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ENGAGING TEAMS: MISSIONS, MANAGEMENT AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Abstract. Drawing upon the extended symbolic interactionist tradition, this paper examines management activities in the context of office holders and teams. As researchers, if we wish to fully appreciate management in everyday life, then we must pay particular attention to teams, team creation and teamwork, for it is through people doing things together that organizational life is realized. Specifically, I examine the relevance of performance teams, legacy teams, legislated teams, mission-based teams, and the relevance of secrecy for enacting teams. Encouraging an attentiveness to perspectives and activities of office holders, this paper resists more structural renderings of organizational life and encourages researcher to attend to management in the making.

Keywords: generic social process, management, symbolic interaction, secrets, teams.

1. Introduction

A particularly consequential aspect of the work of office holders involves creating, assembling, managing, and otherwise engaging in team-based activities. I use the term "team" here as a sensitizing concept in the Blumerian tradition (Blumer 1954; van den Hoonaard 1997; Faulkner 2009). Rather than viewing teams in more structural or organizational terms, teams are understood as reflecting the various associations, identities, and allegiances (no matter how potentially fleeting) that accompany the everyday work of "getting things done" in organizational settings. The approach taken herein emphasizes the cooperative endeavors that may be undertaken in organizational settings oriented to accomplishing missions – the

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"organizational objectives that one or more people pursue in a group context" (Grills, Prus 2019: 132).

While organizations may devote considerable resources to aspects of planning, developing missions and creating value statements, it is by engaging teams that office holders may attempt to coordinate the activities of others towards creating and realizing particular missions. As such, the creation of teams and their relative success with respect to the various projects they undertake may be highly consequential for office holders, team members, and others within the organization. In fact, team activities can be so central to organizational maintenance that various versions of failure may put the team and/or the organization itself at considerable risk. Therefore, realizing missions and creating and sustaining teams are central aspects of management activities. This paper examines office holders' lived experience with teams and the salience of attending to teams in the study of management in the making. By paying particular attention to performance teams, legacy teams, legislated teams, mission-oriented teams, and the relevance of secrecy in the context of enacted teams, this paper offers a symbolic interactionist examination of teams and the practical accomplishment of management activities.

2. On teams

One of the enduring lessons from the pragmatic tradition is that human group life is, in part, problem solving. A rather central challenge for researchers, however, is that forms of human association that may have similar qualities may be solving quite distinct and differentiated problems within the setting at hand. While Goffman (1959: 50) understands teams as "a set of performers who cooperate in presenting a single performance", and as such all teams share certain qualities of teamness, it is profitable to consider teams in the context of the underlying pragmatic qualities of human group life.

In the discussion to follow, I pay particular attention to teams in the context of management, office holders and the various teams that are ongoing features of organization life. By so doing I am drawing on the approach to examining management in the making advocated for by Grills and Prus' (2019) work *Management Motifs: An Interactionist Approach for the Study of Organizational Interchange*. Unlike more overly rationalized and often deterministic accounts of management and managing, the approach taken in the following emphasizes the emergent, negotiated and often-times problematic nature of engaging offices held, undertaking missions (e.g. shared projects of quite variable durations), and creating, enacting, and managing teams.

For students of organizational life, it is profitable to locate teams and teamwork as something of a meso-level performance (e.g. Maines 2001). As Goffman (1956: 49) writes, "an emergent team impression arises which can conveniently

be treated as a fact in its own right, as a third level of fact located between the individual performance on one hand and the total interaction of participants on the other". The interactional reality that Goffman points us to, echoes the formalism of Simmel (1950; e.g. dyads and triads) and foreshadows Becker's organizational studies (e.g. Becker et al. 1961; Becker et al. 1968; Becker 1982). People in organizational settings can and do act as more solitary actors as they undertake more personalized missions and attend to matters related to reputation, identity, and career progress. And office holders may focus on broader themes related to institutional dynamics captured by the concept of "total interaction", everything from share price to outstanding labor grievances, advertising campaigns to carbon emissions. However, much of organizational life is lived out in the context of teams as people come together to advance agendas, pursue missions, and do the everyday work of organizational life. As researchers, if we wish to fully appreciate management, then we must pay particular attention to teams, team creation and teamwork, for it is through people doing things together that organizational life is realized.

> I think the real action is close to the earth, down here where people are doing things with each other, creating what we like to call, not realizing we're speaking metaphorically, "social structure", and "organization", though what they are really doing is finding ways to collaborate in the day-to-day here-and-now, getting life done. That is where I like to work and think. The air is not as thin down here (Becker 2014: 187).

3. Considering teams: A view from the office

Office holders may find that considerable time, energy, and personal resources are devoted to creating, maintaining, and coordinating team efforts and agendas. While those who anticipate taking up offices may envision having considerable latitude or control over establishing missions and team creation, the practical constraints that accompany entering office may be more consequential than imagined. While there is negotiated quality to human group life, we do live within settings where prior action constrains the extent to which office holders have a free hand to act. As Dingwall and Strong (1985: 218) suggest, "there is an enormous difference between saying that (organizations) are, in principle, indefinitely negotiable and recognizing that they are in practice, determinate. Our argument is for the study of the ways in which that actual determinateness is accomplished". And one of the ways in which determinateness is accomplished is found via the ways in which teams are created, sustained, and engaged.

We might profitably examine the necessary tension between the negotiated and emergent aspects of holding office and the accomplishment of determinateness in organizations by attending to the problem-solving qualities associated with teams from the perspective of office holders. Reflecting the Blumerian (1969) assertion that attending to meaning (and accompanying themes of language, interpretation,

and sense-making) is essential for understanding human action and that human group life is perspectival, it is essential to frame teams and teamness in meaning terms (e.g. Prus 1996). Simply put, how might we frame the various teams that office holders encounter through a pragmatic lens? And how might this framing provide a useful analytical reference point for a trans-contextual and trans-situational consideration of office holders in multiple settings? While teams may share various qualities in common, from the perspective of office holders' teams encountered in everyday life may have a variety of purposes, be marked by quite distinct relational dynamics, and be oriented towards multiple missions. Much as Sutherland (1949) encourages those who study organizational life to attend to the "crooked practices" that researchers may find within, there are considerable analytical benefits for those pursuing an understanding of organizational life in the making by attending to teams, their creation, and their various mission-related qualities. Towards this end, I examine some of the ways in which teams may be contextualized, understood, and engaged by office holders. By so doing we gain an appreciation of the interactional complexity that teams represent in organizational settings.[1]

4. A preliminary framing: Performance teams

As Goffman (1956: 48) suggests, performance teams are cast as "a set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine".[2] However, cast in more organizational terms and as used herein, performance teams reflect the more fleeting and episodic cooperative performances that are associated with the often-emergent set of alliances and interests that may mark organizational life. Reflecting this, teams "denote situations in which two or more people knowingly strive towards objectives that they envision themselves to share with others" (Grills, Prus 2019: 142). Given the episodic qualities of teams, team membership itself may be somewhat uncertain. For example, within the very same meeting, those who hold similar offices within a setting (e.g. regional directors, academic deans, parish priests) may find that a certain level of cooperative action and enacted teamness holds various strategic advantages. As such, office holders may view certain advantages for pursuing team performances that offer something of a common front or that "speak with one voice". In such contexts, performance teams may hold considerable perceived advantages over going it alone.

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[1] For example, readers are directed to Hall et al.'s (2021) examination of the complexity of those occupying the office of coach in high level sports and the multi-faceted aspects of the work of leading, managing and coaching.

[2] In this sense, all teams are in some ways performance teams. Given this, Goffman uses "performance" as a modifier for "teams" infrequently in his classic discussion of teams in the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

However, in the very same setting those holding peer positions may find that enacting teams also may pose challenges and limitations relative to superordinates, accessing resources, or securing perceived successes or gains. For example, university departmental chairs may share a certain sense of teamness enacted in part through their shared roles and may find considerable advantages in invoking office to advocate or push for specific outcomes (e.g. improved technology in classrooms). However, this role denotes another highly consequential team affiliation – to the department one leads. In the context of resources over which various teams may compete (e.g. staffing, sabbaticals, graduate and teaching assistantships), prior alliances may prove considerably less consequential as actors move between (competing) team performances.

By enacting and invoking team performances, participants may adopt strategies that clearly delineate those who are team members and those who are outsiders – those who are excluded from team planning and performance and those who may be the targets of performance objectives. For example, as Smith (2011: 367) suggests in their examination of outreach workers and street affected persons, the "performance of »outreach worker« requires a careful team performance by the workers, which must consistently demonstrate that they are on the side of the client while fulfilling their role of managing the client group more generally". There is considerable complexity in play here.

The discussion that follows attends to some of the highly consequential forms that teams may take relative to the perspectives and activities of office holders. As such, the distinctions and differentiations made in what follows are relevant to the everyday activities of those engaging office. As these are perspectivally-situated distinctions, researchers are encouraged to pay close attention to the definitions and interpretations that office holders may bring to team-related activities. Nevertheless, the distinctions that follow are, I would suggest, helpful in capturing something of the range of teams that office holders may work with in an ongoing and dynamic way as organizational life is realized. In this context, I turn my attention to 1) engaging legacy teams, 2) enacting mission-oriented teams, 3) legislated teams, 4) and the processes associated with attending to secrecy in the context of team and team performances.

5. Engaging legacy teams

Those moving into administrative roles may find that a wide range of teams and their membership are well established in the local culture of the setting. Therefore, for office holders, the challenge may not be so much in establishing and sustaining such teams (in that they may have something of an objectified presence within organizational life) but in effectively managing inherited teams in such a way that one might successfully realize desired outcomes.

In some instances, inherited teams may be problematic for newcomers to office. Team members may hold allegiances to prior office holders and be somewhat reticent to view the team as having any obligation to support current office holders. Relatedly, teams may include those who aspired to office yet failed to realize that objective. As such inherited teams may include those with an interest in limiting, subverting or otherwise challenging office holder success. While something of an extreme example, President Biden's transition to office involved the challenges of addressing various inherited teams who included members who denied the legitimacy of his entrance into office and apparently were working to over-turn his Presidency.[3]

More typically however, engaging and working with inherited teams is a central aspect of undertaking office (Grills 2020b). For those entering management roles, pre-existing teams may contribute to learning the ropes of the setting. Some team members may have considerable institutional memory, have a sense of mission and purpose associated with the team at hand, or may contribute to generating a sense of teamness. In fact, in more complex settings, members may come to identify with and build reputations around being members of specifically organizationally situated teams.

Pre-existing teams are indicative of the prior management work of office holders – they denote aspects of the local culture and history of a setting. Such teams may constrain or limit the latitude that office holders may experience but at the very same time may be highly consequential for enabling or otherwise supporting office holder agendas. For researchers, attending to established and persistent teams may be instructive for understanding the social processes that have been routinized into teams such as standing committees, advisory boards, regional associations, or steering committees. It is profitable to view inherited teams as reflective of what Prus has referred to as "slow process" – aspects of organizational life that may have structural qualities but are best framed relative to the subculturally-situated processes that enable and sustain them.[4]

For example, that a setting has a team dedicated to addressing issues such as gender equity, Indigenization, or shareholder relations alerts us to the situational reality that some within the setting view these missions as salient enough to warrant team creation, to establish what may pass for terms of reference for the team and that the team has sustained its presence in the setting. As researchers, it is important to more fully appreciate the social processes that facilitate team creation, the role of insiders and outsiders to the setting in creating teams and how those undertaking office engage and manage these legacy teams.

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[3] At the time of writing the work of the National Commission to Investigate the January 6 Attack on the United States Capitol Complex is ongoing.

[4] The framing of social structure as "slow process" is a phrase that Bob Prus has used throughout the years when speaking about what some refer to as social structure but is best framed relative to the outcome of people doing things together. Readers are directed to his work *Subcultural Mosaics* (Prus 1997) for an extended and detailed discussion of these themes.

Office holders may adopt a wide range of strategies to manage, engage or challenge legacy teams. For example, office holders may challenge legacy teams by: 1) adopting more formal strategies to disband them (e.g. altering by-laws, seeking approval from other teams to suspend or otherwise "mothball" legacy teams); 2) adopting strategies to sideline or marginalize legacy teams (e.g. assigning teams secondary or peripheral missions); 3) creating alternate or competing teams (e.g. establishing committees that "round-end" or provide more viable alternatives to legacy teams); 4) reducing or constraining resources available to legacy teams (e.g. contracting team budgets, intentionally allowing vacancies on teams to go unfilled); and 5) sabotaging or otherwise discrediting legacy teams/team members (e.g. casting blame/aspersions, associating failed missions with teams and team members). While there is no claim that this framing is complete or represents the full range of strategies that office holders may employ in challenging legacy teams, what is most relevant here is the consideration that office holders do not simply inherit legacy teams but may take quite active roles in addressing perceived issues.

In fact, members of the setting at hand may view office holders' efforts to remedy perceived deficits relative to legacy teams and their members as indicators of office holder effectiveness – the ability to assess situations at hand, identify those who are defined by some audiences as marginal team members, and to find solutions to the pragmatic challenges that legacy teams may hold. In this sense, audiences may be looking for office holders to act to address perceived team-related challenges.

For office holders however, doing nothing relative to legacy teams may be perceived to have some meaningful advantages. As Grills and Prus (2019) have argued, an absence of action may be quite deliberative, and may advance office holder interests. Researchers are encouraged to attend to how office holders may attempt to manage legacy teams through strategic inaction. For example, office holders may elect to allow vacancies/openings on teams to go unfilled, opt to not assign missions to particular teams, or strategically opt to not invoke or reconstitute teams at hand. Where office holders have some institutional responsibility for legacy teams (e.g. serving as their Chair, providing instruction or guidance, having the organizational responsibility to call meetings), electing not to enact teams or opting not to establish agendas or assign/delegate tasks to legacy teams may quite effectively subvert or marginalize teams that are defined as problematic or otherwise troublesome in some way.[5] In short, inaction may be a strategic act on the part of office holders.

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[5] See Scott (2018) for a helpful examination of a sociology of "nothings".

6. Establishing and engaging mission-oriented teams

As Grills and Prus (2019: 132) suggest, "mission refers to any organizational objective that one or more people pursue in a group context". Much like solitary actors in other settings, office holders may find advantages to "going it alone" relative to more limited missions. More solitary action relative to missions is enhanced where: 1) office holders have decision-making authority over the mission at hand, 2) accountability to outsiders is low, 3) the office holder has the organizational resources to implement the mission at hand, or 4) there is little perceived need to seek the consent or cooperation of subordinates or superordinates in the realization of the mission.

However, as instances of collective action, missions are productively framed in terms of joint action – where actors are attending to self and other in selecting from lines of action (Blumer 1969). A great deal of the enduring aspects of organizational life and human culture more generally reflects the outcomes of teamwork and the various missions they undertake (Grills, Prus 2019: 142). For example, if one reviews the internal history of organizations as offered by organizational actors, these accounts may be profitably cast in mission and team terms. Universities may include aspects that are defined as noteworthy concerning an institutions' past in their course calendars or online recruitment materials – the foundation of the institution, the addition of faculties and schools, the launching of new majors and credentials, and the opening of various buildings and facilities. For our purposes, however, these milestones represent the realized outcomes of team-based missions – as people go about the work of undertaking initiatives, coordinating action, and bringing various missions to a conclusion of sorts.

Researchers are encouraged to attend explicitly to the activities of office holders with respect to mission-oriented teams. While office holders may express a certain sense that team building and maintenance somehow takes away from doing the "real" work of the office held, in many respects realizing anticipated outcomes may be associated with office holders' abilities to strategically establish and manage teams. Rather central here are people's abilities to: 1) establish teams relative to missions at hand (e.g. Prus, Sharper 1991); 2) assemble teams and manage team members within (e.g. Gómez-Zará et al. 2019); 3) provide guidance and direction; 4) work at producing and generating a sense of team-related identity and cohesion (e.g. Vaz 1982); or 5) coordinate or align the actions of team members and manage team identities relative to various audiences within and outside of the organizational setting.[6]

For audiences, a rather minimal expectation of those holding office is that they be perceived to be "doing something" – to be undertaking the work of office as defined by those who look to managers to act in various ways. There is a perspectival

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[6] See Bennett (2003) for a discussion of how charities and those in the not-for-profit sector may pay particular attention to outsiders and competing missions and teams.

element here that is rather central. While office holders may move from audience to audience within their day-to-day activities and may perceive themselves to be rather fully engaged, subordinates may have a decidedly different definition of the situation. As such, perceived inaction, or a lack of attentiveness to a relevant aspect of office, may be defined in more negative terms. Those in the setting may attempt to address perceived inaction, disinterest, or indifference by encouraging office holders to act relative to issues of import to audience member interests and agendas.

In such contexts, team creation may become something of an end in and of itself. For office holders, creating teams may be utilized to demonstrate their interest in particular issues at hand, provide evidence of a willingness to commit resources towards the mission and demonstrate that "something is being done". Creating and populating teams to address matters defined as critical by some audiences may be seen by organizational insiders and outsiders as an indicator of managerial successes. We have seen this relative to a variety of issues in university settings over the past two decades as teams/committees have been established to address matters such as research ethics, biohazards, the care and treatment of animals in research, sexual harassment and assault, equity, diversity and inclusion.[7] While not wishing to suggest that the missions and work undertaken by such teams is not highly salient for organizational life, I do wish to stress that the act of establishing such teams is in and of itself consequential and may be employed as a part of impression management strategies by office holders.

Researchers would be remiss were they not to attend to circumstances where team creation may be strategically utilized by office holders to delay, thwart, or otherwise obstruct missions proposed by others. Where proposed missions are defined in less than desirable terms, office holders may find that team creation allows for strategic advantages over more overt or direct forms of opposition. Where superordinates are particularly supportive of embarking on missions that office holders may be less enthused about, team creation may allow for the adoption of a cloak of support while at the very same time utilizing team establishment, creation, and fully enacting the team at hand as a form of resistance.[8] Office holders may adopt a wide range of strategies with respect to mission-based teams to attempt to thwart or resist the initiatives of others such as: 1) referring team establishment to a committee on committees; 2) engaging in far reaching "consultaganda" relative to the mission, terms of reference and team composition; 3) strategically appointing team members

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[7] For a discussion of ethics committees in the context of qualitative research see van den Hoonaard (2002).

[8] Such strategies speak to the larger themes associated with impression management and adopting various cloaks, masks, or enacted versions of self. Readers are directed to studies that attend to more individualized performances of competence such as those with an intellectual impairment (Edgerton 1967) or medical students (Haas, Shaffir 1987). For some instances of impression management that attend to team objectives, see research on professional thieves (Prus, Sharper 1991), police work (Meehan 1992), chefs (Fine 1996) and the supervisors of whitewater recreational rafting expeditions (Holyfield 1999).

who are anticipated to oppose the mission at hand (e.g. sabotaging the team); 4) embarking on strategic planning exercises (and deferring selected future missions until "plans are in place"); and 5) pursuing "mission interruptus" – altering, modifying or redirecting teams via shifting missions.

Such practices are recognized in the argot of the workplace – members may refer to such strategies as "death by committee", the creation of "luddite committees" or "bad faith engagement". These terms denote circumstances where members attribute more cynical intentions to team creation and management. The relative effectiveness of sabotage via team creation and practice was attended to in the *Simple Sabotage Field Manual* which suggests, "[w]hen possible, refer all matters to committees, for further study and consideration. Attempt to make the committees as large as possible – never less than five" (Strategic Services 1944: 28). While this advice was intended to foster disruption during wartime, its strategic relevance for managers remains.

7. Acknowledging legislated teams

For office holders, legislated teams may hold particular and unique challenges for management practice. But first some clarification is in order. Whereas legacy teams may be profitably cast as reflecting associational and relational dynamics within settings that have been established and realized by superordinates and subordinates within a setting, legislated teams are enacted by those outside of the setting at hand. While potentially no less consequential for office holders than legacy teams, legislated teams may pose unique challenges for office holders.

Researchers are encouraged to examine various legislated teams that may be salient for the research setting at hand. In some cases, these teams may be relatively inconsequential on a day-to-day basis for office holders. In other cases, however, legislated teams may consume considerable time, effort, and resources. Examples of such teams include: teams established through collective bargaining processes and established via collective agreements (e.g. mediation and arbitration); teams required by external bodies to access resources controlled by those agencies (e.g. quality assurance councils, financial oversight bodies); legislatively enacted governance bodies (e.g. school boards, boards of directors, university senates); supervisory bodies (e.g. civilian oversight related to police activities, disciplinary committees); external appeals bodies (e.g. real estate boards, radio and television communications commissions); and legislatively established teams intended to address injustices (e.g. South African (1996–2003) and Canadian (2008–2015) Truth and Reconciliation Commissions).[9]

If we may profitably cast human group life as, in part, problem-solving activity, then researchers are encouraged to attend to the problems that legislated teams were ostensibly created to solve and to ask how that mission, intent and purpose is realized

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[9] Horowitz (2012) offers a detailed examination of medical licensing and disciplinary processes.

in the day-to-day activities of its team members. That is, researchers are encouraged to attend to the lived activities of members of legislated teams, to get to where that action is, and not assume that more formalized terms of reference speak fully to the activities undertaken therein. Unlike legacy teams where office holders may have latitude over various aspects of team activities, there may be many challenges to exercising similar influence over legislated teams. In fact, members of legislated teams may perceive that their interests and identities more fully align with the team than with particular missions in progress or the office holders with which they interact. While Presidents of Colleges may interact with legislatively enabled Boards of Governors/Regents on an ongoing basis, the reality that they serve in that role "at the pleasure of the Board" helps to define and shape relationships within the setting.

For office holders, such legislated teams may vary considerably over time with respect to their relevance and presence in the work and life of the office holder. Office holders may routinely pay relatively little attention to their potential accountability to external bodies. However, some legislated teams may be in fact drive sequences of events that may be threatening to missions defined as central to the organization and its continuance. Deans of professional programs that require the accreditation of external bodies may find that their ability to credential students within the profession is placed at short-term or longer-term risk, church leaders may confront the role that their organizations have played in the deaths of Indigenous children via government legislated inquiries or commissions, and medical facilities may be subject to ongoing licensure reviews. While legislated teams may differ greatly, researchers would be remiss in not attending to the various ways in which office holders attend to legislated teams, utilize personal and organizational resources in response to their place within the setting, and the ongoing relevance for engaging legislated teams for effectively discharging the obligations of office.

8. Acknowledging secrecy and enacting teams

Goffman's (1959) discussion of teams and teamness helpfully attends to secrecy as a central aspect of team activities. Specifically, Goffman examines various types or forms those secrets may take in the context of team members doing things together in everyday life. As forms of social life, Goffman distinguishes between various secrets – dark secrets, strategic secrets, inside secrets, free secrets, and entrusted secrets. While I would encourage researchers to attend to Goffman's thoughtful framing here, there is much to be gained by moving beyond classification and to attending to how secrets may be engaged, enacted, and realized relative to team enactment in managerial settings. I turn my attention to secrets, teams, and related social process through a brief consideration of dark secrets and strategic secrets.[10]

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[10] Goffman (1959: 143) also discusses two additional types of secrets relative to the knowledge one has of the secrets of others – entrusted secrets (which bind an individual to other team members

8.1. Dark secrets

Dark secrets refer to aspects of the team that that are incompatible with the performance undertaken by the team and that the team conceals or at least shields from audiences (Goffman 1959: 141). Dark secrets may be highly consequential for office holders, team creation and team management over time. While Goffman's concept of dark secrets may be a useful heuristic device for researchers, for the purposes of this paper, the notion is most helpful when understood in perspectival and processual terms. That is, the qualities that make a secret dark are best understood from the perspectives of office holders and related team members as they are managed and modified overtime. It is not a quality of the secret(s) in play that makes them threatening in some way, but a reflection of a definitional quality attributed to an aspect of the everyday life by some audience. As such, understanding dark secrets requires that researchers develop an intimate familiarity with the setting at hand (Blumer 1969).[11]

Some team performances depend rather fully on maintaining dark secrets – consider for example those teams engaged in hustles, cons, frauds, or espionage. Some team performances are so centrally contingent on team members maintaining dark secrets that were the secret to be revealed the existence of the team and in fact the organizational setting at hand may be placed at considerable risk.[12] As Prus and Sharper's (1991) *Road Hustler* illustrates, the team performance of card and dice hustler's is contingent, in part, on targets failing to recognize that they are in the presence of a team and that the team's definition of the situation at hand differs markedly from that of the mark(s). In such circumstances the revelation of the dark secret irrevocably alters the interaction sequence in play – as the target of the hustle's definition of the situation may move from "recreational gambling" to "being conned".

Dark secrets differ from a consideration of secrecy and teams more generally through the perceived threat to team and performance that such secrets hold. For those entering office, discovering the dark secrets of the setting may be a crucial aspect of learning the ropes and effectively discharging the duties of the office holder. To the extent that team members have successfully engaged in concealment strategies, those approaching office will have little if any prior knowledge of the specifics of dark secrets in play. For newcomers, the extent to which they come to be entrusted with the dark secrets of the group, serves as an indication of the inclusion of the office holder as a member of the team at hand.

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through the shared secret), and the free secret (secrets that can be shared without threat to team performances or self/other identities).

[11] It is far beyond this paper to attend to the methodological issues in play here, but I would caution that access to the dark secrets of a team requires the development of considerable rapport on the part of researchers. Towards this end there is no substitute for patience in the field and a commitment to field sites and developing the trust of participants (Shaffir 1998; Grills 2020a).

[12] See Jaworski (2021) for a detailed and thoughtful discussion of Goffman's interest in secrets and their relationship to espionage and the Cold War.

8.2. Strategic secrets

For researchers, an attentiveness to strategic secrets – secrets that have an instrumentality and that may be used tactically relative to individuals or other teams that are defined in more oppositional terms – may offer an important context for team action (Goffman 1969). Whereas dark secrets threaten the team and its missions (and as such may be held in perpetuity), strategic secrets have an operational and organizational relevance for office holders. Through attending to strategic secrets and their relevance for teams at hand, we gain a sense of how strategic action may contribute to framing team membership and generating a sense of teamness (Grills, Prus 2019).[13]

It may be helpful to attend to secrecy work as a generic aspect of realizing team-based missions. Goffman encourages us in this direction. For example, he suggests that teams form something of a society of secrets "in so far as a secret is kept as to how they are cooperating together to maintain a particular definition of the situation" (Goffman 1959: 105).[14] Organizational life is marked by a wide variety of teams. As such, participants may be a part of multiple teams not all of which are engaged in missions that are entirely compatible. Office holders may find that they are the co-keepers of a variety of strategic secrets – some of which, if revealed, may expose missions, team members and the larger organization to considerable risk.[15] As such, Goffman encourages researchers to attend to the shared experience of (strategic) secrets. He writes, "[s]ince we all participate on teams we must all carry within ourselves something of the sweet guilt of conspirators" (Goffman 1959: 105).

While Goffman's conspiratorial reference may seem to overstate the case relative to the more mundane strategic secrets of everyday organizational life, a helpful trans-contextual point is made here. The shared experience of maintaining the secrets of the group addresses the perspectival, relational, and inter-subjective qualities of teams as enacted and realized human constructs.

Successfully maintaining strategic secrets may prove essential to the realization of missions at hand. The extended ethnographic research tradition sheds insight into office holders, teams and the management of strategic secrets that may prove helpful for researchers pursuing a rich understanding of these themes in the context of generic social processes. For example, Wolf's (1991) ethnography of the Rebel's

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[13] I direct readers to Goffman's (1969) work *Strategic Interaction* for a discussion of this theme and an extension of themes initially developed in the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.

[14] Goffman uses the term "secret society" rather than "society of secrets" – in organizational settings however, the existence of the team may be readily known, but their strategic secrets less so. For my purposes, "society of secrets" is a more adept modification without losing the spirit of Goffman's position.

[15] For a discussion of the complexity of secrets and secrecy in educational administration see Samier (2014).

outlaw motorcycle gang may be read in the context of a deviant subculture whose office holders (e.g. sergeant-at-arms, club president) manage teams and whose strategic secrets allow for club activities to successful operate in the context of rival gang activity and concerns related to detection by law enforcement. All of this is strikingly similar to Grills' (2022) study of the dominative practices utilized by university administrators who may employ strategic secrets such as concealment or deception to advantage their team relative to competing universities or oversight bodies.

As office holders attend to maintaining and enacting strategic secrets, the flow of information within the organizational setting is altered by secret keeping. Managing strategic secrets is an exercise of power in everyday life. As Prus (1999: 152) writes, "power implies an intent and a capacity on the part of a person or collectivity to influence, control, dominate, persuade, manipulate or otherwise affect the behaviors, experience, or situation of some target". As team members enact strategic secrets they are, in part, manipulating the experience of selected others outside the team and the secret at hand. Lemert's (1962) *Paranoia and the Dynamics of Exclusion* can be interpreted in this light. Where office holders collude with other team members to withhold information from co-workers deemed untrustworthy or troublesome, the enacted secret may serve to alter the flow of information to those defined as "paranoid". Here the secret serves the strategic purpose of exclusion and by so doing both isolates the target and reaffirms the teamness of those "in on" the secret. As Goffman (1956: 55) asserts, "[t]o withhold from a team-mate information about the stand his team is taking is to withhold his character from him, for without knowing what stand he will be taking he may not be able to assert a self to the audience".

For researchers interested in pursuing a more processually-attentive understanding of secrecy as an enacted feature of human group life, an attentiveness to the following may prove particularly fruitful:

- learning the secrets of the team;
- attending to perceived risks, threats, and vulnerabilities;
- responding to insider concerns;
- employing concealment strategies;
- anticipating disclosure, leaks, or related "whistle-blower" activities;
- anticipating mitigation strategies via accounts (Scott, Lyman 1968), disclaimers (Hewitt, Stokes 1975), rationalizations or scapegoating;
- creating situated vocabularies of motive to rationalize (e.g. every organization has "one bad apple"), justify or otherwise make reasonable previously concealed acts (Mills 1940);
- attending to audience expectations that "something must be done" in light of the secret disclosed;
- managing audience expectations by targeting team members for sanction/ dismissal.

Simmel (1906; 1950) adds an important caveat to our understanding of secrets, office holders and the teams they interact with. The power of the secret may be

lost in the telling or in its revelation. A historical example is illustrative here. The cracking of Germany's Enigma code by the Allies created a secret of the secret. The value of the successful code breaking hinged not only on obtaining a vital strategic secret but keeping this fact itself a secret. If opposing forces were to learn of the code breakers' success, then the strategic value of the secret would be lost as the compromised coding system would most surely be abandoned (Sebag-Montefiore 2011).

9. In sum

The study of management is the study of organizational life in the making. We see this commitment to the study of process in Blumer's (1947: 272) essay on industrial relations wherein he emphasizes the "dynamic, uncrystallized and changing" qualities of organizationally situated relations between workers/unions and management. And as Hughes (1937: 413) concludes, "institutions are but the forms in which the collective behavior and collective action of people go on". We lose much if we fail to attend to the practical accomplishment of organizational life.

This paper has argued for the importance of attending to office holders' engagement with teams – in the context of shared performance, as established aspects of organizational life, as consequential for understanding organizational life in the context of legislated requirements, and in terms of missions at hand and the secrets that may accompany and inform team performances. In all of this, social process and the intersubjectively enabled and shared understandings that accompany them are crucial for students of management and organizational life.

For researchers, an appreciation of the situational complexity of team creation and management is in many respects crucial to the successful study of management and management activities. While office holders can and do "go it alone", there are few missions, objectives and outcomes in organizational settings that are best understood in terms of more solitary action. Rather, a crucial aspect of successfully engaging office is to be found in the capacity of office holders to effectively enact, manage, and coordinate while attending to the various missions at hand. There is no adequate substitute for getting close to the action, and of attending to teams in the context of joint action – of people doing things together, managing and concealing aspects of their joint undertakings that may be defined as problematic and getting the work of organizational life done. Attending to the generic social processes that accompany enacting, engaging, and managing teams contributes to this end.

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ANGAŻOWANIE ZESPOŁÓW: MISJE, ZARZĄDZANIE
I ŻYCIE CODZIENNE

Abstrakt. Nawiązując do rozszerzonej tradycji interakcjonizmu symbolicznego, w zaprezentowanym artykule analizie poddane zostały działania zarządcze w kontekście aktywności osób zarządzających zespołami i funkcjonowania tychże zespołów. Jako badacze, jeśli chcemy w pełni zrozumieć zasady i funkcje zarządzania w życiu codziennym, musimy zwrócić szczególną uwagę na zespoły, proces ich tworzenia i pracę zespołową, ponieważ życie organizacyjne urzeczywistnia się poprzez wspólne działanie ludzi. W szczególności analizie poddane zostało znaczenie zespołów wykonawczych, zespołów o charakterze dziedzicznym (*legacy teams*), zespołów powołanych na mocy prawa (*legislated teams*), zespołów opierających się na misji (*mission-based teams*) oraz znaczenie zasady poufności dla zespołów uchwałodawczych (*enacting teams*). Zachęcając do zwrócenia uwagi na perspektywy i działania osób zarządzających, proponuję w artykule odejście od strukturalnych ujęć życia organizacyjnego na rzecz zwrócenia uwagi na zarządzanie w procesie tworzenia.

Słowa kluczowe: generyczny proces społeczny, zarządzanie, interakcja symboliczna, poufność, zespoły.