.
The way in which the group’s knowledge about decision-making process (and the closely related issue of authority relations) evolves over the course of these two meetings is similar to what we’ve seen in the other sets of meetings. More specifically, the knowledge moves from being a fairly gradual shift in understanding (in the first interaction) to a more significant one (in the second).

Summarizing the First Part of my Analysis

Using the analytical methods I proposed earlier, I have attempted to analyze two different dimensions of discourse (Discourse and discourse) in several different sets of interactions that occurred over time (between spring of 2007 and summer of 2008). My underlying aim in doing so has been to expose and begin to analyze the dialectic of control involved in the social reproduction process, in general, and in the communicative constitution of organizational knowledge that underlies this reproduction, in particular. As part of this analysis, I have examined how repeating patterns in discursive practices influence how members collectively understand problematic situations. In the case I have been studying, for example, the contrasting sets of discursive resources that different constituencies consistently prefer appear to reproduce the tension between academic and administrative authority that has long characterized this setting (particularly as it pertains to organizational decision-making). In addition to looking at which resources different groups employ in their interactions, I have also tracked how and when they use them within the context of the local interactions I have recorded, examining both how dominant actors attempt to use their existing authority to maintain their advantage and how subordinate actors resist these attempts.

Analyzing both the particular discursive resources that members employ as well as the immediate interactions in which they employ them helps to show how the group collectively
constitutes specific knowledge, in this case, the knowledge that although decision-making in the OTC involves a tension between academic and administrative authority, administrative authority is favored (slightly favored in the early interactions and more greatly favored in later interactions). We might say then that the methods I have used have been useful in accomplishing one of my research tasks: to highlight the dialectic of control involved in knowledge construction process that underlies the communicative constitution of organization. More specifically, using these methods, I have been able to examine the co-constitutive (versus top-down or bottom-up) nature of the knowledge construction process. What remains a bit of a mystery, however, are the dramatic changes in determinancy and the related shifts in knowledge that this part of my analysis has exposed. To better understand these phenomena, I need to shift gears in my analysis, moving from the focus on knowledgeability that I have maintained over the last few chapters to a new analytical focus: a focus on unintended consequences.
Chapter Eight: Analysis of Unintended Consequences in the Last Period of My Dataset

In previous chapters, I argued that studying the dialectic of control involved in structuration process requires research methodology that is capable of attending to two interrelated phenomena: actors’ knowledgeability and the unintended consequences associated with their actions. I have also proposed we can empirically “examine” these phenomena by analyzing the interactions of organizational members. I began this type of analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, teasing apart the discursive resources upon which members drew as they initiated, negotiated and attempted to close problematic issues that arose in their discussions as well as the shared knowledge (what we might also understand as a set of structural resources) that members co-constructed these interactions. By moving back and forth between an analytical focus on the structures that actors employ and the interactions in which they employ them, my analysis began to shed light on the dialectic of control that underlies structuration process. To fully appreciate this dialectic, however, Giddens (1984, 1989) proposes that researchers must attend to an additional dimension of these interactions: namely, the unintended consequences that are the inevitable byproduct of social interaction.

In the previous chapters, I used the discourse analytic methods that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) developed to tease apart the knowledgeability that conversation participants both enacted and constructed in the problematic situations I examined. They propose that these methods might also be used for studying the related phenomenon of unintended consequences. More specifically, they suggest that their model provides a solid starting point for studying this phenomenon from a communicative perspective, making it possible for researchers to identify the specific patterns in communication practice that may be involved in the production of unintended consequences (patterns that can be highlighted by analyzing the situation framing
resources that a particular group employs as they negotiate ongoing problematic situations). In the summaries that I provided at the end of each section of analysis (in my last two chapters), I started to identify such patterns. By tracking the evolution of organizational knowledge, I also started to look at the outcomes (in terms of this knowledge) that seemed to be associated with these practices, focusing my attention on their co-constructed nature. In the process of this analysis, I identified several outcomes that were difficult to explain, in terms of the discursive resources that actors employed and the ends towards which these resources were aimed. More specifically, in three separate sets of interactions, the ultimate outcomes (in terms of shared knowledge) that actors co-constructed seemed to be inconsistent with their communication practices (particularly with regard to the practices of subordinate members/constituents). In this chapter, I use Giddens’ (1984) ideas about unintended consequences as a way of examining and attempting to explain these inconsistencies.

Examining Patterns in Communication Practice across Interactions

In the two previous chapters, I highlighted the patterns in discursive practices and the related changes in knowledge “outcomes” at the end of each set of interactions I examined. It is useful now to look at these patterns across the different sets of interactions I examined. Beginning with the discursive resources that various constituents employ, my analysis indicated very consistent patterns throughout all of the problem-solving interactions: academic representatives almost always preferred the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse whereas administrators and IT directors preferred those from managerialist Discourse. Also consistent across the interactions were administrators’ and IT directors’ attempts to foreclose discussion of the issues that were raised through discursive closure as well as the particular mechanisms they employed to so do (my analysis showed a preference for the mechanisms of
legitimation and meaning denial). The way in which subordinate members responded to these attempts at discursive closure from one meeting to the next, on the other hand, was consistently inconsistent. More specifically, in each of the three sets of interactions I examined, this group of constituents went from being highly resistant to these attempts to unexpectedly acquiescent from one meeting to the next as the following figure (Figure 13) shows:

![Changes in Levels of Indeterminancy](image)

**Figure 13: Changes in Levels of Indeterminancy, 2007-2008**

As I discuss at the end of the previous chapter, the shifts in practice that correspond with these changing levels of determinancy help to explain how the knowledge that is constituted through these interactions ends up being significantly different from beginning to end. They also begin to shed light on the co-constructed nature of organizational knowledge. What remains a bit of a mystery, however, is why subordinate members’ responses to discursive closure changed so dramatically from one meeting to the next. The question I propose to explore in the next several sections is this: how might OTC members’/constituents’ routinized communication practices have contributed to these changes?50?

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50 It is important to acknowledge that there may be a myriad of other reasons—outside the reach of my study—that may also have been involved in the changes. Focusing my attention on the empirical data from my study is both necessary as well as limiting, in terms of fully explaining these changes.
Analyzing the Relationship between Practices and Outcomes:

A Description of my Analytical Model

Understanding the relationship between communication practices and knowledge outcomes requires a slightly different analytical focus than I have taken so far. Whereas in the previous chapters I focused my analytical attention on examining and describing the various parts of the knowledge construction process (e.g. the discursive resources actors employ, the back-and-forth interactions in which they engage, and the knowledge they together “accomplish”), in this chapter my focus is on examining the larger process itself and, within this process, the production of unintended outcomes. To begin this work, it is useful to review how the parts I have been examining fit within the larger process that Giddens (1984, 1989) describes. I use a slightly adapted version of the model that Kuhn (1997) developed to visually represent structuration process to help with me with this task (a model strongly influenced by the models of Yates and Orikowski, 1992, and Barely, 1986).

Figure 14: An Outline of the Structuration Model I Use in this Part of my Analysis
Part of what this diagram helps to highlight is the recursive nature of the process I am examining. Said in another way, the “knowledgeability” that I have been examining (what might be understood as a set of structural resources) is, in Giddens’ (1984) structuration terms, both the “medium” and the “outcome” of the interactions I have been examining (1984: 25). In the following sections I will use this model as I attempt to relate the various parts of the knowledge construction processes that I analyzed in the previous chapters to the larger structuration process I have proposed to study. My goal, again, is to try and explain the rather dramatic (and, in terms of the previous interactions, what might be understood as “unintended”) changes in knowledge outcomes from one interaction to the next.

A Snapshot of the Interaction Pairs

I begin my analysis with a snapshot look at the patterns that ran across each of the sets I analyzed (patterns that emerged during the first part of my analysis) within the context of the larger process I am examining. Using the model above, I can begin to outline the relationship between communication practices and knowledge outcomes from one interaction to the next. More specifically, I can outline the patterns in the discursive resources that actors employ (Discourse) alongside the patterns in the interaction moves they make (discourse) with respect to their combined influence on participants’ shared understanding of decision-making process (knowledge outcomes). Doing so produces the broad-strokes model on the following page (Figure 15). Again, part of what this model enables me to do is to begin examine (albeit on a gross level, at this point) the relationships between communication practices and knowledge outcomes not only within each interaction episode (as I started to do in my previous analysis), but also across episodes.
mD=managerialist Discourse (aims to increase authority of admin and IT profs in policy and decision-making); pD=progressivist Discourse (aims to preserve academic authority in policy and decision-making)

Figure 15: An Outline of the Relationships between Communication Practices and Knowledge Outcomes in the Interaction Pairs from my First Dataset

If we look at the discursive resources that administrators consistently prefer in these interactions (resources from managerialist Discourse) alongside the way in which they use their existing authority to resolve the knowledge episodes in their favor (using discursive closure mechanisms), the ultimate knowledge outcome (a significant increase in their authority) is very much in line with these practices (or “intentional”, using Giddens’ terms). The practices of academic representatives, on the other hand, seem to be at odds with these outcomes. More specifically, based on the discursive resources that academic representatives consistently prefer (resources from progressivist Discourse) and on the way in which they use their existing authority to negotiate the knowledge episodes and to resist administrators’ attempts at discursive
closure in the first interaction, we might conclude that their communication practices were aimed at preserving the influence of academic authority in organizational decision-making (an influence that has been significant). The first knowledge outcome (one that maintains the tension between academic and administrative authority) clearly reflects these influences. Tracking this structuration process from one interaction to the next (using Giddens’, 1984, approach), one would expect to see the knowledge outcomes from the first interaction feed back into the subsequent interaction. If they had, the tension that was produced in the first interaction would continue in the second.

On the level of discursive resources, it appears that this tension has been maintained (as evidenced by speakers’ continued preferences for different sets of discursive resources). At the interaction level, however, what we see is a dramatic reduction in tension—an absence that ultimately leads to a significantly different knowledge outcome. What is striking about this shift, in terms of my study, is its consistency. In three separate pairs of interactions from three different time periods across two different meeting groups, the same dramatic shifts in knowledge outcomes occurred—outcomes that I have come to understand as *unintended* (using Giddens’ term), in terms of the structuration process that Giddens (1984) describes.

Again, there may be many factors involved in the changes in knowledge outcomes from one interaction to the next. The question that interests me (and the one that I can actually address, using the data I have collected) is the degree to which participants’ communication practices may have contributed to these changes. To explore this question in greater depth, I turn my attention back to the interaction data.
Revisiting and Deepening My Initial Analysis

In the previous section, I outlined (on a gross level) how the communication practices of subordinate members produced what seem to be unintended knowledge outcomes. In this section, I review and deepen parts of my previous analysis with the goal of analyzing which particular communication practices were involved in this process. Based on my discussion above, I focus my analytical attention on the opening moves of the second interaction (since that is where the discrepancy between practices and outcomes seems to begin). Again, we can analyze these moves on two different levels: as Discourse and as discourse. Since the dramatic shift in practices seemed to occur at the level of discourse, I focus my analytical attention there.

Reviewing this part of my analysis of the May, 2007 IT Council meeting, I pointed out a slight increase in the frequency of dominant members’ attempts at discursive closure as compared with the previous interaction (2 moves out of 6 as compared with 4 moves out of 7). Since the type of discursive strategies that dominant members employed was so consistent from one interaction to the next (almost all the moves were aimed at foreclosing discussion about the controversial IT policy through legitimation, in general, and by invoking the values of progressivist Discourse, in particular) and since subordinates were so quick to challenge these attempts in the previous interaction, it seems unlikely that merely increasing the frequency of these attempts would produce such a dramatic change in the responses of subordinates. The more probable influence—an influence I didn’t give much weight to in my initial analysis—was who employed these strategies and when.

Readers may remember from my previous analysis that a representative from the Budget and Planning Office had been invited to attend the May IT Council meeting, a visit that was very much out of the ordinary for this particular meeting. Although his presence in the transcript was
quite limited (he only spoke only once, at the end of the meeting, when Geoffrey gave him the opportunity to have the “last word”, the turn where he uses the discursive closure mechanism of legitimation), it is likely that his mere attendance at the meeting may have influenced the group’s interactions. Although this kind of non-verbal presence doesn’t neatly fit within the categories for discursive closure that Deetz (1992) outlines, I propose that we might understand it as such. Indeed, I would describe it as an intensified form of discursive closure given that it is even more non-discussable than the conversation moves Deetz (1992) describes.

Reviewing my analysis from the next set of interactions I analyzed, and again focusing my attention on the second of these (the second Community Gathering Meeting that occurred in April, 2008), reveals a similar phenomenon. As I examined the question-and-answer session from the second meeting and compared it with the first, one of the striking differences was the prepared nature of the questions in the second meeting. In contrast to the open-ended session that had occurred in the previous meeting (in August 2007), in this session, the questions that were posed were those which had been gathered before the meeting (no explanation was given for how this was done), questions that the administrators and IT directors had had a chance to review before making their public responses. Because these interaction moves occur outside of the meeting itself, they are relatively non-negotiable, making them a highly effective form of discursive closure. Seen in this light, the comparatively quick acquiescence of subordinate members/constituents to these moves (as contrasted with strong resistance to discursive closure attempts in the first meeting), is much less surprising.

A similar kind of non-verbal closure is clearly conveyed at the outset of second meeting of the final set of interactions I analyzed (the November and December IT Council meetings), what was booked as a continuation of the unfinished conversation that occurred during the
previous meeting. Of critical importance in this second interaction was the lack of presence of
the interim CIO (the organizational member who had facilitated the first discussion and, in so
doing, fielded subordinates’ strong resistance to his numerous attempts at discursive closure). In
his place, he sent his subordinate to deliver the message that he had “decided to take things in a
different direction” leaving next to no room for negotiation. As with the previous interactions,
when faced with these interaction moves, subordinates’ lack of continued resistance is much
more understandable.

Theorizing about the Etiology of these New Strategies

Reviewing each of these three sets of interactions and deepening my analysis at the level
of discourse that shaped the final knowledge outcomes reveals yet another pattern across the
interactions, what I have described as an intensification of the discursive closure mechanisms
that dominant organizational members use to foreclose discussion. Subordinate members’
responses to these mechanisms, in turn, help to explain how the knowledge outcomes ultimately
end in such a different place than they started: going from the initial understanding that
organizational policy and decision-making is influenced by both academic and administrative
authority (with a slight advantage to the latter group), to one where academic authority is
dramatically reduced.

While it is difficult to say with certainty what caused dominant members to intensify their
discursive closure strategies, it seems highly possible that subordinates’ consistently strong
resistance to the more familiar forms of discursive closure—resistance that characterized all of
the first interactions in the sets I examined—may have played a role. In talking about
unintended consequences, Giddens writes, “The duree of day-to-day life occurs as a flow of
intentional action. However, acts have unintended consequences, and unintended consequences
may systematically feed back to be the unacknowledged conditions of further acts (1984: 8).”

The persistent resistance of subordinate actors’ towards discursive closure that we saw in all three interactions appeared to be aimed at maintaining rather than reducing the influence of academic authority in decision-making. Therefore, I propose that we understand the intensification of the discursive closure mechanisms that dominant members employed in response to this resistance (and the reduced influence of academic authority in decision-making that ultimately resulted from this intensification) as an unintended consequence of these actions.

Circling Back to the Dialectic of Control

In the previous section, I attempted to identify specific patterns in communication practice that may have been involved in the production of unintended consequences in the interactions I studied. In doing so, I have repeatedly acknowledged that there is considerable room for error in this kind of analysis. So why attempt it? As I have discussed in previous chapters, Giddens (1984, 1989) insists that those endeavoring to empirically document structuration process (and particularly those interested in the dialectic of control that underlies this process) cannot do so meaningfully without taking into account the influence of unintended consequences. According to Giddens, these kinds of consequences (combined with way in which actors co-construct knowledge), are key to understanding that the structures of social systems are not simply “built into social institutions…grinding out ‘docile bodies’ who behave like automata” (1984: 16) but rather dynamic, co-constructed phenomena. Relating this to the particulars of the case I am studying, my analysis of unintended consequences might be used to explain how both dominant and subordinate members/constituents of the OTC contributed to the knowledge outcomes I have been investigating—outcomes that significantly favor dominant interests.
To investigate the impact of unintended consequences on the OTC’s organizational process, I began by reviewing the first part of my analysis with an eye towards identifying consistent communication patterns in the interactions. I then considered the relationships between the patterns I identified and the outcomes they produced (using the model I describe on page 204, Figure 14) and speculated how these patterns may have been involved the production of unintended consequences. More specifically, I looked at how subordinate members’ strong resistance to dominant authorities’ attempts to foreclose discussion about decision-making process may have paradoxically contributed to their (and to the constituents they represent) reduced participation in decision-making process.

Returning to the idea of methodology, the analytical approach I have taken in this chapter—an approach that highlights the recursive nature of structuration process—seems to have shed some light on the role that unintended consequences play in the dialectic of control I have been examining. In the case of the interactions I examined so far, however, the feedback loop I have considered has been relatively small, spanning just two consecutive interactions. To get a more complete picture of the structuration process I have been studying (and the unintended consequences that are an inherent part of this process) requires that I broaden my view of this recursive process. In the following sections, therefore, I propose to track the communication patterns I have identified (subordinates’ resistance to discursive closure and dominant authorities’ intensification of closure mechanisms) across longer feedback loops, examining the relationship between these patterns and the group’s decision-making knowledge on a larger scale.

The interactive data I have analyzed comes from the meetings of two fairly different subgroups of the OTC: 1) the IT Council group (including the CIO, several IT directors, about 10
administrators from local offices [many of them academic], and one faculty representative) and
2) the group attending the Community Gathering and Coffee and Conversation meetings (the
CIO, all the IT directors, Central IT staff, and the IT “liaisons” from a wide range of academic
and administrative departments)—what I propose to call the Central IT+ group. In the case of
the first group, their meetings were more short-lived than those of the second group. What this
means for the next part of my analysis is that my longer-term look at the OTC’s communication
activities will focus primarily on the interactions of members from the second group: the Central
IT+ group. Before analyzing these interactions, however, it is useful to briefly examine the
interactions of the IT Council group from a more gross-level perspective.

Tracking the IT Council Group’s Shared Knowledge about Decision-Making over Time

Earlier in this chapter, I analyzed two pairs of interactions from the IT Council meetings
(one from April and May of 2007 and another from November and December, that same year),
focusing my attention on the separate pairs. If we look at these combined interactions over time,
the patterns in communication practices and knowledge outcomes from the first set look quite
similar to those in the second set. Indeed, if we were to represent the progression of these four
interactions over time, we would simply add an identical pair of interactions onto the model I
outlined on page 206 (Figure 15). In both of these pairs, the resources upon which members
drew were similar, their back-and-forth interactions were similar, and the shifts in knowledge
outcomes were similar (going from slightly favoring administrative authority in the first
interactions to significantly favoring it in the second). The consistency between the two pairs of
interactions seems to contradict the recursive nature of structuration process that Giddens (1984,
1989) describes. More specifically, if the knowledge outcomes had changed in the May
interaction, as my analysis indicated, why didn’t members draw on these new rules/resources in
the November interaction?

One possible explanation is that the dominant authority in the meeting (Porter) was new
in that position and, hence, the group needed to establish a shared understanding about decision-
making process with him. An addition explanation is simply that structuration process takes
time. For new structures to become institutionalized, patterns of interaction need to be repeated
over and over. Within this slow process, however, it is likely that there are fairly subtle changes
taking place. Closer analysis of the IT Council meeting interactions seems to indicate that these
kinds of more subtle changes do occur from one set of interactions to the next.

For instance, although the shift in knowledge outcomes looks similar in each pair of
interactions (going from the initial understanding that administrators have a slight advantage in
decision-making to the subsequent understanding that their advantage is significant), looking at
the specifics in each case seems to suggest that the shift that occurred in the second set of
interactions was more pronounced than in the first. When Geoffrey listened to the problems the
group raises about decision-making process, for example, he did so over the course of four
separate interactions (the two IT Council meetings I analyzed, the additional meeting he had with
the Residential representative, and another IT Council meeting in June). Also, as he moved
forward with the controversial actions he did so acknowledging (in face-to-face interactions) that
a transgression in the group’s normal decision-making process had occurred. Porter, on the other
hand, allowed a much shorter time for discussion, made his decision to override the group’s
input much more quickly, and closed the discussion much more firmly (through his choice to not
participate in the subsequent meeting). Again, in both interactions, group members seemed to
understand that the balance between academic and administrative authority in decision-making
had shifted significantly in favor of the latter. Comparing these actions, however, it seems reasonable to assume that the second set of interactions produced a more pronounced shift (in terms of the increased authority that administrators were understood to have) than the first.

Tracking this group’s activities into the following year indicates that their shared knowledge about decision-making process continued to shift towards greater administrative authority (and less academic authority) as time went on. A short time after the last IT Council meeting (in December 2007), for example, Porter “suspended” the IT Council meetings. At the same time, a handful of IT directors were promoted, in terms of their participation in the OTC’s “official” organizational discussion, a discussion that the CTO now conducted behind closed doors. Citing the need to focus on the organization’s “internal needs” during this transitional moment, there were few objections to this change. Having redirected IT Council members’ attention to the Tomorrow and Beyond planning discussions (in the November and December IT Council meetings), the interim CIO seemed to have satisfied their need to engage in discussion with a more representative group, even though it was clear to all involved that the focus of these discussions was quite different from their longstanding discussions. With Council members’ attention thus occupied, the directors of Central IT were free to conduct their planning and decision-making process outside the radar of a broader group of constituents—practices that represented a significant change in terms of the OTC’s heretofore established decision-making process.

Looking at the progression of the IT Council group’s interactions on a more gross-level, then, we might conclude that patterns in communication practice that I highlighted in the first part of my analysis (subordinates’ resistance to discursive closure and dominant authorities’ intensification of closure mechanisms) seemed to have similar consequences in the larger
structuration process as we saw in the shorter feedback loops (in terms of the group’s knowledge about decision-making process). More specifically, in response to subordinates’ consistent resistance to discursive closure, dominant authorities increasingly intensified over time the mechanisms they used for discursive closure which, in turn, led to knowledge outcomes that increasingly favored administrative authority. By the end, all opportunities for more diversely informed discussion about the OTC’s decision-making process had effectively been closed off and the knowledge that administrators had the clear upper hand in this arena clearly established.

A. Different constituencies consistently prefer different discursive resources throughout the interactions (administrators/IT directors prefer managerialist resources; academic reps prefer progressivist resources).

C. Shared understanding of decision-making authority shifts over time towards favoring administrative authority over academic authority (as roughly depicted by balance figures* below).

B. Dominant members’ mechanisms for discursive closure intensify over time; subordinate members’ resistance to these mechanisms eventually gives way to acquiescence.

* These balance figures are a condensed version of the balance figure on page 146 (Figure 1). They are meant to show the general direction of change (rather than a specific measurement).

Figure 16: Outline of Relationship between Communication Practices and Knowledge Outcomes in the IT Council Group’s Interactions over Time

Earlier in this chapter, I showed how the communication patterns that characterized the IT Council Group were also present in the other organizational subgroup I studied (the Central IT+ group). As I have begun to do with the IT Council group’s interactions, I can examine these patterns (and the larger recursive process of which they are a part) on a broader-scale, tracking
the changes over time. Before I can so, however, I need to ready the last part of data set for this kind of analysis. I turn my attention to this task in the next section.

Readying my Last Set of Data (Central IT+’s Interactions) for Analysis

In the first part of my analysis (of the data I collected from the first two years of my study), I analyzed one pair of interactions of the Central IT+ group: the Community Gathering meetings that occurred in August of 2007 and in April of 2008. Due to the lack of back-and-forth interaction in the second of these meetings, I also included in my analysis several Coffee and Conversation meetings from that spring and the following fall. The last part of my dataset begins with the arrival of the new CIO, in the fall of 2009. While I observed and recorded a variety of conversations during (and just before) this time (e.g. the public forums for the new CIO, the CIO’s interaction with the faculty assembly and the executive faculty council, etc.), I have selected meetings that involve the Central IT+ group for this part of my analysis because of the longer range view they afford\(^5\).

To analyze these interactions, I will employ the model I used in chapters 6 and 7. My analytical focus will be slightly different, however, given that my purpose for analyzing these interactions has shifted. (More specifically, in this chapter, I am primarily interested in tracking the patterns in discourse practices I identified in the earlier interactions and following how they unfold over the long term, as opposed to demonstrating the co-construction of knowledgeability, as I was in chapters 6 and 7.) Two basic questions will guide my focus: 1) Do the patterns in subordinates’ communication practices that I have identified in the previous interactions continue (in other words, do they continue to insist that academic authority be involved in

\(^5\) In an earlier draft of my dissertation, I had included these other interactions as part of my analytical discussion. While I have chosen not to include them here (largely because of space limitations), it is interesting to note that the patterns in communication practices that I have identified throughout my analysis for those who represent academic interests (their strong preference for the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse and their defensive reactions to discursive closure attempts) were extremely similar for the practices of faculty members that I analyzed from the aforementioned meetings.
decision-making and continue to prefer the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse as they do so)? 2) Are the consequences similar over the long term as we saw in the short term (tighter and more covert forms of discursive closure by administrative authorities surrounding the discussion about organizational decision-making and knowledge outcomes about this issue that increasingly favor these authorities)?

*Analyzing Interactions from the Community Gathering Meeting, Nov 2009*

Readers may remember that in the last set of the Central IT+ group’s interactions I examined (The Community Gathering meeting from April, 2008 and a Coffee with Conversation meeting later that spring), the opportunities for discussion (and conflict) were extremely limited. The interactions I examine for this part of my analysis, on the other hand, are much more interactive and more debate-filled. The meetings from which I excerpted the interactions that I will closely examine were the same: one half-day Community Gathering meeting that occurred in November, 2009 and two Coffee and Conversation meetings that occurred at the start of the next year (in January and February, 2010). I begin my analysis by examining a conversation that occurred during the half day Community Gathering meeting (in November, 2009): a 45 minute “roundtable discussion” focused on the topic of “Redefining Governance”. Participants in this conversation included several IT “liaisons” (2 from local administrative offices and 1 from an academic office), two staff members from Central IT (one mid-level director and one project manager), and the newly appointed CIO. They were one of 15 groups that had convened around small tables (in a large meeting room) to discuss various organizational topics that the meeting organizers had prepared. I treated the question that was assigned to the governance group as a planned topic (in terms of my coding scheme). This question was written on a 5 x 7 note card on
the table where the group convened; it read: “Discuss governance at [M.U.]. What is it and what might it become?”

Over the course of their discussion, members raised several interrelated problematic issues including: “Who participates in planning and decision-making?”, “What are the organization’s guiding values?”, “How are organizational priorities determined?”, and “What is the relationship between the OTC and local departments?” In contrast to the meetings with formal agendas that I analyze in the previous sections, in this discussion, members jumped back and forth between these emergent issues. This made identifying distinct knowledge-accomplishing episodes challenging. Although not a perfect solution, I treated each new issue that group members raise as a new problem-solving episode then attempted to track them through the rest of the discussion.

Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources and Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge

The problem-solving episode I select for close analysis is one focused on the issue of organizational decision-making (in line with the focus that has guided much of my previous analysis). Again, the primary reason that this issue was reopened was because a new CIO had recently been to lead the OTC, bringing an end to the nearly two year transitional leadership team. The episode is initiated by Silvia (an IT liaison from an administrative department) who challenges the group to specify who participates in decision-making (line 5) and what kind of authority various participants have (lines 5 and 6); in her words:

4 Silvia: So what do we consider governance? You know, **who is going to be involved**
5 and **what’s going to be the pyramid** of this thing? **Who’s going to be the**
6 **pinnacle**? Is this the CIO, is this TPAG [Technology Professionals Advisory
7 Group]? Does TPAG go away? Does IT Council go away?
In their response to Silvia’s questions, David (the IT project manager) and Charles (the mid-level IT director) employ the discursive resources that are common for these constituents, as the following excerpt demonstrates:

David: **I take a top-down approach, meaning governance starts with business objectives.** Because anytime IT comes into play, IT is going to want to support your business objectives. So up front knowing what your business objectives are and **that comes from the functional side.** You know management you know providing services to students, learning systems, having excellent faculty and staff you know, those sorts of things. So that’s the business governance and **then IT comes in and says, “how are we going to support those business objectives”.** And then you can build from the strategic level down and start forming your, your tactical plans. Um, and so when you’re looking at certain standard of best practices, you know like Cobit, ( ) ITIL, there’s different models but for our organization, you may choose one or two of those standards and then take pieces out of those **best practices** that suit your **customized environment.** And so that’s how **it kind of works down from the top.** So.

Charles: I would expand on what David’s saying, to actually make it work there has to be a set of standards or a framework used. **I don’t think we can do business the way we did 20 years ago, when IT was a minor support,** played a minor supporting role to the campus. So both for the university and the larger system, the **accepted frameworks,** and they can be any of them, are going to be necessary to help make the decisions for campus.

Borrowing heavily from the language and logic that the interim leadership team has consistently employed during the transition years (language and logic that come straight out of managerialist Discourse), David demonstrates his knowledge of (and his identification with) the governance approach (and the related decision-making process) that this Discourse favors. The system he describes, for example, is lead by something rather than someone: “business objectives” (line 51). These objectives are, above all, “functional” (line 53) and IT plays a critical role in accomplishing them (lines 55-56). Frameworks for decision-making draw are based on “best practices” that originated in the corporate sector (ITIL and COBIT), “customized” for this particular environment (59-61). Charles also identifies with this Discourse, reiterating that corporate-style frameworks (what he refers to as “accepted frameworks”) will be “necessary to
help make the decisions for campus” (lines 67-68). At the same time, he conveys his more
senior status, referring to his knowledge of how business was conducted “20 years ago” (line
65).

Shortly after these turns, Bob (an IT liaison from an academic department), takes the
floor. In the first part of his turn, he draws from the resources of progressivist Discourse as he
responds to the issue of governance and decision-making. More specifically he raises the issue
of participation (and transparency) in the current governance process, stating,

Bob: You know, we don’t have IT Council anymore. We’ve got TPAG but the problem
that I have with it is the selection process, who’s on it and who can visit it, who
can have input on it? No one knows, it’s not clearly defined. There needs to be
enough transparency that the actual constituents can get the information and
provide information back. Right now, we don’t know what comes out of TPAG, I
mean, you don’t know, you don’t know what’s being discussed there and you don’t
know if it’s addressing your concerns or you know.

A few turns later, Bob continues to address the issue of policy and decision-making, highlighting
the closely related issue of policy and decision-enforcement. Drawing on his day-to-day
experience with faculty members, he suggests that the governance model that the speakers (and
the current leaders) have described is simply out of synch with the reality of how things work at
WU. More specifically, he points out that although IT directors may now have the upper hand in
making decisions, the tension between administrative and academic authority has not
disappeared. Rather, it has been transferred to the closely related issue of rejecting/enforcing
decisions. David, (the speaker who initially articulates the transitional leaders’ vision), is the
first to agree, as this excerpt shows:

Bob: …So, okay then, you make a policy by governance that says, ‘You want to play?
Here are the rules. You violate them: here are the repercussions,’ and actually have
the authority to back those up. Right now what we have is, ‘please don’t do anything
bad,’ and there are no ramifications for negative actions.

David: That’s because nobody wants to be the bad guy.
Bob: Right/

David: I totally agree with that/

Bob: I’d love to be the bad guy. But no one cares what the our department says

((laughter from the group)).

David: I’ve dealt with faculty who break the rules and say, ‘if you do that you’re going to lose your privileges.’ And they say, ‘yeah, right, I need this to do my job.

They’re not going to take it away from me.’ And they’re exactly right.

If we examine this exchange in terms of the particular examples that are discussed (the interactions between IT professionals and faculty members), they seem to reflect the shared knowledge that OTC members/constituents established in the previous interactions I examined (from the first two periods of my dataset). More specifically, they reify the knowledge that technology professionals have greater influence and control in decision-making process than in the past (they are able to say, for example, “You want play? Here are the rules,” line 136-137).

At the same time, they refine that understanding so that it reflects other dimensions of contest between academic and administrative authority (lines 145-147) and other ways in which academic constituents might exercise their authority.

Looking at the turns from this problem-solving episode all together (from lines 50-147), we can also examine the exchange in terms of the more immediate level of interaction. Doing so reveals that in spite of their knowing that academic constituents have more limited decision-making control than they did in the past, those who represent academic constituents (in this case, Bob), continue to advocate for their interests using the same discursive resources they have preferred throughout the interactions I have analyzed (the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse). Those advocating for greater administrative authority (in this case, David and Charles), are also consistent in their preferences, favoring resources from managerialist Discourse in many of their turns.
For the first part of the discussion, the CIO mostly listens rather than contributes to the discussion; when he does contribute, his turns are very brief (mostly 2-12 word utterances, occasionally a bit longer), and they demonstrate his facility with both of the Discourses I am studying. About 15 minutes into the discussion, the CIO (who is has the pseudonym of Victor in my transcripts) begins to articulate his position on governance and as he does so engages more actively in negotiating the problematic situations at hand (in this moment of the conversation, what I have coded as “What is the organization’s governance model?” and “Who participates in planning and decision-making?”). In response to one group member’s comment about the importance of “feedback loops”, he says the following:

Victor: Well, so this gets to some things that are important to me, in terms of, and these are some of things I’m hearing around the table so, you know, a big part of governance is interaction, feedback, communication. So there’s formal groups…((he lists the various governance groups on campus))…but also I think governance has to have one root in customer interaction. That’s one of the things I like about HE, you live intimately with your customers. I mean they’re not out there as some kind of statistic of how we’re doing with our customers, they’re standing in your doorway they’re calling you on the phone. So there has to be a lot of that, at the same time there has to be this distillation of what are IT providers going to provide. And all of that gets at what I was trying to say about communication being a form of conflict, not nasty conflict but open honest, “I want this” and somebody else saying “oh, I can’t give you that”. So there’s a disagreement and hashing that out and maybe you do or you don’t get what you want but I think almost any reasonable person, if they can at least participate in why they’re not getting what they want and feel like, okay, it might not be what I had hoped for, but I can see it is the way it is, I think are willing to accept that. If its done reasonably and fairly, overall. If its some crazy dictatorial thing, then, it will all fall apart quickly anyways, so.

In this turn, Victor employs a mix of discursive resources. He begins with the notion that a “big part of governance is interaction, feedback, communication” (line 198-99), invoking the participatory-style governance of progressivist Discourse. In referring to the constituents the OTC serves, however, (another group who should, according to him, should inform decision-making), he uses the term of “customer” (line 201)—a term that is often associated with
managerialist discourse when it is employed in the HE setting. In one sense, he emphasizes that “customers” of this setting are different from customers in other settings. They are not simply “some kind of statistic” (line 202-203), rather IT providers and customers “live intimately” together in the HE setting (line 202). Also different from other customers is their expectation that they will be involved in decision-making (lines 197-211). While he acknowledges that “there has to be a lot of that” (referring to this kind of involvement) (line 204), he also asserts that “at the same time there has to be this distillation of what IT providers are going to provide” (lines 205-206), what I read as a rather ambiguous reference to the authority that IT professionals have in deciding what will be provided. Rather than clarifying this reference, he goes on to advocate for “the hashing out of disagreements” between academics and IT professionals (line 208-209).

Although he invokes the values of participation (line 210), fairness (line 212) and transparency (line 207) in this part of his turn, the disagreement example he cites—where someone (presumably a faculty member or student) says “I want this” and someone else (presumably an IT professional) says “Oh, I can’t give you that” (lines 207-208)—seems to be a more cut-and-dry case of a higher authority (the IT professional) conveying a previously-formed decision (as is prescribed in managerialist Discourse) than an actual negotiation of interests (as in progressivist Discourse). In the end then, he seems to be talking more about the manner in which higher authorities convey the decisions they have made (and whether this is done “reasonably and fairly” versus in a “dictatorial manner”, lines 212-213) rather than the process that is used to form these decisions.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{52} Earlier in the conversation, Victor proposes the “there’s an art to being the bad guy” and that part of that art is “finesse” which he describes as not only “what you are imposing but also how you are imposing.” This example also helped to shape my interpretation of his comments above.
Adding all of these moves together, it’s possible to read Victor’s use of progressivist resources as an attempt to legitimate his more managerialist position on decision-making, and as such, as an attempt to foreclose discussion about the issue at hand. The ambiguous way in which he describes the authority of IT professionals, along with his rather confusing emphasis on the presentation versus the formulation of decisions might also be interpreted as being aimed at foreclosing discussion. In contrast with the previous examples I have analyzed where administrators have combined legitimation and strategic ambiguity to foreclose discussion, in this case, the managerialist position he takes seems to be more deeply buried in the talk. More specifically, his myriad references to progressivist ideology (a practice that is not just true for this turn but for the majority of his turns in this interaction) set a tone for the turn that makes his support of managerialist-style decision-making harder to apprehend.

Outlining Patterns in Discursive Practices and Summarizing Shared Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>Community Gathering Meeting, November 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victor 197</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David 145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob 143</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>David 140</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>David 143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob 136</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles 63</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob 141</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob 114</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David 50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silvia 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Discursive Resource Used (P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
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</table>

For the purpose of comparison, as I have done before, I distill the various levels of my analysis of this problem-solving episode into more quickly readable summaries (the first of
which I will summarize in graphic form, and the second two, because of their relative simplicity, in textual form. Graphing the turns according to which discursive resources that speakers employ and highlighting dominant authorities’ attempts at discursive closure of the episode produces the figure above (Figure 17).

Summarizing the knowledge that the group accomplished in this problem-solving episode is somewhat challenging given the nature of the discussion (where group members jump around from issue to issue). Additionally, Victor left the discussion to sit in on another before the end of the session. In his absence, participants continued to discuss the issue of decision-making, some continuing to advocate for “top-down” governance structure, others pushing for clearer definition of who can have input into the process and how. The discussion of what “principles” ought to guide decision-making occupied the last 10 minutes of the group’s conversation. Although no clear resolve of the issue of decision-making was reached by the end of the session, the interaction did seem to reestablish the tension between academic and administrative authority that seemed to have all but disappeared in the interactions I analyzed from the previous period (the transition period). In terms of the figure I have used previously to map these kinds of changes (Figure 1 on page 145), the knowledge that the group co-constructed seemed to represent a shift back towards the academic end of the continuum (as compared to the April, 2008 meeting).

In terms of the level of determinancy of the episode, I understand it to be relatively determinate. This might be a bit confusing, based on the fact that members debated the meaning of decision-making knowledge and on the fact that they didn’t come to any clear consensus about this meaning. There seemed to be, however, very little contest regarding the meaning of the discursive resources that members employed. Again, it is this level of debate (and not the
debate about the issue itself) that is involved in the determinancy/indeterminancy of the episode. Having analyzed and summarized this episode, I turn my attention to the last episode, an episode that I excerpted from the Coffee and Conversation meeting that occurred in December, 2009.

*Analyzing Interactions from the Coffee and Conversation Meeting, December 2009*

About a week and a half after Victor participated in the roundtable discussion I just analyzed, he addressed a wide variety of Central IT staff in a “Coffee and Conversation” meeting (in December, 2009). As in the previous meeting, organizational members from a myriad of levels of the organization participate in the conversation. In this meeting, however, the directors of Central IT were also audience members (versus being co-presenters with the CIO as they were in the previous meeting), providing me with the opportunity to observe and record their interactions with the new CIO as well.

*Analyzing Situation-Framing Resources and Tracking the Evolution of Shared Knowledge*

At the beginning of the meeting, the newly appointed leader oriented audience members to his view of the purpose of the OTC and what role various members/constituents play in the organization (what I label as a planned topic, in terms of my coding scheme). He did so by doing “a quick run through” of the “three core slides” from a presentation he had made at the Community Gathering meeting a few weeks before. The first of these slides, entitled, “What is IT?”, was a conceptual diagram of the organization (brief description). He begins his discussion about this diagram by emphasizing the particular setting in which the IT organization he’ll be leading (the OTC) exists, namely, the higher education setting. In his words:

21 Victor: …So what is IT is how I see IT very briefly, we’re at a higher ed institution, hope everybody is aware of that? So what is a higher ed institution so a higher education institution ultimately is its faculty, you can take away all kind of things, buildings, etcetera, ah, you could move it somewhere else that’s not really what a higher ed institution is. Ultimately it’s the faculty because the faculty teach and do research and especially here the students are extremely important, somebody was telling me well Jon
was telling me this but I guess it’s an old rue here which is that there’s three sources of
income at WU: students, students, and students. Do I need to explain that? ((laughter))
So yeah, so students follow on from faculty obviously but, it’s the nature and quality
of the faculty that really determine the nature and quality of the institution
ultimately. And then there’s administration and staff which I think is all of us
anybody here a student also probably a number of you, right? Anybody here a faculty
member? Nope okay so so we’re staff we’re administration but, we’re not here so
much to amuse ourselves as we are to support what the faculty do which is creation
and pursuit and so on of knowledge wisdom whatever you want to call it, and ah also
disseminating that, also known as teaching and learning. (7:05) So teaching and
learning at the top, research and creative works, as well, IT is important in daily
living? and then there has to be administration or administrative services or
business services or enterprise services as I know we differentiate between those two
levels as well. In the center is IT providers:: and I made the circle in the center
smaller than those other things on purpose to connote that we’re supporting those
things not that we’re the most important thing in the middle of the circle and all
those things revolve around us we’re we’re supporting all those things, and we is
everybody in [our organization].

At first glance, many of the ideas he raises seem to be in line with progressivist Discourse. For
example, his emphasis on the teaching and learning that occurs in the higher education setting
and the importance of the work that faculty members do. Even the authority relations he
describes—where faculty members enjoy a slight advantage over administrators and a significant
one over IT staff—also seem to line up with those described by progressivist Discourse. The
nature of this authority, however, seems to be different from what this Discourse describes.53
More specifically, what Victor seems to suggest in the turn above is that faculty’s higher status
in the organization is what determines their authority (as opposed to their simply being a
significant stakeholder in the organization and therefore an important voice in governance and
decision-making). While this is a subtle difference, it is an important one, in terms of
understanding the framework Victor proposes.

53 The first few times I read this passage, I had assumed it was grounded in progressivist Discourse because of the authority relations it describes. It was only after analyzing the rest of the episode and looking back at this passage in that context that I began to notice the discrepancy, in terms of the nature of authority described.
Part of what influenced my interpretation of this framework is the attention Victor gives to clarifying a particular pecking order. “At the top”, there are faculty members, “who determine the quality of the institution” and “then there’s administration” (lines 30-31). The circle that represents IT providers on the diagram he has prepared is “smaller on purpose to connote…that we’re not the most important thing” here (lines 40-42). The latter part of his turn seems to be aimed at clarifying various constituents’ roles within the hierarchy he describes:

Victor: …So how do we provide services? So the the thing I tried to drive home and keep continuing to do here as well as there is that we’re a service organization, so we’re here to serve period. I always kind of take the view that, this institution has to have IT in order to exist. Its no longer an interesting thing or something people do on the side but everybody else is using 3x5 index cards or whatever. It’s it’s, ingrained in everything that everybody does? And it has to be done but there doesn’t have to be an internal, central IT organization there to do it. Some schools have tried outsourcing it, some schools are even more decentralized than this place, keeping in mind no school is completely centralized but its sort of our privilege to be the IT providers not definitely not our our right. There’s no 11th commandment there shall be a Central IT at WU, (turns back to PP slide on screen)) not that I’ve seen anyway.

In this part of his turn, Victor is very definitive in terms of what is expected from IT professionals in this setting (and here, he includes himself): “we’re here to serve, period” (line 58-59). He even suggests that IT providers view this service as a “privilege”, again underscoring the superior status of faculty members (lines 65-66). Although the framework he proposes to describe faculty authority would likely appeal to those favoring progressivist ideology (because of the advantage it affords academic constituents), I understand it to be fundamentally managerialist because of the way in which locates organizational authority in one’s status in the organization rather than in a broad-based, consensual process (as in progressivist Discourse), an idea that Victor continues to develop as the interaction continues.
In the interactions that follow, participants respond in various ways to the framework Victor has presented, some asking for points of clarification, others attempting to use the framework as a platform for introducing other related issues. The problem-solving episode I select comes after about twenty-five minutes of such discussion. In it, the speaker (a high-level director for Central IT) takes issue with the way in which Victor has framed the organization as a ‘service organization’. The exchange begins in this way:

Victor: Oh, so what’s your name? ((laughter from the group))
Giles: Ahhhhh, I can’t remember your exact words when you started you said something like we’re a service org, plain and simple
Vic tor: Yeah, something like that
Giles: I’d like to challenge that, I’d like for it not to be the last thing I do here but I’d like to challenge that ((lots of laughter from the group))
Vic tor: No, you you guys can challenge me endlessly, that’s/

We might understand the first part of this exchange as being aimed, in part, at establishing the identities of (and the relationship between) the speakers. Victor jokingly invokes Giles’ senior status in the organization by asking his name (line 201) (a name that he clearly knows); Giles, in turn, invokes his subordinate status, jokingly pointing out the fact that Victor has the power to fire him for his comments (line 205). Victor’s friendly response to this jest, “no, no you can challenge me endlessly,” (line 207) might be read as a show of respect for the authority of IT Director.

In his next turn (see below), Giles more clearly defines the problem he has with Victor’s frame. More specifically, he takes issue with the pecking order that Victor describes in his turn where faculty are “at the top” and administrators and IT professionals exist to “serve” (in line with progressivist Discourse), and attempts to reframe the role of IT professionals—or at least the role of senior IT directors—as leaders rather than followers or “servers” (in line with the ideals of managerialist Discourse). The argument he makes is based on the premise that service
organizations are non-expert organizations (like University Catering, line 208-209), whereas “we” are experts who should play a “strategic role” in the organization, and have “leadership” authority (line 211). While he doesn’t specify exactly the “we” to which he refers, both his organizational status and his reference to the private conversations he has had with the CIO (in line 214) seem to suggest that he is talking about people with considerable status in the organization (those who have regular access to the CIO, for example). In terms of my coding scheme, I label the exchange as an emergent issue aimed at the question of “What are the authority relations among members?” I also assign the label of “Who participates in decision-making?” based on Victor’s response (see below)—a response that reopens the issues of decision-making process (as it relates to issues of authority). The interaction proceeds in this way:

Giles: I uh you know **when I think of a service org I think of you know UMC catering** what can we do for you? and I think that there’s a strong service element to us but boy I sure wouldn’t say plain and simple we’re a service organization because I think there’s, a **very strong leadership position** we play? there’s a **very strong strategic role** we play?

Victor: [Yep]

Giles: And **you know I think I expressed this to you before** I think we’ll get eaten alive if we think of ourselves as a service organization cause we’ve got, 3,000 faculty out there and if we say to each 3,000 faculty what can we do for you it gets obscene

Victor: Um ((laughter from the group)) yeah, I guess I’m just really agreeable this morning but **yeah, I agree** so let me explain what I mean by service organization YES, we have to lead, um a a a cliché I like is we **have to lead the target**? we sort of have to have IT be where it should be when people get there to use it and that’s one way to think about leadership aspects of it there **but by service I mean** and maybe its just that past I came out of you know right? so when I started at IT it was back in the **old wizard days** you know you got to wear a robe, you were really cool, ((laughter from group)) you could sort of “yeah okay I guess I’ll help you and you know you’re a cowboy you’re stupid” ((more laughter)) wasn’t quite that bad right but it was sort of IT was an end in itself we didn’t call it that right? ((chatter and laughter from group)) Um and then I think it went computing **organizations went through a a phase or went through a shift into, we’re not here to amuse ourselves this stuff’s expensive and we’re paid to help people** so that’s what I mean by we’re a service organization. **But yeah, there has to be,**
a lot of leadership, and we have to provide that and that sometimes means that we have to take stands or make decisions that people don’t like and that’s partly what I mean by optimize as well. But you have to be really really careful with that because you can sort of get into a trap of yes, I’m pissing everybody off but this was the optimal decision, so. ((laughter from group, cough))

Unidentified audience member: So it’s a balance.

In Victor’s response to Giles’ challenge, he employs a mix of discursive resources. At the beginning of his turn, he “agrees” that “we have to lead” (lines 218-219); again, like Giles, not explicitly specifying who he means by “we”. As he goes on to reference the idea of “leading the target” (line 219), (the notion that IT professionals can somehow know what constituents need before constituents themselves know [an idea that is firmly grounded in managerialist Discourse]), one gets the feeling that he is not talking about just any IT professional, but one with considerable organizational status. We might understand these moves as a clever way of recognizing (and legitimizing) Giles’ request to be treated as an exception to the rules that Victor has laid out without actually coming out and saying that.

But Victor must somehow line up the exception he has made with the model he originally proposed. The middle of his turn seems to be aimed at this task (starting at line 221). In it he shifts gears, focusing on the “service” dimension of the “service organization” that he proposed (in his former presentation) that the OTC be. To develop this idea, he describes the demotion that IT professionals have had to endure, contrasting the “wizard” status that they long ago enjoyed (lines 223-225), with the role they now play (“we’re not here to amuse ourselves” but rather “to help people”, lines 228-229), moves that might be interpreted as both acknowledging the growing authority that academic constituents have demanded and warning the IT director that as he provides leadership going forward, he can’t do so the way people have done so before. Those who see themselves as representing academic authority will no doubt have been pleased to hear him say these things.
Quickly following these statements, however, Victor reiterates his initial agreement with Giles saying, “but yeah, there has to a lot of leadership” (line 231). He also reiterates his cautions from one higher-level official to another, pointing out the “traps” that are inherent in assuming this kind of leadership and reminding Giles that “you have to be really, really careful with that.” In the midst of those moves, he also begins to highlight the connection between leadership and decision-making, pointing out that sometimes “we” (again, he seems to mean higher level IT professionals) “have to take stands or make decisions people don’t like” (line 232). His statements, however, say very little about the manner in which decisions are formulated, leaving this detail open to interpretation. His rather vague reference to “optimizing” decisions is similarly ambiguous (as it doesn’t really clarify for whom decisions might be optimal).

In the next turn, the speaker (a less prominent member of the organization) seems to attempt to tease out some of these ambiguities. The exchange continues in this way:

279  Howard: Ah I’m Howard Jay I’m with ((mumbles the rest of his words))
280  Victor: I’m sorry, Howard Jay?
281  Howard: With managed services?
282  Victor: Managed services, okay.
283  Howard: I do think that as an organization we do tend to have a reputation as sort of a
284 an idea as an organization of that whole IT guy that you were talking about,
285 you’re stupid get out of the way, we’ll take care of it, you don’t know what you
286 need, we’ll tell you what you need and, I think that having more of a philosophy
287 of being a service organization will improve us across the board in terms of really
288 finding out what the campus needs as opposed to trying to dictate what the
289 campus needs, and I think that we’ve been doing more of the latter a less of the
290 former
291  Victor: Wha…((Appears confused))
292  Howard: We’ve been doing more of the trying to dictate what the campus needs as
293 opposed to really trying to fully understand I mean we’re more of the old
294 computer nerd guy who is like you don’t really know, we’ll take care of it.
295  Victor: Yeah, that was fun, while it lasted ((laughter from the group))
296  Howard: I remember it too/
297  Victor: So do you have ideas for how to fix that?
298  Howard: Not really no, ((quiet laughter from the group)) I think, I think
In his comments, Howard distinguishes between “finding out what the campus needs” versus “dictating what the campus needs” (a progressivist read on the top-down decision making that characterizes managerialist Discourse), charging that the OTC has been doing more of the latter (lines 288–289). Although Victor ultimately seems to agree with this assessment (it is, after all, very much in line with the ideas he discussed in his opening turns), the way in which he does is quite interesting from the point of view of authority relations.

As compared with his previous interaction with the IT director, the authority moves that Victor makes with this speaker (a lower level IT professional) are markedly different. Right from the start, he challenges him to speak up (line 230), a subtle move that might be read as a demonstration of his superiority. When the speaker attempts to align himself with the CIO’s earlier position, (that we are here to “serve” faculty needs), instead of reciprocating, Victor puts him on the spot, challenging him to come up with “ideas about how to fix that” (line 297). It’s as if he seems to be saying, “I can say those things, because I have the authority to but what about you?” Similar negotiations of authority relations seem to be occurring in the exchange that follows.

As Howard falters in response to the CIO’s challenge, another lower-level employee (named Cory, in the transcript below) attempts a reply. Like Howard, he advocates for getting the faculty “more involved”, reiterating the idea that “they are our customers, they should be driving us in what we do” and concluding that “if it wasn’t for them we wouldn’t be here.” (in line with progressivist Discourse). Whereas in previous meetings, leaders would often engage with IT professionals who raised such issues (legitimating the idea that they could, in the absence of faculty member participation in the conversation, represent them and their interests), Victor’s response seems to challenge that identification. Instead of allowing Cory to act as a voice for
faculty he presses him to make suggestions—as an IT professional—that might address the issue (line 309). When he is unable to do so (line 311), Victor takes the opportunity to point out the ways that he, in his position of authority, (as well as Giles, another high-level administrator) is in a better place to do so than Cory (e.g. his inclusion in the “Chancellor’s Executive Forum”, his and Giles’ seats at the “Breakfast with Champions” table, etc., lines 315-326).

Cory: … if it wasn’t for them we wouldn’t be here.
Victor: Yeah and so?
Cory: That’s basically the end of it.
Victor: Yep.
Cory: We could use a lot more feedback.

Victor: So so one I agree one of the ways I’m trying to do that is is to meet and establish relationships with faculty informally in some of the groups in others reforming a faculty input advisory governance oversight whatever you want to call it group. In others just opportunistically? to go to forums, meetings, there’s I don’t know there’s all these meetings I can’t remember them all correctly there’s the Chancellor’s Executive Forum? I guess like 30 40 people go to that. So I’m able to go to that. There’s the, Chair’s Breakfast, what’s that called Giles, Breakfast of Chair’s? Breakfast of Champions ((laughter from the group))

Giles: It’s the Chairs Breakfast.
Victor: Chairs Breakfast so I’m able to go to that so other things like that so and I’ll be able to so in the future when I actually have more to say than “hi nice to meet you”, I’ll be able to stand up for 20 30 minutes at those and talk and present things and stuff. Yeah so any but you know surveys or all the ways we can potentially do that

Cory: I mean the trick is as always with large organizations you know down here at the bottom there’s lots of interesting things going on and once it gets to the top you know this was a brilliant idea, you know, so, to get feedback to other people means being in a lot of places that I for one will never be a part of, you know, I’m never gonna be at the chancellors breakfast, you know its hard for me to even get to you/
Victor: It’s the chair’s breakfast ((laughter))
Cory: Well whatever/
Victor: It’s a good good breakfast, too ((more laughter))

Not only does Victor seem to use his turns to demonstrate his seniority but he also outlines who else is a legitimate speaker in the decision-making and planning conversation (e.g. faculty members and IT directors), a conversation that Cory, himself, points out that he will never be a part of (331-332). Interrupting his efforts to get his
“feedback” to the CIO (332-333) (ostensibly one of the opportunities this question and answer session was intended to provide), Victor makes Cory the brunt of his joke (334-336), a joke that underscores his clearly superior (and Cory’s inferior) status in the organization.

*Outlining Patterns in Discursive Practices and Summarizing Shared Knowledge*

As I have done before, I can graph the turns from this interaction according to which resources actors employed and the frequency of turns aimed at discursive closure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker/Line Number of Turn</th>
<th>Coffee and Conversation Meeting, December 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cory 335</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles 322</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 312</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cory 311</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 310</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 336</td>
<td><em>Howard</em> 298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 334</td>
<td>Victor 297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 323</td>
<td><em>Howard</em> 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 314</td>
<td>Victor 291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cory 328</td>
<td>Victor 295</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victor 218</td>
<td><em>Howard</em> 279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cory 313</td>
<td>Victor 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 214</td>
<td>Victor 213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cory 309</td>
<td>Giles 208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard 292</td>
<td>Giles 205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard 283</td>
<td>Victor 204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victor 207</td>
<td>Victor 202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Discursive Resource Used (P=Progressivist, M=Managerialist)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18: Discursive Resources Employed in the December 2009 Coffee and Conversation Meeting
One of the things that I discovered in attempting to graph the turns from this interaction was that the turns of the new CIO that were long enough to categorize (six of his 16 turns were five words or less) rarely fit squarely within either progressivist or managerialist Discourse. In four of his turns (turns 21, 218, 314, and 323), he combined resources from both Discourses in one turn (as my analysis of his first turn showed), employing progressivist resources in his attempts at discursive closure. On four other occasions (turns 201, 295, 334, and 336), he made jokes that loosely drew on the logic rather than the language of managerialist Discourse making them a bit more difficult to recognize as such. Overall, he (like his predecessors) seemed to prefer the resources from managerialist Discourse as did the other high-level administrator who contributed to the interaction. The subordinate members who spoke, on the other hand, preferred those from progressivist Discourse as the graph above (Figure 18) depicts.

To review, in this knowledge accomplishing-episode, the group addressed the interrelated issues of “What are the authority relations among members/constituents?” and “Who participates in decision-making process?” In terms of the first issue (organizational authority) the interaction seemed to establish an understanding that there is an “official” pecking order in terms of organizational members and constituents: faculty at the “top”, then administrators, and lastly “staff”, what Victor initially described as “all of us”. A significant difference in this interaction from those that I have previously analyzed was Victor’s unwillingness to allow lower level IT professionals to speak for faculty members (as previous directors had allowed). The ways in which he so directly and strongly challenged these members’ authority in the interactions I analyzed
and the ways in which both subordinate actors faltered when challenged, helped to establish the group’s understanding of this “corrected” pecking order. Through these interactions, subordinate members within the Central IT organization enacted quite a different level of organizational authority than they had in previous interactions.\textsuperscript{54}

Summarizing the knowledge the group accomplished regarding decision-making authority is a bit more difficult. On the one hand, Victor portrayed the meeting as an opportunity for employees from all levels of the organization to participate in decision-making process, a frame that all seemed to embrace. The fact that he held two of these hour-long sessions with this group alone (and numerous others with other groups), and that he consistently emphasized the importance of “open”, “honest” and broadly inclusive participation in these early conversations (values that are grounded in progressivist Discourse) also suggested a commitment to these ideals. Yet the knowledge about organizational decision-making that seems to be constituted through the interaction I analyze does not really line up with these ideals. Indeed, my analysis of this knowledge episode suggests that the decision-making authority that actors constitute through these interactions is authority that is based on hierarchical position (as it is in managerialist Discourse) rather than democratic consensus despite the many signs to the contrary.

The model of governance (and decision-making) that the group seems to be enacting (following the model that Victor has suggested) is that faculty members can participate in the OTC’s decision-making process not simply because they are stakeholders in the outcomes but rather because they have significant organizational

\textsuperscript{54} Although space limitations prevent me from analyzing the interactions I recorded that included faculty members (e.g. the public forums that were part of the CIO hiring process, the faculty assembly meeting and the executive faculty council meeting with the new CIO, and dozens of committee meetings from the strategic planning process), I did conduct this kind of analysis in other drafts. What I found was that the hierarchy that I describe in my analysis above was also clearly enacted in these other meetings. In the case of these other interactions, however, the part of the hierarchy that was co-constructed was faculty members’ dominance over mid-level IT professionals.
authority. Likewise, the decision-making authority of lower status IT professionals (e.g. tech support people, etc.) seem to be in line with their organizational status, as the interactions I analyzed help to establish. Analyzing the exchange between Victor and Giles seems also suggest that the authority of certain individuals falls outside of this established hierarchy. More specifically, the knowledge these two begin to construct is that in terms of decision-making, the rules of hierarchy that Victor originally described (faculty over administrators over staff) do not always apply to Giles. Indeed, without saying so directly, the interaction implies that his authority can supersede the authority of faculty members, suggesting the presence of another, larger hierarchy within which the faculty-administrator-staff hierarchy may be nested.

In my analysis of the interaction that took place the month prior to the one I just analyzed (the interaction from the Community Gathering meeting in November, 2009), I suggested that no clear consensus about decision-making knowledge had been accomplished, however, the tension between academic and administrative authority seemed to have been reestablished (as compared with the interactions from the transitional period). More specifically, in that interaction we saw those representing faculty interests back at the negotiation table, trying to make sure that academic interests helped to shape the group’s understanding about organizational decision-making. In the interaction I just finished analyzing (the interaction from the Coffee and Conversation meeting in December, 2009), a similar tension seemed to be present, but it was enacted through different means. This time, the co-construction of this tension occurred by way of the group’s enactment of a fairly strict hierarchy of relations where faculty were understood to wield a great deal of organizational power. At the same time, the
interaction suggested that there were exceptions to this hierarchy, as in the case of the Security Director’s leadership and decision-making power. A question that has important implications in terms of the balance between academic and administrative authority that I have been tracking is this: was the exception to these hierarchical relations that was established through this interaction a unique phenomenon? Or might this leadership and decision-making authority apply to the other IT Directors as well? And if so, who else (if anyone) enjoyed this kind of elevated status? To answer these questions, I end my analysis with a brief look at the OTC’s 2010 IT Strategic Plan.

Analyzing the OTC’s 2010 IT Strategic Plan

Had I been allowed to sit in on the committee meetings about governance and decision-making that occurred as part of the OTC’s strategic planning effort as I had requested (meetings that took place between January and May, 2010), I would likely be addressing the questions I posed above by way of analyzing an episode of interaction that spoke to that question. As I describe in my methodology chapter, however, I was unfortunately denied access to these conversations. I do, however, have access to the planning document that summarizes these efforts. While this kind of data prevents me from being able to tease apart just how this official knowledge was produced, it does provide a snapshot of the official understanding about organizational decision-making (and the related authority relations) that was accomplished through these interactions. This understanding seems to both reinforce the knowledge that the group seemed to be establishing through the December interaction as well as clarify some of the ambiguities, in terms of the authority relations among members.
As in the December meeting, there is a strong emphasis on the participatory process that characterized the planning effort. More specifically, the executive summary of the report begins by highlighting the elevated role that faculty played in the planning meetings themselves. In the words of the plan’s authors:

Beginning in February 2010, 16 committees, each comprised of approximately 8-10 faculty, students and staff—led by faculty or senior staff with support from an IT content expert—met and discussed IT issues that are in direct support of the campus mission…IT strategic planning has occurred consistently every four years, beginning in 1998. This plan is a distinct departure in that it more fully engaged the stakeholders and partners of the campus. Faculty, students, and staff participated in an unprecedented manner and created an IT blueprint that will support the campus mission (bold text added).

The text stresses the idea of “fully engaging the stakeholders” of the university (invoking the ideals of progressivist Discourse) as well as the idea that the academic “campus mission” guide the planning and decision-making process. The authors continue to discursively draw on the resources from progressivist Discourse in the “themes” that they identify as common among all the chapters, what they define as 1) “transparency”, 2) “flexibility”, 3) and “engaged participation”. The introductory paragraph of the chapter on governance also emphasizes these ideals, identifying the need for “an IT governance model…that is guided by, and is responsive to, all campus constituencies (italics added).”

In the conceptual diagram of the IT environment presented in the chapter, faculty, students, and staff are described as being “at the core, or heart of the IT environment”.

Taken all together, these moves create the impression that this plan is very much in line with the traditional values of higher education (values based in progressivist Discourse). Digging below the surface of these references and teasing apart the details of the plan that is proposed, however, reveals that it significantly departs from these traditions.
More specifically, a close reading of some of the finer details of the governance model described in the text reveals that that table for negotiating one’s interests in the IT environment at WU has grown considerably and that faculty (and students) are one among many groups with recognized interests in the process. In other words, the academic authority that is highlighted the chapter is actually situated within a larger, less obvious authority system—a system grounded in managerialist rather than progressivist ideals.

The layers to this system described in the governance chapter are complex. First, there are the regular forums for faculty, students, and administrators to discuss their technology needs and to provide input into the OTC’s planning and decision-making process. Under the proposed plan, faculty would have not just one but two groups contributing to the process, one focused their teaching activities and one on their research activities. Students would also have their very own group as would administrators and “distributed IT providers” (in other words, the IT professionals working in local departments and offices). Looking at just this first layer of the feedback/decision-making system, it appears that academic representatives have a slight authority advantage since three out of the five discussion/feedback forums are composed of academic representatives. Teasing apart the larger context in which these forums are nested, however, reveals that in actuality, academic authority is fairly limited when understood in relation to the larger model described.

A relatively easy way to appreciate these limits is to examine the graphic illustration of the larger context in which these groups are situated, described in the report as the “Conceptual IT Environment” (see Figure 19 below). The authors propose that
this environment includes four different levels: 1) “three areas of focus” (academic technology, research computing, and administrative computing), 2) “all of the IT providers who support these areas” (versus just Central IT), 3) the process for “managing IT services” (ITIL, which is described as “the most widely accepted approach to IT service management”), and 4) the “boundaries, or criteria in which to create structure and order in developing and maintaining campus IT” (which include “IT security, enterprise architecture, and policy”). While the first three layers of the illustration below are similar to the OTC’s previous governance models (although the particular management process recommended is novel), the last (or outermost) layer, “boundaries, or criteria in which to create structure and order” is new. More specifically, the addition of IT security and enterprise architecture to policy as elements that create boundary conditions for governance is new. In effect, what this does is to take two of Central IT’s five divisions and make them “background conditions”, as opposed to dimensions of the organization that are subject to the policies developed through the proposed governance process. This change (a change that is presented in relatively non-negotiable terms), represents a significant shift in terms of decision-making process. Relating this back to the question I posed at the end of my last section, this adds another IT director/department (in addition to the Security director/department) whose decision-making authority trumps that of faculty members.
Another way in which the decision-making authority of faculty members is limited in the proposed model is the way in which it explicitly situates the advisory forums within WU’s larger governance structures. In a section entitled, *Shaping IT Direction Through Engaged Participation*, the proposed plan highlights the need to establish more formal communication channels between the CIO’s office and higher level administrators (e.g. the Provost and the Chancellor) suggesting that *all* members of the community *together* have responsibility in sorting out the university’s IT priorities. In the words of the chapter’s authors, 

Implementation of this governance process will result in **visible, campus-wide, participatory, and ongoing process** for faculty, students, staff, and senior leadership to **engage together** in shaping the nature and directions of the WU IT environment, both in terms of services and spending (bold added). 

Although progressivist language is used frequently in this section (e.g. the emphasis on “engaged participation”) and in this passage (see bolded text above), the authority relations that are described are grounded in hierarchical status, following the practices of
managerialist Discourse. More specifically, yet another group with greater decision-making power than faculty members is called out here: “senior leadership”. As we have seen in many other instances, then, progressivist resources seem to be employed in this part of the text in order to legitimize the managerialist relations proposed.

This could also be said for the unexpected use of progressivist logic/language in the report’s emphasis on economic efficiency. Towards the end of the chapter, the authors of the plan highlight the links between “governance” and “fiscal responsibility”, what they describe as two “sides of the same coin.” They propose a “systematic process” for determining IT funding priorities, a process that combines “requests being generated from the bottom up” with “expectations and funding levels being communicated down from the highest levels of the university”. Although the process is loosely framed as a participatory process, how “requests” from “the bottom up” would actually impact decision-making is left quite vague. What is clear is that in the proposed model, administrators from the Budget Office now have significant decision-making authority.

Since I was not allowed to record the governance committee’s meetings, I can’t deconstruct the knowledge that was produced by these interactions in the same way I have with other interactions. Having been at several presentations where different drafts of the governance plan were “unveiled”, however, I can say that the background components of the plan, as well as the larger hierarchy within which faculty authority is situated were very much de-emphasized in these presentations. Faculty’s revived authority over mid-level IT directors was much more strongly featured (an emphasis that the faculty members participating in these meetings embraced and reinforced through their contributions). At least in the meetings I observed, therefore, this interactional
focus on the middle part of the hierarchy (and the lack of interactional attention to its higher levels), seemed to effectively foreclose discussion about the latter (much like we saw in the December, Coffee and Conversation meeting). The reframing of the two IT Directors’ authority over faculty as “back ground conditions”, a frame that went unchallenged by participants in the meeting, also seemed to curtail discussion (what might be understood as naturalization, in terms of Deetz’s, 1992, categories). Combining my observations of these meetings with my brief analysis of the strategic planning document itself, it seems that the patterns in communication practices that I proposed to track through the last part of my dataset (in particular, the collective enactment of tighter and more covert forms of discursive closure), do, indeed continue.

The way in which these practices impact the related knowledge outcomes I have been tracking (members’/constituents’ shared understanding of decision-making authority) also seems to be similar to what I found in other parts of my analysis. Based the model that the governance chapter describes (as well as the discussions about this model that I observed), faculty members do seem to have gained a slight advantage in terms of decision making power over mid-to-low level IT professionals. A closer reading of the proposed plan, however, reveals that there are several new constituents whose decision-making authority trumps theirs (e.g. the Security and Infrastructure directors/departments and a host of higher level administrators/offices). Despite the strong progressivist tone that characterizes the chapter (and that characterized the strategic planning process itself), ultimately, the proposed governance model prioritizes administrative authority (albeit higher level administrators) over academic authority.
Tracking the Central IT+ Group’s Knowledge about D-Making Authority over Time

In the past few sections, I have analyzed the interactions from several meetings from the last period in my dataset and as well as the final chapter from the OTC’s 2010 Strategic Plan. My purpose in doing so was to ready these parts of my data for the final step in my analysis: tracking the relationship between the communication practices and knowledge outcomes of the Central IT+ group across a longer set of interactions (beginning with the August 2007 Community Gathering meeting and ending with the December 2009 Coffee and Conversation meeting and the 2010 Strategic Planning document) with the goal of examining potential unintended consequences of patterns in communication practice. Having analyzed the final sections of my dataset, I am now ready to address the following questions: 1) Did the patterns in subordinates’ communication practices that I identified earlier in my analysis continue (their consistent use of discursive resources from progressivist Discourse and their declining resistance to dominant authorities attempts to foreclose discussion)? And 2) were the consequences of these actions similar to what I saw in my other analysis (tighter and more covert forms of discursive closure by administrative authorities and knowledge outcomes that increasingly favor these authorities)? (These questions should sound familiar to readers, as I also asked them earlier in the section where I examined the interactions of the IT Council group over time.)

In terms of the first question, combining my earlier analysis of the Community Gathering meetings from August 2007 and April 2008 with my more recent analysis of the two interactions at the end of 2009 (interactions from the November Community Gathering meeting and the December Coffee and Conversation meeting) demonstrates
subordinate members’ strong preference for the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse. In every single turn from these combined interactions (not counting those that were five words or less), subordinate members employed these resources. In the great majority of these, they used these resources in their efforts to protect the authority of academic constituents in organizational decision-making. As for their response to dominant members’ use of discursive closure mechanisms to foreclose discussion about decision-making, beginning with the second meeting (April 2008), and continuing through the last meeting I examined, my analysis showed a dramatic decline in the degree to which they challenged the discursive resources that dominant members employed (as compared with the initially strong challenges to these resources that we saw in the August, 2007 meeting). This decline in resistance seemed to go hand in hand with dominant members’ intensification of discursive resources over the course of the interactions. In the April 2007 meeting, for instance, dominant authorities significantly altered the nature of the question and answer session such that discussion about decision-making authority was greatly curtailed. The new CIO’s frequent use of progressivist resources to legitimize the managerialist-based hierarchy he enacted (making this hierarchy both difficult to recognize and to challenge) seemed to accomplish the same ends as did the naturalization of certain aspects of the decision-making model he co-constructed with other constituents. Tracking the impact of these combined practices on the evolution of the group’s knowledge about decision-making, my analysis suggests that while it initially looked like some academic authority had been regained through the interactions with the new CIO, ultimately, the larger context of changes that were enacted served to significantly reduce faculty authority (and increase administrative authority).
Using the model I proposed earlier in this chapter, I visually summarize the Central IT+ group’s structuration process over the course of these various interactions (see Figure 20 below).

A. Different constituencies consistently prefer different discursive resources throughout the interactions.

B. Dominant members’ mechanisms for discursive closure intensify over time; subordinate members’ resistance to these mechanisms while strong at first, eventually gives way to acquiescence.

C. Shared understanding of decision-making authority shifts over time towards favoring administrative authority academic authority (as roughly depicted by balance figures* below).

* These balance figures are a condensed version of the balance figure on page 146 (Figure 1). They are meant to show the general direction of change (rather than a specific measurement).

Figure 20: Outline of Relationship between Communication Practices and Knowledge Outcomes in the IT Council Group’s Interactions over Time

One of the benefits of this model is that it allows researchers to track the relationship between communication practices (A & B) and knowledge outcomes (C) (all important dimensions of structuration process) over time. For my purposes, what’s interesting are the discrepancies that this model potentially helps to highlight between the intended outcomes of particular communication practices (in this case, the influence of academic authority on decision-making authority that progressivist Discourse aims to protect) and the unintended outcomes in terms of knowledge about decision-making (in this case, the
significant reduction of this authority). As with the previous group, my analysis of the Central IT+ group’s interactions over time seems to reinforce my earlier proposition: that the reduction of academic authority that resulted from these interactions might be understood as an unintended consequence of the subordinate members’ insistence on recognizing this authority in the conversations I recorded (through both their frequent and consistent use of the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse and their early resistance to dominant members’ attempts to foreclose discussion about decision-making).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused my attention on identifying potential patterns in communication practice that may have been involved in the production of unintended consequences in the structuration process I have been examining. I began by tracking several patterns in communication practice that the first two chapters of analysis enabled me to identify across interactions—first across pairs of interactions then later across longer stretches of time. I then attempted to describe how certain communication practices (namely, subordinates’ unfailing preference for the discursive resources from progressivist Discourse and their strong resistance in the early interactions I examined to dominant members’ attempts to foreclose discussion about decision-making) impacted the group’s knowledge outcomes in unexpected ways. In each of the groups of interactions I examined (the three interaction pairs from the first part of my data set and both the IT Council and Central IT+ interactions that spanned the length of my data set), my analysis suggested that subordinates’ efforts to protect academic authority
paradoxically may have contributed to a decline in this authority (by inspiring dominant members to develop tighter and more covert forms of discursive closure).

Given the nature of the phenomena I have been investigating in this chapter, I have continually emphasized the tentative nature of my findings. Despite the inherent limitations of this kind of analysis, however, I have invested considerable time and effort in conducting it. I do so based on Giddens’ claim that we cannot meaningfully understand the dialectic of control involved in structuration process without considering the potential influence of unintended consequences on structuration process. Having completed this last step in my analysis, I turn now to looking at the larger methodological project of which it is a part.
Chapter Nine: Conclusions and Implications

In the first two chapters of this project, I established the need for developing methodological models that would be up to the challenge of empirically examining the dialectical tensions that are a common thread among practice theories, claiming that new models were necessary in order to advance scholarship about the communicative constitution of organizational authority. In chapter three, I developed such a model based on Giddens’ (1984, 1989) structuration theory and I proposed to pilot it in a case study of the Office of Technology Coordination (OTC) at Western U. The last three chapters have been devoted to conducting this analysis. First, I focused my attention on examining how OTC members/constituents shared knowledge about decision-making evolved over time and later, I identified a set of possible unintended consequences associated with this knowledge construction process—two dimensions of analysis that Giddens describes as being key to understanding the dialectic of control that underlies the constitution of social (in this case, organizational) authority.

As a communication scholar, I understand this dialectic to be communicatively constructed. My analysis, therefore, has focused on the communication practices of organizational members. The research question I proposed earlier reflects this focus: how do the communication practices of each group of OTC members and constituents (both dominant and subordinate) shape the constitution of organizational authority? Given the complex and lengthy nature of my analysis, I began to address this research question within the analytical chapters themselves, summarizing my research findings as
I went along and discussing them as they related to my underlying study interests. In this chapter I will deepen my discussion about these findings as well as about the methodological model used to generate them. This discussion will open the door for me to also examine the contributions and limitations of my study. I will end my discussion with a look at the implications for future research that my project raises.

**Discussion of Research Findings**

For this project I proposed a methodological model for scholars interested in studying the communicative construction of organizational authority using Giddens (1979, 1984) structuration theory. I also piloted a study using the model I proposed. This study yielded a set of research findings related to the particular research questions I proposed to examine. At the same time, the pilot case study enabled me to field-test the model I developed, yielding what might be understood as another set of research findings—findings concerning the usefulness of the model itself. I will discuss both sets of research findings, beginning with the former.

**Underlying Assumptions**

Before extending my discussion about my research findings, it is useful to remind readers about some of the assumptions underlying the study I conducted. For example, the way in which I approached studying the evolving authority relations to which my research question refers (see above) was in keeping with the practice-based approach underlying my project (and the larger social constructionist perspective within which it fits). In other words, I assumed that there were no institutionalized power relations outside of members’/constituents’ shared understanding of these relations and that

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55 Graphic summaries and related discussions of my analysis of OTC members’/constituents’ knowledge construction process can be found on pages 159-163, 183-187, 198-200, 229-330. Summaries and discussion about the unintended consequences associated with this process are located on pages 219-220 and 247-250.
members/constituents negotiated these understandings through their ongoing social practices. Again, as a communication scholar, the analytical focus I took as I attempted to tease apart these understandings was on the communication practices of organizational members/constituents.

Following in the footsteps of numerous CCO scholars (e.g. McPhee, 1985, 2004; Orlikowski, 2000, 2002; Poole, Seibold & McPhee, 1985, 1996; Taylor & VanEvery, 2000), I chose Giddens’ (1984, 1989) theory as one that had the potential to increase my understanding about the relationship between members’ communication practices and their understanding of organizational authority. My approach to studying this relationship, therefore, reflected a number of his theoretical assumptions. For example, rather than focusing on the structures or the actions involved in the interactions I analyzed, I endeavored to examine the dialectical relationship between the two (in line with Giddens’ assumptions about the dialectic of structure). Following Giddens’ (1984, 1989) suggestions, I studied the communication practices of organizational actors, an approach that enabled me to move back and forth between the two dimensions of structure and agency (or, in the case of my communication-focused study, between the dimensions of Discourse and discourse).

The dialectic of structure that Giddens described strongly influenced his conception of power and, therefore, also the way in which I approached the concept of power in my study. In response to previous theorists “whose conceptions of power…tend[ed] to faithfully represent the dualism between subject and object,” Giddens proposed the concept of the dialectic of control (1984: 15). He defined this dialectic as “how the less powerful manage resources in such a way as to exert control over the more
powerful in established power relations” (1984: 374). While Giddens implied that communication had something to do with this process, this assumption strongly shaped my study. More specifically, I assumed the dialectic of control that Giddens described as being communicatively constructed. Indeed, the purpose of my study was to analyze and to examine the specific communication practices involved in that process.

In sum then, the way in which I approached the issue of authority in my study was based on Giddens’ ideas about the dialectic of control. More specifically, as I studied OTC members’/constituents practices and the knowledge outcomes associated with them, I assumed that both dominant and subordinate actors exerted control in shaping them. The way in which I analyzed the influences of each group (examining the group’s communication practices on two levels, shifting back and forth between a focus on the structural resources that actors employed and the moment-to-moment interactions in which they employed them), also reflected Giddens’ theory, in this case, his closely related concept of the dialectic of structure. Giddens’ (1984, 1989) insistence on recursive nature of the constitutive process that I was studying also shaped my study. More specifically, I assumed that members in their ongoing interactions drew on structural outcomes accomplished in previous interactions, a process that required that I examine the interactions from one to the next, preferably over an extended period of time. Lastly, I adopted Giddens’ view that the knowledge construction process that I was analyzing involved unintended consequences, consequences that needed to be teased out in order to appreciate the dialectic of control I had proposed to study.
Interpreting my Research Findings

Having reviewed the some of the basic assumptions underlying my study, I turn back to the task of deepening my discussion of my research findings. I begin my discussion with a brief review of what my analysis showed in terms of the how members’/constituents’ shared understanding about organizational authority, in general, and organizational decision-making, in particular changed over the course of my study. Consistent with the setting in which I conducted my study, the early part of my analysis (the meetings with the original CIO) clearly indicated that diverse OTC members/constituents expected both academic and administrative authorities to contribute to decision and policy-making. It also indicated that participants together understood that a shift in the traditional balance between these two authorities seemed to be occurring—more specifically, the authority of administrative members (including some IT directors) seemed to be growing. Over the course of my study, this shift intensified. By the end, administrators (both from high-level administrative offices and from several IT offices) seemed to enjoy a significant advantage over academic constituents in terms of decision-making authority.

My challenge, again, was to examine how both dominant and subordinate members’/constituents’ communication practices shaped (and were shaped by) these changes. What I found in looking at the communication practices of OTC members/constituents at the Discourse level was that throughout the three years of my study, dominant and subordinate actors consistently preferred the discursive resources from different Discourses—managerialist Discourse in the case of dominant members and progressivist
Discourse in the case of subordinate members. Although these preferences were consistent, the ratio of progressivist to managerialist resources changed over the course of my study, as the following figure shows:

![Figure 21: Comparison of Number of Turns in which Speakers Employed the Discursive Resources from Progressivist and Managerialist Discourse](image)

In the early interactions I analyzed, progressivist resources were more frequently employed than managerialist resources\(^56\). Beginning in August of 2007, however, the opposite was true and remained the case for the rest of my study.

Adding these study results together with the changes in knowledge outcomes that I describe above, we might say that the increase in managerialist Discourse that my analysis showed was correlated with an increase in administrative authority. If I were to examine this relationship from a purely structural point of view, I might view the increase in administrative authority as a natural result of the increase in members’/constituents’ use of the discursive resources from managerialist Discourse (a discourse that favors this kind of authority). From this point of view, the knowledge outcomes that I identified in

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\(^{56}\) While I don’t know for sure that the patterns that I observed at the beginning of my data collection were a continuation of similar patterns, having spoken with a number of Council members regarding their perceptions about how the meetings changed during this period, I suspect that they may have been. Also, having watched the CIO facilitate this and other meetings, and knowing something of his raise-an-issue-then-sit-back-and-listen approach, it is likely that the number of turns that Council members took in the meetings prior to my data collection also increased the number of instances that progressivist resources may have been employed (given their consistent preference for these the discursive resources from this Discourse).
my study (sets of structural resources that favored dominant members interests) would be treated as structures that “operate[d] like forces in nature” causing unwitting members (both dominant and subordinate) to interact in particular ways. In Giddens’ words, when one takes this approach to understanding social interaction, “the range of ‘free action’ which agents have is restricted, as it were, by external forces that set strict limits to what they can achieve” (1984: 174).

In contrast to this approach, I followed Giddens’ (1984, 1989) lead and treated the speakers I studied as deeply knowledgeable actors who not only “penetrated” the authority systems that shaped their interactions but also clearly “exerted control” in the negotiation of these authority relations. More specifically, my findings indicated that subordinate members/constituents of the OTC actively resisted the growth in administrative power in the organization, drawing on the discursive (or structural) resources that enabled them to do so. Ironically, the ways in which they “chose to act otherwise” as they negotiated the meaning of decision-making authority (e.g. challenging administrators use of various discursive resources and insisting on the inclusion an academic perspective in decision-making), may have ultimately played a role in reproducing the structural constraint they sought to revise. What my study helps to illustrate, however, is that these constraints were neither an unavoidable external force nor simply an order imposed by those with greater organizational authority but rather were co-constructed understandings constituted through the day to day communication practices of both dominant and subordinate members. The dialectical approach I took in analyzing the interactions (where I examined how the Discourse-based resources upon which members drew as they, through their everyday discourse, initiated, negotiated and
attempted to resolve problematic situations) seemed to be key in my being able to tease apart and to demonstrate this subtle but important theoretical difference.

The Contributions of my Study

When I started my analysis, my goal was to empirically expose the dialectic of control involved in the communicative constitution of organizational authority. The analytical approach I took (guided by the methodological model I developed earlier in this project) proved to be useful in this endeavor in numerous ways (as I started to explore at the end of my last section). In this section, I focus more directly on assessing the utility of this model and the scholarly contributions it helped to facilitate.

Assessing the Utility of my Analytical Framework

In addition to fostering a dialectical focus in my analysis (what might be understood as complicating my focus), the research methods I employed also helped to tighten my analytical attention at crucial moments in my investigation. Given the seemingly contradictory nature of these two effects, some clarification is necessary. In any longitudinal project, a significant challenge for the researcher is deciding which parts of the data warrant closer analytical attention. The units of analysis that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) recommend (e.g. problematic situations and, within these, knowledge accomplishing episodes, and among these, indeterminate episodes) provided a useful framework both for initially categorizing my large dataset and for determining potentially interesting places (in terms of my research interests) to drill down deeper. Once I determined where to drill down and I engaged in the next level of analysis, Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) analytical framework also supported the kind of dialectical focus my research question demanded. As I had anticipated in this part of my analysis (based on
reading Huttenon’s, 2010 study), identifying the problematic situations within the meeting interactions I examined (a necessary step in this closer analysis) was much less straightforward than Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) empirical example suggested. In many cases, the beginnings and endings of the episodes I analyzed were far from clear and frequently, interaction participants seemed to be addressing more than one problematic situation in their knowledge accomplishing activities. The benefit of these challenges was that they forced me to tease out and to identify the knowledge at issue in each interaction, a practice that served me well in the later steps of my analysis (e.g. identifying particular knowledge issues that the group returned to again and again and tracking the evolution of these issues over time). The related adaptations that I made to Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) model ought to be useful for future researchers applying this model to more interactive data.

In addition to helping me identify a frequently contested knowledge issue where I might examine the dialectic of control I proposed to study (what turned out to be, over the course of my analysis, the group’s shared understanding of decision-making authority), the analytical approach I adopted (based on Kuhn and Jackson’s, 2008, model) was also useful in my search for a focus in the second part of my analysis. More specifically, the patterns in discursive practices that I tracked within each knowledge-accomplishing episode provided the foundation for my analysis of the unintended consequences. Looking at these patterns across the interactions, I was able to identify recurrent communication practices (in this case, subordinates’ resistance to dominant members’ attempts at discursive closure through their challenges to the discursive resources that dominant members employed), an important first step in trying to figure
out which of these may have contributed to unintended consequences. Without the findings from the first part of my dataset to guide my search, looking for practices that may have been relevant (in terms of the knowledge outcomes I examined) would have been like looking for a needle in a hay stack. The communicative focus of my analysis also helped to narrow down which practices to investigate.

In his review of critical organization studies, Mumby (2005) points out that, “Control can never be absolute in the space provided by the indeterminancy of labour, employees will constantly find ways of evading and subverting managerial organization and direction at work” (Ackroyd & Thompson, 1999: 47 as cited in Mumby, 2002: 25). He goes on to say that “studying the dialectic of control and resistance is precisely about understanding how this indeterminancy is subject to various and competing efforts to shape it” (2005: 25). Identifying indeterminancy in the knowledge construction process is a both a challenging and a necessary first step in this kind of study. While Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) model encourages researchers to identify the level of indeterminacy in the knowledge episodes they study and while they attempt to model this in their empirical example, in practice, I found this to be one of the more difficult steps in my analysis.

To begin with, as my analysis showed, the level of determinancy/indeterminancy in a problem-solving episode was dynamic. Additionally, the degree to which participants in an interaction accepted the resources employed often varied considerably from one participant to the next. This was further complicated by the fact that speakers often addressed more than one knowledge issue within a single turn. Determining the difference between whether speakers were contesting someone’s frame of a situation (a contest that didn’t necessarily indicate indeterminancy) versus contesting the very
resources they used to frame the situation (a contest that did) was also far from an exact science. Often I relied on my larger experience with the group to help make the distinction. We might say, then, that Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) analytical model was somewhat limited in its usefulness for helping me to confidently classify the level of indeterminancy of an episode (pointing to the need for more attention to these issues in future research efforts).

The analytical approach that they described (and modeled) for teasing apart “how this indeterminancy [was] subject to various and competing efforts to shape it” (Mumby, 2005: 25, italics added), on the other hand, felt much more solid. More specifically, in contrast to distinguishing between determinancy and indeterminancy, analyzing the situation framing resources that different members employed as they initiated, negotiated and attempted to close problematic issues seemed to be much more straightforward. Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) framework (as well as their analytical examples) provided an invaluable foundation for kind of analysis. Applying this model enabled me to examine the dynamic nature of knowledge that unfolded in the episodes I analyzed, a dynamic that was critical in appreciating the dialectic of control I was trying to understand. Through its orientation towards the micro-levels of problem-solving, it allowed me to bring to life (in empirical terms) the intersubjective negotiations among members.

In discussing their approach, Kuhn and Jackson (2008) suggest that their model “makes possible a second level of analysis”, what they describe as “the analysis of political nature of knowing” (2008: 10). Combining their model with Giddens’ (1984, 1989) theory seemed to help realize this potential. More specifically, the dialectic of structure that he insists upon shed light on which aspects of Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008)
model needed developing, namely the institutional level of analysis (as contrasted with the analysis of strategic conduct). The classifications inherent in Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) model (as well as their interest in how members’ sometimes drew on these to foreclose discussion) provided a base upon which to build this kind of analysis. My interest in the influx of managerialist Discourse into the HE setting (a setting where progressivist Discourse has prevailed) guided the form my additions.

Beginning with the classification categories the Kuhn and Jackson (2008) suggested (identification, legitimacy, and accountability), I analyzed how each of the two Discourses I had identified as significant to my study defined these categories, creating operationalized definitions for each dimension of classification. These Discourse-specific classifications, in turn, became a fundamental part of the dialectical approach I took to studying the communication practices of OTC members/constituents—an approach where I moved back and forth between an analytical focus on the discursive structures that actors employed and the interactions in which they employed them. The adjustments I made to Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) analytical framework enabled me to more directly examine the influence of specific institutionalized Discourses in the knowledge construction process I analyzed. At the same time, the model’s fundamental orientation towards examining organizational members’ micro-level practices helped to ensure that I did not overemphasize this influence. As I suggested earlier, this approach was useful for examining the dialectical tensions between structure and agency and between control and resistance that Giddens (1984, 1989) describes.

At the beginning of this section, I proposed to assess the utility of the analytical framework I employed in this study. I have focused my discussion, so far, on the
framework that guided the first part of my analysis, a model that borrowed heavily from Kuhn and Jackson’s (2008) work. What my discussion has shown is that their model—with several adaptations and additions—proved to be quite useful in analyzing the knowledge construction process I studied. Initially, the enhanced model helped me sort and to categorize what might have otherwise been an overwhelming dataset, aiding in the process of determining which knowledge-accomplishing episodes warranted more focused attention. Once I identified these episodes, the model was well-suited for the task of teasing apart OTC members’/constituents’ attempts to negotiate the knowledge at issue as well as identifying the discursive resources they used to do so. By tightening up the specificity of the classification categories that Kuhn and Jackson (2008) recommended, I was also able to conduct a genuinely dialectical analysis of this knowledge construction process (one that examined both structural and agential influences) and the dialectic of control associated with this process.

**Contributions to our Understanding of CCO**

The analytical framework I have just finished assessing is, as readers know, part of a larger analytical framework. Before turning my attention to the second part of this framework, however, I will attempt to summarize what my analytical approach (an enhanced version of Kuhn and Jackson’s, 2008, model) has enabled me to accomplish, in terms of my research goals, and how these accomplishments contribute to my field of scholarship.

The underlying purpose of my study, again, was to examine the central role that communication practices played in the constitution of organizational authority, in general, and in the ways in which both dominant and subordinate members contributed to
this constitutive process in particular. Early on, I situated these goals within the larger scholarly project of examining the communicative construction of organization (CCO). Although Kuhn and Jackson have contributed much to this area of study (both collaboratively and independently) (e.g. Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009; Jackson, Poole & Kuhn, 2002; Kuhn, 2006; Kuhn & Ashcraft, 2003; Kuhn & Corman, 2003), in presenting their analytical model (2008) they downplay the potential that their model holds for advancing our understanding of CCO. My study indicates that much can be learned about the communicative constitution of organization by taking the analytical approach they suggested (combined with the enhancements I added).

One of the premises of CCO theory is that organizational members, through their everyday communication practices, co-construct organizational meanings. Although a small group of scholars have attempted to empirically document this co-construction process (e.g. Katambe & Taylor, 2006; Saludadez & Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al, 2001), very few studies have been explicitly aimed at examining how organizational authority influences (and is influenced by) this process (Fairhurst & Cooren, 2007 and McPhee, Corman & Iverson, 2007 are notable exceptions). In my project, I examined how organizational authority itself is constituted in and through communication practice (in the case of my study, how the various communication practices of OTC members/constituents shaped their shared understanding of organizational decision-making authority). By disassembling the turn-by-turn co-construction of organizational authority (what might also be understood as the power relations among members), my study challenged the notion of authority/power as merely some kind of force (or reality) externally imposed on organizational members/constituents. Instead it showed
authority/power to be (at least in part) a phenomenon that was enacted through the everyday communication practices of organizational members.

In addition to helping to substantiate the largely constructed nature of organizational authority, the analytical framework I developed also enabled me to illustrate how both dominant and subordinate members contributed to this process through various kinds of communication practices, what represents a significant extension of the small body of research concerned with these issues. Treating the knowledge-accomplishing activity that I studied as a recursive process enabled me to examine how members drew upon knowledge outcomes produced in previous interactions’ (outcomes that I understood as sets of structural resources) as they negotiated newly emergent knowledge issues. Studying these structural resources as both “means” and “outcomes”, I was able to show how organizational members, through their ongoing communication practices, began to institutionalize certain resource sets, in other words, how these structures became more deeply embedded in participants’ communication practices. This type of analytical approach helped to illustrate both how dominant authorities attempted to reproduce their dominance (leveraging previously established advantages), and how subordinate members resisted (as well as participated in) these attempts. In the case of my study, then, the sets of structural resources (or knowledge outcomes) that were produced by the close of each interaction seemed to be not only constraining but also, potentially enabling for both groups of organizational actors. In this way, my findings lend support to Giddens’ (1984) claims about the dialectic of control involved in the co-construction process, both expanding and

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57 Again, to study this process, I used (and slightly adapted) the model for examining this process that Kuhn (1997) proposed (based on the models of Yates and Orlikowski [1992]; Barley (1986)).
complicating our understanding of the co-construction process. More specifically, my study helps to highlight the inherent tensions involved in the constitution of organizational authority and the way in which these tensions are actively maintained (or potentially revised) through members’ everyday communication practices.

Although the setting where I conducted my case study made these tensions relatively easy to reveal (a setting where both academic and administrative authority are recognized) \(^{58}\), Giddens (1984) asserts that these tensions exist, at least to some degree, in any social situation, creating the discursive possibility for subordinate members in any setting to participate (at least to some degree) in the shaping of organizational authority (Giddens, 1984: 16). Using my case study as a model, the analytical framework I developed might be used to study interactions where the margins for influencing change are narrower and, therefore, more challenging to expose. For the time being, my findings support the notion that (at least in the setting I studied) the degree to which subordinate members influence the constitution of organizational authority depends largely on the choices they make regarding when and how to employ the various discursive resources at their disposal, an idea that extends our current understanding of the communicative constitution of organization.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, I assumed (following Giddens’ lead) that appreciating the co-construction of organizational authority depended not only on the communication practices in which members engaged (in the knowledge construction processes I examined) but also on the unintended outcomes associated with these practices. As I teased out possible ramifications of these practices in my case study, I

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\(^{58}\) In his discussion about structural constraint, Giddens points out (on numerous occasions) that, “the degree of closure of societal totalities—and of social systems in general—is widely variable. The higher education setting, as compared to other work settings, might be understood as relatively open, because of the traditional expectations around shared authority.
identified a correlation between the resistant communication practices of subordinate members and the change in communication practices of dominant members (the intensification of discursive closure strategies). In the case I studied, these actions seemed to ironically reproduce the structural constraint subordinate members sought to revise. Combining the findings from the first and second parts of my analysis, therefore, seemed to substantiate Giddens’ (1984) claim that although actors are deeply knowledgeable, there are also “bounds” to that knowledgeability—bounds that can have a potentially significant impact on the constitution of organizational authority.

Current CCO theory has yielded many important insights about the importance of examining the dimension of knowledge/knowing in organizing process. The degree to which the unintended consequences I investigated seemed to effect the knowledge outcomes I studied, however, suggest that perhaps more attention is needed in terms of examining the bounds of the knowledge/knowing that scholars have begun to examine (in whatever theoretical form these inquiries might take). My study represents a valuable first step in that direction.

Limitations of my Study

The question I proposed to study in this project was how the communication practices of various members/constituents of the OTC constituted the group’s understanding of organizational authority. Given the importance of academic authority in these negotiations, the contributions of academic constituents represented an important part of this structuration process. Yet this constituency was absent in the majority of the meetings I observed and recorded. As my analysis demonstrated, it was common for those who saw themselves as representing academic interests to speak for this
constituency (in the case of the IT Council meetings, the administrators from academically-related offices and in the case of the other meetings, the departmental liaisons from academic departments as well as a small group of IT service professionals who vocalized faculty and student interests). In my analysis, I treated these contributions as valid representations of faculty interests (following the practices of the groups I observed). It possible, however, that faculty members themselves (and students) may have negotiated the problematic situations I analyzed quite differently than those who spoke on their behalf.

My analysis of the interactions I observed and recorded that did include faculty members (the public forums with the CIO candidates, the faculty assembly’s interaction with the new CIO, the executive faculty meeting with the new CIO, approximately 15 strategic planning committee meetings, and 3 strategic planning meetings that included all the faculty leads and IT professional co-lead from each committee), indicated that the communication practices of faculty members were very similar to those who spoke on their behalf. (Again, in a number of cases, I actually closely analyzed problematic situations from these meetings in preparation to include them in my study. Given my time and space constraints, I ultimately decided not to, but my analysis proved beneficial to my being able to understand the interactions I included within the larger context of meetings that did include a faculty voice.) What changed, rather dramatically, when faculty members directly participated in these interactions was the deference that the CIO showed them (in contrast with his treatment of those attempting to represent faculty interests). While the analysis that I presented in my project was informed by these other

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59 In about half of the strategic planning committees, I was given permission to observe but not record. The same was true for all of the strategic planning discussions that included the committee leads and co-leads.
interactions, more direct faculty involvement in the interactions I selected to analyze would have strengthened my findings. Unfortunately, in the interactions that I observed during the first two periods of my data collection (interactions that became the foundation of my study), faculty members just did not have this kind of involvement (as they either chose not to attend or were not included the meetings I observed).

While on the subject of things that informed my analysis but to which I did not directly refer, I made use of the interview data that I collected (11 interviews in all) in a similar way as the faculty-led meetings that I analyzed but did not have the space to include in my project. Frequently, during my close analysis, I would reflect on the things that speakers said in my interviews with them to help me interpret the meaning of their turns. This was also true for all the many hours of observation of the groups’ interactions that were not part of my close analysis. Ideally, I would have referenced these interviews (and these other parts of the meeting transcripts) more directly, as part of my analysis. Given the already complex nature of my analysis, however, this was simply not practical.

Discussing these issues brings to light another fundamental limitation of my study: namely the interpretative nature of my project. In addition to my interviews with group members, my larger experience of their interactions, and the like, my experience as a graduate student (and instructor) at MU, my interest in the influx of managerialist Discourse in the higher education, the faculty on my dissertation committee, and countless other parts of my experience inevitably influenced my reading of the texts I analyzed. The nature of this analysis—where I was interpreting participants’ interpretations—further complicates my findings. The benefit of this being a dissertation project is that I had a dedicated reader (my advisor) giving me critical feedback on my
analysis on a regular basis, providing me the opportunity to check my interpretations with at least one other scholar. The methodological emphasis of the project also forced me to continually evaluate and to try and firm up the analytical perimeters of the study as well as to articulate these for readers. While both of these helped to increase the reliability of my study, to what degree I “accurately” described members’/constituents’ understandings of the interactions I analyzed remains unclear. In line with countless other researchers in my field, I present my research findings to readers with the caveat that they are but one of many possible interpretations.

In some instances, the limitations of my project can be productively linked to opportunities for future researchers. For example, in studying the constraints inherent in the constitution of organizational authority, I focused my attention on structural constraint, largely because the strong connections between this type of constraint and the communication practice (and knowledge construction process) that I proposed to study. As Giddens (1984), himself, points out, however, this kind of constraint is “only one type among several others60 characteristic of human social life” (1984: 283). An additional limitation of my study, therefore, was my relative lack of consideration of the material constraints that both influenced and are influenced by the interactions I investigated. Although I treated members’ status in the organization as a kind of material constraint, there were numerous others I neglected (e.g. bodies, buildings, the material aspects of technologies, etc.). All of these represent potential avenues for future research.

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60 Giddens’ list of types of constraint includes “material constraints, constraints related to sanctions, and structural constraints” (1984: 282). He describes the latter two as being more negotiable than the former.
Additional Implications for Future Research

As readers know, the research approach I took in my pilot case study was the result of deliberate and careful consideration of the methodological implications of the particular theoretical approach I selected (in this case: Giddens’ structuration theory). Given the relatively new status of the field of CCO and the complex and diverse epistemological positions that various CCO theorists take, greater attention to the relationship between the ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions of future research efforts seems warranted. This is particularly true for scholars who draw on practice-based theories, theories that pose fundamental challenges on the methodological front.

Part of what I discovered in attending to these kinds of issues in my project was the importance of a longitudinal approach for addressing the practice-based questions I proposed. In the case of my project, this approach yielded many benefits. Indeed, many of the contributions that I proposed earlier were made possible by the longitudinal nature of my study. While OC scholars have increasingly been drawing on practice-based theories, very few have examined these practices over longer periods of time. My project suggests that this kind of study approach is not only valuable, but, in some cases imperative (the impact of unintended consequences on the communicative construction of organization authority being just one example). If we wish to deepen our understanding about certain communication phenomena—phenomena that evolve over time and across space—we need to begin to expand our research lens.

As my project demonstrates, examining communication practices over time (and, in my case, to a smaller degree, across space) requires considerable resource and time
investments on the part of the researcher. This was especially true given the discourse analysis model I employed, a model where just the mere preparation of the data was extremely resource/time intensive. Given the success of my project (in terms of the scholarly contributions it makes), however, the investments seem to have been justified. If others are to make similar contributions, however, our expectations as a scholarly community, in terms of the turn-around time for research projects, would need to change. Alternatively, the goal of conducting studies with a greater reach in terms of time and space might open the door to more collaborative types of research endeavors. Although in some senses a daunting idea, it is intriguing to consider what progress might we make, in terms of our understanding of CCO, if we altered our current tradition of the solitary researcher. Looking at the larger implications of my study, then, seems to beg the question to what degree are the existing norms of OC research practice compatible with the complex new organizational theories that scholars in the field are generating—a question that I anticipate OC scholars to be wrestling with more and more as time goes on.

In addition to stimulating these kinds of questions for OC scholars, my project also introduces potential new avenues of inquiry for those who have made the organization of higher education (HE) the focus of their research, particularly for those concerned about the increase in managerialist values and practices in this setting (many of whom are located outside of the field of OC). First and foremost it highlights the central role that communication practice plays in these changes, underscoring for future researchers the importance of attending to these kinds of practices. It also offers an alternative lens for empirically examining the dialectical relationship between the two
main dimensions of communication practice—Discourse and discourse—a lens that has the potential to enhance the efforts of other scholars committed to exploring this dialectical relationship (e.g. Trowler, 1998, 2001; Fairclough, 1993, 2003). In addition to stimulating new lines of inquiry about how managerialism is enacted in HE organizations, my project also sheds new light on who participates in this constitutive process.

More specifically, traditionally those who have studied the org of HE have studied the tension between academic and administrative authority. Taking a slightly different approach, I chose to study the communication practices not only of faculty members and administrators also of the group I referred to as “technology professionals”. Over the course of my analysis I came to realize that these three categories were often insufficient in representing the diversity of constituents involved. As I discussed earlier, the “faculty members” category that I had designated did not adequately reflect the myriad actors who represented faculty/student interests in the interactions I studied. Similarly, the other categories did not capture important differences between the institution-level versus department or office-level administrators I studied, nor the various levels of technology professionals who participated in the conversations, (e.g. high-level versus mid-level directors, technicians versus support personnel, etc.). Based on his research findings, Trowler (1998) has called for scholars who study managerialist Discourse in the higher education setting to complicate our understanding of the faculty members who work in them.61 In a similar vein, my study suggests that our current treatment of administrators and technology professionals as uniform groups is also too

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61 Trowler (1998, 2001) is particularly interested in how faculty members’ philosophical commitments (in terms of their educational philosophy) impact their response to managerialist Discourse, in addition to the disciplinary differences that others (e.g. Becher, 2001) have talked about as being significant.
simplistic. Given the increasingly important role that these groups are playing in the organization of HE, more focused attention towards understanding the differences within these groups seems warranted, highlighting another possible area for future inquiry.

Conclusion

This research project is grounded in the assumption that practice theory holds great potential for increasing our understanding about the role that communication plays in the constitution of organization, in general, and of organizational authority, in particular. Building on the efforts of a small group of scholars (Kuhn and Jackson, 2008; Taylor & Trujillo, 2004), I focused my research attention on the methodological dimensions associated with this academic pursuit, an area that has been relatively neglected by OC (and CCO) scholars. As this focus represents a fairly novel research emphasis, it is clearly ripe for critique and for extension, both of which I encourage. At the very least, I hope that my project will stimulate fresh discussion among those concerned with strengthening the intersection between CCO’s theoretical and empirical investigations. As the case I have investigated begins to highlight, advancing this dialogue is not just an academic issue but one that has important implications for the day-to-day work lives of organizational members.
REFERENCES


Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Organizational Communication Terms

Communication: “the dynamic, interactive negotiation of meaning through symbol use (includes a wide range of verbal, nonverbal, textual & mediated forms)” (Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren, 2009: 6).

Organizational Communication: “the process of creating collective, coordinated structures of meaning created through symbolic practices oriented towards the achievement of organizational goals” (Mumby, 2000: 587).

The Communicative Constitution of Organization (or CCO): “the ongoing, dynamic interactive process of manipulating symbols toward the creation, maintenance, destruction, and/or transformation of meanings, which are axial—not peripheral—to organizational existence and organizing phenomena” (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009: 22).

Organizational Power: the capability of an organizational member to influence the coordinated structures of meaning described above.

Organizational Knowledge: the shared understanding (both discursive and tacit, local and historical) that organizational members must continually co-construct in order to “go on” with their organizational practices.

Social practices: “A social practice is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, “things” and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge (Reckwitz, 2002: 249).

discourse—“language use understood in relationship to the specific process and social context in which discourse is produced” (Alvesson & Karreman: 2000:1133);
Discourse—“a way of conceptualizing, reasoning through, and discussing events” (Deetz, 1992: 222); context-spanning systems of meaning.

e.g. Managerialism: A mode of thought and action based on a desire to control, enhance efficiency, normalize and suppress conflict and promote the universalization of sectional managerial interests (Deetz, 1992, as summarized by Kuhn, 2009).

Discursive Resources: “concepts, expressions, or other linguistic devices that, when deployed in talk, present explanations for past and/or future activity that guide interactants’ interpretation of experience while molding individual and collective action. Discursive resources are drawn from social practice, render activity sensible for participants, and contribute to ongoing system structuration” (Kuhn, 2006: 1341).

Discursive Closure: the suppression of potential conflict through discursive mechanisms.
e.g. **Legitimation**: “the rationalization of decisions and practices through the invocation of higher order explanatory devices” (1992: 195);

**Meaning Denial/Plausible Deniability**: where “a message is present and disclaimed, said and not said…thus enabling the produced speaker control without responsibility and precluding the critical examination of what was said (because it was not said),” (1992: 194-195);

**Pacification**: “messages that pacify tend to discount the significance of an issue, the solvability of the issue, or the ability of the participant to do anything about the issue” (1992: 196-197);

**Naturalization**: “the treatment of the socially produced as given in nature” (1992: 190).

*Methods/Methodology Terms*

**Methods**: the tools and techniques used to collect and analyze data;

**Methodology**: the principles guiding a researcher’s choice of methods.

**Ontology**: what can be known (the nature of reality);

**Epistemology**: relationship between the knower and the known;

**Methodology**: how one goes about studying/finding out about the known.

**Episode of Interaction**: “a bounded sequence, a discourse event with a beginning and an end surrounding a spate of talk, which is usually focused on the treatment of some problem, issue, or topic” (Linell, 1998: 183).

**Problematic Situation**: “the state of affairs formed by a stream of past and projected practices in which actors perceive a need to take action to address a threat (current or potential) to ongoing action” (Kuhn and Jackson, 2008: 4).

**Identification**: actors read and project allegiance(s) to a particular audience (or perspective);

**Legitimation**: “actors tacitly ask, what actions does the organization/group expect from me? (based on my identity claims)”;

**Accountability**: “actors look to particular members of an audience for direction and validation” (Kuhn and Jackson, 2008: 6).

*Structuration Theory Terms*

**Structuration**: “the process by which systems are produced and reproduced through members’ use of rules and resources” (Poole, Seibold, McPhee, 1996: 117).

**Rule and Resources**: these are the alternative concepts that Giddens proposes to describe social “structures”. He describes rules as “techniques or generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social practices” (1984: 21), in other words “a form of practical knowledge, like tacit recipes of ‘how to do something’” (Banks and Riley, 1993: 173). What interests Giddens are the ways in which these rules are integrally related to
“authoritative resources”, in other words, “the capabilities of agents to generate command over other persons’ social conditions” (Banks & Riley, 1993).

**Duality of structure:** according to Giddens, “one of the main propositions of structuration theory is that the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction” (1984: 19), what he describes as the “duality of structure”; said in another way, “the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices they recursively organize” (1984: 25).

**Power:** Giddens describes agency as “the capability of an individual to ‘make a difference’ to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events...that is, to exercise some sort of power” (1984: 14).

*Relating this to organizational communication:* the capability of an individual to influence the process of creating collective, coordinated structures of organizational meaning

**Dialectic of control:** Power within social systems which enjoy some continuity over time and across space presumes regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities in contexts of social interaction. But all forms of dependence offer some resources whereby those who are subordinate can influence the activities of their superiors. This is what I call the dialectic of control in social systems” (Giddens, 1984: 16).

*Relating this to organizational communication:* what becomes interesting is “how the indeterminacy of control/meaning is subject to various and competing efforts to shape it” (Mumby)
Appendix B—Transcripts Used in Chapter 6

Excerpts from IT Council Meeting, April 2007

Scott: …As opposed to the last two items where this is the group that things go through, this group doesn’t really have any say over these issues….

((Scott then distributes handout that explains the new funding model, emphasizing that he is reporting on the “recommendations made by others”. Several members voice concerns.))

Martin: This, how are you justifying the impact of this funding structure on both the auxiliaries and the general student body? It just doesn’t seem fair. I mean by the time we’ve gotten this far we’ve gotten into an almost political discussion as opposed to a debate about funding policy.

Scott: There really is no debate. We, we all looked at the weighted model and signed off on it as an option and the increases that those groups will face are minimal.

Colleen: I’d beg to differ. I did just did the math if you look at the ( ) (refers to the print document that participants are reviewing), that would mean an increase in charges to resident students of $$ per year. I’d call that a significant increase.

Scott: But that doesn’t account for the subsidy that the plan creates (again refers to the print document).

Colleen: I don’t know why it’s a “subsidy”. Who was it that called it that, was it Porter? Even if you look at that total, that the numbers there don’t really help us much either. And what about this ( ) cost? Its different than what came out of the task force we’re it impacts us differently,

Scott: We should have Porter here to defend himself. I’m not sure why it wasn’t in any of the initial calculations.

Colleen: I’m just not sure this is right I, and I also feel that you and Porter charged this group to investigate these issues and to come up with solutions that reflected the needs of the campus groups each of us is here to represent. The model has been I don’t want to say, disregarded but I’m afraid that may have been what happened. I mean we there’s a group of people who were very dedicated to this process and who put a lot of time and energy into researching and discussing these issues so I’m hoping that these models were seriously considered. Now there’s new information?

Scott: The two I can say that the two models went forward. What I can’t say is whether there was a thorough consideration of both of those models. We quickly jumped to number five.

Mark: If we look at model five, there were a handful of adjustments ((Mark goes on to explain the details of these.))

Adam: This, frankly this discussion hasn’t convinced me. I just don’t see how it’s a wash you know I just don’t see it.
Michelle: This is Porter’s decision he in the end and he’s got to live with it. But if
Colleen can’t explain why this this is why the student budget increased this
amount and here’s what you’re getting for it/
Colleen: I’ve got to answer to the student body as a whole and that’s going to be
hard. If the that our allocations are based on projected usage I’m gonna its
gonna take some real finesse.
Michelle: Its back to that pair of pants we had issues with last month. Its different
pockets but it’s the same pair of pants.
Scott: Okay, so. You want me to pass your concerns on about the impacts on the
auxiliaries and on students. I can do that. Its just one of those things where
you start out where you’re just gonna make it dead simple you know like tax law
and as it unfolds it gets increasingly complex.

Excerpts from IT Council Meeting, May 2007

Scott: Brief update on the network task force. Oh, I forgot my other update, I think
the policy that’s coming down on June 30 is a policy that says that we’re not
allowed to smile on our way to work. ((Scott’s joke references a previous
comment. Lots of laughter from the group.))
Stevie: We’re being recorded, Scott.
Scott: I know we’re being recorded but I also think/
Kyle: So smile now, huh?/ ((more laughter))
Will: He said with chuckle/
Michelle: Don’t say his name afterwards/
Kyle: But we can smile on our way home ((more laughter)); generally more
appropriate than on the way in.
Scott: Okay, if I were to give the most brief and only slightly facetious summary of
where we’ve gone in the last month-and-a-half on the Network Taskforce, it is
that the taskforce came out with a bunch of models, one of which model five was
here, ((draws an imaginary mark on the table with his left finger)) then it got
handed over to me and Porter who because of our own whatever, and with a little
help from [Residential] took it on a journey that went all the way around there,
there, there, there ((moves his right finger in a circle in front of him, emphasizing
points each time he says, ‘there’)) and ended up about there ((draws another
mark with his right hand right next to his left hand)). ((Laughter from the
group)). So essentially back to, extremely close to where we started.

Scott:….Anyhow, what model five was about was that was the usage model where
we’re billing basically about head count, and we had something worked into
that model where [residential], which was getting billed at a fraction, I think
it was about half of what everyone else is, and some of you who knew the
history knew where that came from and that already represented an increase,
not a trivial increase, of where [residential] was being billed before. And in
the interim we looked, Porter actually came in next and looked at removing
the general subsidy, for those of you who knew about that, but by the time it
has come full circle, I don’t think, I know we’re not doing that, in fact. And
there’s a detail in here but my understanding is that we’re not, to get the
numbers to work out to where we think they are, we’re no longer billing a
quarter of that general fund subsidy back to the auxiliaries but we’ll need to
check on that.

Michelle: Its not a quarter is a half now?

Scott: No its not, its not. Just so you know where the numbers are, if we look four
years out, the auxiliaries, other than housing, would increase over that four
year period by 29%, the general fund would increase by 29%, there was a
little bit of fool’s luck in the final numbers of that return debt, housing would
increase by a larger percentage than that but one that has been negotiated and
agreed upon by [residential]. And then we’re also working pretty carefully so
that in the next year and, in some cases, two years after, the budgets are what
people are prepared to pay. So my understanding is that next year the
auxiliaries will be paying what they thought they would be paying next year
because it’s just too late in the process for it to be otherwise. For residential
its actually a two year period because you’re so roped in with this nice little
thing of the Otter Creek project that so you’re maxing out the increases that
you can do. So there’s no more blood left in that stone, whether we want
there to be or not, and that’s the summary of it, though. In the end, with our
( ) we’ve come back to one, essentially one, of the points. Mark or
Nathan, did you want to add anything else?

Nathan: I guess the only thing I would add to that, as Scott said, we’ve got this
four year approach where we kind of step it up a quarter each year, and what
I’ve talked to Porter about, and he’s concurred, is that there’s about a $xxx
general fund subsidy that’s going to be continued over that period. As we get
close to the end of that phase in, I would hope we’d bring a like group back
together again to examine the appropriateness of potentially phasing out the
general fund subsidy for the network, as such. So that’s something that’s
been put on the shelf for now but, maybe its appropriate and it stays that way
forever, but its something that should be reconsidered, not in this four year
period but later on.
Appendix C—Transcripts Used in Chapter 7

Excerpts from Community Gathering Meeting, August 2007

Ira: I’m Ira, from the [English] department. I have a question about policies. The campus in the last few months has put out quite a lot of policies, and they’re all over on Central IT’s website, not only to be read by users but to be signed and then to become part of their personnel file. But to be honest, in our department at least, I don’t know of anybody who has read or signed those. And I can’t imagine how these are going to enforced, at the bottom level, to the people who really have to sign?

Mark (Exec Director of IT): Are you talking specifically about security policy?
Ira: Yeah, there are tons of policies out there, especially new computer policies: how to use the web, how do you handle passwords, lots of stuff, and many of those are designed so they have to be signed by the employee, and then should become part of the personnel file, that’s what it says at least.

Mark: So I’ll try and kick this off and then I’ll pass it to Joe. There are some collectively new system policies, and in there it actually states in there that it’s the responsibility of what they call the organizational unit, or OU, has responsibility for those IT professionals and those providing IT services, that in their position description it needs to actually explicitly say what some of their responsibilities are. So what it does is, it integrates it into our current HR fabric if you will, so that people specifically know they have responsibilities for security and so on and so forth.

Ira: Okay but how are you going to plan to educate people [e.g. faculty] about these, other than from the bottom up? Or are you ever going to have a director’s seminar or something that comes from the top down?
Mark: Talking about top down, the chancellor was just here and one of the things he and I were just talking about was the initial communication around the security initiative which will be coming from the chancellor, and it will be going to the deans and directors basically telling them now that this is their responsibility. From there obviously there’s a lot of steps we need to do. As far as that process Joe can probably explain that better than I can.

Joe: So, just to follow up on that, we will need to have more of an educational campaign around that, that will incorporate the messages from the chancellor as well as all type of meetings. The other thing that’s important to realize, is that, particularly for that first group, the high risk areas where we have social security numbers and credit cards, that information is actually coming from my office from me to the department chairs, so I’m not relying on you all to, you know, get this letter and say ‘I need you to sign this,’ that will obviously come from me to that individual saying ‘here’s how things have changed and here’s what you need to do.’ (15:19)

Eddie: Hi, its me again, um yeah um yeah I got a big mouth right, um, I’m sorry if this is gonna come off as kind of blunt but that’s kind of the kind of person I am so. I came from the private sector, and I see a lot of things going on, and I think ITS is just kind of representative, of sort of the administration’s filtering down of things but. I’ve been here for ten years, I’ve seen an awful lot of reorgs and every time you guys reorganize, everything you add these organizational layers
of upper management that are more and more difficult to filter through where
these information and directives are coming from, and words like clarity and
transparency are used a lot while ever obscuring any clarity or transparency.
And I am terrified, having come from the private sector, that we’re trying to
move all this stuff to a rather dangerous business model instead of an
educational one. And I know that we here are all talking about a lot of technical
and sort of a business-oriented processes, but I’m really concerned that a lot of
things are going to be sacrificed, a lot of sort of ideas that come from the bottom
up from the end-user, the end-user that we’re supposed to be seeking out to be
serving and um and I just kind of want to know what is, where is this re-org
going to leave us? I mean how long is this educational process going to take and
are we just going to get another reorg in another year. Um I mean we’re we
have, some a lot of us, its not just me, have a lot of problem having some kind of
faith that we are going to get transparency, accountability, that it’s not going to
be ‘oh yeah, you logged on to this website, so now you’re responsible.’ You
know, and directives that come from top down, we don’t get educated about, so
I think a lot of this would like to know where we’re going to see ourselves in a
year. Will we see this process completed and a working machine underway, or
are we that well this all just kind of fell apart and in another year we’re going to
reorg?

Mark: I’m not sure which question to answer out of all of that. I think organizations and
how you organize really should be developed around the services you provide, so we
talk about clarity, we talk about providing input and being involved, it’s really around
the services. I don’t view that as being around what is the organizational structure. The
organizational structure should be agnostic to the services you provide, and at times
we need to create organizations around the people we have, the skill sets we have and
so forth, and so you create an organization and it does evolve over time because we
see around 20% attrition a year, which is pretty normal for an IT organization, so you
see those things evolving. You also see the service needs around the campus evolve.
So say that we ever set an organization that’s there for any long period of time is really
a hard thing to do. So, it’s really about clarity around the services. You know, the
question about some of these policies, and so on and so forth, those are the kinds
things that it’s good for us to hear, is to know where there’s not clarity around things,
where there is not clarity on the type of services we have, what kind of funding model
it has, what does it mean to the auxiliary. That’s where the clarity needs to be. One of
the things Mark mentioned before, was, you know, I get asked occasionally for an
organization chart so people can get phone numbers by names because there is some
history behind the services delivered by this person as opposed to delivered by this
organization, so we’ve gone through some organizational evolutions over time to try
to change that. So you don’t have to know [David Lauer’s] number, which is 678-495-
99987 ((laughing)), to get () support, although he’s a great resource. Hopefully
we’re putting an organization in place that provides clarity around how to get, how to
provision that service, how to get the help when it’s broken, or where do you go, you
know there’s some architectural people here, where do you go when they start talking,
what’s the next gen for the network. We may have folks here, we have folks here from
units that have piloted services for us. Psychology, for example just piloted a gigabit
subnet, a reading script around some of their research fees and so forth. That’s not a
service yet because we don’t know how to make that a service broad-based for
campus, we will eventually though. But that’s where, when we talk about clarity,
that’s where I see clarity. And hopefully we don’t make you responsible for whatever
our organization is and whether or not we’ve reorganized or any of those terms.
Joe: I also want to say that I take your words as a, a caution and warning about making
sure that that we don’t move back, that we really do move forward. That we take this
as an a vacuum. I do believe that as I say as I’ve talked to chairs some have said that
that’s the first time they’ve had somebody come talk to them and and my intent is to in
increase that and I know Dennis’ intent at the CTO level is to increase that, so, I think
that there’s as good a chance as not that this will actually start to address some of what
you talked about even more rather than less.

Porter: Let’s go ahead and get going. I think we’re going to be pretty light today. I’m
actually going to have to leave in about 45 minutes so we’ll see if we can get our work
done in that time if not, Mark can continue the conversation. In September, when we
last spoke, we talked about where this group was going, what its future was, what its
role was, how it can help the institution and I still think that those questions will
continue to be out there although hopefully not forever [laughs]. We won’t be
wandering forever, we’ll have some direction at some point but in the meantime, and
maybe to help us define that, Mark and I have spoke about how we can get in synch
with the planning process that’s going on institution wide, that’s the “Tomorrow and
Beyond” effort. And as you know, the strategic plan, at least the written document
portion of the strategic planning process is coming to a close, most of the work is still
yet to come. What’s next is to write down a whole bunch of ideas and then figure out
how to do them and it’s the figure out how to do them piece that’s gonna take a lot of
effort. While we’ve got the first part almost completed soon we take it to the board of
regents to get their approval, we want to talk about IT from a campus perspective and
its role in helping to support this plan and to make it happen. The next major phase of
the process is that there will be conversations involving folks from every corner of
campus, talking about things like enrollment, financial planning, clusters of others,
given resources, given staffing, given monies to do some exploratory work, and then
come back to the next step, implementation. The Chancellor has talked about how to
view the plan, as request for proposals, lets think about the written document as a
request for proposals…Essentially, there are two parts to the plan, what we know we
need to do in order to stay competitive, the stuff we need or we’re falling behind, and
then, what will help distinguish us, what will help us stand out. Those became known
as these [10] big ideas, that’s what got the attention, much of the focus built around
thos. More recently, the reality is that the majority of what we spend will be on that
first part… I see this group as an important group of experts who are uniquely
positioned to make these things come true. So I’m asking what can you contribute to
the process, and understanding you may ask for some resources in order to help you, but
I want us to think about it in that form as well…Were still in phase one, strategic
planning, I know strategic planning has been done for IT separate from Future and
Beyond, and I’m not suggesting that we redo that, but we ought to talk about how they
dovetail. If we were to think about what we already know, based on the conversations
that have taken place around this table for the last number of years, what would we say
about what we’re doing now and how it can make these 10 things happen, how can we
enhance what we’re doing now that can help these 10 things happen, and what we’re
not doing now that is necessary to make these 10 things happen, if we could have some
discussion over the course of this meeting and the next meeting and in a couple of
meetings, in a pretty tight time frame, if we could come up with those three lists, its not
exhaustive, I think we can catch up with the process and be in a position to have that
document contribute to the next phase and then when we get there we’ll have to talk
about how this group or some similar group will represent IT in the future. So that’s
really what I’d like us to focus on, and all I have to say, maybe turn it over to Mark or
Stevie to say how we got to where we have here, so its really just a prompt to engage us
in the conversation.

Mark: ((Hands out copies of the “matrix”)) So we were trying to come up with something
that essentially made some sense, what we’re proposing as a draft matrix. We had done
some of this before the conversation about the 3 categories that Porter talked about, we
had innovative offerings and core offerings and things like that and then we tried to map
those to the Tomorrow and Beyond categories. Really the point is to come up with a
tool if you will that we all share so the same understanding and how does it map to
those 10 items, what we want to do is to come up with some clarity for campus about
where do we invest in IT that will enable these 10 initiatives. There’s nothing sacred
about this, that was really the idea behind this, was to come up with a conceptual tool.

Colleen: One piece that’s jumping out for me is do we have the right representatives at the
table to look at this and I’m I thought that was one of the things we were supposed to be
talking about was the membership of IT Council, and as we look at these initiatives, do
we have the right folks at the table to do that? The one that, for example, the global
crossroads one and the internationalization of the campus, you know do we have
anybody at the table who really brings expertise to that discussion or at least perspective
from that those initiatives to help us look at the IT commitments as well, so

Porter: Okay/

Colleen: I don’t want to add a 5th matrix but I think that should be a discussion/

Porter: Sure ya/

Colleen: Before we get into the discussion.

Porter: Okay, sure. Well that wasn’t just a little comment that’s a big ((laughs)), a big issue
so let’s take five minutes or ten minutes or however long you want to talk about that a
little bit. We did talk about that last time and I said it again at the beginning but kind of
went by it. I do think we’re still trying to figure out what this committee is, who’s
around the table, what it is we’re trying to accomplish. I was trying to take advantage of
the fact that this group has been together for a while and some conversations have been
happening here, some information has been shared and there should be some expertise
around this table to be able to be able to help inform this process. But sure, we can ask
that question. I’ll put it to rest of the group, we’re a little bit light, today, not everybody
is here that should be here, but is this the right group to do something like this? I mean
put yourself out of business if you want, ((laughter from one group member)), or not.
Step up and say we’re the right ones no we’re not. What do you think?
Colleen: Is there enough academic representation? I mean it seems like there’s needs to be
more colleges and schools representation
Porter: Um hmm
Sam: Actually I should know this but I’ll ask because other people are probably wondering
the same thing, exactly who all do we have represented on the committee?
Porter: Yeah, you have a list don’t you (referring to Mark)?
Mark: So, on the academic side, we’re missing [Jim], [Paul] and [Carla]. I think that’s it.
That’s who we’re missing today.
Klaus: Is there anybody from engineering?
Mark: No.
Michelle: Business?
Mark: No, nope.
Sam: How about Law?
Michelle: How many academic people are there?
Mark: Well, I have a list of, of, everybody who’s here and their assistants so, I can’t really
do it that quick.
Kelly: I think there’s five
Michelle: Out of a total of?
Mark: 20
Kelly: No I think its closer to 15, 18.
Mark: So maybe a third
Michelle: Close to a third
Russ: Are there any students at the table?
Kelly: They’re invited.
Michelle: But they don’t show up.
Colleen: But if we’re not getting response from the student, the traditional student
representation, should we be looking for some student voice that we know would be
invested in helping have the conversation?
Kelly: I think so and I think its always worth our while to keep trying even though they
don’t always show up with regularity.
Colleen: Maybe MUSU would help us find two or three students that would
Porter: Well I think there’s probably two two different questions, hey can find a student you
will come to a meeting once a month to talk about IT or can you give us some student
representation to provide input into the strategic planning process on IT?
Michelle: Right, right. The latter
Porter: I think if it’s the latter, we may get a student who really gets involved or we may get
one who puts it on their list of everything else they have to do but then doesn’t show up.
Michelle: Seems like something like that would be more reactive, so you’d get a focus
group or a particular set of groups that could react to a document and give input to it
that way,
Colleen: That’s, that’s a good idea/
Michelle: /And we might get a better read on our customer base, if you will, rather than
somebody one person sitting at the table
Colleen: That’s a good idea,
Michelle: And you could do that with faculty you could do that with staff you could do that with other entities outside us as well.

Porter: So, this group? would help facilitate? A questionnaire? About what other groups thought were the needs around information technology to make the strategic plan work?

Michelle: Well what I’m thinking is if we put something together that we think addresses most of the the initiative kinds of things we could also get then invite input from these focus group areas that are not represented or that its been hard for us to get at the table on a regular basis

Colleen: So go hold a focus group, or a conversation I think a conversation I think would be more powerful than a survey,

Michelle: And its more interactive, you can actually find out what the thinking is or kind of push beyond

Porter: Um hmm.

Michelle: What a yes no answer might give you

36:20

Sharon: Well one poss possibility? is sort of lions and arenas come to mind but /

((laughter from the group))/ doing a presentation at the arts and sciences chairs and directors meeting.

Stevie: I think lions and arenas was a good analogy.

((more laughter))

Mark: So you’re out of town that week, right?

Kelly: It is a vocal and represents a very large you know chunk of the university, you certainly would get feedback.

Kelly: Yes/

Porter: Well. I’m sorry/

Kelly: Oh no I was just agreeing with/

Porter: Well, I think this goes all the way back to the question that started this part of the conversation is you know if, I’m mean that’s the whole goal is to find out what the faculty want to support to find out what the students are willing to support, I mean that’s what, we, here as IT representatives are here to try and enable, them to be able to do what they’re here to do, and if if they’re not willing to support the things that we come up with here?

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Excerpts from IT Council Meeting, December 2007

Michelle: Were there no new notes for today? Are we’re just continuing where we left off?

Mark: Yes we’re continuing, Porter has given us a little different path.

Michelle: Oh?

Adam: Does this mean a slanted path?

Mark: Change of direction

Colleen: A veer

Michelle: That is a veer

Mark: I’m slanted, he straightened me out

Michelle: I see okay.

You only said that because we’re recording,
Michelle: Its funny how it effects your behavior,
Yes it is. ((Lengthy silence))

Mark: Ok so, the last time we met, we came up with, collectively, this brilliant idea that we were going to all get together as a group and work on some stuff and when I talked to [Porter] and debriefed him he said “Naw, I want to take this in a different direction”, so that’s good.

Michelle: I wondered about that, I was thinking about that this morning, I never got any email from you.
Mark: I didn’t email you, the reason why is that our discussions here were getting a little ahead of the discussions around the Future and Beyond initiative and quite honestly, its getting close to being in glossy form.

Colleen: It’d be nice to have a copy.
Mark: So really we’re at the point now, yeah, that’s even been updated. Actually you have three things in this packet and I’ll talk through them and talk about what we’re going to accomplish today. So we’re still on the same theme what we want to try and accomplish to see how IT Council can support the efforts of F2030. So let me tell you about what you have in front of you. The top document has the flagship initiatives the core initiatives the things we’re going to start doing right away. Then there’s stuff on the more strategic efforts. A description of nine taskforces that was just published is on the second paragraph on second page. The committees will be looking at various issues, faculty, research, grad ed, enrollment, bud models, resources, facilities, outreach, I don’t know if those are completely populated or not.
Appendix D—Transcripts Used in Chapter 8

Excerpts from Community Gathering Meeting, November 2009

Charles: Our definitions of governance, that’s where I’d want to start.
Silvia: So what do we consider governance? You know, who is going to be involved and what’s going to be the pyramid of this thing? Who’s going to be the pinnacle? Is this the CIO, is this TPAG [Technology Professionals Advisory Group]? Does TPAG go away? Does IT Council go away?
Charles: Well IT Council has gone away, laughter
Silvia: It seems like it, doesn’t it.
Charles: It hasn’t been here for a while.
Greg: I think we should focus on IT, since this is kind of an IT event.
Silvia: Okay. Right, I’m just saying what’s the impact? So we’re going to start at the very bottom but where do we want to end up at? Where do we see governance ending up at? The president, the chancellor, the CIO? I mean is that what you’re asking?
Charles: Yeah, yeah. I mean, one of the things that I’ve learned is that when you talk to a faculty member about governance, what they hear is different from what I’m saying.
Silvia: Oh yeah,
Charles: Right? Because of their process. Faculty process for government is different from what I’m thinking. what I’m thinking is all steeped in national standards and IT governance principles. They’re not hearing what I’m saying because of that. So what is governance? What’s the purpose of governance? (1:29) And I don’t know that that’s a problem as much as an opportunity. If its defined well, its easier to do something about it.
Silvia: I think that should be the most important part is actually defining it. My theory on relativity, I love this, is that there’s no such thing as reality. Its all perception and your biases and everything else. So you may be saying A and be very clearly defining A but someone else might be hearing B because of something else. We don’t have a clear definition of governance on campus, right now. Most people don’t know what our...
Charles: Find you a place Victor?
Silvia: We tried to sneak in the definition of governance before you got here but um
Victor: Oh well, what is it?
Silvia: We have absolutely no idea how we want to define it yet/
Charles: I have a definition that I’d be happy to throw out but I’d like to hear everyone else’s.
Silvia: Well let’s start with yours as a framework and then we can throw things at you
Charles: Cause I’ve been working on this actually, I should just expose this to everybody, I’ve been working with [Paul] on a recommendation for data governance. You know, what should data governance be. We think the data itself should be governed, as an asset, much the way you govern cash, right? You have controllers that manage cash. And what you do with your finances, right? We have nothing like that for data as a campus. Um, but, my definition when I talk
about IT governance or data governance is clarity and decision making—pure and simple. Its understanding how decisions get made, who can make them and how to resolve problems with those decisions. To me, that’s what I would define as governance. Is, is an understanding and a clarity and making decisions about the use of technology or data or whichever subcategory you want to talk about. So that’s the way I try and keep it simple. Somebody else?

David: I take a top-down approach, meaning governance starts with business objectives. Because anytime IT comes into play, IT is going to want to support your business objectives. So up front knowing what your business objectives are and that comes from the functional side. You know management you know providing services to students, learning systems, having excellent faculty and staff you know, those sorts of things. So that’s the business governance and then IT comes in and says, “how are we going to support those business objectives”. And then you can build from the strategic level down and start forming your, your tactical plans. Um, and so when you’re looking at certain standard of best practices, you know like Cobit, ( ) IT, ITIL, there’s different models) but for our organization, you may choose one or two of those standards and then take pieces out of those best practices that suit your customized environment. And so that’s how it kind of works down from the top. So.

Charles: I would expand on what David’s saying, to actually make it work there has to be a set of standards or a framework used. I don’t think we can do business the way we did 20 years ago, when IT was a minor support, played a minor supporting role to the campus. So both for the university and the larger system, the accepted frameworks, and they can be any of them, are going to be necessary to help make the decisions for campus.

Bob: To me one of the big things that we’ve got to deal with governance is that we have to actually have some. Right now, it’s kind of faded. You know, we don’t have IT Council anymore. We’ve got TPAG but the problem that I have with it is the selection process, who’s on it and who can visit it, who can have input on it? No one knows, it’s not clearly defined. There needs to be enough transparency that the actual constituents can get the information and provide information back. Right now, we don’t know what comes out of TPAG, I mean, you don’t know, you don’t know what’s being discussed there and you don’t know if it’s addressing your concerns or you know. Being on the advisory board, I have 10 CSR’s that I go talk to. Well, I need to be able to take my concerns up to the governance council if we feel there’s something that’s not being addressed. You know Frank comes up to me and says, “Oh my god, what are they planning on doing on this?” We don’t have a voice right now, there’s this nice little clique of people that aren’t IT knowledgeable, and they shouldn’t be. I don’t really think that the top tier people should be a bunch of IT geeks. Cause (9:58) we’re going to have cool toys but they’re not going to be real (/ )

Charles: /Why is that? Is that they’re saying that the business objectives aren’t IT objectives?
Bob: I’m thinking/
Charles: /Is that why or is it something else?
Bob: Again, this is my personal opinion, I think a lot of IT people try to find IT solutions because that’s what we do. We can’t have IT solutions to every problem. You know, like dynamic DNS. It hasn’t been employed because we can’t technologically ensure that people won’t put in bad names on computers or try to highjack one of the campus servers or something like this. So, okay then, you make a policy by governance that says, ‘You want to play? Here are the rules. You violate them: here are the repercussions,’ and actually have the authority to back those up. Right now what we have is, ‘please don’t do anything bad,’ and there are no ramifications for negative actions.
David: That’s because nobody wants to be the bad guy.
Bob: Right/
David: /I totally agree with that/
Bob: /I’d love to be the bad guy. But no one cares what the our department says ((laughter from the group)).
David: I’ve dealt with faculty who break the rules and say, ‘if you do that you’re going to lose your privileges.’ And they say, ‘yeah, right, I need this to do my job. They’re not going to take it away from me.’ And they’re exactly right.
Silvia: I think we’re getting a little bit over on time. I think one of the things we really need to talk about is okay, so we all know these problems. How, what would you consider to be a model? How would we see governance happening? What, how would we structure the, the needs of the campus versus the business needs. How do we make them merge? How do we? Do we form different committees at different levels? Do we groups? You know, we can’t do a free democracy because we’ve seen what happens when we try that at any of our meetings
Victor: It’s, it’s not a democracy. (13:13)
Bob: Right, exactly.
Charles: Can’t be.
Bob: Exactly. But we do have to take the people’s opinions into account. But we need to aggregate that, to come up with what are the actual needs that we have. They actually are our business needs. We don’t know what the business need are. A lot of the things that come from [Central IT] are, don’t really, they see that there’s a need and they come up with a solution but they don’t really talk to the constituents. So then they provide it to us and we go/
David: What do we need that for?
Bob: What do we need that for? But they go to ITAG, and say here’s something we need and they come up with these great words and they say, that’s cool! That’s what we’re going to go behind.” but they’ve never, they don’t open it up to everyone else. So they don’t know what’s needed, what actually is the technical or just the general side of things. You know: file services. If you don’t provide any way that we need it, we can’t use it. It’s not that we’re being jerks about it its just that they don’t function. So there has to be a feedback in this, and right now, I don’t know
who’s on, I mean, I don’t know if there’s actually a way to find out the members
of TPAG.

Victor: Well, so this gets to some things that are important to me, in terms of, and these
are some of things I’m hearing around the table so, you know, a big part of
governance is interaction, feedback, communication. So there’s formal groups…((he
lists the various governance groups on campus))…but also I think governance has to
have one root in customer interaction. That’s one of the things I like about HE, you
live intimately with your customers. I mean they’re not out there as some kind of
statistic of how we’re doing with our customers, they’re standing in your doorway
they’re calling you on the phone. So there has to be a lot of that, at the same time
there has to be this distillation of what are IT providers going to provide. And all of
that gets at what I was trying to say about communication being a form of conflict,
not nasty conflict but open honest, “I want this” and somebody else saying “oh, I
can’t give you that”. So there’s a disagreement and hashing that out and maybe you
do or you don’t get what you want but I think almost any reasonable person, if they
can at least participate in why they’re not getting what they want and feel like, okay,
it might not be what I had hoped for, but I can see it is the way it is, I think are
willing to accept that. If it’s done reasonably and fairly, overall. If it’s some crazy
dictatorial thing, then, it will all fall apart quickly anyways, so.

Excerpts from Coffee and Conversation Meeting, December 2009

Victor: I’m going to skip to these 3 core slides. So what is IT how I see IT very
briefly, we’re at a higher ed institution, hope everybody is aware of that? So what
is a higher ed institution so a higher education institution ultimately is its faculty,
you can take away all kind of things, buildings, etcetera, ah, you could move it
somewhere else that’s not really what a higher ed institution is. Ultimately it’s the
faculty because the faculty teach and do research and especially here the students
are extremely important, somebody was telling me well Jon was telling me this
but I guess it’s an old rue here which is that there’s three sources of income at
MU: students, students, and students. Do I need to explain that? (laughter) So
yeah, so students follow on from faculty obviously but, it’s the nature and quality
of the faculty that really determine the nature and quality of the institution
ultimately. And then there’s administration and staff which I think is all of us
anybody here a student also probably a number of you, right? Anybody here a
faculty member? Nope okay so so we’re staff we’re administration but, we’re not
here so much to amuse ourselves as we are to support what the faculty do which is
creation and pursuit and so on of knowledge wisdom whatever you want to call it,
and ah also disseminating that, also known as teaching and learning. (7:05) So
teaching and learning at the top, research and creative works, as well, IT is
important in daily living? and then there has to be administration or administrative
services or business services or enterprise services as I know we differentiate
between those two levels as well. In the center is IT providers:: and I made the
circle in the center smaller than those other things on purpose to connote that
we’re supporting those things not that we’re the most important thing in the
middle of the circle and all those things revolve around us we’re we’re supporting
all those things, and we is everybody in [our organization]. So here’s a question, what’s the name of our org?

Silvia: It’s a trick question.
Porter: It’s a trick question that’s right. So nobody wants to, try that? I think you’d probably say [Central IT] but as I look at [Central IT] historically there’s [Central IT] and there’s [Central IT], there was [Klauss Hoffer, Scott Roden, Mark Flink, Porter Granza], but then things that got added to [Central IT], [Kelly] and [Stevie] came from [Scott] land, I [guess, Joe], you always were? The security officer was sort of born out of this group, and they should be a little bit separate, [George] was pulled up out of [Central IT], [Giles] architecture group, [Chad Barnam], did I see [Chad] here? ((Makes note in imaginary log)). Then there’s other stuff around campus that’s not necessary called [Central IT]. I don’t have an answer for now, but we’ll all come up with one. So how do we provide services? So the the thing I tried to drive home and keep continuing to do here as well as there is that we’re a service organization, so we’re here to serve period. I always kind of take the view that, this institution has to have IT in order to exist. Its no longer an interesting thing or something people do on the side but everybody else is using 3x5 index cards or whatever. It’s it’s, ingrained in everything that everybody does? And it has to be done but there doesn’t have to be an internal, central IT organization there to do it. Some schools have tried outsourcing it, some schools are even more decentralized than this place, keeping in mind no school is completely centralized but its sort of our privilege to be the IT providers not definitely not our right. There’s no 11th commandment there shalt be a Central IT at MU, ((turns back to PP slide on screen)) not that I’ve seen anyway.

Victor: Oh, so what’s your name? ((laughter from the group))
Giles: Ahhhhh, I can’t remember your exact words when you started you said something like we’re a service org, plain and simple
Victor: Yeah, something like that
Giles: I’d like to challenge that, I’d like for it not to be the last thing I do here but I’d like to challenge that ((lots of laughter from the group))
Victor: No, you you guys can challenge me endlessly, that’s/ Giles: I uh you know when I think of a service org I think of you know UMC catering what can we do for you? and I think that there’s a strong service element to us but boy I sure wouldn’t say plain and simple we’re a service organization because I think there’s, a very strong leadership position we play? there’s a very strong strategic role we play?
Victor: [Yep]
Giles: And you know I think I expressed this to you before I think we’ll get eaten alive if we think of ourselves as a service organization cause we’ve got, 3,000 faculty out there and if we say to each 3,000 faculty what can we do for you it gets obscene
Victor: Um ((laughter from the group)) yeah, I guess I’m just really agreeable this morning but yeah, I agree so let me explain what I mean by service organization YES, we have to lead, um a a cliché I like is we have to lead the target? we sort of have to have IT be where it should be when people get there to use it and that’s one way to think about leadership aspects of it there but by service I mean and
maybe its just that past I came out of you know right? so when I started at IT it was back in the old wizard days you know you got to wear a robe, you were really cool, ((laughter from group)) you could sort of “yeah okay I guess I’ll help you and you know you’re a cowboy you’re stupid” ((more laughter)) wasn’t quite that bad right but it was sort of IT was an end in itself we didn’t call it that right? ((chatter and laughter from group)) Um and then I think it went computing organizations went through a a phase or went through a shift into, we’re not here to amuse ourselves this stuff’s expensive and we’re paid to help people so that’s what I mean by we’re a service organization. But yeah, there has to be, a lot of leadership, and we have to provide that and that sometimes means that we have to take stands or make decisions that people don’t like and that’s partly what I mean by optimize as well. But you have to be really really careful with that because you can sort of get into a trap of yes, I’m pissing everybody off but this was the optimal decision, so. ((laughter from group, cough))

Unidentified audience member: So it’s a balance.

Howard: Ah I’m Howard Jay I’m with ((mumbles the rest of his words))
Victor: I’m sorry, Howard Jay?
Howard: With managed services?
Victor: Managed services, okay.
Howard: I do think that as an organization we do tend to have a reputation as sort of a an idea as an organization of that whole IT guy that you were talking about, you’re stupid get out of the way, we’ll take care of it, you don’t know what you need, we’ll tell you what you need and, I think that having more of a philosophy of being a service organization will improve us across the board in terms of really finding out what the campus needs as opposed to trying to dictate what the campus needs, and I think that we’ve been doing more of the latter a less of the former
Victor: Wha…((Appears confused))
Howard: We’ve been doing more of the trying to dictate what the campus needs as opposed to really trying to fully understand I mean we’re more of the old computer nerd guy who is like you don’t really know, we’ll take care of it.
Victor: Yeah, that was fun, while it lasted ((laughter from the group))
Howard: I remember it too/
Victor: So do you have ideas for how to fix that?
Howard: Not really no, ((quiet laughter from the group)) I think, I think
Unknown speaker: (    ) ((loud laughter from the group))

Victor: Okay, who are you and how to we fix it?
Cory: My name’s [Cory], [student services] and can’t tell you how to fix it but I certainly have some ideas,
Victor: Okay
Cory: And one of them is to get the faculty they are our customers, they should be driving us in what we do. We can set up our own private ideas about what might help them you know like this is the great thing we’re going to build for you if it wasn’t for them we wouldn’t be here.

Victor: Yeah
Cory: That’s basically the end of it.
Victor: Yep
Cory: We could use a lot more feedback.
Victor: So so one I agree one of the ways I’m trying to do that is is to meet and establish relationships with faculty informally in some of the groups in others reforming a faculty input advisory governance oversight whatever you want to call it group. In others just opportunistically to go to forums, meetings, there’s I don’t know there’s all these meetings I can’t remember them all correctly there’s the Chancellor’s Executive Forum? I guess like 30 40 people go to that. So I’m able to go to that. There’s the, Chair’s Breakfast, what’s that called Giles, Breakfast of Chair’s?
Giles: It’s the Chairs Breakfast.
Victor: Chairs Breakfast so I’m able to go to that so other things like that so and I’ll be able to so in the future when I actually have more to say than “hi nice to meet you”, I’ll be able to stand up for 20 30 minutes at those and talk and present things and stuff. Yeah so any but you know surveys or all the ways we can potentially do that Cory: I mean the trick is as always with large organizations you know down here at the bottom there’s lots of interesting things going on and once it gets to the top you know this was a brilliant idea, you know, to get feedback to other people means being in a lot of places that I for one will never be a part of, you know, I’m never gonna be at the chancellors breakfast, you know it’s hard for me to even get to you/
Victor: It’s the chair’s breakfast ((laughter from group))
Cory: Well whatever/
Victor: It’s a good good breakfast, too ((more laughter from group))