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DISPUTING IN ORGANIZATIONS
DISPUTE DOMAINS AND INTERACTIONAL PROCESS

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This paper offers an interactional perspective on the emergence and organization of disputes in organizations. Organizations are analyzed as interrelated dispute domains which consist of standardized and recurring argumentation practices and constraints, orientations to interactions and relationships, and role formats. The paper considers how organization members orient to and treat disputes as disruptions of preferred organizational routines and realities, and attempt to sustain the routines and realities in the face of ongoing disputes. Two additional implications of the perspective are also considered: how disputes are transformed when they are reconsidered within different dispute domains, and how the rhetorical resources available to disputants vary within and across dispute domains.

All social interactions and relationships hold the potential for arguments and disputes. This is especially true of formal organizations and street-level bureaucracies (Lipsky, 1980; Miller, 1991) which are characterized by diverse perspectives and agendas, and fraught with major and minor conflicts. This paper develops a sociological approach to the emergence and resolution of everyday disagreements by treating them as normal and routine aspects of the organizational interaction. Specifically, we treat disputing as one way in which organization members formulate, express and justify their positions on practical issues. Disputes are embedded in and emerge from ongoing organizational interactions and relationships which disputants define and redefine as they formulate, express, and negotiate their arguments. They may emerge within otherwise mundane and unremarkable interactions, or may take place in settings explicitly organized for disputing, such as administrative hearings, court proceedings, or mediation sessions.

FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

This paper focuses on the relationship between organizational disputes and their social contexts. We refer to such contexts as "dispute domains." They are circumstances to which organization members orient and which provide resources and restraints for disputing. Dispute domains are interactional and interpretive sites within and through which practical issues are formulated as disputes, and responses to them are produced (Silverman, 1987). They are "local" cultural contexts, "more or less regularized and localized ways of assigning meaning and responding to things" (Gubrium, 1989:94).

While disputing is a potential aspect of all organizational interactions, and any interaction is a candidate dispute, full-fledged disputes emerge when when participants orient to them as arguments, organize their subsequent interactions with this orientation in mind, and hold themselves and others accountable to the assumptions, concerns and interactional procedures that constitute the dispute domain. Organizational disputes emerge and are managed within concrete interactions about practical issues. Such issues include how to properly understand the meanings and motives associated with persons' "troublesome" behavior, respond to conditions that disputants agree are troublesome, and predict future conditions in which interactants have an interest. Interactions become disputes when interactants orient to others as holding opposed and unacceptable positions on issues of mutual concern, and orient to situations as contests intended to determine which of the opposed positions on the issues will prevail.

Disputes do not always focus on the practical issues around which the interactions are initially organized, however. The initial issues are conditions to which organization members may respond in various ways, including ignoring them, or treating them as nondisputes. Disputing responses are produced in three general ways: (1) by taking opposed positions on the initial issues, (2) by reconstituting the issues at stake and taking opposed positions on the new issues, or (3) by portraying the organization of ongoing interactions as unfair, inappropriate or otherwise unacceptable -- "arguing about arguing," as Billig (1987) puts it.

We elaborate these themes in the sections that follow. First, we discuss the theoretical tradition within which our perspective is situated, and how it differs from other approaches to organizational disputing. We then examine how dispute domains are socially organized, and their implications for analyzing organizational routines. Finally, we conclude by discussing some implications of the dispute domains perspective for studying organizational disputing.

PERSPECTIVES ON DISPUTING

Our analysis draws from a number of sociological perspectives which stress the complex interrelationships between social structure and human agency, including symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969), phenomenology (Schutz 1970), and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967). Each perspective has been

applied in diverse studies of organizational processes and relationships (See, for example, Anspach 1993; Cicourel 1968; Emerson 1969; Gubrium 1988; Holstein 1993; Loseke 1992; Miller 1991; Silverman 1975; Dingwall and Strong 1985). Indeed, many of their assumptions and themes are central to Giddens' (1984) approach to "structuration," which he offers as a theoretical resolution to the structure-agency issue. Giddens (1984: 25) states that the study of structuration involves

> analyzing ... the modes in which [social] systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction.

Silverman's (1971) social action theory of organizations elaborates many of these themes, anticipating much of the theory of structuration. As a theory of organizational structuration, Silverman's framework emphasizes how social structures and meanings are simultaneously constructed and sustained through organization members' interactional and interpretive activities. He uses Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionist approach to the sociology of knowledge to analyze how situationally produced meanings become routinized and institutionalized when organization members orient to them as autonomous constraints on their choices and actions.

From this, Silverman outlines an approach to the comparative study of organizations that emphasizes the complex interrelationships between organizational structure and human agency. He states that such an approach to organizations would focus on

> 1. The nature of the predominant meaning-structure and associated role-system in different organisations and the extent to which it relies on varying degrees of coercion or consent.
> 2. The characteristic pattern of involvement of the actors; differing attachment to the rules and definitions of their situation.
> 3. The typical strategies used by different actors to attain their ends.
> 4. The relative ability of different actors to impose their definition of the situation upon others. The nature and sources of the symbolic 'sticks' (resources) available to the actors; their relative effectiveness.
> 5. The origin and pattern of change of meaning-structures (institutionalisation and de-institutionalization of meanings) in different organisations. (Silverman 1971: 171-172)

In part, the concept of dispute domain incorporates aspects of Silverman's perspective on organizations as interrelated settings and processes. We adopt a comparative approach to analyze dispute domains that differ in their meaning-structures and associated role-systems, patterns of actor involvement in settings, actors' abilities to exert influence in settings, and strategies used by actors to achieve their practical ends. Like Silverman, who offered his action

theory as an alternative to dominant systems and positivist approaches to organizations, our analysis is a response to more traditional approaches to organizational conflict.

Two of these approaches merit discussion. The first locates the sources of organizational conflict in extra-situational factors. For example, Marxist analyses of industrial organizations often stress class-based sources of conflict in organizations (Nichols and Armstrong 1976; Nichols and Beynon 1977). Similarly, Kanter's (1977) functionalist analysis of gender relations within corporate hierarchies stresses the structural sources for conflicts of interest between managers and their secretaries. Corwin's (1970) analysis of teacher militancy also emphasizes how organizational conflict is related to professionalization, bureaucratization, and structural crystallization.

Our approach does not deny that there may be extra-situational factors associated with organizational conflict. However, an overemphasis on such factors obscures the socially accomplished character of conflict that is organized and pursued within the practical contexts of organizational settings. Thus, our approach focuses on social interaction and the circumstances associated with organization members' expression of complaints against others, negotiation of the complaints, and resolution of their differences.

A second traditional approach emphasizes how organizational decision-making (including decisions about engaging in and resolving disputes) is rationally organized. Perrow (1979) frames the approach as neo-Weberian, and it is perhaps most usefully developed by Simon (1957), March and Simon (1958), and Cyert and March (1963). These studies emphasize how organization members are not motivated by a desire to get the best deal available, but to get a satisfactory one. The neo-Weberians have extended this line of reasoning to the analysis of organizational systems and disputing within them. For example, March and Simon (1958) examine how disputes emerge when organization members make competing choices that are intended to satisfy opposed personal and/or organizational interests.

While organization members act in ways that might be considered rational, social life in organizations is more varied and complex than the neo-Weberians suggest. This is not to say that their approach is wrong, only that it is narrow and of limited use in analyzing diverse organizational disputes and disputing settings. As Silverman (1971: 206) states,

> it is possible to take up their insights about the different ways in which men define their situation and the limits on their rationality in order to examine the varied meaning systems and patterns of interaction that develop in organisations. Systems in themselves, therefore, only have problems from the perspective of the participants, and there are as many different problems as there are definitions of the situation and ends.

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF DISPUTE DOMAINS

Disputes arising in organizations take place within distinctive dispute domains which consist of the fundamental assumptions, concerns, resources, restraints, and discourses held by setting members. Dispute domains are partly organized around disputants' and dispute interveners (such as therapists, attorneys and mediators) typical orientations to the purposes of social interactions, issues that may be properly considered within them, and available resolutions to the disputes at hand. For example, formal mediation and some forms of family therapy are organized to produce mutually satisfactory, negotiated agreements between disputants. In these settings, non-negotiated and non-consensual responses are discouraged. Other disputing settings and interactions, however, may be organized around the assumption that negotiated agreements between disputants are impossible and that other forms of dispute resolution must be sought, as in formal legal proceedings, for example.

While disputants and dispute interveners bring diverse and competing interests and argumentative styles to disputing settings, dispute domains involve unique normative and interactional frameworks to which interactants may be held accountable. Dispute domains are thus organized as shared, standardized, and recognizable disputing expectations, roles and relationships that both constrain participants' options and actions, and provide rhetorical resources for organizing and advancing disputing positions. Put differently, disputes are organizationally embedded (Gubrium, 1988). They emerge from the socially organized circumstances within and through which organizational relationships are constructed and sustained, settings where work is done.

The following sections consider three major and related aspects of the social organization of dispute domains. They analyze dispute domains as argumentation practices, situated traditions, and role formats.

Dispute Domains as Argumentation Practices

Dispute domains consist of interrelated argumentation practices that disputants use to organize and justify their positions on practical issues. The practices include the typical claims and rationales participants use to justify their positions (Toulmin, 1958, 1972) and the conversational practices that disputants use to formulate and express their arguments (Button and Lee, 1987; Atkinson and Heritage, 1984). Analysis of conversational practices focuses on the social organization and related interactional conventions within situations, while examination of claims-making may emphasize the rhetoric of disputing.

From the conversational orientation, one way in which dispute domains may be distinguished from one another is by analyzing their distinctive turn-taking and speakership-allocation conventions (Sacks et al. 1978). For example, legal proceedings are typically organized interrogation formats whereby questions are asked by predesignated parties, and testimony is produced only through witnesses' answers to these questions. The major criterion for assessing information and arguments in such proceedings is their legal relevance to the

issues at hand. Disputants must reorganize disputes that they may have previously treated as broad-based conflicts, recasting their arguments and justifications within the context of more limited, concrete, and verifiable claims about actions and events.

Legal hearings often turn into culpability contests, where blame is assigned for "improper" or "illegal" actions, and participatns are held accountable for what they have done and said. Legal disputants' interest in challenging and blaming others is constrained by the social organization of speakership turns and practices within legal proceedings and settings. Here, in contrast with other sorts of dispute domains, participants may challenge and blame others only through question and answer sequences. As Atkinson and Drew (1979: 105) point out, the consequences of this format are that

> challenges, etc., may be formed rather differently than they are in other sequential environments, that is where there is no constraint to produce them in question sequences. Secondly, the challenge, blame, or whatever, should arise from the information which is drawn out in the question. Thus a counsel has to design questions so as to elicit, or get the examined party's agreement to, certain facts or information, the effect of which will be to challenge or blame the witness/defendant.

Disputing contexts and settings may also be organized as orchestrated encounters (Dingwall, 1980), that is, speech-exchange systems in which one party determines who speaks and the topics about which others may properly speak. Mediation sessions, for example, may be organized around one or two mediators who assume responsibility for initiating, monitoring, and guiding the mediation process. The disputing parties direct their talk toward the mediators, even when they are responding to accusations made by other disputants, with direct accusations and conflict being avoided. Mediators manage the interactions by "using sanctions, changing topics, redirecting a question, uttering minimal responses, and other similar techniques" (Garcia 1991:827). Thus, orchestrated encounters differ from conversation-like disputes in which all participants may influence the allocation of speakership. They are more tightly focused and tend to have a more limited-range of topics that may be discussed than do free-ranging disputes.

When we analyze dispute domains in terms of argumentation practices, the focus is on the rhetorical procedures used by disputants and dispute interveners within and across dispute settings. Participants and interveners use the rheorical procedures available within diverse dispute domains to organize and pursue their practical interests in dispute settings, and produce moral backgrounds (or universes) for assessing their own and others' argumentative positions and actions in the settings (cf. Ibarra and Kitsuse, 1993). Moral backgrounds might be characterized as "good reasons" (Fisher, 1987), collective representations (Durkheim, 1965), and/or schemes of interpretation (Schutz, 1970) to which

disputants may appeal in pressing their argumentative claims and countering others' arguments.

Analysis of dispute domains as argumentation practices, then, points to some of the ways in which disputes are organized as political relationships within local cultures. They are practical reasoning processes that, as Willard (1982, 1983) notes, involve testing the "fit" between ideas and audiences, particularly other disputants and dispute interveners (Perelman, 1982). Reasoning and persuasion are thus linked in organizational disputing because disputants assess the viability of candidate claims, warrants, and logics by assessing their persuasiveness for concrete audiences.

Dispute Domains as Situated Traditions

Organization members recognize and orient to dispute domains as typical ways of interacting and disagreeing, situated traditions of activity and interaction (Willard 1982, 1989). The traditions include the disputing forms associated with the seemingly spontaneous disputes that sometimes emerge in routine organizational interactions (such as professional-client interactions), disputes that emerge in staff meetings involving persons who represent competing organizational factions, and officially defined disputing procedures such as adjudication and mediation sessions.

Indeed, organization members often anticipate disputes as part of their routine, professional interactions. Consider, for example, the following statement made by a staff member of a Work Incentive Program [WIN] to a colleague prior to a meeting with a new client. WIN is the work component of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children [AFDC] program. Many clients who receive AFDC benefits are required to also enroll in WIN which is concerned with helping clients identify and obtain jobs that will be them economically self sufficient.

> Here we go again. [To a nonexistent client,] "Do you know why you are here?" [To the other staff member,] Don't you love asking that?....And they [clients] always say no. That goes to show you that they don't tell 'em anything at [the] welfare [department]. [Welfare officials say,] "You have to go over to register for WIN to get your [welfare] check." They come here and we say, "Do you know why you're here?" and they go, "No, not really." [WIN officials reply,] "You gotta look for work." [Clients respond,] "Oh, but there aren't any jobs out there." [WIN officials say,] "Oh, okay, then you don't have to look for work." [To the other staff member,] Wouldn't you love to say that? You don't have to look for work. (Miller, 1991: 78)

While this statement may be dismissed as a cynical, self-serving, and overly simplistic caricature of typical WIN staff-client interactions, it also highlights aspects of staff-client disputing in WIN that are very real to staff members. Specifically, the statement describes how initial staff-client interactions are organized as question-answer sequences, staff members' practical concern for introducing clients to WIN expectations and procedures in such interactions, and

clients' typical argumentative responses to staff members' portrayals of WIN. The staff member's statement simultaneously casts initial staff-client interactions as potential disputes and describes the ways in which disputes emerge within such interactions. The statement also casts staff members as accountable for their responses to clients' claims and justifications. That is, regardless of their personal inclinations, staff members are not free to let clients to stop looking for work.

Dispute domains, then, are shared practical understandings of, and orientations to, the troubles and their typical remedies that typify organizational interactions. Participants' understandings of, and orientations to, disputes are reflexively related because organization members' understandings of situations are partly based on their experiences in previous and similar situations, and organization members use their understandings of past interactions in orienting to ongoing interactions as potentially troublesome. In this way, organization members produce known and recognizable types of conflict to which they respond in anticipatable and recurring ways.

Dispute Domains as Role Formats

Finally, dispute domains may be analyzed as role formats or institutionalized activity systems (Strong, 1979). In these systems, actors collaboratively manage their mutual encounters by organizing them within culturally shared and standardized forms of social relationship and interpretive frameworks, that is, roles. But roles do not determine behavior. Instead, interactants orient to role formats as resources for organizing their behavior and as practical constraints on their decisions and actions. As Strong (1979: 13) notes, role formats

> constitute a resource to which all kinds of problem may be brought for solution, so long, that is, as the participants agree. In essence, role formats are not structures which totally determine action but are instead routinized, culturally available solutions which members 'use' to solve whatever problems they have at hand.

Role formats are thus practical conditions within and through which organization members manage their mutual interactions, including their disagreements. They influence, but do not determine, interactants' efforts to define and act in situations. For example, Strong characterizes the usual social relationship between pediatricians and middle-class parents as the bureaucratic role format. Social interactions organized within this role format are polite and friendly encounters in which pediatricians treat parents as caring and competent. Strong contrasts these interactions with those organized within the charity role format.

Relationships within the charity format are organized around the pediatricians' assumption that parents (usually working-class and poor parents) are likely to be incompetent and/or uncaring about their children's well being.

The physicians are concerned with identifying signs of parental inadequacy in their interactions. Signs produced in otherwise routine and unremarkable interactions are often cited to formulate and express complaints about parents' orientations to parenting and their parenting practices, and to challenge parents' claims to being competent parents. Disputes were produced when physicians' instructed parents on how they should properly orient to their children's health and behavior. Consider, for example, the following exchange:

> Dr. S: Are there any other problems?
> Mother: Well, he chews cigarette ends ... (laughs) ... It's very difficult to stop him.
> Dr. S: Why are you laughing? Do you think it's funny?
> Mother: No, I don't think it's funny.
> Dr. S: Well, why did you laugh then; do you always laugh at this? (Strong 1979: 44)

In sum, dispute domains are shared, standardized and recognizable ways of organizing and managing troubles. They are social contexts of disagreement and argumentation -- local cultures within which disputants and dispute interveners formulate, organize, and articulate their practical interests, and assign meanings to their own and others' actions. Organization members must formulate and describe contested issues in ways that are recognizable as instances of known disputing practices and traditions. In so doing, participants provide the interpretive framework for assessing the persuasiveness and "truthfulness" of disputants' competing argumentative positions.

INTERACTIONAL EMERGENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL DISPUTES

Organizational disputes emerge within, and are built from, the rhetorical resources available to interactants in ongoing, often routine social interactions. Such resources include the organization of speakership rights in settings, determination of the issues to which interactants are expected to attend, presence of others with similar interests in the issues at hand, and availability of documents and/or other materials that interactants might use to justify their own claims and counter the claims of others. Thus, interactants' opportunities to challenge others, press their claims, and rebut others' counter arguments are influenced by the social organization of the initial interactions within and through which their disputes emerge.

Otherwise mundane and unremarkable organizational interactions, then, provide the conditions of possibility for disputing, with contextual factors often promoting the interests of some potential disputants over others. For example, a major practical interest of some organization members is their concern for managing social interactions in predictable ways in order to produce organizationally useful outcomes. Organization members who refuse, or are unable, to interact in preferred and predictable ways may be treated as

argumentative and disruptive. This section analyzes how disputes in routine organizational interactions are cast as disruptions, and how organizational routines and realities are maintained through such responses to emergent disputes.

Disputes as Disruptions of Organizational Routines

Organization members' concern for predictability is related to at least two factors. First, disputes are potential "reality disjunctures" (Pollner, 1987). Typically persons in the course of everyday life assume that a single social reality exists separate from persons' own interpretations and actions. Potential disjunctures emerge when the "facts" of a situation might be experienced and reported in different ways by different persons (or by the same persons at different times). Conflicting trial testimony is a prime example. Persons counter the possibility that more than one reality might exist by treating reality disputes as disagreements about the "true" meaning of objects, events, and/or issues; one position is always argued to be faulty, the other, real. The possibility of multiple realities is not considered. In so doing, persons affirm their common-sense assumption that there is one social reality and justify their treatment of some portrayals of reality as more accurate or trust-worthy than others.

Second, organization members' concern for predictable interaction relates to their practical interest in being perceived and treated by others as competent professionals. Specifically, organization members often treat their own and others' abilities to manage routine interactions as signs of their professional competence. To accomplish these goals, organization members may attempt to increase the potential social costs for interactants who challenge their positions, or argue for alternative understandings of the issues at hand. Consider, for example, Gubrium's (1980) analysis of geriatric staff-patient meetings intended to produce mutually agreeable understandings of, and orientations to, nursing home patients' troubles and treatments.

Staff members oriented to the meetings as potentially troublesome encounters in which they wished to appear as competent and knowledgable, not arbitrary or self-interested (Gubrium, 1980: 336). The meetings were organized as "this-is-your-life-routines" in which staff members described and summarized patients' organizational histories and current circumstances by reading selected entries from patients' charts. For staff members, "cooperative" patients responded to the reading of the charts by noting factual errors, affirming that the charts were generally accurate descriptions of their circumstances, and sometimes elaborating on staff members' descriptions of their lives and troubles.

Disputes emerged when patients objected to staff members' descriptions. Staff members treated these objections as disruptions of the expected and preferred interactional organization of the meetings, and as challenges to staff professionalism. Gubrium (1980: 340) characterizes the emerging dispute in the following way:

Should patients persist in objections, they may be glossed over as the briefing is completed over them.... Should patients' disagreement grow beyond what is taken to be routinely acceptable, they are reminded that their behavior is "inappropriate." They may even be told, with patronizing firmness, "Adults simply don't act that way," or "We mustn't be so childish," or "Let's try to be calm and more reasonable about this." With the patient's persistence, the interaction of the patient and staff members may spiral into an exchange where the patient becomes increasingly enraged with staffers' diversion from what the patient takes to be the issue at hand and where staffers, in turn, increasingly become irritated by what they believe to be the patient's unrealistic, immature conduct. Should the patient refuse to calm down and cooperate in decorously completing the routine, the patient is led from the meeting, whereupon the staffing is completed.

Gubrium highlights two major aspects of organizational disputing. First, he shows how disputes emerge within the mundane interactions that constitute most of everyday life in organizations. By orienting to patients' questions and claims as disruptions and inappropriate behavior, the staff members produced social conditions for treating virtually all of the issues raised by patients as signs of opposition and aspects of arguments. In addition, patients who challenged staff members were framed as disruptive for having violated staff members' expected and preferred organization of speakership turns.

Second, Gubrium's analysis suggests how dispute domains are organized as accountability structures (Holstein 1993) and how disputants are held accountable to the practical concerns and assumptions around which dispute domains are organized. Gubrium describes how organization members can be held accountable to typical, expected and/or preferred interactional patterns and interpetive procedures. Members who fail or refuse to organize their actions in expected and preferred ways are subject to criticism, and may be considered disruptive, confrontational, and or out of line. Such characterizations might later be cited in challenging members' claims to social competence and other desired identities.

Disputing and the Maintenance of Organizational Routines

Organization members often orient to emerging disputes as undesired disruptions and threats to typical and preferred organizational routines. Accordingly, they often rely upon standardized, organizationally embedded argumentation practices and role formats to manage the disputes so as to restore and preserve those routines, rhetorically sustaining typical organizational realities. Organizational routines and realities are thus maintained by interactants treating emergent disputes as disagreements about the "true" meaning of practical issues, rather than raising fundamental ontological questions. In so doing, they sustain the natural attitude (Schutz 1970) that is fundamental to virtually all forms of organizational reality and work.

Organization members also use these interpretive procedures to cast "disruptive" others' claims as false and/or unrealistic, and as expressions of their

inappropriate motives or inability to grasp reality. In so doing, organization members interested in "orderly" interactions also cast themselves as responsible and rational organization members, thus warranting their condemnation of "disruptive." Such responses deflect attention from the issues raised by "disruptive" others which might be treated as appeals to reconsider the appropriateness of typical and expected routines and realities.

The episode taken from Gubrium's (1980) study of geriatric settings is an example of how some organization members may cast others' complaints about typical organizational practices and routines as signs of their bad motives and/or irrational stats of mind. Perruci (1974) offers other examples in his analysis of staff-patient interctions concerned with the possible release of patients from a mental hospital. The analysis shows how patients who challenged dominant organizational claims were cast as sick and in need of further psychiatric services. In responding to patient challenges, staff members cast themselves as responsible professionals, and justified existing organzational practices, routines and relationships. Consider the following exchange.

[After the patient explains why she feels that her electric shock treatments are forms of torture, the discussion to turns to her reasons for not wanting to take a work placement. She states that she really needs to be set free from the hospital. A psychiatrist asks,]
Q[uestion]. But if you stayed here on a work placement you'd be free to come and go on your own time. It would be just like a job.
A[nswer]. No. You would still be controlling me if I stayed here.
Dr Craig: [cutting in] ... Do you mean we control your mind here?
A: You may not control my mind, but I really don't have a mind of my own.
Q. How about if we gave you a work placement in _____; would you be free then? That's far away from here.
A. Any place I went it would be the same set-up as it is here. You're never really free; you're still a patient, and everyone you work with knows it. It's tough to get away from the hospital's control.
Dr. Stone [cutting in] That's the most paranoid statement I ever heard.
Mrs. Rand: How can you say that...? That doesn't make any sense. [... standing at this point] It's just plain crazy to say we can control your mind. (Nurse Rand turns to Dr. Stone who is looking at her.) ... I had no idea she was that sick. She sure had me fooled. [turning to Patient again] You're just not well enough for a discharge ..., and you had better realize that. (Perruci 1974: 158)

Finally, organization members may use typical organizational responses to problems and potential disputes to justify organizational routines. They do so by treating the outcomes associated with typical responses as evidence of the correctness of organiztional practices and routines. Miller's (1991) research in a Work Incentive Program (WIN) analyzes several interactions between a WIN staff member and client who reentered the program after being expelled for failing to cooperate with the staff. When the client applied for readmission, he wrote on

his application form that he "always wanted to be a politician to speak for us peasants." The following exchange occurred during the ensuing registration meeting with the client.

Staff Member: .... You have a real attitude problem. You know that? Look at this [points to the WIN application form], anyone who puts down "I always wanted to be a politician to speak for us peasants" has an attitude problem.
Client: That's how I feel. That's how I am. I cut right through the bullshit and get to how it really is.
Staff Member: I cut through the bullshit too and I'm telling you this is inappropriate. I have only seen you a short time here and I can see that you are angry. How do you think job interviewers see you? Part of your problem is your attitude. (Miller 1991: 162)

Near the end of the interview, the staff member told the client that his first assignment would be to take a series of diagnostic tests at the local Alternative Learning Center. The assignment was routinely given to clients who had not completed high school. The client returned to the WIN office two weeks later with test scores that were higher than either he or his WIN worker anticipated. The staff member used the test scores to reassess the meaning of the clients' prior actions and attitude, casting the routine practice of having clients take the diagnostic tests as justified. The staff member stated,

Here is an example of a gross error on my part.....This just shows ya why we need outside, input, hard data. I mean, if you look at the guy, you'd never guess he could do that [well on the diagnostic tests]. He did tell me that he was good in school, but I didn't believe him. But he probably was good. Well, it just goes to show ya. (Miller 1991: 164)

There are at least two major ways in which the dispute domains perspective should be extended and elaborated. They involve analyzing organizations as interrelated dispute domains, and describing the ways in which disputes move across, and are transformed within, organizational dispute settings. Both of these issues have implications for viewing disputes and dispute management as both shaped by, and sources for, the production and reproduction of organizational structures and processes.

First, organizations can be analyzed as interrelated, intra- and inter-organizational dispute domains. Disputing frequently involves several settings which may be organized as increasingly formal occasions for resolving disputes. Formalization often involves third party intervention and increasingly severe sanctions for disputants found guilty of wrong doing. Intra- and inter-organizational disputing stages may also be organized as appeals and reconsiderations of previous disputes. However they are connected. interrelated

dispute domains structure the ways in which organizational disputes are formulated, expressed, negotiated, and managed.

Thus, a major way in which the analysis of organizationally embedded dispute domains may be extended is by developing empirically-based criteria for analyzing, comparing, contrasting, and categorizing interrelated dispute domains within which disputes emerge and develop. This paper lays the groundwork for developing such a categorization scheme by focusing on the ways in which dispute domains are organized as argumentation practices, situated traditions, and role formats. Four factors might be emphasized in comparing and contrasting dispute domains: (1) the settings within which disputes emerge, evolve, and are managed, (2) argumentation claims and rationales associated with the settings, (3) conversational practices used by interactants to constitute the settings, and (4) interactants' orientations to the proper management of disputes emergent in their mutual dealings.

Studies of organizations as interrelated dispute domains are also opportunities to analyze how organizational disputing is organized to produce and reproduce organizational structure and process. For example, while dispute domains are aspects of general intra- and inter-organizational contexts to which participants attend in various ways, these contexts do not determine when or how disputes emerge in concrete interactions, or how disputants and dispute interveners will respond to them. Rather, disputants and dispute interveners use the available resources to organize and manage their disagreements. In doing so, they take account of, and reproduce, the general contexts of their interactions, including typical and expected organizational routines and realities, and dispute career trajectories.

Second, movement of disputes through interrelated dispute domains may be analyzed as processes within which disputes are reformulated and transformed. The reformulations generally involve new portrayals of the issues being contested and new interactional procedures for expressing and negotiating the issues. For example, Emerson and Messinger (1977) and Emerson (1992) suggest that the micropolitics of disputing are significantly altered by third party intervention, frequently transforming both the substance and the interactional dynamics of the dispute. Relatedly, Felsteiner, et. al (1980-81) analyze how disputing issues which initially focus on the assignment of fault are transformed when third party interveners refocus disputes around finding dispute remedies. And Mather and Yngvesson (1980-81) note that third party interveners may narrow disputing issues by organizing them within preferred and established professional categories, or expand disputing issues by recasting them in interpretive frameworks that had not previously been considered by disputants.

Disputes involve more than the determination of how practical issues should be handled, however. Social relationships, identities, and statuses are also involved and, in some cases, placed at risk as disputes emerge and change. They are most obviously placed at risk because the social and practical costs of losing disputes often increase as they move through interrelated dispute domains. For example, each disputing venue involves new investments of time, energy and,

perhaps, money by disputants. They may also involve other risks because disputants and dispute interveners frequently orient to them as increasingly problematic and, in so doing, invite the use of proressively severe responses.

Disputants who cannot adapt to the changing circumstances of their disputes often find themselves disadvantaged in pressing their claims and justifying their actions. Of special importance are the ways in which the disputing process places some disputants at a disadvantage as conflicts move from initial confrontations to more formalized disputing occasions. For example, some disputants may be disadvantaged by third party intervention, which may reorganize disputes within new turn-taking conventions, around new assumptions and practical concerns, and within new disputing discourses. Introducing legalistic procedures and guidelines may further alter disputing dynamics, placing disputants who are familiar with legal or other professionalized forms of disputing at an argumentative advantage (Conley and O'Barr, 1990).

Thus, analyses of the transformation of disputes within and across organizations promise to show how conflict and disputing are embedded in contemporary organizations, organized within and across dispute domains, and have practical consequences for disputants and dispute interveners.

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