

Negotiated order

[Business](#), [Organization](#)



: “ The Negotiated Order of organizational Reliability. ” | | Watson (2008), “ Organizational rules and hierarchies play a part of in the patterning of life in organizations but the overall organizational order is one that emerges out of the process whereby different groups make use of rules, procedures and information in the day- to-day negotiations that occur between them about what is about to happen in any given situation at any particular time. Paul Schulman, in his writings on the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant unfolded the different aspects of management step by step showing how organization rules, hierarchies and cultures affect the efficacy of the plant. At the beginning of the article ‘ The negotiated order of organizational reliability’, Schulman (1993) delves into the realm of both the worker and manager by introducing and further conceptualizing the idea of “ slack”. He expounds the link of this concept, of slack by breaking it down into two varieties.

Firstly “ resource slack, in timemoney, personnel...can be viewed negatively as a nonproductive inefficiency in the organization, a suboptimal allocation of available means to desired ends. ” This concept outlined inherently speaks to the idea of Taylor’s ‘ systematic soldiering’, where Taylor explains this notion as “ employee’s deliberate attempt to restrict output and still get maximum reward without tempting management to come back and tighten the rate. ” The second aspect of slack zeroed in on is that of control slack.

Despite the negative connotation of the word slack in essence from an industrial sociologist standpoint can be viewed positively as a way to move away from a scientific management approach which helps to break down a centralized bureaucratic authority. Shulman’s aim on the paper being discussed is generally focused on the idea of organization function and

efficacy and reliability from workers. One such way of doing such was by the workenvironment, the article outlined a quite detailed description of the surroundings of the plant; the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant is located on acres of beautiful farm land with beef cattle and crops on the way.

Parker in his book *Sociology of Industry* (2005), noted from the Hawthorne studies conducted that environmental factors played a key role on motivating workers behavior. Industrial sociology would pinpoint the strategic effort places on environment to be all part of management's way of motivating or just keeping workers happy. The author highlights a clear division of labor as well as support groups, separate departments to handle each problem example Safety and Emergency Services department as well as Safety Review groups, fire Marshalls, hygienists.

This inherently shows the rigid bureaucratic structure eminent at the firm with each specific group having a designed task to take care of. Workers jobs are monitored via quality assurance who reports to the vice president of utility. He shows that the firm as well maintains a level of compliance when it comes to specific standards. Most importantly when it comes to employee interaction and say on the job, what separates this firm from a scientific management style is the fact that they have weekly meeting which inherently allow employees to be a part of the firm as well as support group for workers.

Schulman highlights in his research that despite the high levels of specialization and organization there is pressure to “ formalize” tasks and as a result there are some “ established norms for operations—not formally but informally. ” These norms the writer ties into the title of the article

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negotiated order which he highlighted there is at the firm however it was difficult to actually point out except with the case of improper communication between the day and night supervisor who did not tell each other about changes that were made.

In all the case of Diablo canyon managers aim to diminish slack and gain maximum safe levels of performance, they have implemented formalized standardize hierarchical structures which help inherently promote cultures desirable for the organization as they saw that were arrogant were not seen as an ideal worker as well the internal polity had a system of somewhat overlapping powers thus decreasing centrality. Analyzing this piece from an industrial sociology standpoint brings up many issues.

Firstly Schulman fails to show how really employees are motivated at Diablo Canyon. Despite all the programmes and meetings put in place there is no clear indicator of how the employee is in fact motivated. The author centralizes on management and management functions, and measures they put in place. His main issue of concern as mentioned prior was efficiency on the light of the manager's perspective of the firm. A lot of the paper went on to "sort out units", separate different part of the organization and highlight their role.

For example there is a "Plant Staff review committee that meets weekly to approve procedural modification and design changes, as well as a Technical review group", showing that management takes high level of importance in quality and control. With all these groups especially support groups and safety groups it acts as a motivator to workers. Thus here we can say that

there is even though not mentioned by the author some sort of motivation taking place by implementation of these groups.

Looking at the Psychologistic side in management, we see that Maslow (1954) believed that scientific management should be revamped and remodeled to and “centered on releasing people’s potential at various levels” Maslow designed and put forth a model he called the “Hierarchy of needs” in which he outlines various levels of motivation for workers. At the Diablo canyon we see that workers are motivated on the second as well as some evidence of third level, which are safety needs and love needs respectively.

Especially safety needs with all the inspection units, the Onsite Planning Engineering Group for example “engineered to verify activities are performed properly and looks over general safety of the plant as well as looks over equipment modification.” Worth mention is the comparison the author makes to a study entitle “The Hospital and it’s Negotiated order” (Strauss, Schatzman, Ehrlic, Bucher and Sabsin (1963) described what the write states as a “complex pattern of reciprocal yet unstated agreements” between hospital staff.

Schulman clearly highlights as part of his issue that the aforementioned phenomenon of negotiated order which was brought forth by the Interactionist School in industrial sociology can in fact be observed within the plant. “not only are a range of informal interorganizational agreements observable, their negotiation and continual renewal are recognized and embraced formally in the organization”. Here one clearly understands that yes there is an existence of negotiated order however he fails to impact on its existence on the plant here at large.

Instead he seems to bring out the idea of a more Durkheimian strand of groups and the importance of formal and informal groups at the workplace. Tony Watson (2008) highlights a case which can mirror a comparison with the idea of groups. A researcher found that within two departments that the department with a higher level of social solidarity, were more bonded with similar experiences, and just had a group or community type setting. Thus it lends the reader to ask whether or not the managers at the firm aimed to bring out such factors and create a motivator in and of itself out of the groups.

Schulman (1993), shows the reader that “ A new agreement had been negotiated between the Radiation protection officer and the night shift foreman to make minor modification in the design of scaffolding” however it was found that the night shift foreman failed to make mention to the day foreman. There is not sufficient evidence to show whether or not as well this could have been a case of negotiated order and they made the decision unknowing to the day because of their own benefits, as the day foreman did complain: “ They are changing the rules in the middle of the game”. However the author shows how swiftly management resolves such an issue.

Here management worked hard to ensure everything was cleared up and he states to “ restore amicable relations between the two departments”. Therefore one can imply that at Diablo Canyon there is a focus of cohesion and agreement among the firm which takes a bit away from the scientific management realm that Taylor would talk about. Trust is a vital cohesive unit and this is brought about by as well the decentralization and separation of powers at the plant, again moving focus away from a manager centric

role, at the plant there seems to be more of a worker oriented feel to an extent.

This may be so whereby there are efforts to have weekly meetings hearing employee feedback as well as the breaking down of roles within the organization despite the rigid bureaucratic structure there is some flexibility which lends back to the point at the beginning of the paper by Schulman when he mentions “ control slack”. To further contribute to the writing of Schulman using the thoughts and concepts akin to that of Industrial sociology, first to delve more into the issue of negotiated order as it relates to “ slack”.

A firm like Diablo Canyon can easily fall susceptible to unhappy workers, due to the type of environment managers ought to look out for informal social groups. While mention of it was made, looking at Durkheim’s analysis on social groups and how it impacts on a firm. In addition because of the environment being a plant and having a somewhat scientific management style, the writer should have paid more particular attention to aspects of worker interaction and their feel of the job. Issues such as Deskilling and alienation of workers, how can a reader be sure that workers do not feel totally dissatisfied with their jobs.

Watson (2008) brings forth the idea of Marx’s notion of alienation, whereby a worker because the monotonous nature of his job may start feeling estranged. One might argue that the mere groups and weekly meetings counter the feelings of estrangement and instead due to technology highlighted in the plant may be akin to Braverman’s (1974) idea of up skilling. The level of equipment highlighted needs a certain amount of

skill even at the lowest level thus separating the workers of Diablo plant from a normal processing plant that may require much less skill.

The entire focus of the writer delves into the aspect of as mentioned throughout efficiency of the worker this is achieved via motivation principles through groups and safety. The writer shows how management even though having a strong, rigid bureaucratic structure allows some control slack as well as the large number of informal groups may impact on negotiated order and other minor work disputes however due to the set of the organization these such disagreements are quickly dissolved and rectified.

However the writer from an industrial sociologist standpoint failed to take in key considerations since it is a plant, issues such as alienation, deskilling could have been more addressed as well as more emphasis could have been put into the notion of negotiated order. Works Cited Parker, S. R. , R. K. Brown, Child J, and M. A. Smith. The Sociology of Industry fourth edition. London: Unwin Hyman, 2005. Schulman, Paul R. " The Negotiated Order of Organizational Reliability. Administration and Society 25. 3, 1993: 353+. Watson, Tony J. Sociology, Work and Industry 5th edition. NewYork: Routledge, 2008. ----- [1]. Watson, Tony J. Sociology, Work and Industry 5th edition. NewYork: Routledge, 2008. pgs 49-50 [2]. Schulman, Paul R. " The Negotiated Order of Organizational Reliability. " Administration and Society 25. 3, 1993: 353+. [3]. Watson, Tony J. Sociology, Work and Industry 5th edition. NewYork: Routledge, 2008. pg. 3 [4]. Schulman, Paul R. " The Negotiated Order of Organizational Reliability. " Administration and Society 25. 3, 1993: 353+. [5]. Watson, Tony J. Sociology, Work and Industry 5th edition. NewYork: Routledge, 2008. [

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