The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling Processes, Turmoil, and Inhabited Institutions in an Urban Elementary School

Tim Hallett[a]

Abstract

The study of institutional myths has been central to organizational sociology, cultural sociology, and the sociology of education for 30 years. This article examines how the myth concept has been used and develops neglected possibilities by asking: What happens when myths become incarnate, and how does this occur? In other words, what happens when conformity to a rationalized cultural ideal such as ''accountability'' is no longer symbolic but is given tangible flesh? Data from a two-year ethnography of an urban elementary school provide answers and reveal ''recoupling'' processes through which institutional myths and organizational practices that were once loosely connected become tightly linked. In the school studied here, recoupling accountability with classroom practices created a phenomenon that teachers labeled ''turmoil.'' The findings advance our understanding of the micro-sociological foundations of institutional theory by ''inhabiting'' institutionalism with people, their work activities, social interactions, and meaning-making processes.

Three decades ago, Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978) suggested that formal organizational structures are types of ''myth and ceremony'' that are loosely coupled with work activities. Central to their argument was the notion that loose couplings protect organizational legitimacy by alleviating structural inconsistencies, thereby reducing conflict. In time, their work became a mandate for examining how macro-cultural ideals (i.e., institutional myths) provide legitimating rationales across broad organizational populations, and how organizations comply in symbolic, ceremonial ways. However, vital aspects of Meyer and Rowan's work were more local in orientation.

In this vein, they proposed that tight couplings between institutional myths and core practices would create uncertainty and conflict inside organizations (1977, 1978). I develop this neglected aspect of their work by examining how myths become incarnate. I shift the focus away from symbolic compliance with

[a]Indiana University

Corresponding Author:
Tim Hallett, Indiana University, Department of Sociology, Ballantine Hall 744, Bloomington, IN 47405, USA
E-mail: hallett9@indiana.edu

institutional myths and examine how myths are given tangible flesh inside organizations.

This article is grounded in efforts to understand ethnographic data from ''Costen Elementary School'' (a pseudonym) in light of institutional theory. During my fieldwork, the institutional myth of accountability came to dominate Costen's environment. Schools have long been held up as exemplars of institutional arguments about loose coupling, and given this literature, one might expect ceremonial compliance to accountability (i.e., facades of conformity disconnected from actual practices). At Costen, however, accountability became a tangible reality.

By examining how myths become incarnate, this article makes three interrelated contributions. First, I describe ''recoupling'' processes (Espeland 1998) through which institutional myths and organizational practices that were once loosely connected become tightly linked. Although contemporary institutionalism usually focuses on external factors, such as broad diffusion processes and macro-environments (Schneiberg and Clemens 2006; Scott 2008), recoupling is a local response to institutional pressures, and examining recoupling directs attention to the micro-macro interface that links organizations to their environments (Binder 2007).

Second, I examine a possible outcome of recoupling, a phenomenon that Costen's teachers labeled ''turmoil.'' Turmoil has two dimensions. Initially, in response to recoupling, teachers experienced epistemic distress, that is, a displacement of meaning, certainty, and expectations (Zuboff 1988). Next, they responded to this epistemic distress by constructing a set of meanings that created a partisan interpretation of events and defined emergent battle lines. Both of these dimensions are social psychological, and they underscore the need to further develop institutional theory's micro-sociological foundations.

Third, this article advances efforts to ''inhabit'' institutionalism (Hallett and Ventresca 2006; Scully and Creed 1997)

with people, their work activities, social interactions, and meaning-making processes, all of which tend to be obscured by the macro-gaze common in contemporary neo-institutionalism (NI). Without taking a more local stance vis-à-vis data and theory, we cannot observe recoupling, understand its components, or ascertain its possible outcomes. Taking an inhabited view enables scholars both to analyze how external myths, such as accountability, pressure organizations and to examine the internal manifestation of myths in organizations and their substantive (in addition to ceremonial) implications. Moreover, like ''old'' institutionalism (OI), an inhabited view stresses intra-organizational politics, and it extends OI's focus on conflicting interests by demonstrating how interests become articulated via local interactions, and how turmoil involves struggles over meaning.

THEORY AND LITERATURE

Myth, Ceremony, and Coupling in Institutional Analysis

The publication of Meyer and Rowan's remarkable article ''Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony'' (1977) has been labeled NI's ''birth date'' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). NI has evolved into a macro-cultural theory that explains why organizations conform to their environments, but the 1977 article was inspired by observations of *local* nonconformity. Analyzing surveys of San Francisco schools, Meyer and Rowan were struck by the fact that formal structures (i.e., bureaucratic rules) did not match the core activities of schooling. This raised the question: If structures do not address functional needs, why do organizations look similar?[1] Their answer promoted new thinking: structural similarities reflect organizational efforts to conform to broad cultural ''myths'' that foster public legitimacy necessary for survival.

According to the 1977 article, myths operate in two ways, although this distinction is sometimes unclear. In the first mode, myths are widely shared cultural ideals that provide a ''rational theory of how'' organizations should operate (p. 342). In this sense, myths are idealized cultural accounts, not necessarily something ''false.''[2] Instead of examining the local gap between symbols and substance that prompted Meyer and Rowan's thinking, NI typically focuses on symbolic similarities between myths and organizational forms by studying how myths diffuse and how organizations conform to them (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Strang and Meyer 1993; Sutton et al. 1994).

By focusing on myth in this first, macro sense, subsequent work sometimes obscures how the concept operates in a second, local way. Macro-myths provide legitimacy, but they often conflict with practical activity. Organizations avoid conflicts by building gaps between formal structures and core activity. Directing attention back to this local gap, Meyer and Rowan (1977:356) used myth in a second sense: ''Organizations must not only conform to myths [in the first sense] but must also maintain the appearance that the myths actually work.'' This second, local myth is the ceremonial presentation of a tight linkage between formal structures and work activity that hides gaps between them (Elsbach and Sutton 1992).

Meyer and Rowan's two-fold conceptualization of myth was bound with the concepts of loose coupling and decoupling, that is, practices that enable organizations to sustain formal structures while unit activities vary (Weick 1976). These ideas challenged long-standing assumptions about tight couplings among organizational structures, external technical requirements, and work activities. Loose coupling was especially useful for educational research because it explained why schools remained the same despite reforms (Bidwell 2001). To theorize the conditions that affect coupling, Scott and Meyer (1983:140) distinguished between ''institutional'' sectors, where organizational success depends on legitimacy acquired from conformity to macro-cultural myths (e.g., schools), and ''technical'' sectors, where success depends on market exchanges and ''effective and efficient control of the work process'' (e.g., manufacturing). They hypothesized that institutional organizations tend to exhibit loose coupling and technical organizations tighter coupling (1983). Subsequent work blurred the institutional/technical distinction, and loose coupling became popular throughout the literature. Orton and Weick (1990) criticized the overemphasis on loose coupling, however, and lamented that coupling is typically studied at one particular time, as though unchanging. Few studies examine the dynamics of coupling, how couplings reverse from loose-to-tight, or vice versa.

To capture these dynamics, I draw from Espeland (1998) and examine ''recoupling,'' that is, the process of creating tight couplings where loose couplings were once in place.[3] In her study of how Orme Dam was *not* built, Espeland showed how commensuration created a recoupling with surprising outcomes. Engineers originally saw Orme Dam as a means to electricity and water, but as they grew invested in the project, the dam became beautiful in itself. In the face of commensuration, they filed many ceremonial reports to legitimize the dam. This powerful constituency expected dam construction to proceed, but the quantitative techniques that rationalized decision-making suggested an alternative to the dam. The engineers were devastated, but silenced, because commensuration recoupled decision-making to their original (instrumental) rationale.

Although they do not use the term, Kelly and Dobbin (1998) also document recoupling. In examining antidiscrimination laws from 1961 through 1996, they find that employers initially responded with symbolic compliance and loose coupling. When the environment changed from weak to strong federal enforcement, however, employers

hired specialists to create compliance strategies. This recoupling of law and practice was not ceremonial: specialists became internal champions for substantive programs that rationalized hiring. These programs even survived an opportunity for uncoupling; when Reagan curtailed enforcement, the programs remained because specialists had become integral to management.

In new research on private education in Toronto, Davies, Quirke, and Aurini (2006) note that market conditions could make schools more ''technical'' (Scott and Meyer 1983). When parents become paying customers, markets should ''reconnect school performance to its resource exigencies'' (Davies et al. 2006:106). They hypothesize that market accountability should recouple classroom practices to performance indicators, such as test scores. Unexpectedly, the organizations most dependent on markets (i.e., tutoring businesses and non-elite private schools without large endowments and reputational shields) did not recouple to quantitative benchmarks. Instead, the schools emphasized vague notions of customer satisfaction, creating qualitative market niches.[4]

Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1978) anticipated that the surveillance associated with tight coupling would create uncertainty and conflicts that could destabilize schools and threaten the entire system. For this reason, they expected loose coupling to persist in schools. In classic NI thought, therefore, the prospect of recoupling is not intuitive, although it is not beyond the realm of possibility. This article follows through, empirically, on that possibility. The dynamics and multiple forms of coupling must be identified because they are the means through which macro-institutional environments and local activities are linked (Binder 2007). Loose couplings sustain myth and ceremony; via recoupling, myths become incarnate. Both scenarios entail local responses to environmental pressures, and local analyses are necessary for understanding them both, but NI's evolution has obscured these concerns.

NI's Macro-Evolutionary Drift

Although contemporary NI is often criticized for neglecting micro-sociology (Hirsch and Lounsbury 1997), this is an evolutionary symptom, not a trait essential to foundational works. To conceptualize myth and ceremony, Meyer and Rowan (1977:358) drew from Goffman:

> Considerations of face characterize ceremonial management. . . . Confidence in structural elements is maintained through three practices—avoidance, discretion, and overlooking (Goffman 1967). . . . Assuring that individual participants maintain face . . . reinforces confidence in myths that rationalize the organization's existence.

Invoking Goffman made sense, given that Meyer and Rowan's thinking was compelled by observations of local gaps between substance and symbols. They also drew from Berger and Luckmann's insight that humans produce a world perceived ''as something other than a human product'' as interpretations become reified external objects (1977:341). In the same vein, Zucker ([1977] 1991:85) described institutionalization as a process by which people ''transmit what is socially defined as real'' and a property of taken-for-granted meanings.

While there have been theoretical nods to micro-sociology (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Scott 1987), empirically NI has drifted in a macro direction (Hirsch 1997). Contemporary NI seeks to explain diffusion and homogeneity across organizations, the world polity, and nation states (Meyer et al. 1997; Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992). To do so, NI looks at societal sectors and typically uses event-history analysis to measure the adoption of organizational programs signaling conformity to macro-myths (Chaves 1996; Schneiberg and Clemens 2006; Westphal and Zajac 1994). NI does this exceedingly well, and it successfully explains why organizations have surface similarities. Yet something has been lost.

NI was built on a micro-sociological scaffolding, but as it spread, these concerns ''disappeared into the background'' (Barley 2008:491). Zucker ([1977] 1991:106) warned that ignoring local processes would turn institutionalization into a ''black box.'' While institutions were originally viewed as human social constructions, organizations and people are increasingly treated as institutional constructions (Meyer and Jepperson 2000).

NI studies of diffusion often close with disclaimers that ''no real inferences'' can be made about ''substantive'' activity (Sutton et al. 1994:966), generating calls for research that delves below surface measures of adoption by examining actual implementation (Kelly and Kalev 2006). This requires a fine-grained empirical analysis, and this article is in an ethnographic tradition that redirects NI by interrogating local processes. Only by ''going local'' could Heimer (1999) explain variations in the impact of law on neonatal intensive-care units: legal institutions compete with family and medical ones. This competition occurs on the ground, depends on who is present, for how long, and when. Binder (2007) also takes an inhabited view to explain how directors of a transitional-housing program responded to environmental pressures. Instead of uniform decoupling or tight coupling, the directors responded with a creative ''bricolage'' that varied across the organization. This response could not be predicted from the environment itself. Local meaning processes were vital as directors responded to environmental pressures based on co-worker interactions and professional commitments.

If we do not attend to how institutional myths are coupled to actual work, how couplings change, and what couplings mean to inhabitants, our knowledge of how and why institutions matter is limited. If, below the surface, the gaps that inspired Meyer and Rowan's thinking have changed, then we are obligated to revisit the micro-foundations of NI, not just theoretically, but also empirically. What happens when conformity to macro-myths is no longer symbolic, but is given flesh as the local myth of a tight coupling between an institutional environment and work activities is made real? How does this happen? What does it look like?

THE STUDY: BACKGROUND, METHODS, AND DATA

Schools continue to be relevant sites for answering the questions posed above. Schools were NI's foundational case, and the imagery of loosely coupling has endured, but not without growing debate (Coburn 2004; Spillane and Burch 2006). Some scholars, for example, argue that NI's focus on decoupling is ''out of step with current events'' in education (H. D. Meyer and Rowan 2006:3). This change reflects the emergence of accountability as an educational reform trope, which has grown since 1983 when *A Nation at Risk* stirred fear that U.S. schools were failing (Mehta 2006). Accountability is not simply a policy. It is an institutional myth in the first, macro-cultural sense of a rationalized ideal that models how schools should operate. Its legitimacy stems from its origins in the neo-liberal economy (Strathern 2000), and it has diffused to areas ranging from the International Monetary Fund's mission work (Harper 2000) to healthcare (Scott et al. 2000). In education, accountability gained momentum when advocates of market reforms argued that parental choice and competition would improve school performance. Progenitors of market accountability anticipated that political divisions would prohibit market reforms (Chubb and Moe 1990), but state accountability became broadly appealing. For Democrats, emphasizing standards was a way to promote equality, while Republicans viewed increased external pressure as a means to improve transparency and efficiency (Mehta 2008).

Accountability thus became an acceptable ''solution'' proffered by reformers who deemed loose coupling a form of

''disorganization'' that limited improvement (Ingersoll 2003; Rowan 2006). Beyond testing, accountability encompasses efforts to promote standards, transparency, efficiency, and quality by increasing surveillance and centralizing authority (Abelmann and Elmore 1999; Ladd 1996). The reforms encourage a recoupling between the institutional environment and local practices by making it difficult for schools to enact ceremonial compliance while doing different things behind classroom doors.

Examining recoupling requires data that capture evolving relationships among personnel, the organization, and the environment. Ethnography has limited generalizability but is suited for this purpose because it facilitates inductive exploration of local, contextualized processes (Morrill and Fine 1997). ''Costen Elementary,''[5] a kindergarten through 8th grade school, is a good case for two reasons. First, it is in ''Midwest City.'' Midwest City was among the first cities to implement accountability, and it helped set the stage for federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policies. Second, the principal, ''Mrs. Kox,'' was beginning her first full year at the school when I started my fieldwork. The Local School Council (LSC) hired her with a mandate to increase accountability, which provided a special opportunity to observe recoupling.[6]

When I began fieldwork, I initially sought data for an empirical synthesis of Goffman's studies of interaction and Bourdieu's work on symbolic power (Hallett 2007). Costen's managerial transition and repetitive administration-faculty interactions were useful for this purpose. However, I did not let these orienting ideas limit my data collection, and during my research I discovered phenomena pertaining to organizational sociology. I read this literature in constant dialogue with the data. My conceptualization of recoupling, turmoil, and inhabited institutions developed out of this dialogue between theory and data (Ragin 1994).

My fieldwork extended from October 1999 through June 2001. I typically arrived before classes started to observe meetings. I shadowed administrators as they worked, observed classrooms, and interviewed teachers during their resource breaks. I lunched with teachers, noting their talk. I took fieldnotes on 96 meetings (23 of which I videotaped and transcribed), 11 administrator observations, 61 lunches, 13 classroom observations, and 21 observations of hallway interactions. I conducted interviews with an availability sample of personnel, including 45 interviews with 27 teachers, 15 interviews with 5 administrators, and 5 interviews with 3 members of the LSC. These diverse data enabled me to triangulate the findings (for more detail, see the Online Supplement available at http://asr.sagepub .com/supplemental).

In what follows, I describe Costen's institutional context and the couplings it exhibited before Kox's arrival. I then examine how Kox gave tangible flesh to accountability and how recoupling sparked turmoil.

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND ORGANIZATIONAL COUPLING AT COSTEN

Costen's Institutional Context and the Hiring of Mrs. Kox

Accountability gained traction in Midwest City in mid-1990. Basic curriculum, instructional, and testing standards were implemented across the state to facilitate comparisons between schools, prompting additional reforms in Midwest City because of its low test scores. From 1985 to 1995, Midwest City had given schools and their LSCs autonomy to formulate their own improvement plans, but when scores did not improve, the mayor centralized control. He imported the business ideal of accountability into education by appointing a school ''CEO'' who had experience in finance, not

education. The CEO increased standardiza-
tion of the curriculum and instruction, estab-
lished   rigid   benchmarks   for   student
promotion, and threatened to close low-scor-
ing schools. With this change, LSCs became
part of the surveillance mechanism.[7]

In this environment, Kox was seen as a ris-
ing star. An assistant principal at an improv-
ing school, she learned the business ideal of
accountability as a fellow at Principal
Leadership Training in Education (PLTE),
a joint program between an elite business
school and an education school. Echoing
themes of accountability, Kox said she loved
PLTE because ''business people have a dif-
ferent orientation to improvement. They
have   a   better   sense   of   urgency''
(Interview).[8] This orientation appealed to
Stan Feierman (the LSC chair), who believed
Kox was ''far and away'' the best candidate
for the opening at Costen:

> She had been through PLTE, number one.
> . . . I think that the job of principal . . . is
> much more demanding now than it was
> 10 years ago. . . . The dictates that come
> from the Board of Ed are much more
> severe. . . . Accountability is very tight all
> the way around. The only person in the
> school who's really responsible is the prin-
> cipal, and we needed to know we had some-
> one who could really take the lead.
> (Interview)

Feierman thought Kox was a good match
with   accountability   mandates   because
''she's very opinionated and has very high
standards.'' Likewise, the LSC secretary
said of Kox and her assistant principal: ''I
think they're very tough. I think they're
very no nonsense'' (Interview).[9]

Costen's Iowa Test of Basic Skills
(ITBS) scores also played a role in the deci-
sion to hire Kox. When Kox was hired in
January 1999, 58 percent of students scored
at or above norms in math, 56 percent in
reading. This was better than the city aver-
age of 43 percent for math and 39 percent
for reading, but Costen fell short of Baxter

Elementary, its sister school. Baxter served
a similar student population but tested at
70 percent for math and 62 percent for read-
ing and received national recognition for
academic excellence.

The LSC expected Kox to bring account-
ability to Costen, and she did—although, as
we will see, test scores dipped. Importantly,
the LSC viewed Kox as a strong leader
because she guided the school into the new
era of accountability, had exhaustive knowl-
edge of education policy, was tireless, and
held firm to her convictions. They repeatedly
gave her outstanding reviews and enthusiasti-
cally renewed her contract (Hallett 2007).
Going beneath the surface, however, reveals
a more complicated story.

The Prior Local Order and Previous Loose Coupling

> We had a principal [Mr. Welch] . . . he's
> a really good guy and what he did was he
> hired good people who he let do their
> jobs. . . . Then our previous principal
> [Mrs. Jackson] . . . most of the time she
> let people do their jobs. (Interview)

When Kox was hired, Costen had an estab-
lished order that teachers and administrators
had negotiated over time (Strauss 1978).
Despite an increasing emphasis on account-
ability, teachers could ''do their jobs'' without
intervention. This loosely coupled arran-
gement   spanned   two   administrations
(Principals Welch and Jackson), operated for
more than 10 years, and developed in response
to Costen's structural characteristics.

Costen was a large school. Ninety teachers
served nearly 1,600 students from diverse
backgrounds. In 2000 to 2001, 31 percent of
students were classified as white, 8 percent
black, 36 percent Asian, and 25 percent
Hispanic. Almost 41 percent were classified
as ''limited English,'' and 77 percent of stu-
dents   were   from   low-income   families.
Despite these challenges, ITBS reading
scores had increased 15 percentage points

since 1991. (Math scores were stable.) These scores might indicate student ability, but they could also reflect the style of instruction. For years, the school responded to heterogeneous student needs by creating a system of high autonomy and low surveillance. Teachers created their own work routines, which I observed early in my fieldwork. Some teachers were rigid authoritarians; others used reward systems to promote good behavior. Many relied on a teacher-driven, skills-centered style; others used an inquiry-based method. Some taught math with curricula emphasizing hands-on manipulatives; others used direct instruction. Some taught reading through whole language; others used phonics.

These individualized routines created epistemic security for teachers within the often ambiguous process of education. Each day varied, but teachers generally knew what to expect. This aggregate order was taken for granted, but not uniform or standardized. Even as accountability became the official policy, Welch maintained the school's loose coupling and resisted the LSC's demands for accountability. For example, at an LSC meeting the previous chair told Kox:

> He [Welch] would bring me documents and would say, ''Sign this.'' And, uh, he just wanted my signature because it was the law. But, you know, he wouldn't give me the opportunity to examine what I was signing. He didn't want the council to know. (Video transcript)

Likewise, Feierman said that under Welch ''curriculum issues were never allowed to be the purview of the LSC'' (Interview).

When Welch retired, the next principal, Jackson, maintained the loose coupling. A teacher described Jackson as ''a delegating authority'': ''She was the head person and would allow the teacher to do whatever it is they want'' (Interview). Jackson's engagement with accountability was ceremonial. In a nod toward standardization requirements, she used Costen's discretionary funds to hire a consulting firm to align the curriculum to accountability policies, but she did not

enforce the curriculum: ''Everyone kind of realized that this is something that's not going to be used'' (Interview). In August 1998, when Jackson left the school for a job at the consulting firm she once hired, teachers' autonomy increased. Although losing the principal right before the start of the school year was problematic, teachers proceeded as they had for years. One teacher explained, ''We really were running ourselves before Mrs. Kox got here. In fact, school started without a principal and we did very well'' (Interview).[10]

This system of autonomy supplied teachers with a status akin to professionalism. Yet surprisingly, when discussing events, they did not invoke a straightforward discourse of professionalism, and data suggest that autonomy was important not merely for status reasons, but also for deeper social-psychological reasons—it was the means through which teachers organized their world. Their individual routines created epistemic security and islands of order amid the uncertain sea of education. However, this quasi-professional situation was an informal, *local* arrangement. Occupationally, teachers have very weak professional status (Dreeban 2005; Ingersoll 2003; Lortie 1975). Lacking formal protection, Costen's teachers had little recourse against the recoupling on the horizon.

The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling the School to Accountability

Accountability pressures factored heavily in Kox's hiring, and as a middle manager she bore the strain of enforcing accountability while facing it herself. An assistant principal explained:

> The principal goes down for a rating with the REO [Regional Education Officer]. And the first question the REO is going to say to the principal is, ''How'd you do with reading and math?'' It's measurable. It's empirical data. It's something you can hold somebody accountable for. (Interview)

Moreover, accountability was a cognitive script that shaped Kox's approach: ''I heard this phrase so much when I was teaching, 'you can't reach every child, if you can reach at least 80 percent of them, you are successful.' That's just not a standard I can live with'' (Interview). Three years before accountability became federal law, Kox was determined to leave no child behind.

Accountability is not just about test scores, and for Kox, it provided a ''rational theory of how'' schools should operate (Meyer and Rowan 1977:342). She told me:

> They'd [teachers] been running the school without a principal for six months. . . . Everyone took full advantage of running in every direction that they chose to. Well, that's not going to happen with this administration. [Referring to teachers flooding her with reimbursement requests] If you want to make any purchases with a reason, you submit a roster of what you need to purchase and you get approved and then you get reimbursed. I mean, if you allow no system in place, 100 people out there doing shopping on their own . . . can't—can't function that way. (Interview)

For Kox, accountability was a comprehensive and rational managerial guide, not just a means of symbolic legitimacy.

Surveillance is fundamental to accountability (Sauder and Espeland 2009), and Kox's use of surveillance to recouple Costen was evident from the first day of my observations. Kox told me I should observe ''anytime unannounced,'' because ''without some external partner to come in and observe, I don't think it will get us to do what we need to do'' (Fieldnotes). Accountability was so central to her worldview that she saw me as an agent of accountability.[11]

Teachers also heard the discourse of accountability and used it to contrast Kox with previous administrators:

> I think everybody is more accountable now. I hear that word all the time at faculty meetings, ''accountability.''

> Mrs. Kox likes to get her hands in and say, ''What's going on here? This is what we're going to have to do,'' rather than just allow the teacher to do it.

> People are held more accountable under Kox's administration. There's more accountability of what teachers are doing now. (Interviews)

Importantly, Kox was not just talk. She gave flesh to accountability through her surveillance of classroom and student management, grading, and curriculum and instruction.

Classroom and student management. Kox felt there was ''some good teaching,'' but ''a lot of time is wasted in not-focused instruction.'' She believed better classroom management would improve ''time on task'' and, eventually, test scores (Interview).[12] At a faculty meeting, she argued that ''if we monitor the students constantly, they don't have time to act up'' (Fieldnotes). Accordingly, she often popped into classrooms unannounced:

> Kox heads to Room 124 and stands inside the doorway. Students sit quietly as the teacher does something at her desk. Kox observes for a few seconds but does not say anything. Then we head to Room 224, and Kox does the same thing. (Fieldnotes)

> Kox opens the door, and students scurry around their desks. The noise rises, and Kox asks the teacher, ''Why are they running?'' The teacher responds, ''They're running to get their books.'' Kox says, ''That's unacceptable'' and makes them settle down, telling students, ''Show me your learning position.'' Once students are sitting quietly, Kox says, ''Stand up, get what you need for science, and put your book bags away. You have five seconds. Five . . . Four . . . Three . . .'' Students move quickly but quietly and return to their seats. Kox says, ''Straighten up the books around you.'' Then she walks around, checks their homework, and instructs, ''Raise your hand before you speak.'' When they settle down, Kox says, ''OK, we are ready for

learning. See you at lunchtime. Have a good day.'' (Fieldnotes)

I observed such practices on many occasions. Kox thought orderly classrooms signaled readiness for learning, and she would intervene if necessary. This recoupling of classroom practices gave flesh to accountability but disrupted teacher autonomy. Describing Kox, one teacher invoked ''Big Brother.'' He said Kox was ''more visible in the building,'' and teachers saw her ''in the halls, popping out of lockers, popping out of closets'' (Fieldnotes).

Grading. Accountability in Midwest City included higher and more uniform standards for student achievement, identification of at-risk students, and an end to ''social promotion'' of failing students. Kox recoupled Costen to these policies by reforming grading procedures. Unlike previous administrators, Kox required accounts of grading so that students could be monitored and classrooms compared. At a staff meeting, she introduced new forms that standardized procedures:

> The first form is for a ''report card review,'' the other for a ''grade book review.'' Kox says she will review their report cards and grade books and use the forms to provide feedback. For grade books, they should have ''at least 15 grades per subject.'' A teacher interjects, ''We've never had that much'' testing and it would require two tests per subject per week, limiting instructional time. Many agree, but Kox says testing is important for accountability because parents often do children's homework. She asks, ''Who wants feedback on this form this quarter?'' No one raises a hand. (Fieldnotes)

During a lunch that week, teachers expressed dismay. One exclaimed, ''She wants four grades a week, when are they going to learn?!'' Another said grading had to be subjective because she ''considers lots of different things'' and ''I don't put a number on it.'' Another agreed and said, ''When I close that door, it's me'' (Fieldnotes).

A 3rd-grade teacher, who was also the union representative, described numerous ''panicked'' phone calls leading to a ''midnight meeting'' with Kox (Interview notes). Kox agreed not to use the forms, but she still did a review:

> Kox and the assistant principal review report cards, and Kox wonders aloud, ''If they are all using the same materials, do the teachers assign the same grades? It's the same curriculum'' (implying they should).
>
> Kox continues, saying, ''We should standardize.'' Looking at a report card she sighs, ''Oh, I don't like it.''
>
> Kox looks at a report card and says in disbelief, ''Oh, come on! Recognizing numbers 1 through 10 is not introduced [during the first quarter] in kindergarten?''
>
> Looking at another report card, she comments, ''No, this is more than I can handle. Why is it [Rooms] 231 and 232 have different criteria? Are we teaching the same things to students?'' (Fieldnotes)

While previous administrations rubber-stamped grades, Kox scrutinized them. Recalling the midnight meeting, Kox said teachers were ''panicking,'' and one was ''very worried because she had never seen anyone review her grade book for the last 26 years'' (Interview).

Curriculum and instruction. Kox also monitored instructional practices and the curriculum. Accountability reforms required schools to adopt Midwest City's ''structured curriculum'' or develop their own curriculum aligned with policy goals. During a staff-development day focused on the latter, Kox argued that with the right curriculum, even ''difficult'' children could ''succeed if you give them the proper support.'' Echoing themes of accountability, she implored them to ''put the foot down and demand the children learn,'' because ''children know when we lower our expectations.'' Teachers replied that ''there should be order, but there has to be some noise with creativity'' and ''there has to be a balance with the fluidity required for

creativity.'' Emotions simmering (apparent from looks of disgust), Kox defended herself: ''I think it's a misconception to say we want total order, total control. We are not a boot camp here.'' She said accountability ''comes down to the children,'' because ''if we don't provide the opportunity for them'' students will not escape poverty (Fieldnotes).

To monitor instruction, Kox required teachers to submit daily lesson plans, and she organized an instructional review that included an examination of student work:

> Kox begins, ''Part of my training, my work'' is to make sure instruction is ''in alignment with the state and city standards,'' so ''I have a form, a very simple form that I have passed out to you.'' They should fill out the form based on ''one period a day,'' and include ''actual work from the children, so I can give you feedback.'' Teachers are to turn in the form and examples of student work with their lesson plans and grading rubrics. Based on this review, they will ''come back and talk about the kind of assessments we want to do'' and create some standards aligned with accountability. (Fieldnotes)

Later, at lunch, a teacher complained that lesson plans had to correspond exactly to teaching activities on specific days, which was ''ridiculous'' because teachers have to be ''flexible.'' Frustrated, her colleagues agreed that lesson plans were intended to aid substitute teachers, not constrain practice (Fieldnotes).

Anxiety increased as teachers received comments. A kindergarten teacher, for example, turned in an exercise where students practiced writing letters. Kox wrote: ''What's the [grading] rubric?'' Baffled by this surveillance, the teacher told me that ''this is bullshit,'' because ''this is kindergarten'' and students are ''just learning this letter'' (Fieldnotes).

RECOUPLING AND TURMOIL AT COSTEN

''The school's been through a lot of turmoil. A lot.'' (Interview)

Kox's decision to recouple classroom practices with accountability was conditioned by the logic of accountability that dominated the institutional environment. Accountability was at odds with the prior order, however, which had been institutionalized at the local level. Recoupling was not a simple ''first-order'' change that modified the existing system (Bartunek 1984); rather, it was a ''second-order'' change that entailed a discontinuous shift in practices (Weick and Quinn 1999). At Costen, this shift created a phenomenon that the teachers labeled ''turmoil.'' Turmoil has two social-psychological components: epistemic distress and a partisan reconstruction of meanings that defines emergent battle lines.

Epistemic Distress

Before Kox arrived, teachers had developed individual work routines that created a stable set of meanings, knowledge, and expectations. The recoupling disrupted that order, and teachers could not operate in their accustomed ways. Their epistemic security was replaced with epistemic distress, that is, a displacement of meaning, certainty, and expectations (Zuboff 1988). Each day, teachers had only a limited sense of what would happen. Would Kox observe classrooms? What was happening with grading? What about the curriculum? For many, stripped of the routines that organized their universe, life no longer felt rational (Weick 1993).

Kox's surveillance entailed an implicit loss of status, yet data suggest that teachers were more upset with their sudden lack of cognitive control over everyday life. One teacher lamented that life had become unpredictable because everything ''moves from day to day.'' She struggled with this new ''back and forth'' because the job was ''hard enough without the merry-go-round.'' I asked if the problem was the workload, but she replied, ''To me that isn't even the issue so much so, but the fluctuating.'' Costen had a settled order,

but recoupling put it in flux, and the methods teachers used to exert control over daily life were being challenged. As this teacher said, ''It's like I'm constantly defending what I'm doing in my classroom'' (Interview).

During lunch, another teacher described her distress. Hands and lips quivering, she said she was so ''freaked out'' by accountability that she brought a trash bag to school, ripped the paperwork Kox used to monitor instruction into ''bits and pieces,'' put the pieces in the bag, and ''poured chocolate milk over it'' as a disguise (Fieldnotes). This sabotage is fascinating, but it is the psychological horror the teacher felt in response to recoupling that indicates turmoil.

By making the myth incarnate, Kox disrupted the previous order, transforming the known into an unknown:

> Nobody knows what is going to take place and how it's going to affect us all. (Interview)

> Everybody finally becomes comfortable with one thing and then . . . you were happy with what was before, and then you feel disappointed because you don't know what's going to come in the future too. (Interview)

> This seems to be my daily life at Costen. It has become par for the course not knowing what to expect from day to day. (Excerpt from an anonymous complaint letter)

Because of this unpredictability, the atmosphere seemed crazy:

> *Maggie:* (In a choked voice) I'm betwixt and between, and it seems like we're, every time we're told to do something or, this is gonna happen and this gonna happen, then the whole thing just falls apart and there's no continuity in anything in this school.
> *Brenda:* (Agreeing) No, no, that's right.
> *Maggie:* (Trying not to cry) I've try-, I've really, I've just had it, I've, I've, I'm in a bad place right now, I have just had it.
> *Brenda:* If we did a survey, I'm gonna bet 75 percent would agree with you, the lack of continuity, the ambiguity. (Video transcript)

These teachers described a ''problematic present'' (Snow et al. 1998) where recoupling created chaos from order. A teacher reflected on this insanity when she said she wanted a ''sane'' job and ''you'd have to be psycho to stay here more than one or two years'' (Fieldnotes).

This condition was psychologically exhausting. One teacher sighed, ''Why can't we have a normal school year? It's so tiring'' (Fieldnotes). The normalcy she desired was a sense of familiarity bred from routine. Ironically, Kox used accountability as a *rational* management tool, but recoupling disrupted the teachers' routines and their lives suddenly felt *irrational* (Weick 1993). This state took its toll: ''It seems like every day somebody else is losing it'' (Teacher interview). One teacher often mentioned seeing a therapist ''just for work'' (Fieldnotes); another told colleagues that she skipped school to attend a ''wellness workshop'' (Fieldnotes). Another teacher coped by reading self-help books by Dr. Andrew T. Weil (Interview notes).

The Partisan Reconstruction of Meaning

Turmoil is foremost a state of epistemic distress, but it has another social-psychological component. Epistemic distress involves a collapse of meaning, but eventually teachers responded by reconstructing meanings in ways that defined emergent battle lines. When teachers talked to each other and to me about the past, they were not just describing their experience; they were infusing it with meaning. ''Turmoil'' was their term, and it is not a neutral one. Talk is a basic element in the politics of signification (Benford and Snow 2000; Hall 1972), and teachers' ''turmoil talk'' had political aspects (Emerson and Messinger 1977). Teachers had no formal authority to fight recoupling, but they did have the informal symbolic power (Hallett 2003) to shape meanings. Turmoil has a negative connotation, and teachers used their version of events to construct the

recoupling negatively. They did this by (1) reconstructing the status quo ante, (2) criticizing the rate of recoupling, and (3) mobilizing an anti-Kox campaign.

Reconstructing the status quo ante. Reflections on the past always happen in, and are shaped by, the present (Mead 1932), and the past contains symbolically reconstructed elements that can be used politically (Maines, Sugrue, and Katovich 1983). In light of recoupling, the past at Costen never looked so good, and by presenting a selective view of the status quo ante, teachers gave events a partisan spin. As evident in previous excerpts, their views of the past led to a negative depiction of Kox's reforms. When a teacher said Welch was a ''really good guy'' who ''let people do their jobs,'' the subtext was that Kox was the opposite. A similar example occurred during a teacher meeting:

> *Connie:* When I first started here, in 1989 . . .
> *Brenda:* With Dr. Welch?
> *Connie:* (Affirmative tone) It was so calm, and you could teach, no one was constantly looking over your shoulder. They knew exactly what was going on. I mean, they ordered books, we, we weren't, we didn't have to do all this extra stuff. We were allowed to teach, and I don't know if this is, the, way of the future, but it's, it's, kinda' stifling.
> *Maggie:* I think, well, I think some of it, I don't know the percentage, some does come from, the uh, from downtown [the central bureaucracy], um, but some is purely made up here.
> *Connie:* A lot of it I think. (Video transcript)

Connie gave a glowing account of Welch's administration. In juxtaposition, the present was ''stifling.'' Although Kox remained unnamed, this contrast between the two periods clearly reflected negatively on her. Other teachers were more direct in their evaluations of Kox and the different periods:

> They [Kox's administration] watch over us too much. . . . When I first came here the

principal we had was never ever [watching them] and this school was supposed to be one of the best in Midwest City. . . . That is why I can't understand why there is so much people looking over our shoulders. (Interview)

Teachers also used metaphors in reconstructing the past: ''If it's working, why try to fix something that's not really broken?'' ''We were a well-oiled machine until this administration came in'' (Interviews). My fieldnotes were littered with similar phrases; the image of the past as ''working'' painted Kox as a bad mechanic.

This is not to say that the teachers' version of the past was false. No data indicate that previous administrations recoupled Costen to accountability. The recoupling did represent a discontinuous shift, but the teachers' version of the past was selective. Teachers' lives were reportedly better in the past, but the school was not perfect. As noted earlier, almost 50 percent of students tested below average in reading, and almost 40 percent tested below average in math, even as Baxter's students excelled. Principal Jackson resigned to take a job with the company she had hired to align Costen's curriculum with accountability policies, but only one teacher raised ethical concerns. Such an admission betrays the idealized image of the past.

Criticizing the rate of recoupling. Another way teachers gave ''turmoil'' partisan meanings was by criticizing the pace of recoupling. At lunch one day, for example, a new teacher said she felt tension in the air. Her mentor responded: ''She made lots of changes, quickly. In most cases, making such quick changes is not good'' (Fieldnotes). Likewise, during an interview a teacher said:

> Mrs. Kox didn't really take time to look at our school and what the teachers were doing before she changed it. . . . That wasn't really fair. . . . If maybe after a year of observing, then make changes. That would have been more legitimate.

While eating lunch with colleagues, another teacher was more succinct: ''You don't have a baby in a month, it takes nine months'' (Fieldnotes).

While teachers often espoused the popular notion that fast change is bad, Kox and the LSC disagreed. Research on organizational change identifies multiple types of changes, but there is little consensus on when change is negative (Barnett and Carroll 1995; Brown and Eisenhardt 1997). Whether the pace of recoupling was bad or not, teachers used this rhetoric to create negative meanings.

Mobilizing an anti-Kox campaign. Over time, as teachers created meanings they could use as the basis for political action, they tried to protect the prior order by mobilizing against Kox. This effort was spearheaded by Mrs. Drew. Inspired by colleagues who had sent individual complaint letters to the regional office, Drew asked them for copies and solicited new letters. She gathered the complaints into a 119-page volume titled *Turmoil at ''KOX''sten School*. The volume included 36 letters from more than 27 teachers,[13] as well as 8 letters from 6 staff members. Entries decried the rate of recoupling and Kox's tough, accountability-based approach. Drew sent copies to district, regional, and central offices; the teachers' union; and anyone else she could think of:

> I plastered her [Kox's] name all over this city. Everybody I could think of I sent that book to. And the book was just magnificent. . . . It had, oh God, maybe a good 40 odd letters from various teachers. . . . And the title of the book was, a little thing with her name, ''Kox,'' *Turmoil at ''KOX''sten School*. . . . And through the whole process, all I kept hearing was ''You can't make principals change. . . . Let's just ride her out and eventually she'll be gone.'' I was just like ''No, no.'' The reason it's so difficult to combat leadership is that everybody runs scared. (Interview)

Initially, most teachers did not know how to respond to their epistemic distress. Many were inclined to ''just ride her out,'' but this changed as they reinterpreted the situation, and as Drew successfully mobilized a collective action frame (Benford and Snow 2000).

With the distribution of Drew's volume, this form of unconventional opposition (Zald and Berger 1978) became a not-so-hidden transcript (Morrill, Zald, and Rao 2003; Scott 1990) that prompted the central office to conduct an official investigation. Investigators observed Kox, interviewed teachers, and held meetings. Kox never broke any formal rules and never overstepped her authority, so nothing substantive happened, but the movement had a vital symbolic outcome. It framed Kox and the turmoil negatively and countered the frame advanced by the LSC, which repeatedly gave Kox excellent performance reviews based on her accountability efforts (Hallett 2007).

The Upshot of Turmoil

The epistemic distress and emergent partisan battle enveloped Costen in turmoil and affected everyone. A teacher described the turmoil as ''hard for all of our personal health'' (Fieldnotes). Likewise, at a lunch near the end of my fieldwork, a teacher said, ''Everyday it's harder and harder to come here.'' Her colleague agreed and tried to be positive, saying that at least it was ''not September.'' Another said, ''I counted up the days, 21 more to go'' (Fieldnotes). The turmoil also wore on Kox and the LSC. Kox battled frequent colds, and the LSC chair said he was at the ''end of his rope.'' When I asked how he coped with the turmoil, he said, ''I don't. I get sick. . . . It takes a terrible toll on me personally'' (Interview).

There was also evidence that recoupling and turmoil affected educational outcomes. A quarter of the veteran faculty left and were replaced with inexperienced newcomers. Moreover, teachers rarely discussed the core technology of schooling: instruction. When I asked a teacher how she coped with the turmoil, she said: ''I close that door. . . .

Once I have to open that door and be part of the bigger community, I—it's difficult and stressful. . . . I don't go out there much'' (Interview). Teachers young and old responded in kind. The classroom can be a sanctuary from turmoil, but closed doors inhibit the formation of an instructional community conducive to improvement (Rosenholtz 1989).

The advent of turmoil coincided with a drop in reading scores (from 56 percent at or above national norms to 54 percent). While this decline was small, it marked the reversal of an upward trend dating back to 1991. Whether this decline was caused by the turmoil is debatable,[14] but teachers interpreted it that way on two grounds: practices they felt were proven had been tampered with, and their veteran colleagues who chose to leave were replaced with rookies. In this way, test scores fed into the partisan construction of turmoil. Meanwhile, Baxter continued to outpace Costen, creating more pressure. This pressure was exacerbated by federal NCLB policies mandated after I stopped fieldwork. In the first year of NCLB (2003 to 2004), Costen failed to meet ''adequate yearly progress'' in seven areas, and Costen's inability to meet NCLB benchmarks in 2007 and 2008 triggered ''choice transfers,'' enabling students to go elsewhere. Despite Baxter's relative success, it also struggles with recoupling. Like Costen, its inability to meet benchmarks has triggered choice transfers.

Costen's story reveals a hidden irony of accountability. Accountability intends to reduce ambiguity by creating transparent standards for all schools. It is supposed to create certainty, but when recoupled to local practices it can have the opposite effect—the epistemic distress central to turmoil. In many settings, conformity to myths meant to rationalize an organization's policies can increase politicization and decrease the legitimacy of ''rational'' myths (Stryker 1994). At Costen, the myth incarnate was an ugly reality.

DISCUSSION

Meyer and Rowan's work on myth and ceremony inspires us to explore the myth incarnate, but doing so requires a modified stance in regard to data and theory. Contemporary NI is associated with an external, macro focus (Scott 2008), and without taking a more local view, we cannot see recoupling, examine how it unfolds, or understand the social psychology of turmoil. By taking such a local view, this article extends NI and advances efforts to ''inhabit'' institutionalism (Scully and Creed 1997) by bringing work activity, social interaction, and local meaning-making back into the picture.

Work activity. In NI's foundational pieces, work, or the ''technical core,'' was central, although some scholars thought that in institutional organizations like schools, work would be decoupled from institutional myths (Scott and Meyer 1983). As NI evolved in a macro direction emphasizing fields, diffusion, and isomorphism, actual work was often left behind.[15] This prompted Barley and Kunda (2001) to call for research that brings work ''back into'' organizational sociology. Observing work is perhaps the best way to identify the couplings between organizations and myths. At Costen, teachers' work routines structured the prior order, provided epistemic security, and created a loosely-coupled system of autonomy akin to professionalism. Likewise, via her surveillance of and interventions into work activity, Mrs. Kox recoupled Costen to accountability. By emphasizing how the combination of work and institutional myths structures organizations (Barley 1986; Barley and Tolbert 1997), inhabited institutionalism harkens back to this neglected foundation.

Social interaction. Attending to interactions fosters an institutionalism that takes people and their relationships seriously but does not revert to methodological individualism. NI has been criticized for creating a ''metaphysical pathos'' (DiMaggio 1988),

where institutions are ''disembodied structures acting on their own volition'' and actors are ''powerless and inert in the face of inexorable social forces'' (Colomy 1998:267). One solution was to depict people as institutional ''carriers'' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Scott 2001), but this view is oversocialized and implies that people act out myths in rote ways (Fligstein 2001). Another solution was to depict some actors as ''institutional entrepreneurs'' with the resources and skills to realize their interests and remake institutions accordingly (DiMaggio 1988). Intentionally or not, this creates an imagery of heroic individuals (Maguire, Hardy, and Lawrence 2004) that is inconsistent with NI's important critique of atomistic, utilitarian, rational-choice models where actors' preferences and interests are treated as exogenous to the larger cultural order (DiMaggio and Powell 1991).

The attempt to solve the problem of agency by using an approximation of an actor that NI tries to reject is awkward, and ''not all change is led by entrepreneurs, and surely heroic actors and cultural dopes are a poor representation of the gamut of human behavior'' (Powell and Colyvas 2008:277). A possible solution is to focus less on individual agency and more on interaction—a ''supra-individual level of analysis'' (DiMaggio and Powell 1991:8) concerning what ''people do together'' (Becker 1986). Regardless of whether one views Kox as a dopey slave to accountability, as an empowered entrepreneur who brought accountability to Costen, as a task-oriented despot (the teachers' view), or as an intrepid leader (the LSC's view), she was only one part of a larger package of consequential interactions that inhabited accountability at Costen and were bound with meaning-making processes.

Meaning-making. One of NI's great virtues is its theoretically rich account of myths as macro-cultural meanings that are widely shared and taken for granted. This view was abstracted from Garfinkel's discussion of practical activity and tacit knowledge, and Berger and Luckmann's analysis of typification and externalization (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). NI's social psychology is a variant of phenomenology and ethnomethodology writ large. It has culture and meaning, but the interactions that fascinated Garfinkel and other micro-sociologists dropped out. As such, institutional myths are commonly treated as exogenous and ''analytically removed from the more active struggles over meaning'' (Lounsbury, Ventresca, and Hirsch 2003:72). An inhabited approach extends NI's interest in macro-cultural myths by giving concurrent attention to how meaning evolves via local interactions. When Kox recoupled Costen, local meaning processes played a dual role. First, teachers experienced a collapse of meaning concerning the world they took for granted. Second, they attached negative meanings to their epistemic distress. These meanings defined their perspective and the ensuing turmoil. By attending to the stability, disruption, and re-creation of meanings, inhabited institutionalism fuses NI's macro-phenomenology with insights from the ''negotiated order'' branch of symbolic interactionism (Fine 1984; Maines 1977; Strauss 1978).

An unfortunate side effect of the myth concept as used in the second sense (i.e., the ceremonial presentation of tight couplings that disguise local activities) is that it reifies a false dichotomy between symbolic realms of meaning and substantive realms of activity. Although symbols can be façades, in symbolic interactionism they are also the basis of activity. In managing symbolic meanings we manage substantive action. Kox had many problems in this regard. At the close of my fieldwork, she reflected: ''When I came in, I didn't take the time to establish the rapport because I was eager to get the job done'' (Interview). Neglecting these interactions, Kox failed to build social capital with teachers and lacked what Fligstein (2001) calls ''social skill.'' As a result, she lacked the symbolic power (Hallett 2003) to recast the teachers'

negative frame and control their responses to recoupling.

Had Kox successfully managed interaction and meaning, and had teachers interpreted things differently, the outcome would have been different. This possibility becomes clearer in light of an internal comparison. In the second year of my research, Costen hired another assistant principal. ''Mr. Carrol'' was chosen because, to quote Kox, ''he has good people skills'' (Interview). Initially, teachers were suspicious and expected Carrol to imitate Kox, but he enacted a pliable, humble demeanor that distanced him from his formal position and humanized him in the teachers' eyes. Unlike Kox, he cultivated interactions and acquired symbolic power that he later used to manipulate meanings and teacher responses, enacting accountability without turmoil, even while creating similar recouplings as Kox (see Hallett 2007). If we are to understand the importance of myths such as accountability, and how recoupling can generate a range of outcomes, we must attend to the ways in which these mediating processes inhabit institutions.

An inhabited view also extends OI's focus on micro-politics, traditionally viewed as battles for resources and conflicts of interests (Scott 2001; Selznick 1949), by regarding meaning as a battleground. The teachers had an interest in maintaining a loose coupling between accountability and classroom practices, as this provided autonomy and a quasi-professional status. Moreover, their individualized work routines created epistemic security. However, their first response to recoupling was bewilderment in the form of epistemic distress, not protection of interests. They experienced a collapse of meaning that rendered them action-less, and as Mrs. Drew said, many were inclined to ''just ride her [Kox] out.''[16] As social movement scholars note, common interests must often be socially constructed (Benford and Snow 2000), and this is also true in organizational contexts (Davis and Thompson 1994; Scully and Segal 2002). The teachers eventually fought in the interest of autonomy, but this nascent interest was

formulated out of their epistemic distress; it had to be meaningfully articulated as a basis for activity, which occurred via the reconstruction of the status quo ante, criticism of the rate of recoupling, and mobilization against Kox.

While inhabited institutionalism has a robust social psychology, it does not ignore social structure. Institutional myths are part of an obdurate environment that confronts organizations. Accountability has teeth because resources, rewards, and punishments are tied to compliance and performance. Kox could have sustained loose coupling, but heightened external surveillance made symbolic compliance difficult. Kox could make recoupling stick because she had rational-legal authority, and teachers' weak professional status provided little protection. Teachers could reconstruct meanings and shape turmoil, but they could not prevent recoupling. This becomes evident in comparison to professors (Ingersoll 2003). Since 1983, accountability reforms have increased in K to 12 *and* higher education, but as Mehta (2008) argues, professors' training regimen, mastery of specialized knowledge, and power to exclude practitioners create a formal professional status that, for the time being, blocks accountability at the university door.

CONCLUSIONS

This article pushes institutional research by asking questions that follow from Meyer and Rowan's (1977) classic article: What happens when myths become incarnate? How does this happen? What are some of its implications? Answering these questions (1) articulates recoupling processes, (2) identifies the possible outcome of turmoil, and (3) advances an inhabited institutionalism.

At Costen, the myth of accountability countered the loosely coupled order that had been institutionalized at the local level and provided teacher autonomy. Organizational life is often characterized by competing institutional pressures (Heimer 1999), and there is

a research tradition that examines this kind of ''contested terrain'' (Edwards 1979) and suggests that workers resist impositions on autonomy. This is an important backdrop, but to argue that Costen is merely a story of competing pressures would gloss the dynamics that make it so. It is *how* turmoil emerged, developed, and unfolded that is revealing and conceptually valuable. Accountability and autonomy came into tension at Costen because the myth of accountability was made incarnate when recoupling replaced loose coupling. The recoupling disrupted the routines that had ordered the teachers' world, sparking epistemic distress and a series of interpretive responses that reconstructed a set of meanings and defined the emergent battle (turmoil).

One could argue that Kox was a poor leader, but this would not explain the whole story. It provides little leverage for understanding why the LSC hired Kox (because of accountability pressures), or why they interpreted her as a strong leader and eagerly renewed her contract (because they gave her a mandate to recouple the school and she fearlessly did so despite teacher resistance). Throughout the duration of my fieldwork, the LSC viewed Kox as an overall success.[17] The teachers clearly believed that Kox was a bad leader, but in many ways ''leadership'' is a folk concept that rests in the eye of the beholder (Meindl 1995). Likewise, interpretations of whether Costen was a ''well-run'' or ''disorganized'' workplace (Hodson 1999) varied. According to teachers, Kox dismantled a ''well-oiled machine,'' but the LSC felt Costen had finally become rationally organized. Test scores dipped, but they believed Kox created an infrastructure for improvement. As Hodson (1999) notes, to analyze such situations researchers must assume fixed norms, but organizational norms are often fluid. These are the kind of local, constitutive processes that inhabit institutions, and they must be addressed if we are to fully understand the implications that institutional myths have for organizations.

Conceptually, recoupling has utility because it provides a macro-micro link. Environmental conditions promote recoupling, but recoupling unfolds at local levels, possibly leading to epistemic distress and partisan meaning construction. Empirically, the overall extent of recoupling and turmoil are questions for future research, but there are reasons to believe Costen is not unique. Under NCLB, most schools face accountability pressures. More generally, accountability is a manifestation of an ''audit culture'' that has gained widespread legitimacy with the expansion of the neo-liberal economy (Strathern 2000). Moreover, accountability as a form of governance has diffused across multiple organizational types (Power 1994). I propose that recoupling is likely to occur under conditions of accountability for four interrelated reasons. First, accountability involves commensuration. By simplifying information with quantitative measures, commensuration changes what we attend to and how we respond (Espeland and Sauder 2007). Second, standardization creates benchmarks, facilitating more scrutiny (Sauder and Espeland 2009). Third, accountability is a coercive rationale (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). It holds that people must be watched—a contrast to Meyer and Rowan's (1977) assumptions about ''confidence and good faith.'' Finally, compliance is often enforced through material rewards and punishments.

The relationship between accountability and recoupling can be explored through creative, large N quantitative studies, but some local conditions associated with recoupling and turmoil escape easy measurement. Recoupling depends partly on agents who believe in it (like Costen's LSC) and good soldiers who follow through (like Kox). The second part of turmoil—the partisan reconstruction of meaning—is fluid and contingent on local dynamics best captured via qualitative methods. The comparison of Kox and Carrol highlights the need for small N, cross-case comparative research to explore

local conditions under which the meaning processes that generate turmoil operate, and how they might be managed. New ethnographic research should also examine the reverse of recoupling, uncoupling: the process of replacing tight couplings with loose couplings or decouplings. Through uncoupling, the myth incarnate is transformed into myth and ceremony. This too could disrupt an established organizational order, but does uncoupling create epistemic distress and partisan reconstructions of meaning (i.e., turmoil)? An inhabited approach to institutions provides a sensitizing framework for examining these possibilities, an endeavor valuable for scholars and practitioners alike.

Turmoil is a local outcome, but it could have larger consequences. Research on law finds that as organizations respond to laws, these responses construct ''legal'' activity, shaping law itself (Dobbin and Kelly 2007; Edelman, Uggen, and Erlanger 1999). Like inhabited institutionalism, this work on ''the endogeneity of law'' suggests a more recursive relationship than is typical in NI. When myths become incarnate, they become endogenous to organizations, and their meanings become subject to local processes that can transform the myth itself. Thus, while institutional myths channel political activity, political processes can also alter the meanings of those myths (Clemens 1997; Rao 1998). At Costen, accountability was translated from a rational model of how schools should operate into problematic turmoil.

Such processes might, over time and in the aggregate, delegitimize accountability. In April 2008, a Seattle teacher was suspended for refusing to administer standardized tests (Shaw 2008). He said the tests ''create panic, insecurity, low self-esteem, and sadness for our students,'' suggesting that turmoil is not exclusive to teachers, or to Costen School. More than 140 organizations representing 50 million members signed the ''Joint Organizational Statement on No Child Left Behind,'' calling for major changes to NCLB. With support from the National Education Association, school districts in Michigan, Texas, and Vermont filed a federal lawsuit *(Pontiac v. Spellings)* calling for exemptions from NCLB requirements that are not funded by the federal government. Accountability lives, but when Congress debates the reauthorization of NCLB, it will be in an environment where its legitimacy is no longer taken for granted, but is negotiable. Whatever the outcome, inhabited institutionalism draws attention to these settings as locales for reproducing and revising prevailing institutional myths.

Acknowledgments

Funding

Notes

1. These observations were published after the 1977 article (Meyer and Rowan 1978) but were analytically prior (Meyer and Scott 1983).
2. Perhaps because of this confusion, most work after 1990 replaces ''myth'' with ''institutional logic'' (Friedland and Alford 1991).
3. As I am using it, ''re'' signifies a change of state and reversal of direction from loose to tight coupling. ''Uncoupling'' signifies a change of state and reversal of direction from tight to loose coupling. Recoupling and uncoupling are distinct from simple changes of state (e.g., loose coupling to decoupling).
4. Davies and colleagues (2006:18) qualify these findings by noting that the weak institutionalization of

standardized testing in Ontario ''dissipates pressure for recoupling.''

5. All names are pseudonyms.

6. I initially thought turmoil was a symptom of managerial succession, but as we will see, my data indicate that turmoil is not the result of succession per se. Before Kox's tenure, the transition from Principal Welch to Principal Jackson was relatively smooth, largely because Jackson sustained a pattern of loose coupling. I thus argue that it was recoupling, combined with how Kox interacted with teachers and how teachers responded to her, that created turmoil. While principal transitions can be disruptive, they can also be routine and unproblematic (Macmillan 2000; Miskel and Cosgrove 1985).

7. The LSC includes a chair (a locally elected official), two parent representatives, a community representative (selected through nominations and voting by the LSC), two teacher representatives (elected by peers), and the principal. The LSC reviews policies, approves a budget and an Academic Enhancement Plan that fits accountability policies, and hires and evaluates the principal.

8. Interview excerpts are from transcriptions unless otherwise noted.

9. All of the LSC members voted for Kox, except for a teacher representative who abstained.

10. A holdover from the Welch era became interim principal but was rarely on site because of illness.

11. Despite this invitation, I always obtained permission before observing. I emphasized to teachers that I was not an agent of accountability. I did not report back to Kox or any authority. School personnel accepted my goal of providing a holistic description that included multiple perspectives.

12. Notably, Kox's belief in accountability was sincere. She did not want to game the system by teaching directly to the test.

13. Exact numbers cannot be figured because many letters were from anonymous individuals and groups.

14. For their part, the LSC interpreted this decline as statistically nonsignificant (but without doing any statistical checks), which enabled them to dismiss the decline and sustain their support for Kox in her battle against the teachers.

15. There are notable exceptions (e.g., Owen-Smith 2001; Powell 1985), but they prove the general trend, as they are more local and ethnographic in orientation.

16. An anonymous reviewer noted that the teachers' interest in loose coupling and autonomy was unformed so long as conditions that satisfied that interest could be taken for granted.

17. For an analysis of differences between Kox's interactions with the teachers and with the LSC, see Hallett (2007).

References

Abelmann, Charles and Richard F. Elmore. 1999. *When Accountability Knocks, Will Anyone Answer?* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Barley, Stephen R. 1986. ''Technology as an Occasion for Structuring.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 31:78–108.

———. 2008. ''Coalface Institutionalism.'' Pp. 490–516 in *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, R. Suddaby, and K. Sahlin-Andersson. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Barley, Stephen R. and Gideon Kunda. 2001. ''Bringing Work Back In.'' *Organization Science* 12:76–95.

Barley, Stephen R. and Pamela S. Tolbert. 1997. ''Institutionalization and Structuration: Studying the Links between Action and Institution.'' *Organization Studies* 18:93–117.

Barnett, William P. and Glenn R. Carroll. 1995. ''Modeling Internal Organizational Change.'' *Annual Review of Sociology* 21:217–36.

Bartunek, Jean M. 1984. ''Changing Interpretive Schemes and Organizational Restructuring.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 29:355–72.

Becker, Howard. 1986. *Doing Things Together*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Benford, Robert D. and David A. Snow. 2000. ''Framing Processes and Social Movements.'' *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:611–39.

Bidwell, Charles E. 2001. ''Analyzing Schools as Organizations: Long-Term Permanence and Short-Term Change.'' *Sociology of Education* Extra Issue:100–114.

Binder, Amy. 2007. ''For Love and Money: Organizations' Creative Responses to Multiple Environmental Logics.'' *Theory and Society* 36:547–71.

Brown, Shona L. and Kathleen M. Eisenhardt. 1997. ''The Art of Continuous Change: Linking Complexity Theory and Time-Paced Evolution in Relentlessly Shifting Organizations.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42:1–34.

Chaves, Mark. 1996. ''Ordaining Women: The Diffusion of an Organizational Innovation.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 101:840–73.

Chubb, John E. and Terry M. Moe. 1990. *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Clemens, Elisabeth S. 1997. *The People's Lobby*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Coburn, Cynthia E. 2004. ''Beyond Decoupling: Rethinking the Relationship between the Institutional Environment and the Classroom.'' *Sociology of Education* 77:21–44.

Colomy, Paul. 1998. ''Neofunctionalism and Neoinstitutionalism: Human Agency and Interest in

Institutional Change.'' *Sociological Forum* 13: 265–300.

Davies, Scott, Linda Quirke, and Janice Aurini. 2006. ''The New Institutionalism Goes to the Market: The Challenge of Rapid Growth in Private K-12 Education.'' Pp. 103–122 in *The New Institutionalism in Education*, edited by H. D. Meyer and B. Rowan. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Davis, Gerald F. and Tracy A. Thompson. 1994. ''A Social Movement Perspective on Corporate Control.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39:141–73.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1988. ''Interest and Agency in Institutional Theory.'' Pp. 3–22 in *Institutional Patterns and Organizations: Culture and Environment*, edited by L. Zucker. Cambridge, MA: Ballinger.

DiMaggio, Paul J. and Walter Powell. 1983. ''The Iron Cage Revisited.'' *American Sociological Review* 48:147–60.

———. 1991. ''Introduction.'' Pp. 1–40 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, edited by W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Dobbin, Frank and Erin L. Kelly. 2007. ''How to Stop Harassment: Professional Construction of Legal Compliance in Organizations.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 112:1203–43.

Dreeben, Robert. 2005. ''Teaching and the Competence of Occupations.'' Pp. 51–90 in *The Social Organization of Schooling*, edited by L. V. Hedges and B. Schneider. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Edelman, Lauren B., Christopher Uggen, and Howard S. Erlanger. 1999. ''The Endogeneity of Legal Regulation.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 102:406–454.

Edwards, Richard. 1979. *Contested Terrain*. New York: Basic Books.

Elsbach, Kimberly D. and Robert I. Sutton. 1992. ''Acquiring Organizational Legitimacy through Illegitimate Actions.'' *Academy of Management Journal* 35:699–738.

Emerson, Robert M. and Sheldon L. Messinger. 1977. ''The Micro Politics of Trouble.'' *Social Problems* 25:121–34.

Espeland, Wendy Nelson. 1998. *The Struggle for Water*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Espeland, Wendy Nelson and Michael Sauder. 2007. ''Rankings and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 113:1–40.

Fine, Gary Alan. 1984. ''Negotiated Orders and Organizational Cultures.'' *Annual Review of Sociology* 10:239–62.

Fligstein, Neil. 2001. ''Social Skill and the Theory of Fields.'' *Sociological Theory* 19:105–125.

Friedland, Roger and Robert R. Alford. 1991. ''Bringing Society Back In: Symbols, Practices, and Institutional Contradictions.'' Pp. 232–66 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, edited by W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interaction Ritual*. New York: Anchor Books.

Hall, Peter M. 1972. ''A Symbolic Interactionist Analysis of Politics.'' *Sociological Inquiry* 42:35–75.

Hallett, Tim. 2003. ''Symbolic Power and Organizational Culture.'' *Sociological Theory* 21:128–49.

———. 2007. ''Between Deference and Distinction: Interaction Ritual through Symbolic Power in an Educational Institution.'' *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70:148–71.

Hallett, Tim and Marc Ventresca. 2006. ''Inhabited Institutions: Social Interactions and Organizational Forms in Gouldner's Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy.'' *Theory and Society* 35:213–36.

Harper, Richard. 2000. ''The Social Organization of the IMF's Mission Work.'' Pp. 21–54 in *Audit Cultures*, edited by M. Strathern. London, UK: Routledge.

Heimer, Carol A. 1999. ''Competing Institutions: Law, Medicine, and Family in Neonatal Intensive Care.'' *Law and Society Review* 33:17–66.

Hirsch, Paul M. 1997. ''Sociology without Social Structure: Neoinstitutional Theory Meets Brave New World.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 102:1702–1723.

Hirsch, Paul M. and Michael Lounsbury. 1997. ''Putting the Organization Back into Organization Theory: Action, Change, and the 'New' Institutionalism.'' *Journal of Management Inquiry* 6:79–88.

Hodson, Randy. 1999. ''Organizational Anomie and Worker Consent.'' *Work and Occupations* 26: 292–323.

Ingersoll, Richard M. 2003. *Who Controls Teacher's Work?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kelly, Erin and Frank Dobbin. 1998. ''How Affirmative Action Became Diversity Management.'' *American Behavioral Scientist* 41:960–84.

Kelly, Erin L. and Alexandra Kalev. 2006. ''Managing Flexible Work Arrangements in US Organizations: Formalized Discretion or 'A Right to Ask.''' *Socio-Economic Review* 4:379–416.

Ladd, Helen F. 1996. *Holding Schools Accountable*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Lortie, Daniel C. 1975. *School Teacher*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lounsbury, Michael, Marc Ventresca, and Paul M. Hirsch. 2003. ''Social Movements, Field Frames, and Industry Emergence.'' *Socio-Economic Review* 1:71–104.

Macmillan, Robert B. 2000. ''Leadership Succession, Cultures of Teaching and Educational Change.'' Pp. 52–71 in *The Sharp Edge of Educational Change*, edited by N. Bascia and A. Hargreaves. New York: Routledge.

Maguire, Steve, Cynthia Hardy, and Thomas Lawrence. 2004. ''Institutional Entrepreneurship in Emerging Fields.'' *Academy of Management Journal* 47:657–79.

Maines, David R. 1977. ''Social Organization and Social Structure in Symbolic Interactionist Thought.'' *Annual Review of Sociology* 3:235–59.

Maines, David R., Noreen M. Sugrue, and Michael A. Katovich. 1983. ''The Sociological Import of G. H. Mead's Theory of the Past.'' *American Sociological Review* 48:161–83.

Mead, George Herbert. 1932. *The Philosophy of the Present*. Chicago, IL: London Open Court Publishing Company.

Mehta, Jal. 2006. ''Setting the Problem: The Deep Roots and Long Shadows of 'A Nation at Risk.''' Presented at the American Sociological Association Meetings, Montreal, Canada, August.

———. 2008. ''Does Professional Status Affect Demands for Accountability?'' Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, Boston, MA. Unpublished manuscript.

Meindl, James R. 1995. ''The Romance of Leadership as Follower-Centric Theory.'' *Leadership Quarterly* 6:329–41.

Meyer, Heinz-Dieter and Brian Rowan. 2006. ''Institutional Analysis and the Study of Education.'' Pp. 1–13 in *The New Institutionalism in Education*, edited by H. D. Meyer and B. Rowan. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Meyer, John W., John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez. 1997. ''World Society and the Nation State.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 103:144–81.

Meyer, John W. and Ronald L. Jepperson. 2000. ''The 'Actors' of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency.'' *Sociological Theory* 18:100–120.

Meyer, John W., Francisco O. Ramirez, and Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal. 1992. ''World Expansion of Mass Education.'' *Sociology of Education* 65:128–49.

Meyer, John W. and Brian Rowan. 1977. ''Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 83:340–63.

———. 1978. ''The Structure of Educational Organizations.'' Pp. 78–109 in *Environments and Organizations*, edited by M. W. Meyer et al. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Meyer, John W. and W. Richard Scott. 1983. ''Preface.'' Pp. 7–12 in *Organizational Environments: Ritual and Rationality*, edited by J. W. Meyer and W. R. Scott. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Miskel, Cecil and Dorothy Cosgrove. 1985. ''Leader Succession in School Settings.'' *Review of Educational Research* 55:87–105.

Morrill, Calvin and Gary Alan Fine. 1997. ''Ethnographic Contributions to Organizational Sociology.'' *Sociological Methods & Research* 25:424–51.

Morrill, Calvin, Mayer N. Zald, and Hayagreeva Rao. 2003. ''Covert Political Conflict in Organizations.'' *Annual Review of Sociology* 29:391–415.

Orton, J. Douglas and Karl E. Weick. 1990. ''Loosely Coupled Systems: A Reconceptualization.'' *The Academy of Management Review* 15:203–223.

Owen-Smith, Jason. 2001. ''Managing Laboratory Work through Skepticism: Processes of Evaluation and Control.'' *American Sociological Review* 66:427–52.

Powell, Walter W. 1985. *Getting into Print*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Powell, Walter W. and Jeannette A. Colyvas. 2008. ''Microfoundations of Institutional Theory.'' Pp. 276–98 in *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, R. Suddaby, and K. Sahlin-Andersson. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Power, Michael. 1994. *The Audit Explosion*. London, UK: Demos.

Ragin, Charles C. 1994. *Constructing Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Rao, Hayagreeva. 1998. ''Caveat Emptor: The Construction of Nonprofit Consumer Watchdog Organizations.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 103:912–61.

Rosenholtz, Susan. 1989. *Teacher's Workplace*. New York: Longman.

Rowan, Brian. 2006. ''The New Institutionalism and the Study of Educational Organizations.'' Pp. 15–32 in *The New Institutionalism in Education*, edited by H. D. Meyer and B. Rowan. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Sauder, Michael and Wendy Nelson Espeland. 2009. ''The Discipline of Rankings.'' *American Sociological Review* 74:63–82.

Schneiberg, Marc and Elisabeth S. Clemens. 2006. ''The Typical Tools for the Job: Research Strategies in Institutional Analysis.'' *Sociological Theory* 24:195–227.

Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Scott, W. Richard. 1987. ''The Adolescence of Institutional Theory.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32:493–511.

———. 2001. *Institutions and Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

———. 2008. ''Approaching Adulthood: The Maturing of Institutional Theory.'' *Theory and Society* 37:427–42.

Scott, W. Richard and John W. Meyer. 1983. ''The Organization of Societal Sectors.'' Pp. 129–54 in *Organizational Environments: Ritual and Rationality*, edited by J. W. Meyer and W. R. Scott. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Scott, W. Richard, Martin Ruef, Peter J. Mendel, and Carol A. Caronna. 2000. *Institutional Change and Healthcare Organizations*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Scully, Maureen and Doug Creed. 1997. ''Stealth Legitimacy: Employee Activism and Corporate Response during the Diffusion of Domestic Partner Benefits.'' Presented at the Academy of Management Meetings, Boston, MA, August.

Scully, Maureen and Amy Segal. 2002. ''Passion with an Umbrella: Grassroots Activists in the Workplace.'' *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 19:125–68.

Selznick, Philip. 1949. *TVA and the Grass Roots*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Shaw, Linda. 2008. ''Seattle Teacher Suspended for Refusing to Give WASL, Calls Test 'Bad for Kids.''' *The Seattle Times*, April 22 (http://seattletimes. nwsource.com/html/education/2004364815_wasl22m. html).

Snow, David A., Daniel M. Cress, Liam Downey, and Andrew W. Jones. 1998. ''Disrupting the 'Quotidian': Reconceptualizing the Relationship between Breakdown and the Emergence of Collective Action.'' *Mobilization* 3:1–22.

Spillane, James and Patricia Burch. 2006. ''The Institutional Environment and the Technical Core in K-12 Schools: 'Loose Coupling' Revisited.'' Pp. 87–102 in *The New Institutionalism in Education*, edited by H. D. Meyer and B. Rowan. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Strang, David and John W. Meyer. 1993. ''Institutional Conditions for Diffusion.'' *Theory and Society* 22:487–511.

Strathern, Marilyn. 2000. *Audit Cultures*. London, UK: Routledge.

Strauss, Anselm. 1978. *Negotiations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Stryker, Robin. 1994. ''Rules, Resources, and Legitimacy Processes.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 99:847–910.

Sutton, John R., Frank Dobbin, John W. Meyer, and W. Richard Scott. 1994. ''The Legalization of the Workplace.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 99:944–71.

Weick, Karl E. 1976. ''Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21:1–19.

———. 1993. ''The Collapse of Sensemaking in Organizations.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 38:628–52.

Weick, Karl E. and Robert E. Quinn. 1999. ''Organizational Change and Development.'' *Annual Review of Psychology* 50:361–86.

Westphal, James D. and Edward J. Zajac. 1994. ''Substance and Symbolism in CEOs' Long-Term Incentive Plans.'' *Administrative Science Quarterly* 39:367–90.

Zald, Mayer N. and Michael A. Berger. 1978. ''Social Movements in Organizations.'' *American Journal of Sociology* 83:823–61.

Zuboff, Shoshana. 1988. *In the Age of the Smart Machine*. New York: Basic Books.

Zucker, Lynne G. [1977] 1991. ''The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence.'' Pp. 83–107 in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, edited by W. W. Powell and P. J. DiMaggio. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tim Hallett is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Indiana University. He received his PhD in Sociology from Northwestern University in 2003. His research lies at the intersections of social psychology, organizations, and culture. In addition to his research on inhabited institutions (with Marc Ventresca, *Theory and Society* 2007), he has published articles on symbolic power and organizational culture (*Social Psychology Quarterly* 2007 and *Sociological Theory* 2003), the social construction of leadership (with Spillane and Diamond, *Sociology of Education* 2003), and how emotions ''blow up'' in organizations (*The Sociological Quarterly* 2003).