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Institutional Processes and Organization Fields

I believe that no concept is more vitally connected to the agenda of institutional processes and organizations than that of organization field. Previously defined in chapter 4 and referred to from time to time in subsequent chapters, the concept of *field*—both as a unit and a level of analysis—figures sufficiently large in institutional approaches to organizations to merit extended attention. Like so many concepts in institutional theory, the conception of organization field is a work in progress. Although its introduction into organization theory can be dated with precision, it builds on previous work and has been subject to criticism, amendment, and improvement up to the present moment. It is, at one and the same time, widely accepted and hotly contested.

CONCEPTUALIZING ORGANIZATION FIELDS

The concept of field usefully incorporates important previous levels of analysis employed in organization studies, including individual organizations, organization sets, and organization populations. That is, it encompasses:

- a diverse array of organizations working within a given arena or domain;
- attention not only to the producer organizations, but to their exchange partners, customers, competitors, intermediary actors, regulators, and funding agents—their *organization set*; and
- recognition that organizations are particularly attentive to and influenced by the existence of organizations exhibiting the same general features and competing for the same resources—their *organization population*.

The concepts of *organization set*, *population*, and *field* have all served to make more visible and palpable what had formally been vaguely regarded as the "environment" of the organization. For many years, this relatively passive framing led investigators to envisage a random collection of resources and other organizations that might be of use (or a threat). Some investigators (e.g., Dill 1958; Emery and Trist 1965; Lawrence and Lorsch 1967) came to conceive of the environment as a disembodied set of dimensions—such as complexity, stability, and munificence—whose states could impact the organization (for a review, see Scott 1992). There was little sense that the organization's environment was organized, and there was little awareness that organizations operating within the "same" environment might inhabit quite distinctive locations, providing diverse threats and opportunities.

The concept of organization field celebrates and exploits the insight that "local social orders" constitute the building blocks of contemporary social systems. It urges the benefits of the "mesolevel of theorizing," which recognizes the centrality of these somewhat circumscribed and specialized realms in the construction and maintenance of social order (Fligstein 2001b: 107). The field concept is productively employed in examining delimited systems ranging from markets to policy domains to the less structured and more contested arenas within which social movements struggle. Thus, for example, to view a product or labor market as a field is to embed the competitive processes that are the primary focus of most economic analyses within a larger canvas that includes multiple types of players, each working to "create and maintain a stable world within [each participating organization] and produce social relations across firms [and other units] in order to allow them to survive" (Fligstein 2001a: 70).

The field concept also fulfills a vital role in connecting organization studies to wider, macrostructures—sectoral, societal, and transnational. Organizations are major actors in modern society, but to understand their broader significance, it is necessary to see their role as players in

larger networks and systems. As DiMaggio (1986: 337) asserts, "the organization field has emerged as a critical unit bridging the organizational and the societal levels in the study of social and community change."

Precursor Conceptions

Numerous precursors paved the way for the concept of organizational field. Among the more important was psychologist Kurt Lewin's (1951: 57) use of field as a tool to assess an individual's "life space"—encompassing "the person and the psychological environment as it exists for him." Important features of Lewin's approach were his insistence on the mutual interdependence of the many elements and forces surrounding the individual and on the centrality of the individual's perception and interpretation processes: life space conceived as a cognitive map of one's social environment (see Mohr, forthcoming). Also influential was the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1971, 1984), who employed the concept of field to refer "to both the totality of actors and organizations involved in an arena of social or cultural production and the dynamic relationships among them" (DiMaggio, 1979: 1463). Bourdieu suggests that, "to think in terms of field is to *think relationally* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 96; italics original), and he employs the analogy of a game, with rules, players, stakes, competition, and contestation, to depict its central features. For Bourdieu, fields are not placid and settled social spaces, but arenas of conflict in which all players seek to advance their interests; some are able, for longer or shorter periods, to impose their conception of "the rules of the game" on others. Bourdieu's treatment of field provided the foundation for DiMaggio and Powell's conception.

Within the organizational area, yet another important forerunner was the ecological conception of interorganizational community. Ecologists such as Hawley (1950), Warren (1967), and Astley (1985) employed the concept to focus on a geographically bounded collection of organizations rendered interdependent because of functional ties or shared localities. In contrast to population ecologists, who emphasized competitive processes among similar organizations, community ecologists pointed out that communities of organizations could develop structures that were mutually beneficial. As elaborated by Astley and Van de Ven (1983: 250–251):

> Rather than view organizations as pitched in a competitive battle for survival through a direct confrontation with the natural, or exogenous environment, [community theorists] emphasize

> collective survival, which is achieved by collaboration between organizations through the construction of a regulated and controlled social environment that mediates the effects of the natural environment.

From today's vantage point, a limitation of this useful work was its tendency to focus more on colocation than on functional interdependence, with the effect that important connections and exchanges among organizations outside the spatial boundaries of the community were ignored (Scott and Meyer 1983: 132–133).[1]

Founding Conception

Because it has been so influential, let me repeat here DiMaggio and Powell's (1983: 148) founding definition of the concept of *organization field*, first discussed in chapter 4:

> those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products.

Their definition identifies a collection of similar "producer" organizations working within a delimited social arena, together with their exchange partners, consumers, and regulators. They emphasize that the conception is not restricted simply to competing firms or networks of interacting organizations, but refers to "the totality of relevant actors." As noted, related conceptions of "societal sectors" (Scott and Meyer 1983: 137–138) and "industry systems" (Hirsch 1985) developed at about the same time. Another formulation by Whitley (1987, 1992b) of "business systems" reflects many of the same features. However, all of these views tended to emphasize shared conceptions and information and compatible (in the extreme case, isomorphic) structures.

More recent approaches have suggested that fields can develop not only around settled markets, technologies, or policy domains, but also around central disputes and issues. Thus, Hoffman (1999: 352) argues:

> I suggest that a field is formed around the issues that become important to the interest and objectives of a specific collective of organizations. Issues define what the field is, making links that may not have previously been present. Organizations may make claims about being or not being part of the field, but their membership is defined through social interaction patterns. . . . Field membership may also be for a finite time period, coinciding with an issue's emergence, growth, and decline.

Hoffman arrived at this formulation from his study, described in the previous chapter, of the U.S. chemical and petroleum industries confronting the issue of corporate environmentalism.

Key Components of Organizational Fields

Relational Systems

DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) original conception focused much attention on the relational systems linking organizations into larger networks. Drawing on network theory, they emphasized that the relevant relations may reflect either "connectedness"—with direct and indirect links between organizations—or "structural equivalence"—similarity of position in a network structure (e.g., the structure of local school districts in adjacent states; Laumann, Galaskiewicz, and Marsden 1978). In addition to interaction patterns and information flows, DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148) also noted the importance of "interorganizational structures of dominance and patterns of coalition."

Similar to DiMaggio and Powell, Meyer and I (Scott and Meyer 1983) stress relational or structural features at the field (or sector) level, focusing attention, for example, on centralization and fragmentation of decision making, extent of federalization, and types of sector controls. In a similar fashion, in his discussion of business systems, Whitley (1992b) examines the extent of specialization within firms, whether market ties are characterized by arms length or more relational contracting, and a variety of authority and coordination mechanisms at the system level. More so than other organizational scholars at the time, in his examination of corporate systems at the societal level, Fligstein (1991: 314), like Bourdieu, stresses the centrality of power and control processes—"the ability of a given organization or set of organizations to capture or direct the actions of the field."[2] For Fligstein (1990: chap. 1), the relevant relations for large corporations are (a) those involving other, similar organizations; and (b) those with the nation-state, which is in a position to ratify settlements or modify the terms of competition. More recently, scholars like Podolny (1993) and Owen-Smith (forthcoming) highlight the role of status processes as more or less prestigious actors work to shape the directions of field development.

An important subset of relational systems is the governance systems that operate at the field level (Scott 1994a). *Governance systems* are those "arrangements which support the regularized control—whether by regimes created by mutual agreement, by legitimate hierarchical authority or by nonlegitimate coercive means—of the actions of one set of actors by another" (Scott, Mendel, and Pollack, forthcoming). Each organizational field is characterized by a somewhat distinctive governance system composed of some combination of public and private actors employing some combination of regulatory and normative controls over activities and actors within the field. Among the common actors exercising these functions are public regulatory bodies, trade associations, unions, professional associations, and judicial systems. For a sampling of empirical studies of field governance systems, see Brunsson and Jacobsson's (2000) study of standard setting by professional associations, Campbell and colleagues' study of the governance of economic sectors (Campbell, Hollingsworth, and Lindberg 1991; Campbell and Lindberg 1990), Djelic and Quack's (2003b) and Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson's (2006) collection of studies of transnational regulatory systems, Holm's (1995) study of Norwegian fishing regimes, and our study of the changing governance systems controlling health care delivery organizations in the United States (Scott et al. 2000).

Cultural-Cognitive Systems

Truth be told, attention to the cultural aspects of fields has lagged behind relational approaches. Although in their early formulation DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148) included in their delineation of field factors "the development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise," this factor is not further elaborated. Substantial progress was stimulated, however, by the appearance of Friedland and Alford's (1991: 248) essay stressing the importance of institutional logics to the existence of an institutional order. They defined *institutional logic* as "a set of material practices and symbolic constructions which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate." Multiple frameworks are available within developed societies, which are differentiated around numerous specialized arenas—political, political, economic, religious, kinship, and so on—and each of which is governed by a different logic. Organizations, working at mesolevels within these arenas, are hence confronted by and have available to them multiple, often contradictory, logics:

> Some of the most important struggles between groups, organizations, and classes are over the appropriate relationships between institutions, and by which institutional logic different activities are to be regulated and to which categories of persons they apply. Is access to housing and health to be regulated by the market or by the state? Are families, churches, or states to control education? Should reproduction be regulated by state, family, or church? (Friedland and Alford 1991: 256)

Thus, institutional logics vary in their content—the nature of beliefs and assumptions—but also in their penetration or "vertical depth" (Krasner 1988). For example, Fligstein (2001a: 32) distinguishes between "general societal understandings about how to organize firms or markets . . . and specific understandings about how a particular market works." Institutional logics also vary in their breadth or extent of horizontal linkage (Krasner 1988). One of the most significant predictors of institutional stability and influence is the extent to which it is compatible with or complementary to related institutional arrangements (Hall and Soskice 2001a: 17). Finally, institutional logics within a field vary in terms of their exclusiveness or, conversely, the extent to which they are contested (Scott 1994a: 211; see also Thornton and Occasio 1999). Whitley's (1992b: 127) concept of "business recipes"—varying modes of organizing economic activities—provides alternative language for discussing institutional logics. His empirical work examines the extent of variation in these recipes or logics among European and Asian industries (Whitley 1992a, 1992c). A good example of organizations confronted by contrasting logics is provided by Haveman and Rao's (1997) study of early thrifts being organized as mutual aid societies, whereas later forms adopted the capitalist enterprise model, as discussed in chapter 6.

A second concept that has proved helpful in examining cultural-cognitive systems is that of *cultural frame*. The perceptive social psychologist, Erving Goffman (1974: 21), first employed the concept to refer to "schemata of interpretation" that enable individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" events occurring to them in ways that establish their meaning. The concept was employed after modification by David Snow and colleagues, who eschewed the noun for the verb, emphasizing "framing processes" to better inform social movement theory (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 1986). As they noted:

> This denotes an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process." (Benford and Snow 2000: 614)

The concept of framing proved useful to social movement theorists, who realized that much of the work of activist and reform groups involves a "reframing" of issues and problems in ways that illuminate injustice or identify possible ways forward (McAdam 1994; Zald 1996). In short order, however, the concept was embraced by organizational and institutional scholars.

In their study of the recycling industry, Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch (2003) describe the contest waged between two competing visions—"field-level frames"—for managing solid waste. The waste-to-energy (W-T-E) model, which involves capturing usable energy from the burning of trash, was favored in the 1970s. This approach generated opposition from environmentalists, who promoted an alternative frame that favored recycling—the collection and breaking down of materials such as paper and glass that can be remanufactured into consumer products. The recycling view remained marginal until it was repackaged from a volunteer model to a for-profit model favored by federal, state, and local legislation to resist the building of incinerators and favor recycling efforts. The researchers tracked changes in discourse reflected in the meetings of the Solid Waste Association of North America and its trade magazine providing "a cognitive representation of how key industry issues were to be thought about and discussed" (2003). Although attention to cultural frames stresses "the interweaving structures of meaning and resources as well as their wider cultural and political context" (Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch 2003), it is obvious from this example that the concept of frame is closely associated with that of institutional logic: Issues of how things are interpreted and represented connects fairly seamlessly to considerations how things are to be done.

Organizational Archetypes

Two other families of concepts are useful because they help to bridge the analytical gap between attention to cultural and structural components of institutions. In addition to the examination of wider systems of relations and meanings that provide essential context for actors, we note that within any given field one finds a delimited number of models both for individual actors (roles) and collective actors (organizations). The concept of *organizational archetype,* as discussed in chapter 5, provides a useful mode of characterizing the ways in which a given interpretive scheme or conceptual model is embodied within an organizational structure and its operating systems (Greenwood and Hinings 1993). Of course, the extent to which organizational activities correspond with the model is always a matter for empirical investigation, but archetypes provide templates around which rules, administrative systems, and accounts of activities can be structured. Following the lead of population ecologists as well as "configurational" arguments (Van de Ven and Drazin 1985), Greenwood and Hinings (1993) propose that field-level pressures will encourage organizations to utilize structures and systems that manifest a single underlying interpreting scheme, and that, once adopted, organizations tend to retain the same archetypes.[3]

Attention to the power of organizational archetypes underlines the importance of the constitutive properties of cultural-cognitive elements: their capacity in the guise of typifications, scripts, or conceptions of agency to provide the forms and "categories and understanding that enable us to engage in economic and social action" (Dacin, Ventresca, and Beal 1999: 329; see also DiMaggio 1994: 35).

Most fields include a variety of organizational forms (populations) that constitute the primary modes of producer organizations (e.g., various types of health care delivery organizations, as described below), along with those different, supporting organizations that supply essential resources, including funding, and exercise controls. In addition, it is important not to overlook the critical role played in most fields by a variety of intermediary organizations and occupations—for example, stock analysts in markets (see Zuckerman 1999) or such information brokers as librarians, computer scientists, and online database services (Ventresca and Mohr 2002).

Repertoires of Collective Action

Another useful concept linking culture and social structure was first introduced into the analysis of social movements by Charles Tilly. Tilly (1978: 143) was among the first to point out that even apparently disorganized and disruptive behaviors were likely to take on "well-defined forms already familiar to the participants," including collective actions such as strikes, rallies, and demonstrations. Moreover "given the innumerable ways in which people could, in principle, deploy their resources in pursuit of common ends . . . at any point in time, the repertoire of collective actions available to a population is surprisingly limited" (Tilly 1978: 151). If such an observation holds for social movements, which tend to operate under less structured or institutionalized conditions, think how much more applicable it is to the world of everyday organizations operating in settled fields. As Hoffman (1997: 148) observes:

the institutional environment, in large part, defines the range of the organizational reality. In setting strategy and structure, firms may choose action from a repertoire of possible options. But the range of that repertoire is bound by the rules, norms, and beliefs of the organizational field.

Clemens (1996, 1997) connects the idea of repertoires to that of organizational archetype. She suggests that any field contains a limited repertoire of organizational forms that contain a limited set of culturally defined tools (Swidler 1986) or repertoires of collective action. Clemens also suggests ways in which social movement organizations participate in inducing institutional change, work we review in a later section.

Concepts such as organizational archetype and repertoires of collective action help us to better understand the ways in which cultural-cognitive models act to both constrain and empower social action. By providing clear templates for organizing—whether designing structures, strategies, or procedures—institutional forms constrain actors from selecting (or even considering) alternative forms and modes, on the one hand, but provide essential support for actors carrying on the selected activities in the guise of comprehensibility, acceptability, and legitimacy, on the other.

❖ FIELD STRUCTURATION PROCESSES

Multiple Levels

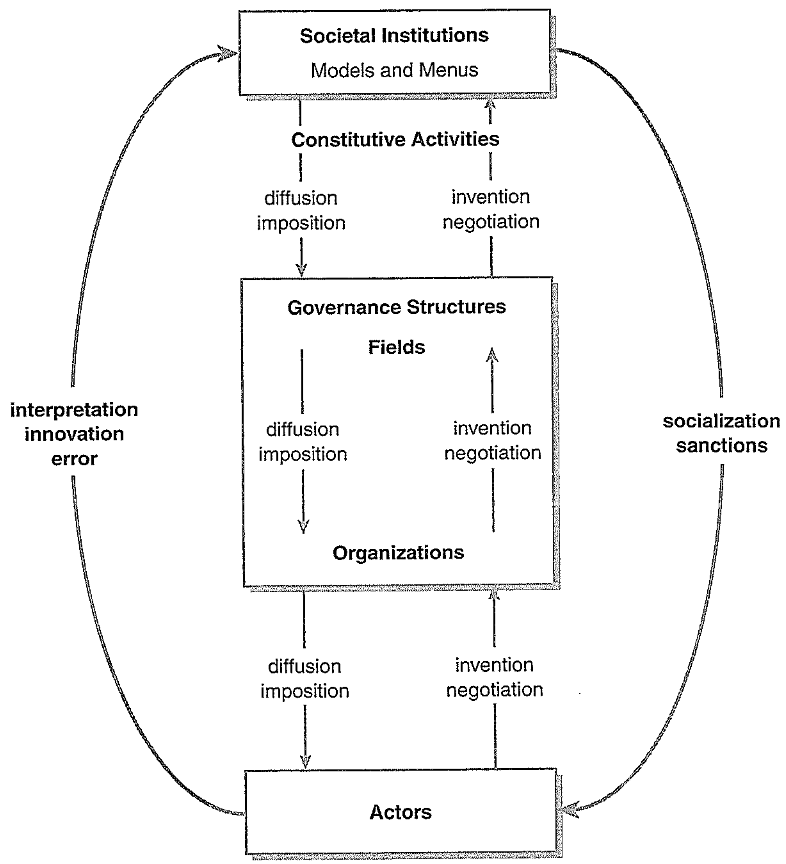
As described in chapter 4, Giddens (1979, 1984) defines the concept of structuration quite broadly to refer to the recursive interdependence or social structures and activities. The verb form is intended to remind us that structures only exist to the extent that ongoing activities produce and reproduce them. In applying the concept to organizational fields, DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 148) employ the term *structuration* more narrowly to refer to the degree of interaction and the nature of the interorganizational structure that arises at the field level. As noted above, the indicators proposed to assess structuration include the extent to which organizations in a field interact and are confronted with a larger amount of information to process, the emergence of "interorganizational structures of domination and patterns of coalition," and the development of "mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are engaged in a common

enterprise." To these indicators, others can be added, including extent of agreement on the institutional logics guiding activities within the field, increased isomorphism of structural forms within populations in the field (i.e., organizations embracing a limited repertoire of archetypes and employing a limited range of collective activities), increased structural equivalence of organizational sets within the field, and increased clarity of field boundaries (see Scott 1994a; Scott et al. 2000: chap. 10).

We stressed earlier the important locus of the organization field as an intermediate unit between, at microlevels, individual actors and organizations and, at macrolevels, systems of societal and transocietal actors. Figure 8.1 depicts a generalized multilevel model of institutional forms and flows. Trans-societal or societal institutions provide a wider institutional environment within which more specific institutional fields and forms exist and operate. These, in turn, provide contexts for particular organizations and other types of collective actors that themselves supply contexts for subgroups and individual actors. Various top-down processes—constitutive activities, diffusion, translation, socialization, imposition, authorization, inducement, and imprinting (see Scott 1987)—allow higher level (more encompassing) structures to shape, both constrain and empower, the structure and actions of lower level actors. Simultaneously, counterprocesses are at work by which lower level actors and structures shape—reproduce and change—the contexts within which they operate. These bottom-up processes include, variously: selective attention, interpretation and sense-making, identity construction, error, invention, conformity and reproduction of patterns, compromise, avoidance, defiance, and manipulation (see Oliver 1991). Research by Schneiberg and Soule (2005) on the changing forms of rate regulation of fire insurance by the several U.S. states during the beginning of the 20th century depict policies resulting from contested, multilevel processes as competing regimes developed in different regions of the country. Forces at work in crafting a "middle way," which subsequently became widely adopted, included within-state differences in the power of relevant associations, attention to policies adopted by neighboring states, and decisions at the national level by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Earlier neoinstitutional sociologists emphasized top-down processes, focusing on the ways in which models, menus, and rules constituted and constrained organization-level structures and processes. Neoinstitutional economists and rational-choice political scientists continue to focus on bottom-up processes as actors pursue their interests by designing institutional frameworks that solve collective action

Figure 8.1 Top-Down and Bottom-Up Processes in Institutional Creation and Diffusion



SOURCE: Adapted from Scott 1994c (Figure 3.1, p. 37).

problems or improve the efficiency of economic exchanges. Thelen (1999: 380) proposes that, although the time may not have arrived for a synthesis of economic and rational choice with more historical and sociological views of institutions, we might "strive for creative combinations that recognize and attempt to harness the strengths of each approach." Recent work has begun to surface that emphasizes the interweaving of top-down and bottom-up processes as they combine to influence institutional phenomena (Barley and Tolbert 1997). We previously discussed the studies by Edelman and

associates (Edelman 1992; Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger 1999) and Dobbin and associates (Dobbin et al. 1993; Dobbin and Sutton 1998), who explored how top-down regulative processes initiated by federal agents trigger collective sense-making processes among personnel managers and who construct new structures and procedures that are reviewed and, eventually, authorized by the federal courts. Regulative (federal laws), normative (professional managerial codes), and cognitive (sense-making) processes are connected in complex and changing mixtures.

In formulating a recursive, iterative model of institutional change, Holm (1995) proposes that it is helpful in examining the processes connecting adjacent levels to distinguish between two, nested types of processes: practical versus political actions. The former are actions taken within a given framework of understandings, norms, and rules serving to reproduce the institutional structure or, at most, stimulate incremental changes. The latter, political processes are actions taken whose purpose is to change the rules or frameworks governing actions. For example, explicit rules govern the activities of professional sports teams, but, from time to time, team representatives and officials meet to review and make alterations in the rules based on accumulated experiences or specific problems encountered. Although in some cases, changes in rules are based on collective mobilization and conflict, in many organized systems, formal structures are in place to support routine reviews of and revisions in rule systems. The creation of such formalized decision-making and governance systems serves to institutionalize the process of institutional change.[4]

Widening Theoretical Frameworks

In addition to employing more multilevel and recursive models in institutional studies, institutional scholars have begun to widen their theoretical frames, taking advantage of ideas and approaches developed in related areas. I have already discussed, in chapter 6, the constructive connections being developed between students of the legal environment and institutionalists. Edelman and Suchman (1997) distinguish three dimensions of legal environments relevant to organizational studies. Legal systems offer a facilitative environment, supplying tools, procedures, and forums that actors can employ to pursue goals, resolve disputes, and control deviant and criminal behavior within and by organizations (see Sitkin and Bies 1994; Vaughn 1999). They provide a regulatory environment consisting of a set of "substantive edicts, invoking societal authority over various aspects of organizational life"

(Edelman and Suchman 1997: 483; see also Noll 1985). Most fatefully, they offer a constitutive environment that "constructs and empowers various classes of organizational actors and delineates the relationships among them" (Edelman and Suchman 1997: p. 483; see also Scott 1994c). Edelman and Suchman suggest that we need much more research on the ways in which constitutive legal processes function to construct interorganizational relations (e.g., tort law, bankruptcy law), construct distinctive forms of organization structure (e.g., corporate law), and contribute to an underlying cultural logic of legal rationality.

Another rapidly developing intersection, noted earlier in this chapter, is that between social movement theory and institutional change. For many years, social movement theory has productively borrowed from organizational theory as Mayer Zald, John McCarthy, Charles Tilly, and others showed us how collective movements, if they were to be sustained, required the mobilization of resources and leadership to create social movement organizations (Zald and Ash 1966). As numerous movement organizations pursued similar types of reforms, they identified social movement industries or fields within which such similar organizations competed, cooperated, and learned from each other (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

As social movements have become more organized and as the more nimble and flexible newer forms of organizations have become more movement-like, the flow of ideas between the two fields has increased apace (Davis et al. 2005).

Among their contributions to institutional theory, social movement scholars have called attention to the openings and opportunities provided to suppressed groups and interests by the contradictions or inconsistencies in political institutions or governance structure, the mobilizing processes that give rise to new kinds of organizations, and the reframing processes that involve the creative construction of new meanings and identities enabling new possibilities for collective action (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996: 2–3; McAdam and Scott 2005: 14–19).

All of these ideas are brought to bear by Elizabeth Clemens (1993, 1997) in her analysis of women's political groups at the turn of the last century in the United States. Lacking access to normal forms of political action (the right to vote), they "adapted existing nonpolitical models of organization for political purposes" (Clemens 1993: 758). The repertoire of collective action—the "set of organizational models that are culturally or experientially available" for women at this time and place—included unions, clubs, and associations. Employing these conventional models in unconventional ways mobilized around new purposes led to significant institutional change.

At the institutional level, women's groups were central to a broader reworking of the organizational framework of American politics: the decline of competitive political parties and electoral mass mobilization, followed by the emergence of a governing system centered on administration, regulation, lobbying, and legislative politics (Clemens 1993).

A neglected area of study has been the processes at work in the transitional period during which successful movement objectives are "handed off" to legislatures and public agencies for follow-through and implementation. In our study of advocacy groups for youth development in urban areas, we have observed the ways in which issues and objectives are reframed and revised as the action moves "from the streets to the suites" (McLaughlin et al. forthcoming). Institutional theory will benefit greatly by continuing to cultivate connections with law and society scholars and with social movements theorists, as well as with other rapidly developing research communities, such as network theorists (Nohria and Eccles 1992; Smith-Doerr and Powell 2005), students of society and accounting (Hopwood and Miller 1994), economic sociology (Smelser and Swedberg 1994, 2005), and international and comparative management (Ghoshal and Westney 1993; Guillén 2001b). All of these communities can bring theoretical insights and useful methodologies to our understanding of institutions and institutional change processes.

❖ STRUCTURATION, DESTRUCTURATION, AND RESTRUCTURATION

On the one hand, change poses a problem for institutional theorists, most of whom view institutions as the source of stability and order. If the nature of actors and their modes of acting are constituted and constrained by institutions, how can these actors change the institutions in which they are embedded? On the other hand, much theory and research on institutions focuses on change: the creation of new institutional forms and associated changes in organizational fields, and populations and individual organizations as these entities respond to pressures to adopt new structures or practices. Much of this attention to change, however, tends to privilege two moments: the formation of new elements and their diffusion across host forms, work reviewed in chapters 5 and 6. Emphasis has been on institutional construction and convergent change processes. This focus assumes that institutions are put in place and then exert their effects, but are not subject to further change. Only in the last two decades have theorists and researchers begun to examine arguments and situations involving institutional change that witnesses the deinstitutionalization of existing forms and their replacement by new arrangements, which, in time, undergo institutionalization. Using Gidden's language, institutionalists have focused attention on structuration processes, but have neglected processes leading to destructuration and restructuration.

This section begins by reviewing ideas and evidence concerning deinstitutionalization (destructuration) processes and then considers the ways in which institutions are reconstructed. Although these processes occur at any and all levels, the organizational field level provides, I believe, the most advantageous vantage point.

Deinstitutionalization Processes

As noted in chapter 5, persistence of institutional beliefs and practices cannot be presumed. Deinstitutionalization refers to the processes by which institutions weaken and disappear. As expected, some analysts emphasize primarily the regulative systems, noting enfeebled laws, diluted sanctions, and increasing noncompliance. Others stress eroding norms and evidence of the diminished force of obligatory expectations. Still others point to the erosion of cultural beliefs and the increasing questioning of what was once taken for granted. Regardless of which elements are emphasized—of course, these elements interact, and all or various combinations may be involved—analysts should attend to both beliefs and behaviors: to schemas and resources. Beliefs and behaviors are loosely coupled, as generations of sociologists have emphasized, but changes in our ideas and expectations put pressure on related activities and vice versa.

The possible causes of deinstitutionalization are multiple. As noted, Zucker (1988b) emphasizes the general phenomenon of entropy associated with "imperfect transmission" and modification of rules under the pressure of varying circumstances and the erosion of roles by the personal characteristics of occupants. Oliver (1992) describes three general types of pressures toward deinstitutionalization: functional, political, and social. *Functional* pressures are those that arise from perceived problems in performance levels associated with institutionalized practices. For example, U.S. public schools have clearly suffered loss of legitimacy in recent years due to lower scores on standardized educational tests compared to children in comparable societies (see National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983). Reduced legitimacy allows increased consideration of alternative policies—for example, No Child Left Behind—and approaches such as vouchers. There is an ecology of institutions, organizations, and actions. When

institutional structures are found by some important constituency to be inadequate in the guidelines they provide, these structures are candidates for reform or replacement as problems accumulate.

Functional pressures can also arise from changing consumer preferences. Kraatz and Zajac (1996) studied the effect on private liberal arts colleges of changes in student educational goals beginning in the 1970s as students became less motivated by humanistic purposes and self-fulfillment goals and more concerned with making a living and succeeding financially. Data from over 600 U.S. colleges during the period 1971–1986 revealed that, despite strong normative and cultural-cognitive commitments to the value of liberal arts programs, virtually all the schools responded to student enrollment pressures by introducing vocationally oriented professional programs. As expected, those more dependent on student tuition were more likely to add such programs, whereas the most prestigious colleges were more resistant to these changes. Kraatz and Zajac interpret their findings as demonstrating the limits of institutional arguments: In the face of changes in consumer preferences, strongly institutionalized values and their associated structures gave way to market pressures. An alternative interpretation, which I prefer, is that their study depicts the undermining (delegitimation) of one institutional logic—the virtues of the liberal arts—and its gradual replacement by a second—embracing market-oriented institutional logics.

Political pressures result from shifts in interests or underlying power distributions that provided support for existing institutional arrangements. Changing voter preferences can lead to new political alignments and changing majorities in legislative groups can result in changes in regulatory legislation or enforcement practices. Thus, as discussed in chapter 7, when the U.S. Surgeon General finally summoned the courage and political resources to "blow the whistle" on tobacco companies, although the Big Six companies responded collectively to defend themselves, all companies attempted to adapt to the new environment in a variety of individual ways (Miles 1982). The Big Six companies survived, many by diversifying into other markets. Population ecologists remind us, however, that it is important not to focus exclusive attention on the largest companies in an industry. Research by Hannan and Freeman (1989: 23–33) reports that, during the period of interest, "of the 78 companies in the U.S. tobacco business in 1956, 49 had left the industry by 1986." About a quarter of these shifted into other business lines, but the rest failed to survive.

Business interests can lobby legislative bodies to change corporate governance frameworks, as discussed in chapter 5. As noted in our review of social movement contributions in the previous section, changes in the alignment of political groups can provide weakened support for existing institutional settlements and welcome opportunities for new players and divergent interests to enter the arena. The rise of environmental interests during the 1960s and the responsiveness of the political establishment to the increasing demands for clear air and water led to a major shift in the institutional environment within which the petrochemical industries operated, resulting in changes in the organizational structure and strategies of these companies and the institutional logics employed by their managers, as Hoffman (1997, 1999) details (see also chap. 7).

Social pressures are associated with differentiation of groups and increasing fragmentation of normative consensus, causing divergent or discordant beliefs and practices. In our health care study, we show how the long-term reduction in membership in the American Medical Association (AMA), associated with the rise of specialty associations, resulted in the weakening and fragmentation of physician normative consensus and, as a consequence, a disintegration of the unified voice of "American medicine" regarding health care matters (Scott et al. 2000). The presence of multiple competing and overlapping institutional frameworks undermines the stability of each. For example, we have "the numerous studies from Eastern Europe documenting parallel and contradictory logics in which ordinary citizens were already experiencing, for a decade prior to 1989, a social world in which various domains were not integrated coherently" (Stark 1996: 994).

We are beginning to see more empirical studies of deinstitutionalization. As might be expected, the indicators employed to assess the extent of deinstitutionalization range from weakening beliefs to abandonment of a set of practices. Geertz (1971: 17) describes a subtle and barely discernible pattern of deinstitutionalization underway in two Islam societies as fundamentalist belief systems gradually loosen their hold on believers:

> What is believed to be true has not changed for these people, or not changed very much. What has changed is the way in which it is believed. Where there once was faith, there now are reasons, and not very convincing ones; what once were deliverances are now hypotheses, and rather strained ones. There is not much outright skepticism around, or even much conscious hypocrisy, but there is a good deal of solemn self-deception.

Sine and Tolbert (2006: 7) describe an intermediate stage of deinstitutionalization based on changing practices. They examine a decline in the use of tenure systems in American institutions of higher education from 1965 to 1995. Although only a few colleges and universities abandoned the tenure system, "many higher education institutions have, in the last three decades, steadily increased the number and proportion of non-tenure-track faculty positions." The tenure institution, strongly supported by the normative structures of the teaching profession, persists, but its scope is narrowing so that the protections apply to ever smaller numbers of faculty members. Using data from 1989 to 1995, Sine and Tolbert show that, although there are costs, primarily labor costs, associated with compliance to the tenure system, other costs, primarily legitimacy costs, attend to reduced compliance.

Analyzing changes over time in the normative and cultural-cognitive conventions governing grand opera, Robinson (1985: 10) describes how the use of "two clocks"—the real-life tempo of the recitative as "things move along more or less as they do in real life," in contrast to the "slow time" devoted to an aria or ensemble number—which characterized 17th- and 18th-century productions gave way to the "continuous" musical style of the 19th century. Transitional composers paved the way by employing, but ridiculing, earlier styles. Thus, in his opera, *The Barber of Seville* (1816), Rossini self-consciously adhered to 18th-century conventions, but employed them to comic effect so that "one sees in Rossini an operatic convention at the very end of its artistic life: he makes fun of it; the next generation simply abandons it."

Outright abandonment of an institutionalized practice represents the extreme case of deinstitutionalization. Ahmadjian and Robinson (2001) examine the gradual abandonment, by Japanese companies, of their celebrated practice of permanent employment, viewed as a cornerstone of their distinctive employment system (Abegglen 1958; Cole 1979; Dore 1973; Ouchi 1981). For many years during the postWorld War II period, Japanese firms had an implicit contract with their mainline employees, who were given extensive in-company training, to provide them with employment until retirement. This commitment was viewed by many observers, including Cole and Ouchi, as a critical contributor to the remarkable productivity associated with the Japanese industry during this period. However, under the pressure of a severe economic downturn during the 1990s, Japanese firms began to abandon their normative commitment to employees. In their examination of over 1,500 companies arrayed across diverse industries, Ahmadjian and Robinson (2001: 644) found that, while downsizing strategies were first utilized by poorly performing companies and more slowly adopted by larger and more prestigious firms, as time passed, more and more companies abandoned the commitment to permanent employment.

Over time, "social and institutional concerns gave way to economic pressures as downsizing became increasingly widespread across the population, and firms found safety in numbers." However, as was the case with the study of the dilution of the liberal arts curriculum within colleges, although economic pressures played a role in destabilizing existing practices—whether regarding curriculum or personnel practices—the changes observed do not reflect the naked play of market forces or the adaptive efforts of independent, individual organizations, as Kraatz and Zajac (1996) would have us believe, but the emergence and diffusion of a new institutional logic concerning the right way to conduct the activities in question. As Burdros (1997: 230) makes clear in his study of U.S. corporate adoption of downsizing programs, these practices are supported by beliefs espoused by neoliberal arguments and advanced by investment managers who have proved persuasive to many businesses, although "available research indicates that these events generally have adverse human and organizational effects" (see also Campbell and Pedersen 2001). Deinstitutionalization is associated not only with the growing recognition that current institutional patterns are ineffective, but also with the development of a challenging alternative institutional logic.[5]

Four Studies of Field Structuration/Destructuation

Evolving Corporate Structure

We can better understand some of the forces and mechanisms at work in field-level change processes if we approach them as they were observed in a few selected studies of particular fields operating in specific times and places. We begin by revisiting Fligstein's (1990, 1991) study of changes in the structure of large U.S. corporations during the 20th century (see chap. 7). This research is particularly effective in pursuing three aspects of field structuration: the interplay of (a) private power and public authority, (b) ideas and interests, and (c) field logics and internal organization processes. We review each in turn.

Recall that Fligstein's study examined a (changing) sample of the 100 largest nonfinancial corporations from 1920 to 1980. These companies became increasingly diversified throughout this period, but the diversification strategies varied over time, in part, because of changing federal antitrust policies.

Whereas Alfred Chandler's (1977) detailed history of changes in corporate structure stressed the role of market forces and managerial decisions, as described in chapter 5, Fligstein reminds us of the power of the state both to ratify institutional settlements enforced by the dominant companies in an industry as well as to establish and change the general rules governing competitive practices and growth strategies for all firms. For Fligstein (2001a: 18), markets are not simply arenas of competition, but organizational fields whose members, in combination with state agencies, attempt to

> produce a social world stable enough that they can sell [their] goods and services at a price at which their organization will survive. Managing people and uncertain environments to produce stability is a sizable task. . . . The theory of fields implies that the search for stable interactions with competitors, suppliers, and workers is the main cause of social structures in markets.

Fields are vehicles for producing some stability and order for their members.

As for the interplay of ideas and interests, Fligstein (2001a: 15–20), more than most analysts, employs what he terms a *political-cultural* approach, melding the role of cultural-cognitive elements or interpretive frameworks with the play of power among actors struggling to achieve a "system of domination" that will serve their interests. Fields are arenas for the interplay of incumbents, who benefit from existing arrangements, and challengers, who seek to change the rules to advance their own interests. Governments, which can be conceived of as a "set of fields," interact with markets, another set of fields, imposing rules to help ensure stability. Fligstein (1991) asserts that the changing strategies reflected changing institutional logics regarding competitive practices and growth strategies. But what is the process by which field logics result in organizational change? One obvious mechanism is environmental selection: Firms not pursuing the favored strategy were more likely to drop out of a sample of the largest corporations over time, particularly during the later period Another mechanism explored by Fligstein is that changes in field logics trigger political processes within organizations so that corporations changed the criteria used to select their chief executive officer (CEO). Fligstein (1991: 323) categorizes CEOs in terms of their background under the assumption that "a manufacturing person will tend to see the organization's problems in production terms, a sales and marketing person will tend to view the nature, size and extent of the market as critical to organizational survival, and a financial person will see the basic profitability of firm activities as crucial." Empirically, he shows that the hiring of a CEO with a manufacturing background was associated with the subsequent adoption of a dominant strategy focusing on a single market, the hiring of a CEO from a sales background was associated with the adoption of a strategy of diversification into related markets, and the hiring of a CEO with a financial background was associated with the adoption of strategy of diversification into both related and unrelated markets. Greenwood and Hinings (1996) generalize these arguments by embracing Cyert and March's (1963) conception of organizations as coalitions of participants holding varying interests. Changes in field logics are likely to be viewed as advancing the interests of some types of organizational participants and undercutting those of others. In this manner, they propose to link the old institutionalism that focused more on power processes within organizations (think Selznick) with the new institutionalism that stresses field-level templates and logics.

Destructuration of a Health Care Field

My colleagues and I (Scott et al. 2000) decided to study health care delivery in the United States because this appeared to represent an instance of a relatively settled and stable institutional arena, which, within the past few decades, has become increasingly conflictual and unstable. For our primary empirical data, we focused on changes in health care delivery systems within a limited geographic area—the San Francisco Bay area—but in accounting for these developments, we took account of actors and forces at state and national levels. Data were collected over a 50-year period from 1945 to 1995.

To empirically capture changes in the field, we selected three components on which to gather data:

- *changes over time in the types and numbers of social actors—both individual (roles) and collective actors (organizations)*

For example, we measured changes in the number and types (specialties) of physicians, changes in the membership of leading professional associations, and changes in the major organizational forms (archetypes) comprising the delivery systems, including physician groups, hospitals, home health agencies, health maintenance organizations (HMOs), renal dialysis units, and integrated health care systems. We also assessed changing relational connections among these various forms (e.g., clinics and home health agencies contracting with hospitals or hospitals joining integrated healthcare systems; Scott et al. 2000: chap. 3).

I can think of no better single indicator for assessing changes in organizational fields than tracking changes in the number and types of organizations that operate within its boundaries. Organizations archetypes are critical aspects of the field's "structural vocabulary." During the period of our study, the number and size of medical clinics, home health agencies, HMOs, and specialized treatment units such as dialysis centers expanded greatly, whereas the overall number and size of hospitals remained relatively stable. Given that the population of the region more than tripled during this time, the lack of expansion in hospitals, the traditional delivery unit, indicates that they were being displaced by other types of organizations. Of equal significance are the new types of organizations that emerged. Newcomers such as home health agencies, staffed largely by nurses who deliver care in patients' homes, and HMOs, which ensure that physicians are financially at risk for failing to control costs incurred by the care they prescribe, represent radically different approaches to health care delivery. These forms embodied novel organizational archetypes that challenge earlier models.

Of course, it is possible for existing organizations to change their archetype, substituting one template or "interpretive scheme" for another, as Greenwood and Hinings (1993) and Fligstein (1990) demonstrated. However, both of these studies focused attention on a single population of organizations, municipal governments or large corporations. A distinctive advantage of field-level designs is that they widen the lens, allowing researchers to observe the rise of new forms that challenge and, sometimes replace, existing forms. Although it appears that we are interested primarily in structural and relational changes—merely counting organizations—we are in fact attending to the constitutive work of changing cultural-cognitive beliefs.

- *changes over time in the institutional logics that guide activities in the field*

Multiple indicators were employed to ascertain changes in logics, including changing patterns in the financing of health care,[6] changes in public policy at the state and federal levels, changes in consumer beliefs regarding health care, and changes in professional discourse as revealed by an examination of physician-oriented and health care administration journals (Scott et al. 2000: chap. 6). The use of such archival sources to reveal changes over time in the meaning structures employed to interpret and guide actions of field participants provides a promising avenue for assessing the codependence of cultural and structural elements (see Ventresca and Mohr 2002).

Composite indicators suggest that three contrasting institutional logics were dominant during different periods. To the mid-1960s, the dominant logic was an overriding concern with quality of care as determined by medical providers. In the mid-1960s, this logic was joined with a political logic emphasizing improved equity of access—the defining event being the passage of Medicare-Medicaid legislation in 1965. Somewhat later, in the early 1980s, yet another logic was introduced, which emphasized the importance of cost containment employing both market and managerial controls. None of the three logics—each of which was associated with differing types of actors—succeeded in replacing the other, but the contradictions and conflicts among them have greatly reduced the coherence and stability of field structure.

- *changes in governance structures that oversee field activities*

As defined earlier in this chapter, governance structures are combinations of public and private, formal and informal systems that exercise control within the field. During the period of our study, dramatic changes were observed in the kinds of actors exercising control and in the mechanisms employed. During the first half of the 20th century, the health care delivery field was firmly under the control of a hegemonic professional group—doctors of medicine. Having warded off a variety of rival claimants for jurisdiction over the field (see Starr 1982), subordinated a variety of ancillary groups (see Freidson 1970), and secured the backing of the several U.S. states exercising their licensure power, the medical establishment ruled by moral authority, exercising normative control.

As already described, by the mid-1960s, fragmentation of physician interests and the coming to power of the Democrats resulted in the passage of the Medicare/Medicaid Act, which overnight made the federal government the largest single purchaser of acute care and hospital services. Paying for a substantial proportion of the bills—which resulted in increasing demands—public authorities became more and more active in regulating health services. The number of health-related regulatory bodies operating at the county, state, and national levels grew from a handful in 1945 to well over 100 agencies (Scott et al. 2000). The normative power of the medical establishment, although weakened, remained in force, but was now joined by public regulative powers.

Beginning in the early 1980s, new approaches to cost containment were introduced based on neoliberal economic assumptions regarding the effectiveness of more business-like and market-based approaches. For-profit delivery systems were endorsed featuring stronger managerial

controls, and incentives were employed to encourage patients to consume fewer services and providers to restrict treatments. New "health plans" emerged to define benefits, collect payments, and enlist panels of eligible providers. Thus, added to the mix of professional and public controls were private market and managerial governance mechanisms (Scott et al. 2000: 217–235).

Some time ago, Meyer and I (1983a: 201) argued that it is useful to view an organization's legitimacy as varying by the extent of coherence in the cultural environment underlying it—"*the adequacy of an organization as theory.* A completely legitimate organization would be one about which no question may be raised" (italics original). From this perspective, given the inconsistency of views regarding health care expressed by professional, public, and private oversight authorities, the legitimacy of health care systems markedly declined in this country during the last half of the 20th century. This is represented not only in the overelaborated and complex administrative units at the organizational level required to respond to the multiple and conflicting demands, but also in the overgrown jungle of financial and regulatory units and infrastructural apparatus—lawyers, accountants, health economists, actuaries, and insurance brokers—that contribute so much to the costs and confusion-making of the current state of this field.

Similar Pressures—Divergent Responses

Nicole Biggart and Mauro Guillén (1999) examine the response of the auto industries of four countries—South Korea, Taiwan, Spain, and Argentina—to mounting competitive pressures from the global environment (see also Guillén 2001b). For many decades, manufacturing fields serviced primarily domestic markets and did not have to take into account the productivity or performance of similar fields in other countries. However, in recent decades, as a result of numerous political, technological, and economic developments, formerly "local" industries were compelled to compete for survival with distant producers (Albrow 1997; Berger and Huntington 2002; Ó Riain 2000).

Biggart and Guillén (1999) employ an institutional approach to their study, emphasizing:

- the different kinds of actors available in each society (e.g., the nature of the state, families, large firms, small firms, business networks)
- the "pattern of social organization that binds actors to one another" (e.g., the relation of states to industrial firms, of large to small firms, of firms to business networks; 723)

- the organizing logics characteristic of the society. In their terms: "organizing logics are not merely constraints on the unfolding of otherwise unimpeded social action, but rather are repositories of distinctive capabilities that allow firms and other economic actors to pursue some activities in the global economy more successfully than others" (726)
- the industrial policies pursued by the state. Nation-states vary in the development policies they pursue, as well as in how actively they intervene in economic matters

Employing a distinction developed by Gereffi (1994), they note that societies characterized by more vertical linkages between strong states and firms or between large firms and subordinate units are more likely to excel at producer-driven activities linked to the global economy, whereas economies comprised of small firms connected by horizontal linkages are more nimble and, hence, can be more responsive to "buyer-driven" global demands. Thus, for example, South Korea, with its vertically integrated *chaebol* (business units) and strong state, has been relatively successful in auto assembly (producer-driven) operations, but much less successful in creating a competitive system of components manufacturers. By contrast, Taiwan, with its highly developed small firms economy, was unresponsive to state initiatives to promote auto assembly plants and instead has been able to compete globally in its manufacture of (buyer-driven) components. It is also possible for states to bypass their own business community and allow "foreign actors unrestricted access to the country" by encouraging foreign firms to make investments and establish direct ownership ties (Guillén 2001b: 17). This was the policy pursued by Spain. Biggart and Guillén (1999: 743) do not conclude that all strategies pursued are equally successful, but rather that the more successful strategies are those that build on a society's existing institutional logics. Such differences are not obstacles or constraints, but "the very engine of development. . . . Development is about finding a place in the global economy, not about convergence or the suppression of difference."

In short, we have a situation parallel to that described in chapter 7, where we considered the reaction of organizations with differing characteristics to similar institutional forces. Like organizations, organizational fields are likely to vary substantially in their history, structural features, and capacities so that, when confronted by similar challenges, they are likely to respond not in parallel, but in divergent, ways. This institutionally informed perspective varies considerably from that of a number of global observers, who emphasize the "flattening" of societal differences (Friedman 2005) or the rapid convergence of economic institutions and firm structures (McKenzie and Lee 1991) as the hallmark of globalization. Gray (2005) points out that, in this respect, such neoliberal arguments bear a close relation to earlier Marxist arguments because they assume that "it is technological advances that fuels economic development, and economic forces that shape society. Politics and culture are secondary phenomena."

The Revolt of the Chefs

As a final example of field-level restructuring, Rao, Monin, and Durand (2003) creatively combined social movement and institutional theory arguments to account for revolutionary changes occurring in the world of French *haut cuisine.* The study examines the introduction by a rebel breed of chefs of a new culinary rhetoric, replacing classic with nouvelle cuisine. The upstart chefs emerged during the period of general political turmoil associated with student protests against the Vietnam War during 1968, a cause that rapidly became connected to a range of other antiestablishment grievances. I like to think the organizing slogan for this revolution was: "Chefs of the world unite. You have nothing to lose but your sauces!"

Rao and colleagues suggest that the two cuisines—classic and nouvelle—represent differing institutional logics—rules of cooking, types of ingredients, and bases for naming dishes—as well as contrasting identities for chefs in relation to waiters. Their imaginative method of tracking the progress of the new logic was to examine changes over time in the menus of leading restaurants, coding a random sample of the signature dishes of chefs between 1970 and 1997.

In conducting their study, the authors draw on a distinction within social movement theory between "interest group" and "identity" politics (Rao, Monin, and Durand 2003: 796). Most studies of social movements focus on interest groups pursuing some instrumental movement (e.g., increased fairness or equality), whereas identity movements seek opportunities for authentic self-expression and opportunities to celebrate and display "who we are." Identity movements seek autonomy, not social justice (Armstrong 2002; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Employing historical materials as well as in-depth interviews, Rao and colleagues examined biographies of selected chefs who personally challenged existing rules—in some cases, rules embraced by their fathers—to convert to the new cuisine. However, for such ideas to diffuse into a movement, they needed to be "theorized" (see chap. 6). This process was greatly facilitated by the media and specialized culinary journalists, who developed the "10 commandments"—including "thou shall not overcook" and "thou shall use fresh quality products"—guiding the new cuisine and advancing rationales for its adoption. Systematic counts of the number of articles published between 1970 and 1997 extolling nouvelle cuisine in culinary magazines—cultural-cognitive legitimation—were found to correlate with adoption by chefs listed in annual directories of *Guide Michelin.*

Evidence concerning the normative legitimation of the movement came from two sources: the number of highly coveted stars from the *Guide Michelin* received by chefs who added a minimum of one nouvelle cuisine dish as part of his signature trio of dishes, and the number of nouvelle cuisine activists elected to the executive board of the professional society of French chefs. Both were positively associated with the abandonment of classical for nouvelle cuisine. In short, the new logic was eventually endorsed by the relevant governance systems.

A particularly valuable aspect of this study by Rao and associates is its recognition of the important role played by intermediary actors in field structuration. The contributions of journalists who helped focus, frame, and diffuse the new logic as well that of influential arbiters of consumer tastes—the editors of *Guide Michelin*—who gave their all-important stamp of approval to the insurgent band of chefs are systematically incorporated in the design of the study.

❖ CONCLUDING COMMENT

The concept of organization field expands the framework of analytic attention to encompass relevant actors, institutional logics, and governance structures that empower and constrain the actions of participants in a delimited social sphere. It includes within its purview all of these parties who are meaningfully involved in some collective enterprise—whether producing a product or service, carrying out some specific policy, or attempting to resolve a common issue. The concept has not only encouraged attention to a higher (more encompassing) level of analysis, but it has also stimulated interest in organizational processes that take place over longer periods of time. To adequately comprehend the determinants, mechanisms, and effects of significant institutional change—or stability for that matter—demands attention to longer time periods.

Organization fields vary considerably among themselves and over time. The concept of field structuration provides a useful analytic

framework, allowing investigators to assess differences among fields and to track changes over time in the extent of the field's cultural coherence and nature of its structural features.

Although it would appear that a field-level focus would detract attention from our attempt to understand the behavior of individual organizations, I believe that this is far from being true. Just as the attributes and actions of a character in a play are not fully comprehensible apart from knowledge of the wider drama being enacted—including the nature and interest of the other players, their relationships, and the logics that guide their actions—so we can better fathom an organization's behavior by seeing it in the context of the larger action and meaning system in which it participates.

❖ NOTES

1. Although this criticism holds generally for the community ecologists' conception of field, an important exception is Warren's later work on American communities, in which he laid great stress on the (vertical) connections between local organizations and more distant organizations and systems of ideas external to a given community (Warren 1972; Warren, Rose, and Bergunder 1974).

2. Fligstein (1990) developed a novel conception of field. Beginning with a more conventional view of a field as demarcated by product markets, because he studied large corporations in the process of differentiating into multiple markets, he argued that field boundaries for these organizations also shifted so that eventually the largest diversified corporations operated in a field comprised of other actors like themselves.

3. We consider in a later section processes leading to the replacement of one archetype with another.

4. Other notable studies of field-level structuration processes include Dezalay and Garth (1996), Lauman and Knoke (1987), Hoffman (1997), and Thornton (2004).

5. In addition to those noted above, see also Davis, Diekmann, and Tinsley's (1994) examination of the processes involved in the delegitimation of the conglomerate form in business enterprise, Greve's (1995) analysis of the abandonment by radio stations of one format for another, Zilber's (2002) study (at the organizational level) of changes over time in the meanings associated with organizational action, and Simons and Ingram's (1997) study of the gradual abandonment of ideological commitments regarding the use of labor by Israeli kibbutzim.

6. Financing issues are never just about material resources. In this case, Congress decided that the nation-state, rather than the individual, was responsible for financing medical care for the elderly and the indigent.