COMMUNICATION DESIGN WORK IN THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF

ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Association management companies are professional service organizations that provide administrative services through association managers for non-profit professional societies and trade associations. Association managers function as outside contractors to the association and have tenures across multiple volunteer leadership administrations. Five key literatures informed this study of communication as design: neo-institutionalism, professional communities, interorganizational communication, grounded practical theory, and communication as design.

Using Grounded Practical Theory (GPT) and Communication as Design (CaD), this study reconstructs association managers' communication practice. Association managers were the primary data source. Observations and industry literature provided secondary sources. Data collection methods were interviews, participant observations, and a review of industry literature. The GPT practice reconstruction revealed communication dilemmas, techniques, and situated ideals. The process of examining CaD work "articulates the tools, ideals, and knowledge of intervention work and then

reconstructs the practical theory of communication" (Aakhus, 2007a, p. 116). This study

focuses on several key tenets of CaD. The tenets include: (a) interventions, (b)

inventions, (c) managing of identity goals, (d) shaping interactivity, and (e) a practical

theory of interaction. The research interviews seek to uncover the communication

knowledge and practices they employ in shaping interactional spaces. This study explores

how a community of professionals chooses to shape interactivity through interventions,

inventions, management of identity goals, and implementation of their practical theory of

communication.

     Findings revealed: 1) association managers establish their role through the

authority of documents and continuity and history; 2) association managers protect their

identity as transparent, neutral, non-conflictual outsiders and exercise their professional

role through backstage work, peer-to-peer communication and strategically chosen

interventions; 3) association managers coordinate collaborative action through an

operational dialogue; 4) association managers' practical theory of communication

(fairness, preparation, backstage positioning, professional positioning, and peer-to-peer

communication) governs implementation of the operational dialogue; and 5) association

managers utilize an operational dialogue to exercise unobtrusive control through a unique

process of inverted control.

     An operational dialogue is foundational to a unique form of unobtrusive control

the author identifies as inverted control. The communication design work of association

managers is tightly integrated into an operational dialogue that guides the association's

governance and management activity.

Preface

My interest in the work of association management stems from my personal involvement in two organizations managed by an Association Management Company (AMC). In my first experience, I served on the board of a trade association and spent several years working on various committees. My second experience was serving on the board and executive board of a charitable organization. As I observed the work of association managers, I was impressed with the fluidity with which they managed board tensions, conflicting perspectives, and industry crises. During the course of my years of work and friendship, I never questioned an association manager on how they actually accomplished their role. This research is an effort to answer that unspoken question. First, I offer a brief glimpse of my story, and then I take a look at theirs.

As a marketing executive in a durable consumer goods company, I began attending the manufacturers' trade association for our industry. The trade association's annual meeting was always in very nice locations and offered a week of warm weather in the midst of the dreary northeast spring. The annual meeting served to report on the state of the industry and provided a forum for the discussion of industry-wide needs. The needs included an annual trade show for members to showcase their product to retail buyers from around the world, joint development of voluntary and required safety standards, and member services including insurance, freight, and credit programs.

After attending the annual meeting for a couple of years, I joined a committee and actually became involved in the organization as a participant rather than a spectator. After serving on a committee and attending meetings twice annually, I was nominated and elected to the board of directors for the organization.

When I attended my first board meeting, I was chagrined to learn that those who managed the association were not direct employees of the association. I had been tangentially involved for more than two years and had no idea they were not employees. They were employees of an outside firm contracted to manage our trade association and they also managed other associations in entirely different industries. At the same time, I learned that all of the association's staff members were employees of the same outside firm. My experience on the board made it clear that these managers were deeply engaged in the business of the industry and were involved in influencing the work of the board and the various individual committees. In spite of their work ethic and their obvious commitment, I was troubled by my lack of awareness regarding their status.

The normal calendar for the association was to hold one of the years' two board meetings the day prior to the annual membership meeting. This was always done at the spring board meeting that was contiguous with the general membership meeting. This served as a preparation time for reporting about the association's work to the general membership. As a new board member, I automatically became the head of a committee. As a new committee chair it became my responsibility to present the annual update on the committee's work to the members attending the meeting. I was concerned that I was not thoroughly versed in the work of the committee and was hesitant to present the committee update.

My fears were allayed when a staff member presented me with an agenda of the committee presentation, explained my place and role in the annual meeting, and then provided me with a detailed committee report that I was to deliver to the membership. I was asked, very nicely, if I had any questions or additions to what had been prepared. I

assured them that I did not and I went to my hotel room to review and practice my

presentation. The staff and association manager had scripted not only my committee

presentation, but also the entire annual meeting. This seemed reasonable because after all,

like the other volunteers, I was busy taking care of my corporate role.

As a result of these experiences, I began to wonder about the processes that this

group of professional managers uses to coordinate these association efforts. Two broad

questions framed my developing query of these individuals and their communicative

work: 1) what is the role of association managers and 2) what role does interaction play

in shaping professional communities, inter-organizational communication, and

institutions?

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The day-to-day communication that comprises the work of many professions is critical to the construction of our social world. This paper presumes four key aspects of social interaction. Social interaction functions in the creation and coordination of meaning, as the primary means by which social actors organize themselves, as the means of defining and sustaining professions, and as the prime motivator in producing and (re)producing societal institutions. These same presumptions are not unique to communication theory and underlie a number of theoretical approaches to the study of professions, organizations, and institutions. As a practical discipline (Craig, 1989, 1995), communication offers additional insights into understanding professions, organizations, and institutions as well as furthering our understanding of communication theory. How communication shapes professional practice requires further examination.

The non-profit sector offers an important opportunity to study a professional practice that is heavily dependent on communication work. In her article reviewing the non-profit sector, Lewis (2005) notes that the "nonprofit context is one rich with possibility and one deeply neglected from a communication theory standpoint" (p. 262). She suggests that these organizations are "largely unstudied in terms of important managerial and communicative issues" (p. 240). Lindenberg (2001) notes that within non-profit organizations the "often-unheard voices [of managers] can provide unique feedback to academics" (p. 375). The work performed by association managers in the

non-profit sector is a rich resource for investigating communication practice and advancing knowledge of how society understands communication.

Whether conceptualized as practical knowledge (Aakhus, 2007a), practical reasoning (Aakhus, 2001), reflective knowledge (Schön, 1983), know-how (Van Mannen & Barley, 1984), or ordinary knowledge (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979), there is an expectation in this study that association managers have a repertoire of knowledge and techniques they utilize in providing their services to associations. Association managers represent a professional community engaged in devising and disseminating both knowledge and techniques that address problems emerging in the course of managing associations. This study reconstructed the professional communication practice of association managers' occupational community in order to understand how communication is consequential in creating dialogue and exerting control in the conduct of their professional practice.

Background to the Study

When society migrated from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy a number of well-known changes occurred in the way society organized and accomplished work. As we move into a post-industrial economy, we see further changes as services, information, and research eclipse manufacturing. Organizations continue to morph and move away from hierarchical to horizontal control and from rigid to flexible structures. These new forms, whether they are virtual, boundary-less, or networked, are decentralized and relationship-based (Child & McGrath, 2001) and demonstrate

increasing dependence on communication for the managing of collaborative networks. Collective enterprises are particularly dependent on communication for accomplishing their goals. In the annual Job Outlook survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), prospective employers consistently rank communication skills as the number one attribute they seek in a potential candidate (NACE, 2011). There is a general presumption in society that success is closely aligned with communicative competence.

Economists emphasize the rising importance of communication competence in the global economy. Robert Reich (1992) discusses three emerging categories of work in the American economy: "*routine production services, in-person services*, and *symbolic-analytic services*" (p. 174). The symbolic analysts participate in work that involves "solv[ing], identify[ing], and broker[ing] problems by manipulating symbols" (p. 178). Friedman (2007) identifies collaborators and explainers as new middlers in the American economy. Middlers represent an intermediate (inter/mediate) group of workers for whom communication is central and who serve an important role in post-industrial society. Those whom Reich refers to as symbolic analysts, and Friedman calls middlers, share a dependency on communication and represent many different fields, various types of work, and diverse professions.

Those who engage in communication work are frequently professionals whose primary body of knowledge is not communication. Professionals for whom communication is important may include financial planners, business consultants, corporate trainers, and hospitality workers. For example, business managers may see themselves as primarily knowledgeable about and engaged in control and administration,

but a significant portion of their daily activity revolves around communication. They regularly make decisions about formats (company meeting or executive committee), forums (presentation or brainstorming), and interactivity (Q &A or submit questions on the intranet). Generally speaking, managers depend on communication as a primary means to accomplish their responsibilities and professional practice, but the vast majority of business managers have no formal education in communication theory.

Correspondingly, a manager's decision-making processes are not necessarily "reflective about the linguistic, interactional, or other matters of communication" but may reflect their business education, professional training, or historical successes and failures (Aakhus, 2007a, p. 115). Managers' engagement in communication work in no way implies they are "schooled in communication theory and methods," but as designers (of formats, forums, and interactivity), they "hold influence over the shaping and disciplining of communication in society" (p. 114). By acknowledging the importance of communication in the overall economy, in business, and in professions, there is an opportunity to assume a communication stance and to be reflective about communication practices with an eye to both understand and to (re)configure its implementation. The communication field articulates the recognition of communication as a prime mover of work practices, which is identified as the "ascendancy of communication work" (Aakhus & Anderson, 2007, p. 1).

Communication work is conspicuous in the steps one takes to encourage certain forms of interaction while discouraging other less preferred forms of interaction (Aakhus, 2008). Communication design work recognizes the potential to structure, shape, and condition discourse (Aakhus, 2007a) by intervening "into some ongoing activity through

the invention of techniques, devices, and procedures that aim to redesign interactivity and thus shape the possibilities for communication" (p. 112).

"There is a great deal to learn about communication by opening up its intentional design as an object of theory" (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005, p. 412). Communication as Design (CaD) is a theoretical frame by which we can view the work of professional practitioners to understand their communication puzzles, their proposed solutions, and various rationales for their choices. CaD provides a framework to study practitioners who create interactional forums and shape interactivity. CaD acknowledges that as practitioners seek to resolve interactional puzzles they are implementing a practical theory of communication (Craig, 1989).

Practical theory is not monolithic and may be conceptualized as mapping, engaged reflection, or transformative practice (Barge & Craig, 2009). CaD, along with Grounded Practical Theory (GPT), is an exemplar of "practical theory as engaged reflection" (p. 59). Barge (2001) points out that practical theory "as engaged reflection takes seriously the reflexive relationship between theoretical and practical discourses and seeks to examine how each illuminates the other" (p. 9). This perspective suggests that "theory emerges from a systematic reflection on communicative practice in terms of the kinds of problems, dilemmas, and sites that people engage" (p. 59). CaD acknowledges the broad goals of communication as a practical discipline (Barge & Craig, 2009; Craig 1989, 1995; Craig & Tracy, 1995) and is concerned with building practical understanding of varying communication practices within society with the consequence of improving practice and building theoretical knowledge about communication. A CaD perspective emphasizes the study of practices where communication takes a central role.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to further understand communication design work in society by examining the professional practice of association managers. The study focuses on the communication work association managers perform in orchestrating interaction among the members of professional societies and industry wide organizations. The study explores what they do in performing their roles and what influence they exert.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The questions that emerged from working within an association context continued to develop and led to an interest in exploring what they do and the role they play in coordinating communication within the association processes. This query into their communication practice affords an opportunity to consider how professional communities, interorganizational communication, and institutions are shaped by a community of practice's ongoing development of practical theory of communication design.

Literatures for the Study

This study presumes social interaction is the means of defining and sustaining professions and is the prime motivator in producing and (re)producing societal institutions. Examining communication and its consequence for the professional practice of association managers requires a review of contributions from neo-institutionalism, professional communities, interorganizational communication, design, and CaD.

Neo-Institutionalism

Institutionalism is rooted in economics, politics, and sociology. Traditionally, institutionalism focused on the impact of societal structures responsible for bringing order to society through rules governing human activity. Institutionalism is not easily

codified because of its diverse roots and streams of thought, but two common assumptions are that (1) behavior is the "aggregate consequence of individual choice" and (2) institutions represent "the sum of individual-level properties" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 2). Neo-institutionalism, like institutionalism, is varied in focus and orientation but grants importance to social context, the durability of institutions, and acknowledges the importance of social processes (DiMaggio & Powell). More specifically, neo-institutionalism recognizes institutions as "multifaceted, durable social structures made up of symbolic elements, social activities, and material resources" (Scott, 1994/2001, p. 49) that are "socially constructed, routine-reproduced (*ceteris paribus*), programs or rule systems" (Jepperson, 1991, p. 149).

Institutionalization occurs when social actors reciprocate habituated actions. When actor A performs X and actor B responds to A with Y, they are establishing a way of acting. As this is transmitted to a wider group of social actors or subsequent social actors, the habituated activity becomes a built up or socially constituted reality. The ways we do things leads to the way thing are (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Prior actions become the standard and guide for social actors as they enact the institutions in which they function. Thus, institutionalization may be understood simply as a system of action, that is, a system of action or a practice that can be evaluated at various levels of structure such as sector, industries or professions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

Institutions are recursive in nature. Social actors operate within social institutions while institutions simultaneously shape what actors see, understand, and respond to. Once socialized, actors enact the institutions and, through their every day actions and interactions, they reproduce the institution (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). "Put another way:

institutions are those social patterns that, when chronically reproduced, owe their survival to relatively self-activating social processes" (Jepperson, 1991, p.145). It should be noted that institutions are not static, and institutional rules are recipes for action rather than ironclad laws. Actors, functioning as individual agents who act rather than enact, are those who ultimately produce change in an institution's cultural environment (Venkatesh, 2009). For example, law as an institution shapes the way a recent graduate of law school understands and performs his or her role in the firm. While the institution of law has a shaping effect at a macro level, it is the individual law firm that mediates the effect on the beginning lawyer because individual "organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work and institutionalized in society" (Meyer & Rowen, 1981, p. 304). We see the cycle completed when the young lawyer enacts the practice or acts upon the institution through unique individual choices.

In his work on institutions, Scott (1994/2001) discusses three aspects of institutions and suggests that one's theoretical frame determines the lens used to view institutions. The three pillars, as he refers to them, are regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. The regulative pillar acknowledges the role of institutions in constraining and regulating behavior with the basis of order in regulative rules. Those who understand institutions from the perspective of a normative lens believe that it is through the incorporated values and norms of the institution that expectations serve to "empower and enable social action" and "confer rights as well as responsibilities" (p. 55). While the regulative perspective emphasizes rules and the normative emphasizes norms and values, the cultural-cognitive perspective focuses on social practices.

This third perspective, cultural-cognitive, is the "distinguishing feature of neo-institutionalism within sociology" which "recognizes that internal interpretive processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks" and "[m]eanings arise in interaction and are maintained and transformed as they are employed to make sense of the ongoing stream of happenings" (Scott, 1994/2001, p. 57). Scott moves beyond rules, values, and norms to meaning and interaction as foundational to institutional activity. While institutionalism began by looking at the macro environment, a cultural-cognitive view of neo-institutionalism allows us to move to the micro level of interaction. We see that "cultures are continuously constructed and reconstructed through interaction and intervention at the everyday level" (Bate, Khan, & Pye, 2000, p. 198). The (re)shaping of institutions is accomplished through interaction and meaning making (Bate et al., 2000; Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Scott, 1994/2001) and the recursive nature of institutions suggests "macro-categories emerge from these interactions and negotiations" (Powell & Colyvas, 2008, p. 281). To better understand macro-categories there is a need to understand the micro-processes of institutions (Powell & Colyvas, 2008).

The cultural-cognitive pillar of neo-institutionalism acknowledges the social nature of institutions, their recursive DNA, the importance of negotiating meaning, the granular level of interaction, and micro activities rolling up to enact and create macro structures. Interaction is acknowledged as critical in the (re)enactment of institutions. The importance of daily activities and interactions of those who make up institutions is emphasized, but neo-institutionalists have yet to study the interactivity of social actors within institutions.

Professional Communities

Professional communities are institutional actors (Scott, 1994/2001) who exercise control over a specific arena (e.g., medicine) and define the terms of engagement for those performing the professional role. Professions are "highly institutionalized" and the "delegating of activities to appropriate occupations is socially expected" (Meyer & Rowen, 1981, p. 306). This study examines the work of a particular group of professionals engaged in communication work. To examine their work, it is important to understand the nature of professional practitioners across diverse literatures.

Sociologists include the following characteristics of "true" professions: (1) a knowledge base rooted in abstract knowledge, (2) a service ideal, (3) a state-sanctioned monopoly, (4) the delivery of expert services, (5) the serving of socially desirable goals, (6) jurisdictional control, (7) an educational program housed in academic institutions, and (8) the creation of new theoretical knowledge (Abbott, 1988; Carr-Saunders, 1955; Freidson, 1986, 2001; Larson, 1977; Leicht & Fennell, 2001; Macdonald, 1995; Toren, 1969; and Wilensky, 1964). Medical doctors exemplify a "true" profession incorporating all eight characteristics.

Daily life demonstrates that the term professional is applied in a broader fashion than the precise definition provided by sociologists. Many professions include some, but not all of the characteristics identified above. While the term "profession" is a contested sociological term, a number of scholars acknowledge the proper application of the term in spite of not being a "true" profession. Communication scholars Cheney and Ashcraft (2007) summarize the sociological literature applicable to professionals and identify three emergent themes including (a) "the connection between professionalism and the division

of labor in the modern society" (p. 149), (b) "claims to authoritative expertise for a class of individuals" (p. 150), and (c) the "normative-ethical dimension of professionalism" (p. 152). They acknowledge the ambiguity surrounding the word "professional" and choose to interpret the term in a general way with a "professional" defined as those demonstrating expertise in a specific area. Using Carr-Sanders (1955) terminology, for the purposes of this study, association mangers are considered a semi-profession.

Writing from a psychological perspective, Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) also assume a similar broad posture toward the term professional. They submit that, "our focus is not on evaluating what work meets certain technical criteria for classification as a profession" (p. 13). They emphasize "good work" or "work of expert quality that benefits the broader society" (p. ix). They suggest that practitioners create the *work of the profession* [my emphasis] when they "define the specific knowledge, skills, practices, rules, and values that differentiate them from the rest of the culture" (p. 21). According to Gardner and his co-authors, professional realms incorporate four aspects. They are (a) individual practitioners operating within a (b) domain containing the symbolic systems of the work. The authors note that every domain "prescribes sequences of action that lead to some desirable goal" (p. 22). They also highlight an (c) ethical dimension "reassuring people that the skills will not be used against the common interest and solely for the practitioners' advantage" (p. 23). When the symbols, ideas, and values of a domain are "enacted" they constitute (d) fields that subsume both practicing individuals and the institutions they represent.

Van Maanen and Barley (1984) propose a communal form of work organization that they identify as an occupational community. Their occupational community is "an

alternative to an organizational frame of reference for understanding why it is that people behave as they do in the workplace" (pp. 289-290). They suggest that organizations are not necessarily responsible for behaviors, but rather occupational communities, which reach across organizational lines and may offer an explanation for the way work is organized. They define occupational communities as groups who are

> engaged in the same sort of work; whose identity is drawn from the work; who share with one another a set of values, norms and perspectives that apply to but extend beyond work related matters; and whose social relationships meld work and leisure. (p. 287)

Occupational communities transcend specific organizations, and membership "entails learning a set of codes that can be used to construct meaningful interpretations of persons, events, and objects commonly encountered in the occupational world" (p. 300). The centrality of work implies that members of a community develop common ways of thinking and acting (Laurila, 1997; Van Maanen & Barley, 1985; Ybema, 1997) with community assumptions that "guide selection, interpretation, and communication of information in ways that are meaningful to the group" (Sackmann, Phillips, Kleinberg & Boyacigiller, 1997). In their work Van Maanen and Barley (1984) posit that it is through socialization that "an occupation's value system comes to shape a person's work perspectives and self concept—work perspectives and self-concepts that are supported over time in a person's daily interactions" (p. 341).

Research on communities of practice provides an additional lens through which we can view professional practitioners. Wenger's (1998) work revolves around social learning and he articulates, "collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations" (p. 45). A community of practice includes "a *domain* of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of

people who care about this domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 270). Developing knowledge is the primary purpose of communities of practice.

In Simon's (1969/1996) book, *The Sciences of the Artificial*, he articulates that professionals are committed to science and, concomitantly, to a positivistic view of their work. This view of professionalism implies that "each of the professions has been conceived as the medium through which knowledge of science is applied. In effect, each profession has been seen as a subset of engineering (Rittel & Webber, 1973, p.158). In conceptualizing professionals as a subset of engineering, the presence of technocratic expertise and instrumental action is obvious. Characterizing Simon's (1969/1996) view as technocratic and positivistic is basically a received doctrine in the design literature. However, Chua (2009) makes the argument that with the 1969 3rd edition of Simon's book, additions, including the Gaither lectures (1980), demonstrated a more constructivist position than presented in the 1969 edition. Chua's claim is intended to show less divergence between Simon's technocratic perspective and Schön's constructivist perspective.

Schön (1983) uses the conceptualization of the professional as scientist or technocratic expert as a starting point to introduce a new perspective on professionalism. Schön articulates a constructivist position rather than a positivistic viewpoint. Schön's objection to the positivistic, rationalistic model is the nature of social, as opposed to scientific, problems. Schön contends that a gap exists between the application of professional knowledge and problems faced in real-world practice (Schön, 1983). He believes these gaps or disconnects indicate

"indeterminate zones of practice—uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict"

that are not easily addressed through the instrumentality of expertise because of

their difficult nature (p. 6). Indeterminate problems are similar in nature to

"wicked problems." Rittel (1971) borrows this phrase from Karl Popper and

identifies "wicked problems" as those that are "not well-defined," and they "do

not have a criterion which would determine whether a solution is correct or false"

(p.19). Churchman (1967) reports on a Rittel seminar and identifies a wicked

problem as a

> class of social system problems which are ill-formulated, where the
> information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers
> with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are
> thoroughly confusing (p. B-141).

Schön (1983) embraces constructivism and proposes that professionals move

from a positivistic model. He argues that changing one's attitude toward reality from

unitary (positivistic and static) to multiple (constructed and emergent) substantially

changes the framework used to approach situations. The new frame toward inquiry is

appropriately suited for real-world circumstances replete with uniqueness and uncertainty

(Schön, 1983). The philosophical move away from a positivistic, technical rationalism to

constructivism is necessary for Schön to introduce a process of thinking/acting that

counters the professional instrumental solution to problems. Schön (1983) conceptualizes

that the technocratic professional approach includes the following tenets:

> [1] I am presumed to know, and must claim to do so, regardless of my
> own uncertainty. [2] Keep my distance from the client, and hold onto the
> expert's role. Give the client a sense of my expertise, but may convey a
> feeling of warmth and sympathy as a 'sweetener.' [3] Look for deference
> and status in the client's response to my professional persona. (p. 300)

In response to what he perceives as an inadequate technocratic approach, Schön

proposes a new type of practice that is reflective rather than instrumental in nature.

Schön (1987, 1995) views professionals as technical experts who access scientifically based techniques and engage in instrumental problem solving. Professionals' identification of symptoms then provides a means of classification and guide appropriately matched protocols for standardized solutions. In contrast, Schön calls for a reflective practice where a professional reflects on his or her actions for the purpose of developing expertise. According to Schön, thoughtful practices demonstrate a reflective knowledge that includes (a) knowing-in-action, (b) reflection-in-action, and (c) reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983, 1987, 1995). *Knowing-in-action* considers the tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966/1983) we bring to a task or knowledge revealed in the performance of an activity. It is our habituated way of dealing with problems that demonstrates our understanding of the circumstances, problems, and solutions (Schön, 1983, 1987, 1995). An example of knowing-in-action is the professional quarterback avoiding a sack while passing to a receiver eluding pass coverage.

Schön (1987) acknowledges that the "distinction between reflection in- and knowing-in-action may be subtle" (p. 29), but *reflection-in-action* refers to thinking about what we are doing while still engaged in the act of doing. This might be characterized as "'thinking on your feet,' 'keeping your wits about you,' 'and learning by doing'" (Schön, 1983, p. 54). The cognition about what one is doing and how one is doing it allows for monitoring and altering of the process while engaged in the process.

Reflection-on-action occurs after rather than during an event. This part of the reflection process is "thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (Schön, 1987, p. 26). A practitioner who employs knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-on-action engages in reflecting-in-practice. Schön suggests that uncertain and ambivalent conditions are best served by reflective knowledge that is developed through knowing-in-practice rather than a reductionistic approach that uses symptoms as a trigger for protocols (Schön, 1983).

A reflective rather than technocratic practice leads to a dramatic shift in the tenets of the professional approach as a result of the epistemological change. (The tenets arising out of a reflective practice are *italicized*.)

> [1] I am presumed to know, and must claim to do so, regardless of my own uncertainty. *I am presumed to know, but I am not the only one in the situation to have relevant and important knowledge. My uncertainties may be a source of learning for me and for them.* [2] Keep my distance from the client, and hold onto the expert's role. Give the client a sense of my expertise, but may convey a feeling of warmth and sympathy as a 'sweetener.' *Seek out connections to the client's thoughts and feelings. Allow his respect for my knowledge to emerge from his discovery of it in the situation.* [3] Look for deference and status in the client's response to my professional persona. *Look for the sense of freedom and of real connection to the client, as a consequence of no longer needing to maintain a professional façade.* (Schön, 1983, p. 300)

A profession is broadly interpreted as community of practitioners who provide service expertise characterized by specific sequences of action. According to Schön these sequences of action should be informed by reflection rather than an application of technocratic knowledge. Solutions to the problem encountered within a given profession may arise from within the community or may arise directly from the nature of the work as

individual practitioners participate in constructing their social worlds. It is in the mundane that researchers can know systematically and explicitly what makes up daily life (Anderson, 1985) and from these "everyday languages and practices" researchers gain insight into social meanings (Putnam, 1983, p. 49). Professions offer an opportunity to study institutional practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) as they emerge from the everyday interactions and processes of the members of a given profession (Powell & Colyvas, 2008).

Interorganizational Communication

Interorganizational communication (IOC) "emphasizes relationships organizations have with external constituents as opposed to relationships that occur internally" (Doerfel, 2008, p. 1). Research surrounding network theory, interorganizational research, and organizational communication inform IOC.

Network analysis is rooted in a number of theoretical perspectives including social psychology (Granovetter, 1973), social anthropology (Scott, 2000), psychiatry, anthropology, and French structuralism (Mizruchi, 1994). The concept of networks was borrowed from these other fields and applied to social interaction. The utilization of mathematics and graph theory shifted the study of networks from description to analysis (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003, p. 13). Social network theory emphasizes "structural forms (patterns and positions) or relational content (qualities of network ties), as well as by its level of analysis" (Raider & Krackhardt, 2002, pp. 58-59).

Social structures are patterns or connections of relationships among individual actors or nodes (individuals, sub units, or organizations) that constrain or enable social

activities (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Kilduff & Tsai, 2003).

Stinchcombe (1965) offers an earlier and more narrow definition that situates structures

as outside the organization). Individual social actors are embedded within network

structures and the relationships that comprise the structure exert significant influence on

individual actions. Granovetter (1985) suggested that to construe actions as independent

of the influence of the network "is a grievous misunderstanding" (p. 482). Mizruchi

(1994) claimed that a "primary tenet of network analysis is that the structure of social

relations determines the content of those relations" (p. 330). Terms such as density,

centrality, and structural equivalence characterize network structures.

A number of dimensions, including strength of ties between nodes, compose the

relational content of networks. Time, emotional intensity, intimacy, and reciprocal

service determine tie strength (Granovetter, 1973). The concept of ties has become

institutionalized in the network literature (Granovetter, 1973; Krackhardt, 1992) with

content being studied along various dimensions including awareness (Cross & Parker,

2004); buy-in (Podolny & Baron, 1997); and collaborations, information flow, friendship,

advice, and interlocking boards (Brass et al., 2004). Network studies research occurs

across multiple levels of analysis. These include individuals, dyads, and groups of social

actors or intra-, organizational or interorganizational networks (Raider & Krackhardt,

2002).

Management journals present numerous network studies with diverse topics and

varying levels of analysis (Brass et al., 2004). The study of networks brings a focus on

relationships that are "analyzed graphically and quantitatively" (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003, p.

127). A network approach differs from traditional management approaches "that examine

actors in isolation" (Brass et al., p. 795). The business literature on networks tends to

focus on structural characteristics of organizations rather than network content, although

research regarding ego networks has addressed content to some extent (Podolny & Baron,

1997). Organizational network analysis continues to include strong mathematical and

graphical components with the "complex nature of interactions among people, tasks, and

resources in the organization… harnessed by a set of simple mathematical rules" (Raider

& Krackhardt, 2002, p. 70) including complexity theory and computational analysis

(Carley, 2002).

The structuralist approach to networks tends to obscure or ignore individual

agency and fails to address how individual actors create and change organizational

networks (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003). There is an acknowledgment in the network literature

that studying social psychological processes and the complexity of human interaction

may provide significant gains in further understanding networks (Gulati, Dialdin, &

Wang, 2002). Kilduff and Tsai (2003) emphasize that "networks represent the dynamic

interplay of micro-processes that operate at the level of cognition and interpersonal

interaction" (p. 113).

Before considering the role of organizational communication in network studies,

it is important to look briefly at interorganizational research. Galaskiewicz (1985) cites

four motives behind interorganizational cooperation. They are the desire to acquire

resources, reduce uncertainty, enhance legitimacy, and attain collective goals. Oliver

(1990) identifies six contingencies as prime movers of organizations joining together.

These contingencies include necessity, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, stability, and

legitimacy. Subsequent interorganizational research focused less on motives for

collaboration and more "on the conditions facilitating cooperation such as learning, trust, norms, equity, and context" (Brass et al., 2004, p. 802). In general terms, organizational collaboration stems from the desire to participate in a collective for the purpose of protection or action.

Interorganizational relationships exist as a way to manage environmental uncertainty (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) and provide structure to coordinate activities (Van de Ven & Walker, 1984). Interorganizational connections may include "supplier relationships, resource flows, trade association memberships, interlocking directorates, relationships among individual employees, and prior strategic alliances" (Gulati et al., 2002, p. 281) with some interorganizational studies focusing on social capital in interfirm alliances (Chung, Singh, & Lee, 2000; Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004). Interorganizational relationships are fostered through communication (Van de Ven & Walker, 1984) and the work of collectives is carried on by the transmission of information through what are considered "especially influential information conduits because they provide salient and trusted information that is likely to affect behavior" (Brass et al., 2004, p. 805).

Networks presume collective actors and interorganizational environments are for the purpose of collective action. Organizational communication scholars embrace the premise that

> collective action is a communicative phenomenon…. and always includes (1) identifying and connecting people who share a common private interest(s) in a public good, (2) communication messages to people, and (3) coordinating, integrating, or synchronizing individuals' contributions." (Flanagin, Stohl, & Bimber, 2006, p. 32)

"Communication networks are the patterns of contact that are created by the flow of messages among communicators through time and space" (Monge & Contractor, 2003, p. 3). Communication scholars concern themselves specifically with communication aspects of networks that leads to collecting data on communication "such as 'provides information to,' 'gets information from,' and 'communicates with'" (Monge & Contractor, 2001, p. 441). In spite of the focus on communication, network studies, from an organizational communication perspective, are significantly influenced by structural perspectives with even semantic network studies focused on structural explanations rather than content (Monge & Contractor, 2001). Scholars suggest that focus on content will improve understanding the role of networks in organizing (Monge & Eisenberg, 1987). A focus on content creates the opportunity for network-oriented studies to account for the microstructures revealed in interaction rather than glossing over them in favor of macrolevel structural functionalist accounts.

Interorganizational communication (IOC) makes the assumption that "interorganizational relationships are enacted by individuals' communicative actions" and concerns itself with topics such as "cooperation, competition, and coalition building" from a social networks perspective (Doerfel, 2008, p. 1). This work may foreground either a macro (system) or micro (organizational representatives) level perspective, but it is not concerned with one to the neglect of the other (Doerfel, 2008). IOC research includes looking at participatory federations (Flanagin, Monge, & Fulk, 2001), virtual organizations (DeSanctis & Monge, 1999), global networked organizations (Monge & Fulk, 1999), and multinational teams (Fulk, Monge, & Hollingshead, 2005). Theoretical perspectives include public goods (Monge, Fulk, Kalman, Flanagin, Parnassa, & Rumsey,

1998) and evolutionary theory (Bryant & Monge, 2008; Doerfel, Lai, & Chewning, 2010; Monge, Heiss, & Margolin, 2008; and Shumate, Fulk, & Monge, 2002). The IOC research direction increasingly focuses on NGO-corporate alliances, as apposed to NGO-NGO or corporate-corporate (Shumate & O'Conner, 2010).

NGOs and collectives function as exchanges for communication (Doerfel, 2008), broker credibility and trust (Stohl & Stohl, 2005), and fill structural holes to enhance the quality of the entire network (Burt, 1992; Doerfel, 2008). Taylor and Doerfel (2003) and Doerfel and Taylor (2004) looked at the work of NGOs as information sources facilitating Croatia's move from a totalitarian state to a republic. Their findings suggested that foundational members of networks were influential within the network (Taylor & Doerfel, 2003) and those who were more dependent on the network were more cooperative within the network (Doerfel & Taylor, 2004).

In a recent study, in-depth interviews were utilized in a qualitative approach to IOC (Doerfel et al., 2010). This study acknowledged that IOC research frequently "overlooks the relevance of the quality or nature of the links" (p. 154). In this research Doerfel and colleagues focused on the content of the interactions and used the constant comparative method to code interview data. This study represents an important step in looking at the content and quality of network interactions. A significant finding of this work was that interorganizational relationships in professional communities and professional associations are key to preparation for disasters.

Trade and professional associations are mutual-benefit organizations that primarily exist for the benefit of their constituency (Lewis, Hamel, & Richardson, 2001). As noted in the Doerfel et al. (2010) article, associations serve a critical function in

helping associates regain their footing after a natural disaster. Additionally, these types of organizations provide centralized information to "legally coordinate competition" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003, p. 178). An important area of development in the IOC literature is the study of cooperative-competitive relationships observed in trade associations (Doerfel, 1999, 2008). Doerfel (2008) suggests that future research should seek to understand "IOC processes that facilitate such collaborative endeavors and result in collective advantages (public goods)" (p. 5). Understanding the networked nature of organizational clusters is a key aspect of IOC research (Doerfel, 2008). The interdependencies and non-hierarchical nature of collectives in general, and trade and professional associations specifically, suggest that the social network is an important component of how these organizations function to accomplish their instrumental goals.

IOC emerges from the work of network theorists and the "structural configurations that emerge when sets of relations are applied to sets of entities" (Monge & Margolin, 2008, p. 790). Network scholars excel at mapping structures and identifying actors' positions and roles in the network. The communication work of those occupying roles is measured in terms of the information flows (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Those serving an intermediary function (intermediaries) may be identified as liaisons, representatives, gatekeepers, brokers, coordinators, or bridges (Kilduff & Tsai, 2003; Monge & Contractor, 2003). The specific type of role is understood only with "detailed knowledge of the context" (Kilduff & Tsai, p. 130). While acknowledging the importance of communication and evaluating content types (e.g., advice network), the strength of the network approach to communication is mapping and often overlooks interaction among social actors that make up the individual parts of the network.

Design

Design is a concept as old as mankind and generally consists of two aspects: (a) intentionality and (b) the planning and the execution of a process to bring about something other than that which naturally occurs. Historically, design informs and lends definition to fields such as architecture (e.g., Roman or Greek) and fine art (e.g., van Gogh or Rembrandt). Design methodology as a field traces its beginnings to the Conference on Design Methods held in London in 1962. Several additional conferences were held during the 1960's and initial publication of a number of design methodology books began during the same period (Cross, 2001). The term "design" is now applied to a wide variety of areas including, but not limited to, fashion design, industrial design, engineering design, product design, software design, and process design.

Simon (1969/1996) brought new focus to the process of design with his groundbreaking work on the artificial. While natural science is concerned with explaining and finding patterns in that which naturally occurs, Simon emphasized artificial or "man-made" designs. He conceptualized design as "concerned with how things ought to be" or normative in nature (p. 114) and suggested that designers are engaged in devising courses "of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones" (p. 111). Simon's (1969/1996) work was oriented around technology and statistical methods and proposed that "design theory is aimed at broadening the capabilities of computers to aid design" (p. 111). Some scholars consider Simon's book, *The Sciences of the Artificial,* as the founding text for Information Services (IS) (Venkatesh, 2009).

While Simon's work may occupy that role in IS, it is certainly not limited to IS. This is evidenced by the inclusion of a chapter on social planning (part of the Gaither

lectures) that goes on to argue that "one of society's most important design tasks" is the configuration of organizations, whether business corporations, governmental organizations, voluntary societies or others" (p. 154). As noted in the section on professionals, Simon's work on design is primarily concerned with decision-making (Buchanan, 2004) and, as such, commits him to technical rationality (Krippendorff, 2006) undergirded by a positivist orientation (Buchanan, 1995). Bazjanac (1974) argues that "early models of the design process…view the design process as a sequence of well defined activities and are all based on the assumption that the ideas and principles of the scientific method can be applied" (pp. 5-6).

Simon's view of design focuses on technology, decision-making, and technical rationality, and he situates all of them within a positivist orientation. Simon (1969/1996) sees professionals as scientific in their orientation and for him design "is the core of all professional training; it is the principal mark that distinguishes the professions from the sciences" (p. 111). He describes the work of professionals such as architects, attorneys, and physicians as "microsocial levels of design" (p. 150). As mentioned earlier "design" is a term modified by numerous adjectives, but it is helpful to look at four research areas that highlight design: policy design, organizational design, management as design, and information systems. Each of these areas is relevant to the focus of this paper.

Policy design. Simon (1969/1996) acknowledges the role of design in society, but policy problems are not easily solved by technological expertise. Societal problems are indeterminate (Schön's 1983 description), and the inability of technology to resolve indeterminate problems is the essence of Schön's argument for a reflective practice. The policy arena is a good example of these types of resistant problems. Policy debates are

intractable (Schön & Rein, 1994) or wicked problems (Rittel, 1972) with multiple

competing goals and stakeholders. Political considerations complicate policy debates.

The problems at hand rely on "elusive political judgment for resolution. (Not 'solution.'

Social problems are never solved. At best they are only re-solved—over and over again)"

(Rittel & Webber, 1973, p. 160).

Schön and Rein (1994) propose a reflective process that reframes policy

controversies. Framing is the "operation of selectivity and organization" to make sense of

"complex, information-rich situations" (p. 30). Importantly, they recognize mutual

dependencies in policy design.

> The success of their [designers'] enterprise depends on other parties
> choosing to behave in certain ways. Just to this extent, the designers live
> in a world of distributed powers, which requires them to enter into a
> communicative relationship with their antagonists. (pp. 183-184)

Schön and Rein acknowledge that designing is "a communicative, 'conversational'

process" (p. xix) and they go on to look at human interaction and what they refer to as

models of behavior.

> We have proposed (Argyris & Schön, 1974, 1978) that human beings, in their
> interactions with one another, design their behavior and hold theories for doing so.
> Model I and Model II theories of action include the values, strategies, and
> underlying assumptions that inform individuals' patterns of interpersonal behavior.
> (Schön, 1987, p. 255)

There are a number of elements from this statement that bear comment. First, note that

the references to "interactions," "design their behavior," and "hold theories" indicate a

communicative stance rooted in theory and informed by design. The phrase "patterns of

interpersonal behavior" references patterns of interaction. Aakhus (2005) notes "Schön's

theory of reflective practice was path breaking in the way it conceptualized the

communicative, interactional basis of decision-making, knowledge, and learning in

professional practice" (p. 64). From a communicative perspective, theories of action represent implicit, differing theories of communication. Aakhus further notes that Schön and Rein (1994) consider design as "a reflective enterprise that involves a designer, an object to be designed, and an environment in which the object is to be used" (Aakhus, 2003, p. 284).

Organizational design. The process of designing organizations rests upon a dual conception of organizations as "natural facts" and "socially created artifacts" (Jelinek, Romme, & Boland, 2008, p. 320). Organizations are not created *ex nihilo* and begin with some idea of structure; a task orientation that suggests specific, relevant processes; and participants who bring personal and career histories. This implies that in every organization there "are people who work within it, who have been busily creating their own designs" (Grant, 2004, p. 179). Thus, design is in reality re-design, a process for discovering what does and does not work, assessing achievement, acknowledging failures, and re-designing again.

Organizational design concerns itself with issues at several levels of the organization. At the macro level, the architecture of the organization's physical space is designed in such a way as to facilitate interaction (Gehry, 2004) by using "traffic flows, sight lines, and chance encounters" (Jelinek, 2004, p. 117) for the purpose of securing and insuring human interaction. In a less physical but equally important move, organizational design frames "people's expectations and perceptions, setting the context for the organizing activity—the social construction of roles and relationships—through which structure is enacted" (Bate et al. 2000, p. 200). In a lengthy statement, Jelinek (2004) captures the far-reaching aspects of organizational design.

> At the most basic levels, as theorists and as practitioners of management, we are interested in behaviors and interactions to further desired outcomes. A design perspective directs our attention to the context that enables, stimulates or encourages some behaviors, while inhibiting or discouraging others. Elements of that design might include selection and training processes, physical surroundings, information flows, performance assessment, and incentives, among others. But beyond these factors, the actors themselves profoundly shape their environment and one another, in their interactions and their responses to them. (p. 117)

In a specific instance of looking at structuring work processes for the purpose of controlling work flow, Dougherty (2008) looks at the process of innovation and says, "work must be orchestrated, shaped, defined, and guided so that people can come together readily even if they do not know each other" (p. 430). In the work of designing organizations, we see purposeful design of architectural space, organizational structure, organizational context, and workflows in order to initiate and facilitate interaction.

Management as design. Scholars studying management as design acknowledge the work of Simon as an important approach to managing through design, but they have expanded and embraced aspects not included in his original formulation (Boland, 2004). A key element of management as design is the move from a decision attitude which "carries with it a default representation of the problem" (Boland & Collopy, 2004a, p. 9) to a design attitude. The vocabulary of decision-making is "limited and narrow" when contrasted with "an expansive and embracing vocabulary of design" (p. 4). Management as design suggests that managers (a) are "involved in the circulation of ideas and objects" (Suchman, 2004, p. 170), (b) focus on the "organization of movement and not the shape" (Faust, 2004, p. 233), and (c) acknowledge "a social community that has to be actively included in order to design the whole" (p. 239).

There are three additional concepts from management as design that merit attention. First, it is possible to have good and bad designs, but it is not possible to have "non-design" because "design is already embedded in management's 'logic of visualization'" (Hoskin, 2004, p. 146). Secondly, Weick (2004a) tells us "[d]esigners fail because they don't know when to stop. The trick in designing is to stop while the design still has life. Life persists when designs are underspecified, left incomplete, and retain tension" (p. 43). Boland and Collopy (2004b) highlight that "language is crucial in constructing the situations we face, the ways we deal with them and the kinds of solutions we can expect to achieve" (p. 265). Recognizing the constitutive nature of their work, designers reflect and reinforce "logics within particular representations of reality, thus serv[ing] to shape the very reality that they represent" (Orlikowski, 2004, p. 91) and by taking enactment seriously, they "develop capabilities for relating to and reflecting on the everyday action of people that brings into existence (or not) particular outcomes" (p. 94).

Literature Summary and Review

Simon's work looked at design as a scientifically driven delivery system, while Schön's (1983) reflection conceptualizes design as professionals participating as conversational partners in coordinating mutual outcomes. Simon (1969/1996) proposes design as a broad concept focused on efforts to "change existing situations into preferred ones" (p. 111). Both Simon's work and Schön's work are concerned with constructing preferred designs and are normative in their orientation.

Schön and Rein (1994) tackle policy design and talk extensively about the importance of communication, but they stop short of actually looking at interactions.

Those who study organizational design acknowledge the social creation of organizational entities and note that interactions are crucial to gain outcomes, but they also stop short of looking at interaction per se. Management as design pushes managers from a decision attitude to a design attitude and acknowledges the critical nature of language in constructing managerial reality, but fails to take the next step and look at interaction.

The implication is that interactivity is the micro building block that builds out to activities (e.g., management), which define professions, structure organizations, build institutions, and facilitate interorganizational work. Thus far in this review, interaction seems to be the box that everyone acknowledges, but no one opens. The review of the area of information systems design serves as a bridge from earlier work on design to communication as design (Aakhus, 2007a).

The Bridge

As noted earlier, Simon's work became a founding text for Information Systems design (Venkatesh, 2009), but Information Systems is not monolithic and several orientations emerged to address the role of computers in generating and managing organizational data, information, and communication. Computing inside organizations changed swiftly with improved technology and reorganized the way data was compiled, handled, and interpreted. Technology developments led to changes about which information was valued versus which information was devalued.

One orientation of computer processing revolves around management information systems (MISs) that presume the need for an ever-increasing quantity and quality of data to enhance the analysis of alternatives and making decisions. A second orientation,

decision support systems, shifts the focus from data specifically to the "process of problem solving and decision making" (Flores, Graves, Hartfield, & Winograd, 1988, p. 155). This process is characterized by "defining the problem space, listing alternatives within that space, assessing the consequences of each alternative, and finally selecting among them" (p.155). These two orientations are about problem solving and decision-making and hearken back to the Simonian concept of design.

A third orientation toward MIS shifts the field and looks at computers as a tool for communication rather than computation and computers become useful for facilitating "human work and interaction" (Winograd & Flores, 1987, p. 163). Winograd and Flores along with their colleagues focus on the design of conversational systems seeking to improve "the quality and effectiveness of organizational life" rather than supporting existing practices (Flores et al., 1988, p. 169). Writing in 2006, Winograd reminds his readers of a 1997 statement which seems to capture Winograd and Flores (1987) orientation to conversational design.

> In the next 50 years, the increasing importance of designing spaces for human communication and interaction will lead to expansion in those aspects of computing that are focused on people, rather than machinery. The methods, skills, and techniques concerning these human aspects are generally foreign to those of mainstream computer science, and it is likely that they will detach (at least partially) from their historical roots to create a new field of 'interaction design.' (p. 72)

Winograd and Flores facilitated a move from machines and data processing to people and interactional design.

Winograd and Flores (1987) predicate their work on an approach to software design called the Language Action Perspective (LAP) (Goldkuhl & Lyytinen, 1982) which "emphasizes pragmatics--not the form of language, but what people do with it"

(Winograd, 1987-88, p. 205). LAP is rooted in Speech Act Theory as developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) and emphasizes "what people do by communicating, how language is used to create a common basis for communication partners, and how their activities are coordinated through language" (de Moor & Aakhus, 2006, p. 93). This perspective clearly emphasizes centrality of meaning, not as residing in words, but in interaction and it is through the use of language that practices, professions, and institutions take shape.

Research arising from LAP led to a number of computer software tools oriented to facilitating work processes. Winograd and Flores (1987) developed a conversation for action (Cfa) schema, which served as a "principle model for interaction within LAP" (Aakhus, 2005, p. 66). This model is primarily concerned with "*directives*, the way people use words to get others to do things, and *commissives*, or the ways people commit themselves to doing things" (p. 66). From this schema, they developed The Coordinator as a conversational system "used for everyday communications in sales, finance, general management, operations, and planning functions" (Winograd, 1987-88, p. 10). Additional methods for modeling support software for organizational work and transactions were developed from the Cfa model including Action Workflow (Medina-Mora, Winograd, Flores, & Flores, 1993), Business Action Theory (BAT) (Goldkuhl, 1998) and Design and Engineering Methodology for organizations (DEMO) (Dietz, 2006).

Aakhus (2005) brings together computer design, LAP, and Schön's concern for professional practice to propose a model of conversation for reflection (CfR). CfR acknowledges Schön's perspective "that professional practice is fundamentally a design process in which professionals work to turn given situations into preferred situations" (p.

64). CfR concerns itself with reflection-on-action and offers a model "from which procedures and technologies can be developed (and assessed) for supporting reflective inquiry on theories of professional practice" (p. 67).

Each of the approaches (Action Workflow, BAT, DEMO, and CfR) to computer-mediated communication is oriented to interactional processes rather than hardware capabilities and constraints. From this interactional perspective, the designer seeks to "improve the capacity of people to act by producing a reorganization of practices in coherence with the essential, ineliminable nature of human interaction and cooperation" (Flores et al., 1988, p. 15). The work that flowed from the LAP perspective emphasized meaning and action as key drivers for the design of technology. The progressive development in thinking about Information Systems design forms a bridge to communication as design.

Communication as Design

As noted earlier, interactivity is at the heart of neo-institutionalism, professionalism, inter-organizational communication, policy design, organizational design, and management design, but it is not a common point of entry for those engaged in studying these areas. In contrast, Communication as Design (CaD) concerns itself with "investigating the social world from the standpoint of communication" (Aakhus, 2007, p. 112). In so doing, it focuses on the "way people use words to construct worlds for others and the way people orchestrate their orientations and actions to sustain particular forms of interactivity" (Aakhus & Anderson, 2007, p. 2). CaD expects a purposeful intervention

into ongoing activity seeking to bring about a change in the way of interacting (Aakhus &

Jackson, 2005).

Communication as Design work is based on an inferential model of

communication and concerns itself with a central problem of communication: meaning,

action, and coherence (Jacobs, 1994). CaD work is predicated on the capacity *for* and

practice *of* reflection. It emphasizes that any design for communication incorporates a

hypothesis about communication and the ideas and hypothesis of the designer are tested

in the process of design. The designer designs, listens, and then re-designs. All of this

activity is informed by affordances, constraints, and unintended consequences.

Communication as Design is also concerned with "what people in a position to

shape communication do to shape it and what knowledge and practices are cultivated in

various professions and organizations" (Aakhus, 2007, p. 117). In an effort to understand

CaD, it is important to uncover "what it is that is known by those who specialize in

crafting communicative activities" (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005, p. 416). The process of

articulating "the tools, ideals, and knowledge of intervention work" exposes the

knowledge and practices of communication workers (Aakhus, 2007, pp. 116-117).

Communication as Design has provided a theoretical frame for the study of practices

including facilitation (Aakhus, 2001) and mediation (Aakhus, 2003; Jacobs & Aakhus,

2002). Considering the studies surrounding these practices will help demonstrate what is

known and assumed about communication work.

Aakhus (2001) looked at the work of meeting facilitators managing group

decision support systems (GDSS). The facilitators' work consisted of an "intervention

between two or more parties to help those parties settle jointly shared problem, choices,

or conflicts" (p. 342). They saw their work as crafting "communication into a tool that solves the parties' interactional problems" (p. 363) and helping "structure meeting communication into a goal-oriented event, designed to overcome particular obstacles, and intended to help a collective take action" (p. 352). This 2001 study emphasized that knowledge about designing communication is organized around ideals about participation rather than being driven by technological concerns or capabilities. The facilitators' work represented a non-authoritative intervention where a third party helped others resolve shared problems without "taking sides or imposing outcome" (p. 342). As a third party, the facilitator must understand "how to lead without leading, participate without participating, and to implement procedures without coercing their acceptance" (p. 343).

Aakhus (2003) considers the work of dispute mediators operating in face-to-face contexts while mediating divorce proceedings. Mediators in face-to-face communication evidence a similarity to meeting facilitators using GDSS. The similarity is that they engage in "the practical art of creating and maintaining forums for discourse" (p. 270). The research findings indicate that mediators intervene in an effort to reshape the discussion by three specific techniques: redirect, temporize, and relativize. When faced with issues in the mediation process that are resistant to resolution, the mediator will *redirect* the focus of the discussion. A second technique is to *temporize* the dispute, or settle for a temporary arrangement in lieu of a permanent solution. Finally, the mediator may choose to *relativize* the line of argumentation by reframing the premise or argument of one of the parties. Aakhus identifies mediators' work as a "class of communication work in societies involved in the invention of means to control the way people pursue controversies and differences of opinion" (p. 281) through "collaborative design of the

disagreement space that participants experience and the dialogue they use" (p. 282). Aakhus' study demonstrates that mediators have different options available for shaping interaction and may use any or all of these techniques.

In a pair of articles, Jacobs and Aakhus (2002a, 2002b) look at mediation where "a neutral mediator guides disputants in a cooperative search for a resolution to their conflict" while their "job is to regulate communication, manage interpersonal relations, and facilitate decision-making" (2002a, p. 29). In Jacobs and Aakhus (2002b), the authors identify three distinct rationalities that mediators use in resolving disputes. The models are identified as critical discussion, bargaining, and therapeutic discussion. Each model frames interactional problems in a different way and consequently each model calls forth a different type of intervention. The way the problem is understood and treated is a direct result of the assumptions of each of the logics. Critical discussion presumes the need to "improve the quality of arguments" (p. 186), bargaining presumes a conflict over values rather than facts, and the therapeutic discussion model presumes a misunderstood point of view or failure to be heard. In each case, the assumption about what is at the core of the dispute guides the type of intervention employed to resolve the dispute.

In a separate article, Jacobs (2002) addresses the issue of mediator neutrality. He describes mediators as "active but neutral facilitators of discussion" (p. 1403) who "must maintain an appearance of neutrality while managing the course and outcome of a dispute" (p. 1405). Jacobs presents numerous quotations and citations that argue for neutrality as a defining element of mediation, but he proceeds to identify three techniques, which maintain an appearance of neutrality while nudging the resolution in a specific direction. These techniques are explained below.

Questioning is a normal process of facilitating disputes and Jacobs (2002) proposes that mediators use questions as a form of *indirect advocacy.* In this case questions "perform many of the tasks that could have been accomplished more directly by just making arguments, giving directions, or otherwise rejecting or accepting disputant standpoints" (p. 1411). While indirect advocacy has the appearance of neutrality, clearly making arguments, giving direction, and taking a position on standpoints would indicate a lack of neutrality.

The normal process of summarizing positions should be a recounting of what has transpired and only informational in nature. In *framing of advocacy*, the mediator may summarize, but, in so doing, he or she emphasizes positions and will "give direction to a line of reasoning and add weight to an argument, and, in that respect, they can manipulate the substantive character of a discussion and push disputants toward settlements they might not ordinarily accept" (p. 1414).

Equivocal advocacy relates to the need for a mediator to report or provide information. While the submission of information and reports can be informational in nature, "the effect may be to appear to confirm or disconfirm their arguments, to suggest solutions that favor one or the other side, or to otherwise provide authoritative support for one or the other disputant" (Jacobs, 2002, p. 1419). The ideal of neutrality is presumed, but through seemingly innocent interventions, the mediator may influence the direction and outcome of the process. Jacobs further notes "the identity of the mediator is inextricably tied to the task of managing disputants and the way they dispute" (p. 1423).

A common theme represented in the majority of studies referenced above involves third party interventionists (mediators and facilitators) who specialize in

communication service to others (Aakhus, 2001, 2003; Jacobs, 2002; Jacobs & Aakhus, 2002a, 2002b). Clearly, there is a difficulty in maintaining a transparent neutrality as noted in Jacobs (2002); however, the type of third party intervention represented by communication design work is traditionally characterized as non-authoritative and (ostensibly) neutral where facilitators "refuse to take sides….[and] facilitate a solution of the problem by encouraging the parties to reach a mutually agreeable settlement…[and] defer to the principals" (Black & Baumgartner, 1983, p. 101).

Although not true for all who engage in communication work, many are expected to assume a neutral stance in performing their role. Those engaging in communication work use techniques, such as those identified in Aakhus 2003 (redirect, temporize, relativize) and Jacobs 2002 (indirect advocacy, framing of advocacy, equivocal advocacy), to intervene for the purpose of shaping interactivity and outcomes. The various roles of those reviewed above (facilitators and mediators) comprise social actors who are responsible for specific activity types (mediation) in which others (participants) engage. Thus far we have considered studies that focus specifically on CaD work. There are other research streams that focus on communication practices.

The Study of Communication Practices

Communication as Design has been utilized in the study of several communication practices. Other perspectives and approaches have been profitably applied to the study of practice and, ultimately, contribute to understanding the focus of communication as design. A review of this literature will further inform the work of CaD.

Craig (1989) suggests that communication represents a practical discipline that

concerns itself with "praxis, or practical art" (p. 98). Practical theory is concerned with

"the theoretical work of a practical discipline…comprises a detailed technical account of

practice, and fosters philosophical reflection revealing central principles, issues emergent

in ongoing dialogue, and fundamental dilemmas" (pp. 116-117). In taking this stance,

Craig advocates that practices qualify as legitimate "objects of critique and reconstruction"

(p. 113). From this perspective the central purpose of communication studies is "to

cultivate communicative praxis, or practical art, through critical study" (p. 98) with the

goal of developing normative theory to influence and improve practice.

In further development of this line of research, Craig and Tracy (1995) "present

grounded practical theory (GPT) as a rational reconstruction of situated practices for the

purpose of informing further practice and reflection" (p. 264). The underlying idea is that

interpretive discourse analysis yields insight

> into the communication problems experienced with practitioners, the specific
> techniques by which they attempt to cope with those problems, and the 'situated
> ideals' or inchoate normative principles that they employ in normative reflection
> on their practice. (p. 250)

GPT has been used to evaluate practices as diverse as classrooms (Craig & Tracy, 2005),

school boards (Tracy, 2005; Tracy & Ashcraft, 2001; Tracy & Muller, 2001; Tracy &

Naughton, 1994), police reporting (Tracy, 1997; Tracy & Anderson, 1999; Tracy &

Tracy, 1998), hospice and crisis negotiation (Agne & Tracy, 2001), and departmental

colloquia in academic departments (Craig & Tracy, 1995). Tracy (1995) further applies

GPT through her development of action implicative research as a method. Action

implicative discourse analysis pays "attention to describing the problems, interactional

strategies, and ideals-in-use within existing communicative practices" (Tracy, 2005, p.

301). The emphasis is on the practice and what emerges as solutions to puzzles that arise within the practice. Within any practice, communicative problems arise and practitioners propose rational solutions to those problems. CaD seeks practice reconstruction to improve praxis and to reveal the theoretical underpinnings to the practice.

Another emphasis that emerges from the work in GPT is the complexity of communication problems. The preceding studies emphasize the complexity of communicative tasks including instrumental goals, identity or self-presentational goals, and relational goals. It is taken for granted in the communication literature that the multiplicity of goals leads to trade offs. "Task goals may conflict with relational and self-presentational goals" (Tracy, 1989, p. 419) and "conversational effectiveness is demonstrated by particular ways of pursuing multiple goals rather than opting for one goal or another" (p. 413). Balancing competing goals in interactions exerts influence on strategic choices within the interaction (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005).

Pragmatics is primarily concerned with language in use (Wittgenstein, 1958). Pragmatics recognizes that people do things with words (Austin, 1962) and that communication affects the behavior of participants (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967). Activity types are an important concept in communication pragmatics and offer explanations for how people achieve communication through interaction. Activity types determine what possible meanings may or may not be assigned to the actions of interactants and are "goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with constraints on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions" (Levinson, 1992, p. 69). The overall context of these social episodes constrains "what will count as an allowable contribution to each activity" and "what kinds of inferences

will be made" (p. 97). These two constraints serve to undergird the activity to such an extent that if they are not met "the activity breaks down" (p. 72).

On the one hand, Levinson (1992) pointed out that the activity type governs the interpretation of the words. For example, "shoot" may be a euphemistic expletive or a directive to shoot a duck, basketball, or marble. The context determines the meaning. He goes on to say that for every activity or event there exists an "inferential schemata" (p. 72). He cites the work of ethnomethodologists in suggesting how inference might be understood.

> The emphasis here is on structural information about conversational organization, and the way in which such information predisposes participants to see utterances as fulfilling certain functions by virtue of their structural location. There are inferences, then, from the structure of conversation to the role that any one utterance plays within it. (p. 75)

In other words, the meaning does not reside in the word choice (semantics), but it is shaped by language usage (pragmatics).

The inferential model of communication acknowledges the inherent ambiguity of language and differs from a code model of communication.

> Rather than looking like a linear deductive process starting from linguistic input and ending, by rule, in a determinate meaning, the process of interpretation appears to look much more like a solution to an equation with several unknown values. (Jacobs, 1994, p. 224 with reference to Dascal, 1977)

The inference of meaning from any given communication is dependent on the contextual variables rather than the "meanings" of the words themselves. Realizing the inferential nature of communication acknowledges that the communication is not sent but is constructed as participants jointly assume that others are seeking to accomplish something through their actions (Jacobs, 1994). As noted earlier, CaD presumes an inferential model of communication rather than a code model (Jacobs, 1994), recognizes

the bounded rationality of social actors (Mansell, 1996; Simon, 1945/1997), and is

concerned with the shaping of interactivity. CaD is not focused on messages per se, but

on shaping interactivity to manage meaning, action, and coherence (Jacobs, 1994).

Conversational Analysis (CA) is grounded in the "interactional accomplishment

of particular social activities" (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 17) including their "context,

their social organization, and the alternative means by which these actions and the

activities they compose can be realized" (p. 17). Conversational analysis focuses on 'talk-

in-interaction' (Schegloff, 1987) with talk being recognized as "the principal means by

which social organization in person-to-person interaction is mutually constructed and

sustained" (Hutchby, 2001). Many researchers who focus on activities and interaction as

a means of social accomplishment have chosen to use CA as a method of studying

situated, naturally occurring interactions.

Consequently, institutional talk or talk at work becomes a rich site for analysis.

Similar to Levinson's activity types, institutional interactions "are often implemented

through a task-related standard shape" (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 43) and shaped by the

context. In Drew and Heritage's edited volume, multiple CA studies look at talk at work

in different venues including, but not limited to, courtrooms, psychiatric intake interviews,

television news interviews, job interviews, and home medical visits. The authors note that

professionals develop "standard practices for managing the tasks of their routine

encounters" (p. 44) and "professional participants in institutional interactions design their

talk so as to maintain a cautiousness, or even a position of neutrality with respect to their

co-participants" (pp. 46-47). The talk of professionals is strategically directed in an effort

to "change topics and their selective formulations" or "prevent particular issues [from]

becoming topics in their own right" (p. 49). Thus, the shaping and structuring of interactivity guide and govern what is talked about and how it is discussed. CaD takes communication as the object of design and reconstructing the practical theories underlying its implementation.

The studies represented by the work of Drew and Heritage (1992) and Craig and Tracy (1995) highlight people engaged in various practices that are cognizant of the pragmatic nature of communication and actively manage interaction as a means of social accomplishment. The study of individual communication practices focuses at the micro level of practice. Practice is a concept that scales from the micro to the macro. Framing interactions is a way of revealing and obscuring the relevant issues and topics and shaping the entire interactional space. The following examples demonstrate that the design of communication practices reaches beyond individual professions or activities. The first illustration emphasizes the social policy impact of framing and the second considers the shaping of an entire global practice.

In their work on policy disputes, Schön and Rein (1994) see frames as a starting point from which to design (or re-configure) interactions dealing with intractable policy disputes or wicked problems. Frames encompass one's "underlying structures of belief, perception, and appreciation" (p. 23) and are usually tacit (Polanyi, 1966/1983). Framing is a way of "making sense of social reality" through the operation of "selectivity and organization" (p. 30). Schön and Rein (1994) seek to restart stalled policy debates by reframing the debates. They describe this process as designing and acknowledge, "social designing is necessarily communicative" (p.168) and a "'conversational' process" (p. xix).

Another example of framing an entire area of discourse is international commercial arbitration that takes as its object the resolution of international disputes (Dezalay & Garth, 1995). The field of international commercial arbitration initially emerged as a result of European academics that saw the process of arbitration as a calling rather than a job and undertook, on the basis of a moral responsibility, to adjudicate international disputes. Their framework for adjudication was the *lex mercatoria,* which is a theoretical approach to dispute resolution that places the international law of business above and independent of national laws. The invocation and application of *lex mercatoria* can be based solely on the arbitrator's sense of justice in the dispute. As the field developed, new players entered the arena with a new perspective on how to engage in international commercial arbitration.

Lawyers entered the field and engaged in the process of arbitration as professional legal practitioners perceiving their responsibility as mastering the law and analyzing case facts. They understood international arbitration as a strict application of the law rather than a magnanimous, morally driven process. The two disparate perspectives—*lex mercatorie* and case law—persist and these two frames lead to differing views of what counts as data and how disputes should be resolved. The shifting of what constitutes valid knowledge and legitimate rationale shapes the way controversies are described, defended and resolved. The work on international commercial arbitration suggests that the shaping of an entire field of practice has long-term consequences for professional communities. Practices revolve around shaping and disciplining communication and although individual practitioners engage in the work they are part of larger work communities.

In summary, policy disputes include diverse perspectives and multiple stakeholders being designed through the articulation of new frames that lead to different ways of conceptualizing and shaping interaction. This process is applicable to small, limited interactions, but it is equally valid for multi-sided disputes that have a long time horizon. We see also how an occupational community can shape and reshape the entire field of international arbitration through competing approaches to shaping interactional space and defining activity types. Communication as design is a theoretical perspective for studying the interactions of a practice to facilitate the understanding of practice as theory, the taking of interaction as an object of design, the impact of multiple communication goals on the pragmatic shaping of interaction, and demonstrate that the design of communication at the micro level demonstrates scale at the macro level.

Using Communication as Design for This Dissertation

Communication as Design is a broadly conceptualized framework that views the social world from the perspective of communication and holds that design (a) is a natural fact about communication, (b) is theoretical, and (c) represents hypotheses about communication (Aakhus, 2007a, 2008; Aakhus & Jackson, 2005). The framework has been utilized in the study of communication and technology (Aakhus, 2002; Aakhus, 2005; Aakhus & Jackson, 2005; Aakhus & Rumsey, 2010), in dispute mediation (Aakhus, 1999, 2003, 2007b; Jacobs & Aakhus, 2002a, 2002b) and facilitators whose work is mediated through group decision support systems (Aakhus, 2001). Two possible avenues for investigating CaD work are (a) creating design methodology (e.g., Conversation for Reflection) (Aakhus, 2005, 2007a, 2008) or (b) examining a practice that emerges in

society. This study focused on a specific community of professionals and their communication practice or their communication as design work (Aakhus, 2007a).

Communication as Design differs from a substantial portion of the historic communication literature in that it does not concern itself with messages or messaging but with the shaping of interaction or interactivity. Arguably, when steps are taken to alter or redirect interactivity, messages may co-occur, but the theoretical focus of design is on moves that "make forms of communicative activity possible that were once impossible or that realize an improved form of communicative practice" (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005, p. 416). Communication as Design is a concept broadly conceived with application across both technologically mediated interaction and face-to-face interactivity (Aakhus 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010; Aakhus & Jackson, 2005).

In earlier CaD studies, Aakhus (1999) reconstructs opinions about a design for communication. In later 2001 research, he roughly follows GPT to uncover situated ideals and the tension of practice. Jacobs and Aakhus (2002a) posit a normative model and use it to find discrepancies between the ideal and actual in an effort to explain the actual model in use. In Aakhus (2007) a hypothetical model is constructed to guide the design of technology.

The naming of an interactional problem and the subsequent effort to address that problem through interaction is informed by one's practical theory of interactivity. Aakhus and Jackson (2005) note that design arises from "lay or professional theories of communication" (p. 412) and that practical theories of communication are evident (or evidenced) in the types of interventions that arise (Aakhus, 2007a). Communication as design focuses on interactivity rather than messages and this focus suggests that a more

accurate descriptor should include the word interaction or interactivity. The emphasis on

interactivity is seen throughout the development of the section on communication as

design and is inherent in statements and ideas such as "changing interaction" (Aakhus &

Jackson, 2005), structuring participation (Aakhus, 2001), efforts to redirect, temporize,

and relativize (Aakhus, 2003), models of interaction such as discussion, bargaining, and

therapeutic (Jacobs & Aakhus, 2002b), activity types (Levinson, 1992), framing (Schön

& Rein, 1994), and "interaction is mutually constructed and sustained" (Hutchby, 2001).

Because of CaD's focus on interactivity, a native or practical theory that guides

interactional choices is better identified as a *practical theory of interaction*. An example

might be when a company faces a customer problem with one of its products. An

engineer might "work" on the problem without ever engaging feedback from the

customer service representatives who speak with consumers daily. The engineer's

practical theory of interaction might preclude data gathering from non-expert sources.

Aakhus (2007a, 2008) clearly states that each design represents a hypothesis

about communication that "involves assumptions about how it [communication] works

and how it ought to work" (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005, p. 418), and each hypothesis will

bring forth "an associated repertoire of possible interventions (p. 416). One's theory of

interaction, whether informed by communication theory or not, suggests what types of

interventions should be undertaken to alter interactivity. For the purpose of this study,

one's theory of interaction refers to how they approach the process of communication.

Interactivity refers the turn taking and contributions of various parties. A belief that

conflict should be diffused leads to a different set of interventions than the presupposition

that conflict should be surfaced and resolved. Underlying a hypothesis about

communication and the associated interventions is a linking rationale that presumes a desirable outcome. The focus on interventions is a defining characteristic of the CaD perspective (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005). Interventions shaping interactivity may take the form of "techniques, procedures, and devices" (Aakhus, 2007a, p. 112) or at a more contextual level the determination of "the participants, topics, and decisions to be made at a meeting" (Aakhus, 2008, p. 1218).

Interventions operate on interactivity by means of the affordances and constraints that arise concomitantly with intervention. In his development of ecological theory, Gibson (1986) coined the term affordance. He stated that the "affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill" (p. 127). Krippendorff (2006) says that the lesson is "that one does not perceive objects but usability: the sit-ability of a chair, the carry-ability of a box" (p. 112). In a physical sense when faced with a nail and no hammer, a screwdriver (intended to drive screws) offers the affordance of a hammer. In communicative events various affordances may be taken up to "provide possibilities for interaction" (Aakhus, 2007a, p. 114). While affordances do not determine the process of interaction, they frame the interactional space (Hutchby, 2001) and introduce previously unrecognized possibilities. The complexity of interaction precludes knowing how affordances will be taken up and utilized. Principles engaged in the interactional space may recognize an opportunity to shift interaction in a way not intended by those shaping the interactional space. It must be acknowledged that one does not engage in interaction with only him- or herself and designers "live in a world of distributed powers" (Schön & Rein, 1994, pp. 183-184).

Constraints are aspects of the interaction that actually "remove possibilities for interaction" (Aakhus, 2007a, p. 114). They delimit the interactional space in such a way that options are removed for participants. Decisions can be made only when there is some limit or constraint on the possibilities without which it would not be possible for interaction to be productive. As with any test, there are outcomes or consequences for each intervention. The success of an intervention is whether it does indeed solve or help solve the interactional problem that precipitated its use. Outcomes may be either successful or unsuccessful. Whether solutions work or do not work, they become "material for reflection and improved understanding of communication and interaction" (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005, p. 417).

The process of analysis and reflection builds theory by identifying interactional puzzles and successful solutions to those puzzles. This accumulation of practical knowledge is a key aspect of CaD (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005). It is through engaging reflectively that CaD work contributes to theorizing (Aakhus, 2007a). A designer's reflection should inform and shape future interventions and perhaps extend to the altering of native theories of interaction. Trying to tease apart the minute-by-minute influences on a theory of interactivity was beyond the scope of this study. This study focuses on several of the key tenets of CaD. The tenets include: (a) interventions, (b) inventions, (c) managing of identity goals, (d) shaping interactivity, and (e) practical theory of interaction. The process of examining CaD work "articulates the tools, ideals, and knowledge of intervention work and then reconstructs the practical theory of communication" (Aakhus, 2007a, p. 116). This study explores how a community of professionals chooses to shape interactivity through their interventions, inventions,

management of identity goals, and implementation of their practical theory of communication. The research interviews seek to uncover the knowledge and practices employed in that shaping process.

The cultural-cognitive perspective on institutions acknowledges that meaning arise in interactions and it is these micro processes that shape and (re)shape institutions (Bate et al., 2000; Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Scott, 1994/2001). Professional communities are "highly institutionalized " (Meyer & Rowen, 1981, p. 306) and as institutional actors (Scott, 1994/2001), through their ordinary interactions, they reproduce and shape both their professions and those institutions of which they are a part. The professional practice of association managers is concerned with orchestrating interactional space. As a nexus for managing the collaboration of multiple parties and organizations, their CaD work is consequential not only for professions, but entire industries. These managers are engaged to provide a service and function as third parties to collaborate efforts. As such they shape trajectories for this type of work. Dezalay and Garth (1995) demonstrate that design can impact industries on a global scale.

Investigating the role of association managers from the vantage point of CaD offers a better understanding of the nature and consequence of a communication practice and CaD work in society. The professional community of association managers is an ideal place to study communication design work because they regularly engage in managing local interactional space with an eye to serving the association's missions and the practical knowledge about communication in their practice, procedures, and expectations.

Context of the Study

The literature review suggests that looking at the communication work of a professional practice might further our understanding of institutional practices, professional communities, inter-organizational communication, and communication as design. As influential members of the association world, preliminary research indicates that associations provide a rich context for studying the communication practice of association managers. Functioning as 3rd parties, these professionals engage in communication design work in a context that varies significantly from that of mediators and facilitators. The clients they serve, the issues they address, and the ongoing nature of their work presents different challenges than those faced by other 3rd party professionals. These differences will be highlighted below but to properly situate their work it is helpful to review the emergence and role of non-profit associations. The types of specific puzzles and dilemmas association managers face in implementing their role will be articulated in the upcoming section.

The Emergence and Role of Trade and Professional Associations

Globalization suggests porous borders easily traversed by communication, technology, and financial instruments. The increased interdependency of first world and third world countries and disparate people groups have led to greater dependency on non-profit organizations (NPOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help navigate the complexities of global manufacturing, global marketing, global media, and a global society. While some view globalization as utopian and others view it as dystopian,

few deny its impact on society, business, and culture (Giddens, 2003; Scholte 2000/2005). Ohmae (1995) boldly proclaims the obsolescence of the nation-state, and others stress the "disjunctures" and uncertainty that accompany the rise of globalization (Appadurai, 1990).

NPOs and NGOs are subsumed by the term "civil society" which encompasses organizations that are outside governments or markets. This "third sector" is identified as the independent sector, the voluntary sector, or frequently simply described as "non-profits." These designations are contrasted with the governmental sector, also known as the public sector, and the market (commercial, business, private) sector. The non-profit sector plays a significant role in society (Doerfel & Taylor, 2004; Hauser, 1998; Taylor & Doerfel, 2003) by coordinating societal activities through social networks in pursuit of common objectives (Hadenius & Uggla, 1996; Taylor & Doerfel, 2011) to achieve collective action on behalf of their stakeholders (Stohl & Stohl, 2005). The context for this project is a narrow segment of the non-profit sector, trade associations and professional societies. To understand the broader environment of non-profits, it is important to take a helicopter view of non-profit organizations as represented in the United States.

Non-profit, in the United States, is a term that has meaning with respect to section 501 of the Internal Revenue Service code. The legal establishment of this formal designation clearly distinguished the third sector from both the private and public sectors (Block, 1998). The law acknowledged that non-profit organizations were created "to accomplish some public or societal purpose" (Block, p. 152) and "may use revenues only to further their charitable or educational mission rather than distribute profits to owners

or shareholders" (Eisenberg & Eschenfelder, 2009, p. 356). In spite of the wide diversity represented in the 27 subsections of section 501 (c), the 501 non-profits are grouped into two broad categories. These broad categories are social benefit organizations and mutual benefit organizations. In each case the United States government has chosen to subsidize these organizations through providing tax benefits.

The most commonly known subsection of organizations are those chartered under Section 501 (c)(3), which includes "social benefit organizations" such as charities and social welfare organizations, whose aim is to "improve the quality of life in a community" (Hoyt, 1998, p. 148). These types of organizations receive the greatest tax benefits under Section 501 because they have no obligation to pay federal tax and those who donate to them are allowed a tax deduction for the amount of their contribution. Forty-eight percent of the 501(c) organizations are charitable in nature and this segment attracts the most attention from researchers (Hoyt, 1998/2001; Lewis, 2005; Oster, 1995; Ott, 2001; Powell & Steinberg, 2006; Salmon, 2002; Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

The organizations chartered under 501 (c)(6) include real estate boards, chambers of commerce, and business leagues. These types of organizations are known as "mutual benefit organizations" that "operate to promote the welfare of the members of the organization rather than the public at large" (Hoyt, 1998 p. 148). Mutual benefit organizations "range from elitist social clubs to trade unions" and tend to provide "goods or services for their members collectively rather than on a quid pro quo transaction basis" (Douglas, 1987, p. 213). Mutual benefit organizations include such well-known organizations as The American Automobile Association (AAA) and the National Football League (NFL).

"Business leagues" is a term that subsumes both trade associations and professional associations or societies, which were the primary context for this research. The tax code clearly states that a business league is an association of persons having some common business interest, the purpose of which is to promote that common interest and not to engage in a regular business of a kind ordinarily carried on for profit" (IRS Publication 557, p. 47). While business leagues are not required to pay taxes, contributors are not allowed to claim a tax deduction, in contrast to 501 (c)(3) organizations. Business leagues account for only 6% of the 501(c) organizations and have attracted little research attention from communication scholars.

Trade associations, comprised of companies engaged in a similar business or industry, and professional societies, made up of individuals within a profession or occupational community, are two significant components within the business league designation. A brief explanation of their distinctives and similarities is a prerequisite to understanding the management of these organizations.

Trade associations trace their roots to the trade leagues of Greece (Burn, 1929), the occupational associations in the Roman Empire (Harland, 2003), and the merchant and the craft guilds of the 11th century Europe. Trade associations' members are companies engaged in a similar business or industry (e.g., National Association of Manufacturers) who join to collaborate on issues affecting an entire industry. The joint effort typically includes engaging in government advocacy, creating safety standards, managing liability concerns, building domestic markets, and developing international trade.

Trade associations provide a space for competitors to cooperate. As a result of a series of anti-trust laws—Sherman Anti-Trust (1890), The Clayton Act (1914), and the Robinson-Patman Act (1936)—practices such as restraint of trade, price fixing, coordinated production, and market allocation are illegal. The need for competitive cooperation must be managed in such a way as to avoid the fact and appearance of collusion and trade associations provide ongoing forums where competitors can legally collaborate for mutual benefit. In this role trade associations are an integral component to legitimate regulation of civil society as coalitions "joining together to do more than they [individual entities] can independently (Mahlmann, 2007, p. 287).

Trade associations demonstrate an uneasy tension as market competitors become collaborators in the third sector. In a memorable illustration, Oster (1995) makes the point that

> [i]n many ways, the position of the nonprofit organization is not unlike that of a tennis player, engaged in a somewhat quirky tournament. At times, in this tournament, individuals face each other as singles opponents. At other times, they are doubles partners, and, at still other times they switch partners and become doubles opponents. So, too, in the non-profit world organizations may be both cooperaters [sic] and competitors, either sequentially, or even simultaneously, within different functions. (p. 48)

Professional associations, as they are identified in the tax code (commonly referred to as professional societies), are historically rooted in the Royal Society of London founded in 1660. As opposed to trade associations, these organizations are made up of individuals as members (e.g., doctors who are members of the American Medical Association). Professional societies focus on continuing education, symposia, research conferences, certification and credentialing, advocacy and representing the profession in the public arena. To summarize, trade associations are made up of companies concerned

with trade and professional societies are made up of individuals concerned with their
professional lives.

Trade associations and professional societies are formed in part because of their
desire to influence governments and other organizations that bear on their respective
goals. Both individually and collectively, these organizations exercise broad influence in
society. In May of 2008, the American Society of Association Management (ASAE)
convened a global summit on social responsibility in Washington, D.C. The sponsors
estimated that the associations (trade, professional, philanthropic, and charitable)
represented by the summit participants accounted for 287 million individuals through
their respective organizations. The goal of the summit was to engage associations in
promoting collective social responsibility. The concept of collectives participating in
social efforts can be seen in Durkheim's (1893/1984) suggestion that "since the division
of labour becomes the predominant source of social solidarity, at the same time it
becomes the foundation of the moral order" (p. 333).

A second characteristic of membership organizations is their networked nature.
Associations are a banding together of equals who decide to mutually submit to a
collective and, as such, there is no structural hierarchy other than elected boards. The
membership is joined together in a web or network of relationships that are designed to
bring advantage to the whole. "The very purpose of an association—enabling people to
achieve common goals, meet common needs, and solve common problems—is realized
by sharing information, networking, or joining together for a common good" (Nappi &
Vieder, 2007, p. 303). As noted earlier, the third sector is frequently referred to as the
volunteer sector, which stems from their primary source of workers. Professional and

trade associations are volunteer organizations primarily fueled by the efforts of the members who volunteer their time serving on boards, task forces, and committees.

The commonsense notion that association management is all about managing an association is accurate, but management takes on different instantiations. First, some organizations, usually limited in size and scope, depend entirely on volunteers for their organization's management. If an organization's activities increase beyond the ability and/or the time commitment of volunteers, associations will employ professional managers and staff to orchestrate association functions such as finance, marketing, membership, and public relations. There are two distinct routes available when engaging professional managers.

Many associations become employers of record and hire employees to serve as full-time staff. Staff members are employees of the association and subject to the authority and hierarchy of their employing association. Associations employing this structure are called "stand alones" or "captive" associations. This approach offers the association the benefit of direct authority and control over a staff focused solely on accomplishing the mission of the association. Creating a staff and home office can be a costly process for young or small associations. What begins as a group of volunteers with passion and a mission becomes an employer of record, with all that entails. Just as for-profit companies consider the rent/buy decision (e.g., "Do we hire a corporate lawyer or continue only with outside counsel?"), so too associations must weigh the relative merits of becoming employers, committing to staff members, and establishing a headquarters by leasing or buying a building.

A second approach to association management is to outsource management of an association to independent service firms in order to take advantage of economies of scale. These independent management companies, known as multiple management firms or association management companies (AMCs), are staffed with professionals across areas such as membership services, event planning, finance, public relations, lobbying and other business disciplines necessary to manage an association. AMCs are professional management organizations that serve the association sector by providing functional expertise on a fee basis. As with law firms and other professional organizations, AMCs serve a number of different clients simultaneously. Those advocating an AMC model of management emphasize that AMCs provide economies of scale and a staff quality that is not available to many associations in a stand-alone environment.

Associations who consider the AMC option will usually contact one or more AMCs and submit a request for a proposal (RFP). As is the case with other professional organizations (e.g., an advertising agency), the trade association or professional society will employ a vetting process and the finalists will meet with the association board to present their organization. The selected AMC will then provide management services to the association.

There are many different arrangements in terms of scope and scale, but the "typical" arrangement for a full service AMC calls for them to provide an association manager who will, in turn, utilize the AMC in-house staff to provided expertise in functional areas such as finance, annual conferences, and publications. The role of the AMC employee, who manages the association, is described in various ways including association manager (AM), account executive (AE), executive director (ED), or chief

staff office (CSO) of the volunteer association. Ordinarily, AMC executives manage

more than a single association and their portfolio will frequently include both trade

associations and professional societies.

Association managers consider themselves professionals who apply a specific

body of knowledge as reflected in their credentialing as a Certified Association Executive

(CAE) and as demonstrated by their involvement in a professional society dedicated to

their work--the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). The actual work of

an association manager is diverse. Writing on leadership in association management,

Balakgie (2007) presents an idealized description of the work.

> Association leaders are the epicenter for the synthesis of a unique set of
> resources, processes, and cultural norms required to run their equally
> distinctive businesses. They are leaders of communities—of practice,
> professions, and industries—and of myriad individuals with differing
> relationships to the association enterprise. As volunteer leaders cycle
> through their roles and time-bounded tenures, staff make inevitable career
> migrations, and members enter and leave the association sphere, the chief
> executive officer remains as the standard bearer for the organization's
> vision, mission, and goals as well as the guardian of its traditions. (p. 83)

Association managers, like any CEOs, are ultimately responsible for all aspects of

the organization including strategy, marketing, and other business disciplines. The work

of association managers can be inferred from skill set tested in the CAE exam. The

foundational information is grouped into 10 domains that include (1) strategic

management; (2) planning and research; (3) leadership; (4) administration; (5) knowledge

management; (6) governance and structure; (7) public policy and government and

external relations; (8) membership; (9) programs, products, and services; and (10) public

relations and external communications. From a functional perspective, their duties

include planning events, orchestrating annual meetings, facilitating board meetings, and a

plethora of other day-to-day activities. All of this work is performed in a context filled with diverse and divergent demands.

First, the manager is faced with balancing multiple competing goals that arise within all associations. Disputes may occur around the identity, values, goals, and priorities of the association and how they should be implemented. Members of an association gather for accomplishing a collective purpose, but members may have varying needs and interests within that broad umbrella. Much a like a political party of coalitions, associations are in agreement about the association's overarching mission, but may differ widely regarding specific goals and means. Secondly, there are a number of demands that arise in the broader context outside of the association itself. The current direction in association management is to look beyond the association members and consider the needs of the customers of the association members (O'Sullivan, 2007). Managers must also consider the broader publics served by their associations (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001), as well as, relevant governmental bodies that may influence or have jurisdiction over the work of the association. The influences on the work of associations include "the public, private, and nonprofit" sectors (O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 40).

Beyond the task or instrumental aspects of association management there are identity considerations. At the individual level, association managers consider themselves to be engaged in work that serves societal goals and transcends personal career building and wealth accumulation. They consider their career choice to be an example of "good work" or "work that is both excellent in quality and socially responsible" (Gardner et al., 2001, p. ix). This "good work" is driven by the ideal that the "needs of your association

and society go hand in hand: If society is better your association will be better" (Schools, 2007, p. 297). Another significant aspect of the identity of association mangers is their role as non-authoritative interventionists (Black & Baumgartner, 1983). They serve the membership and claim no authority over governance.

Along with instrumental and identity goals, the association manager manages relational goals. "Association management, at its essence, is a relationship management business" (Benjamin, 2007, p. 227). The association managers' list of functional responsibilities coupled with their identity as non-authoritative managers requires them to take advantage of social capital (Portis, 1998; Putnam, 2000) in performing their role. "Accomplished association leaders understand the intricacies of the interpersonal and group relationships they must manage and are masters of the methods for maximizing the potential of each" (Balakgie, 2007, p. 88). At this juncture it is important to answer two questions. Why study association managers? And more specifically, why study AMC managers?

Why Study Association Managers

Association managers constitute a professional community who, in fulfilling their responsibilities, spend considerable time managing interactions to resolve conflicts, reach consensus, and generally fulfill the work of non-profits. Association managers working for association management companies are engaged as outside parties to provide a professional service that includes managing interactional spaces.

I propose that association managers are communication workers. The work of association managers is a "class of communication work in societies involved in the

invention of means to control the way people pursue controversies and differences of opinion" through "collaborative design of the disagreement space that participants experience and the dialogue they use" (Aakhus, 2003, pp. 281-282). They are primarily concerned with the creation, design, and management of interactional spaces for collectives seeking to accomplish, through cooperation and collaboration, that which they cannot do as individual practitioners or organizations. Typical interactional spaces include committee meetings, task force meetings, board meetings, ad hoc meetings, and personal conversations.

Undergirding the work of association managers is a commitment to non-authoritative intervention, "where they refuse to take sides….[and] facilitate a solution of the problem by encouraging the parties to reach a mutually agreeable settlement…[and] defer to the principals" (Black & Baumgartner, 1983, p. 101). Association managers assume a stance that is best described as deeply involved while maintaining distance and perspective. Although association managers emphasize their duty to provide direction, information, best practices, and dedication to the mission, they perform these functions at a distance. As outside contractors and non-members of the association, association managers must exhibit neutrality and represent all members of the association without bias. A commitment to neutrality will likely shape their work in problem setting, techniques of practice, and the philosophy they employ to rationalize their conduct.

Association managers, like mediators and facilitators, are engaged in CaD work and share commonalities with these previously studied communities. While there are similarities to other professionals engaged in communication designs, association managers demonstrate significant differences.

One reason to study association managers' communication work is that it differs from the communities studied earlier because the work of association managers tends to be ongoing, with associations retaining the same executive director for decades. Another reason to study association managers is the dynamic of their constant interaction with volunteer participants. The association member/volunteer participants with whom the association managers interact change with mandated frequency. Although an association manager can serve the same associations for decades, many associations have a new volunteer chair every year and one-third of the board rotates off duty every year leading to a completely new board every three years.

Finally, the work of association managers changes in nature after coordinating joint decision-making. After governance decisions are reached and specific goals are articulated, association managers are then responsible for implementing the decisions of the board of directors. On the one hand, neutrality and a non-authoritative stance is a requirement of the association managers' position, but when implementing board mandates and representing the association to the government or the public at large, they are the face of the association and speak with its full authority. Association board members decide governance and policy and association managers then act on behalf of the entire membership to implement these decisions. This adds a dimension that is not seen in mediation or facilitation. There is significant potential to add to our knowledge of communication design work and third party, non-authoritative intervention through the study of this professional community.

The following reasons suggest value in studying the work of AMCs specifically. First, AMCs are a microcosm of the broader and very large non-profit sector that is

definable and reachable. A single AMC may be responsible for managing 25 or more associations of varying types. Represented within a single AMC, there are multiple types of managed associations (trade associations, professional societies, and charities) with differing scopes (local, state, regional, national, and international). Two particularly interesting aspects of the AMC model is that (a) managers are responsible for more than one association simultaneously and (b) these are for-profit companies who generate revenues through serving non-profit organizations.

Secondly, while business leagues are a small, often ignored sub-sector of non-profits, the AMC business model is practically unknown outside of their own circles. This is a relatively small industry with far reaching influence. Over 500 different associations are managed by the five largest AMCs. This small group of AMCs wields an outsized influence over industries and professions that is practically unknown.

Finally in a recent review article Eisenberg and Eschenfelder (2009) note that non-profit associations would need to consider "new management strategies that are emerging that warrant further study, including the use of mergers, consolidations, and administrative and management service organizations" (p. 374). AMCs are management service organizations and are poised to become an increasingly important component of non-profit management.

Those who study neo-institutionalism, professional communities, and interorganizational communication acknowledge the importance of interaction to their fields of study. Professional association managers face a unique governance structure in which they exercise control as neutral parties. Reconstructing their practice promises insight into these theoretical fields as well as advancing practical knowledge.

Research Questions

This study examines the communication design work performed by association management professionals. These professionals provide outside management services and serve as CEO's of multiple non-profit organizations. The work involved in managing professional associations places these management professionals in a position to shape communication for entire communities of professionals and industry wide organizations. The context of association management thus provides a rich setting for investigating the practice of communication design. Seeking answers to the following empirical questions will provide grounds to improve understanding of the communication design work performed by association managers and to further the theory of communication design.

RQ1: What do association managers do to coordinate multiple actors for collaborative action?

RQ2: What role do practical theories of communication play in shaping association managers' work?

Chapter III

DATA AND METHODS

Practice is understood as "a set of socially defined ways of doing things in a specific domain: a set of common approaches and shared standards that create a basis for action, communication and problem solving, performance, and accountability" (Wenger, et al, 2002, p. 38) and is "maintained by interaction" (Rouse, 2007, p. 48). Craig (1989) argues that communication is a discipline with a deep concern for "praxis, or practical art" (p. 98) where communication presents legitimate "objects of critique and reconstruction" (p. 113). The work performed by association managers involves coordinating the interaction of clients in diverse forums with the purpose of achieving collaborative outcomes. It is, as discussed above, a special kind of communication practice—a communication design practice.

Like any practice, it entails methods of conduct as well as descriptive assumptions about how the world works and normative assumptions about how the world ought to work (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005; Craig & Tracy, 1995). A method for investigating communication practice must be able to reconstruct from its performance the practical theory that informs the practice. The reconstruction for this research study explores association managers' reflected thinking, as reported in interviews, about interaction within this professional community.

Method for Researching a Design Practice

Grounded Practical Theory (GPT) offers a general method for investigating communication practice (Craig, 1989; Craig & Tracy, 1995). Craig and Tracy outline GPT as a method for the "rational reconstruction of situated practices for the purpose of informing further practice and reflection" (p. 264). Reconstruction of a practice (re)describes a practice in "less context-specific and more universalized terms" and "rationalizes it so that values and principles implicit in the practice are made explicit" as a basis for evaluating or judging the practice" (p. 252). GPT is a form of interpretive discourse analysis that aims to yield insight "into the communication problems experienced with practitioners, the specific techniques by which they attempt to cope with those problems, and the 'situated ideals' or inchoate normative principles that they employ in normative reflection on their practice" (p. 250).

The process of reconstruction is undertaken at three distinct but interrelated levels (Craig & Tracy, 1995). The problem level looks at the puzzles or dilemmas faced by the participants in the communicative work. The problem level consists of "a problem logic or interrelated web of problems that practitioners experience" (p. 253). The technique level of reconstruction considers the "communicative strategies and techniques" utilized by those within the practice (p. 253). The third level is concerned with the philosophical and seeks "to articulate the situated ideals that participants actually orient to as they work out practical solutions" to the interactional problems emerging tin their practice (p. 259).

Grounded Practical Theory has been used to reconstruct practices that emerge in arenas as diverse as classrooms (Craig & Tracy, 2005), school boards (Tracy, 2005;

Tracy & Ashcraft, 2001;Tracy & Muller, 2001; Tracy & Naughton, 1994), police

reporting (Tracy, 1997; Tracy & Anderson 1999; Tracy & Tracy, 1998), hospice, crisis

negotiation (Agne & Tracy, 2001), business development (Lyon & Mirivel, 2011) and

departmental colloquia in academic departments (Craig & Tracy 1995). There are

multiple forms of data used in the reconstruction of a practice including naturally

occurring transcribed interaction, analysis of internal documents, and transcribed

interviews. See Appendix A for Grounded Practical Theory Chart.

Communication design practice has been investigated using the GPT approach for

practice reconstruction (Aakhus, 2001; Aakhus, 2003); however, the design studies have

made some adaptations of GPT. GPT tends to look at naturally occurring interactions

such as school boards (Tracy & Muller, 2001) and classrooms (Craig & Tracy, 2005),

while CaD takes as its focus, communication design practices where professional

practitioners engage in actively shaping interactional space such as facilitators (Aakhus,

2001) and mediators (Aakhus, 2003). GPT has primarily focused on the messaging that

occurs within a specific context—that is, how messages are crafted to deal with the

particular demands of the setting and situated ideals of the participants.

CaD is concerned with distinct professional efforts to discipline and intentionally

shape interactivity and the practical knowledge about communication that develops. As

noted GPT reconstructs the "situated ideals" of a practice, which explain the rationale

underlying the choice of specific communication techniques. CaD is concerned with

systematic rationality, which includes not only the legitimacy of technique selection, but

also the effectiveness of the implementation (Aakhus, 2002). In contrast, CaD

emphasizes that communication designs are theoretically driven and that design arises

from "lay or professional theories of communication (Aakhus & Jackson, 2005, p. 416)

and practical theories of interactivity are evidenced in the types of interventions

employed (Aakhus, 2007a).

In summary, the practice reconstruction proceeded along the following lines. GPT

was used to reconstruct the practice at the problem, technical, and philosophical (situated

ideals) levels. Association managers' are professional practitioners (CaD), whose

interactional puzzles (GPT) are articulated and techniques identified (GPT). Situated

ideals (GPT) are identified as the reasoned basis for technique selection. The basis of

systematic rationality and effectiveness (CaD) is described. The practical theory of

interaction (CaD) for association managers' is discovered through the reconstructive

process (GPT and CaD). CaD is particularly interested in the use of procedures, formats

and forums to shape and discipline interactivity to achieve preferred forms. This is seen

in the use of staff interventions to gather information and move the decision process to

data-driven rather than motivated by persuasive efforts or personality.

By its nature, design is broad reaching and difficult to define in all of its

manifestations. For example, when a meeting facilitator intervenes to shape interactivity

they cannot predict how various parties to the discussion might respond. Each potential

response might lead to differing subsequent interventions on the part of the facilitator.

Additionally an interaction might have multiple active designers. For example, because

of the distributed nature of interactivity, other participants may be busy with their own

efforts at design. The shaping of interaction does not occur in tidy discrete units but is a

continuous flow of interactivity and is "interactionally emergent" (Aakhus & Jackson,

2005, p. 429).

The preceding issues require that the data needed parameters in order to define, limit, and analyze how the practitioners dealt with the puzzles of interactivity: meaning, action, and coherence (Jacobs, 1994). For analytic purposes the accounts provided by the association managers are the only source of defining the interactional problem and interventions that form the data for this study. In the recounting of their stories of interactional problems and their attempts to shape interactivity, the issue of multiple designers is bracketed out by taking the association managers' point of view as the orientation for analyzing the design process.

Data Methods and Sources

Three methods used to collect data for this study were interviews, observations, and reviews of industry literature. Interviews were used to gain an understanding about the practice and how association managers articulated the problems of the practice and their solutions. Observations we conducted in an effort to engage in casual conversations to see if there were any discrepancies between formal interviews and comments made in unofficial settings. The observations also provided a window into the professional society and trade association that service association managers. In observing their annual meetings and the operational approach to their trade association, it became obvious that the problems, solutions, and rationale they articulated in their professional role were parallel within their own trade association and resolved using the same techniques and rationale. Industry documents were used to provide background material as well as to understand any theoretical approaches promulgated through official literature. There were

no significant differences reported in the literature as compared to the interview data. The consistency of problems, solutions, and rationale was consistent across all three bodies of data. The three sources of data for this study were the association manager participants, observations, and industry literature.

Interview Participants

Interviews served as the primary means of data collection. The first step was to contact the owners of a large AMC in the northeast. The purpose of the study was presented as investigating the work of AMCs and association managers. The first two interviews were completed with the initial contacts and snowball sampling provided contacts for the remaining 25 interviews for a total of 27 interviews.

Participants were drawn from 12 different AMCs from various parts of the United States including New England (1), Mid-Atlantic (4), Washington, DC (1), Midwest (2), the South (1), Pacific Northwest (1), and the West Coast (2). There was an effort to interview some association managers from diverse areas of the country in an attempt to avoid regionalization in terms of approach. However, because associations frequently use the AMC headquarters as their office, there is little regionalization across national associations. Some smaller AMCs will manage local or regional associations, but all of the AMCs accessed had national associations with members spread throughout the country and, frequently, throughout the world.

The AMC industry consists almost exclusively of privately help companies and revenue and profit numbers are unpublished. The industry measures itself by the number of employees working in an AMC. Associations with 36+ employees are designated as

large AMCs, those with 11-35 employees are a medium AMC and those with 10 or fewer employees are designated as small AMCs. Of the 27 interviewees, 20 were from large AMCS, 1 from a medium AMC, and 6 were from small AMCs. The preponderance of interviewees from large AMCs was a purposeful approach based on several premises. These premises include that AMCs are generally more involved in the AMCi, manage larger associations, are involved in multiple associations, have multiple association managers on their staff, and represent the standard in association management. Efforts were made to interview those in medium and small AMCs to reveal any significant differences in approach to the management process. The general approach to managing associations remained consistent across AMC size.

Among the 27 interviewees, there were 26 bachelor's degrees, 13 masters' degrees (8 of which were MBAs), and 3 doctorates (one each in management, science, and education). One participant's formal education included only one year of college. Undergraduate degrees represented by the participants included Marketing (3), Psychology (2), English (2), and 1 each in the following fields (in alphabetical order): Accounting, Anthropology, Business Administration, Business Management, Communication and Computer Studies, Communications, Community Leadership and Development, Dietetics, Economics, English and Political Science, Finance, International Relations, Journalism, Music, Nursing, Organizational Communication, and Religion. Educational data was not collected for one association manager.

The Interviews

The eight initial interviews were conducted using an interview protocol consisting of 21 questions organized into four clusters (See Appendix B for the Initial Interview Protocol). These questions were designed to gain a general overview of the work of association managers, identify problems that might arise in implementing their role, gather narratives about specific problems and resolutions, and collect general industry knowledge of association management.

These eight interviews averaged 56 minutes each. While they provided narratives about problematic interactions, they also supplied a lot of material about the overall industry, client acquisition, and other topics not germane to the study. The remaining 19 interviews were conducted with a second protocol that consisted of a subset of the initial protocol questions with a shaper focus (See Appendix C for the Second Interview Protocol). There were seven questions included in the second protocol that were drawn from the original four clusters. In some instances the questions were slightly modified as a result of the initial interviews and participant responses. The second set of interviews averaged 42 minutes in length. The shortest of the 27 interviews was 31 minutes and the longest was 61 minutes.

The semi-structured protocol was designed to elicit narratives around the role and complexities of association management. The protocol was not designed as a verbal questionnaire. The process of interviewing by comment (Snow, Zurcher, & Sjoberg, 1982) assured an emergent process that was responsive to the participant's answers and interest. Some interviews touched on multiple topics, while others were focused on in-depth discussions about only a few topics.

All interviews were conducted in person by the author, were digitally recorded, and were transcribed for analysis. All interviews were conducted in the association manager's office with four exceptions. One participant was interviewed in a hotel conference room, one was interviewed at ASAE headquarters in Washington, DC, and two participants were interviewed while attending an AMCi annual conference. Seventeen of the participants were female and 10 were male. Twenty-three of the participants were actively managing associations with an industry tenure ranging from less than 2 years to 36 years. The average of association managers' experience was 20.5 years. Eleven of those interviewed were owners (two under an Employee Stock Ownership Plan), 12 were managers, and one was recently retired from association management. Twenty-two of the participants held the credential of Certified Association Executive (CAE), which is developed, administered, and granted by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). Of the 5 remaining participants who did not hold the certification, one was not yet eligible (due to a time requirement) and 2 were waiting for the results from their testing.

Observations

In addition to interviewing practitioners, I attended a variety of industry meetings where association managers gathered to engage in professional development and further the work of the AMC model. The AMC Institute (AMCi) is the trade association for AMCs whose main initiative is marketing AMC firms (J. Dee, speech, February 18, 2011). In the AMCi, companies, rather than individuals, are members of the trade association. While not mandatory for AMCs to belong to the AMCi, the association has

165 member companies that collectively employ more than 3,500 individuals. The total

number of association members served by AMCi companies is more than 2.3 million and

the aggregated association budgets managed by AMCi company members is $955 million

(AMCi Website). AMCi holds their annual meeting during February of each year. The

3½-day meeting includes board and council meetings, presentation of industry initiatives

(e.g., specific research projects), and sessions chaired by industry leaders. Speakers

outside the industry address topics relevant to the work of AMCs.

The Association of Society Executives (ASAE) is a professional society where

individual association managers make up the membership. The ASAE "represents more

than 21,000 association executives and industry partners representing 10,000

organizations" (ASAE Website). The ASAE annual meeting and programs are targeted at

professional development and are attended by association professionals from around the

world. Association managers who are employees of AMCs make up a small portion of

the total attendance at an ASAE annual meeting. In conjunction with the ASAE meeting

in the summer, the AMCi conducts a pre-conference meeting of 1.5 days. These meetings

are similar in nature to the annual meetings in February, but include fewer sessions. The

researcher attended one Global Summit on Corporate Social Responsibility sponsored by

ASAE (2008), three ASAE annual meetings (2008, 2009, 2010), three AMCi annual

meetings (2009, 2011, 2012), and three AMCi pre-conferences (2008, 2009, 2010).

Contemporaneous notes were taken at all events. The combined 100 hours as an

observer-participant (Gold, 1958) provided opportunities to observe the AMCi

association business meetings, participate in round table discussions, attend presentations

tailored to association managers and AMCs, observe association managers function

within their own professional society and trade association, and multiple opportunities for

casual interaction with association managers from all types of AMCs from around the

country.

Industry Literature

A third source of data for the study is the literature of the association management

industry. I read or reviewed a number of "key" publications utilized in the education and

training of an association manager: The CAE credentialing exam, *Professional Practices*

in Association Management, *Building an Association Management Company*, *The Will to*

Govern Well, and *Race for Relevance*. Much of the writing in this field is not derived

from theoretical research projects but is informed by "real-world work with associations"

(Coerver & Byers, 2011, p. vii).

Particular attention was given to the two periodicals that serve the industry. The

first, *Journal of Association Leadership (JAL)*, was published by ASAE. Publication

began in the summer of 2003 and, after only 11 issues, publication ended in the spring of

2009. The limited volumes allowed for a review of each issue (See Appendix D for

Journal of Association Leadership). Articles that specifically addressed communication,

conflict, and other relevant topics were read and analyzed. Practitioners primarily wrote

articles in JAL and only a few of the articles were research and empirically oriented. In

their article in JAL, Gallery and Keramidas (2006) acknowledge that association

management does not have a specific body of knowledge rooted in research. In a visit to

the ASAE library in Washington, DC, an ASAE staff member suggested that the brief life

of the publication might have stemmed from association managers having a greater interest in practical articles (C. B., personal communication, August 8, 2011).

Practical articles are found in the monthly publication *Associations Now*. This magazine, also a publication of ASAE, is for the benefit of all association managers, regardless of whether they work in an AMC or a stand-alone association. All issues for the time period of January 2008 - January 2012 were reviewed for relevant articles. Two annual supplements, *The Volunteer Leadership* issue, published in January of each year, and the *Guide to Association Management Companies* published each July were read in their entirety for the period from January 2008 – January 2012.

Data Analysis

Much as Aakhus (2001) adapted GPT to study professionals (Barge & Craig, 2009), this study utilizes GPT in the reconstruction of the communication design practice. The puzzles, techniques, and situated ideals serve as the basis of practice reconstruction. Communication as Design serves as the theoretical frame for this study. While much communication research is concerned with attitudes, persuasion, and messages, CaD, while not trivializing these aspects, is not primarily content oriented but is process oriented. A CaD focus is on the disciplining and shaping of interactivity among social actors. CaD embraces the premise that organizing interaction will generate a particular quality of communication and a preferred outcome that might not otherwise have been possible. Design implies that one have an idea of what you want to occur as a result of the interaction. Design is evident when social actors speak in a specific context, to

particular others, with specific outcomes. Different choices could have been made but were not. The choices made were design choices and occur through altering the various features of interaction – turn taking, what counts as a contribution, who is allowed to speak, and others – through the use of design tools such as practices and technologies (e.g., meetings and agendas). In analyzing the data, the tenets of CaD informed the process. The following sections will offer explanation or analysis of these tenets which are: (a) interventions, (b) inventions, (c) managing of identity goals, (d) shaping interactivity, and (e) practical theory of interaction.

Identifying and analyzing the interventions of those engaged in communication design work is foundational to reconstructing their practice. Interventions may take the form of "techniques, procedures, and devices" (Aakhus, 2007, p.112) and with each interventional move there arise affordances, which "provide possibilities for interaction," and constraints that "remove possibilities for interaction (Aakhus, 2007, p. 114). A second key aspect to the evaluation of communication design work is considering the inventional component of design. Inventions are those artifacts that are utilized in the "form of procedures and social structures that function as tools for coordinating collective action" (Aakhus & Anderson, unpublished manuscript). Previous commitments (e.g., a strategic plan) can be used to guide and shape interaction. These are inventions or artifacts that present affordances and "the fate of all artifacts is decided in language" (Krippendorff, 2006, p. 148). Their use, rather than their existence, is crucial to the process and outcome. Participant identity concerns influence participation in design interventions and inventions. In managing multiple goals of interaction choices must be made to emphasize and de-emphasize task, relational, and identity goals. This analysis

takes into account the practical impact of association managers' identity within their professional role. CaD focuses on the efforts to shape the interactional process. It does not concern itself with messages per se, but it evaluates moves that change the type and direction of interaction. An intervention into an ongoing interaction presumes certain things about interaction and represents a hypothesis about communication or represents a practical theory of interaction.

Each transcribed interview was initially coded using the constant comparative technique (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of open coding, notes, and categories. As new information and codes emerged from the subsequent interviews, earlier interviews were re-coded to incorporate new codes. As a second phase, axial coding was employed to aggregate more than 100 codes into 52 distinct categories. Texts were taken from the transcriptions and organized under these 52 categories. The texts were then reorganized in a chart form using shorter fragments of the quotation to provide more manageable chunks of data. Each chart was analyzed for sub-themes across the category. The primary organizing tool for the analytic process was CaD's key tenets that include: (a) interventions, (b) inventions, (c) managing of identity goals, (d) shaping interactivity, and (e) practical theory of interaction.

The category or code for "interventions" provides a good illustration of this process. The initial collection of texts coded "intervention" created a document that was 47 pages in length. This was organized into a chart that grouped the interventions based on temporality (pre/during/post) meeting. They were then further reorganized by type (e.g., based on documents) and then organized by time and by type in a final document.

In fact, the identification, grouping, and analysis of the interventional moves guided the entire analysis process.

Contemporaneous notes from the 100 hours of observations were aggregated into a single document that was coded using the same coding scheme as the one employed with the interviews. The appropriate coded sections were combined with the charts generated from the interview data. All research notes and memos, along with notes from the industry literature, were added to the appropriate charts.

Data Presentation

Reconstructing this practice posed unique challenges because of the complexity of the role including: administration, facilitation, strategic development, educating volunteers, providing information, and implementation of governance direction. This was further complicated by the unique governance structure of associations, the complexities posed by rotating volunteer leaders, and the diversity of the associations served. The narrative nature of the interviews, with the open-ended approach, did not provide tight sections of interactional data. Rather the relevant information was spread across the time span of interviews, with numerous digressions and did not provide compact sections for analysis. Because of these factors, steps were taken to create texts from the interview data.

Created Texts

In addition to the numerous quotations taken from the interview transcripts, several other types of text were utilized to present information. A number of vignettes

were constructed to describe and present an event. They do not represent data gathering nor are they data analysis. They were created from the interview transcripts in an effort to create a more coherent and readable narrative than would have been realized from the direct transcription text. The back and forth nature of the interviews and seeking clarification led to event descriptions that were not ordered in a proper time sequence. In some cases an issue was revisited several minutes later in the interview and it needed to be consolidated to present a coherent picture. In a number of the vignettes, there are direct quotations from the interview transcripts and are noted with quotation marks. All vignettes faithfully reproduce the event they seek to describe. All personal names have been changed and none of the associations in the document are actual organizations. The names of all AMCs presented in the document are also fabrications.

The National Pet Products Association (NPPA) is a fictional account. There are a number of pet associations in the United States, but NPPA is a fictional association. The creation of the background information, the participants, and the board meeting transcript was designed as a back drop to (a) contextualize the work and working relationships of volunteer leaders and staff, (b) to demonstrate a typical board meeting, (c) to present a working board agenda, (d) and to provide a basis upon which to identify the interventional strategies employed by association managers. The initial draft of the NPPA documents was submitted to two of the interviewees for comments and corrections. All of their recommended changes were incorporated into the document.

In most cases non-fluencies (i.e. hmm, uhh) and the use of repetitive words (you know, as I said, well) were removed from the quotations reproduced in the document to facilitate a smoother flow than is common in ordinary speech and to minimize

distractions from the particular point being demonstrated by the quotation. In some instances, passages were left longer than absolutely necessary in order to reveal more of the overall thinking motivating the specific comment. All direct quotations are assigned to an interviewee by a hash mark and a numeral within parenthesis. For a complete list of interviewees see Appendix E for Interviewee Data.

Terminology

There are a number of industry specific terms and references used in the presentation of data. As a guide to understanding the usage of these terms the following information is provided. The most common term to describe organizations that are granted non-profit status in the United States tax code is non-profits. This sometimes proves confusing to those unfamiliar with these organizations. Questions arise about how someone can get paid from an organization that does not make profit. What is there to manage apart from profit generation? The more precise term would be not-for-profit in concert with the tax code. Both terms are used in this document with more frequent occurrences of the more typical non-profit.

One of the reasons an association elects to be managed by an AMC is to give the association access to qualified staffers. In an association there are two distinct groups of workers: the volunteer workers who are members of the society or association and the non-member workers who make up the staff. When discussing the staff of an association, they are in reality the employees of the AMC assigned to that particular association. If an association member interacts with someone on the staff of their association, the staff members will not identify themselves as being from an AMC, but will refer to themselves

as staff members of the association. In this document any reference to staff is speaking about the staff of the association, but it cannot be ignored that these staffers are direct employees of the same AMC as the association manager.

Among associations the terminology varies for identifying the volunteer leaders. In some associations the highest volunteer office may be designated as president and in others, the same office would be denoted by the title of chair. In most cases this document defaults to past president, president, president-elect, and secretary-treasure as volunteer office designations. For those who serve on boards, the more common designation is board member but in some quotations the word director may appear. They are equivalent terms. Only a small percentage of association managers in the United States are employed by AMCs. Throughout this document all references to association managers are specifically referencing those employed by AMCs. No non-AMC managers were interviewed for this study.

Association managers are referred to by various titles and show a similar variation to the titling of volunteer leaders. In the majority of cases, staff leadership does not include chair or president, but can in some cases. Associations display a wide variety of identifying labels for staff positions. In most cases this document defaults to association manager as the designation of the senior staff position within the association. Other common terms for this role include executive director, which is frequently abbreviated as ED, exec, and chief staff officer, which becomes CSO. Although some AMCs will make distinctions among these terms, for the purpose of this study they should be considered interchangeable. In regards to the word staff itself, in most cases, associations who use the services of an AMC do not have any direct employees on staff. There are exceptions

to this, but they are not the norm. When an association is managed by an AMC, the

association's headquarters address will be the office of the AMC. An AMC employee

will answer a telephone call to the association telephone. Email servers and websites are

generally developed, maintained, and housed by the AMC.

Chapter IV

THE NATURE OF ASSOCIATIONS AND THE ROLE OF ASSOCIATION
MANAGERS

This chapter uses collected data to describe in detail the nature of associations and

the role of association managers and the unique circumstance surrounding their role. This

chapter begins the process of practice reconstruction and concludes with an explanation

of the puzzles or dilemmas.

> Organizations are systems of coordinated action among individuals and groups
> whose preferences, information, interests, or knowledge differ. Organization
> theories describe the delicate conversion of conflict into cooperation, the
> mobilization of resources, and the coordination of effort that facilitate the joint
> survival of an organization and its members. (March & Simon, 1993, p. 2)

Membership associations are a special class of organizations. While few

traditional organizations could be described as democratic, associations are democracies

made up of individuals or individual member companies. This collaboration represents "a

way of sharing power and a social agreement which stabilizes and coordinates mutual

interdependence" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978/2003, p. 144). Associations consist of

individuals who coalesce to accomplish goals collectively that would not be possible to

achieve on an individual basis. The collective goal may be the only thing they have in

common with one another. They cooperate for their common benefit, but "collaborative

products…are liable to be contested and problematic (Venkatesh, 2009, p. 5) and require

"the conversion of conflict," "the mobilization of resources," and the "the coordination

of effort" (March & Simon, 1993, p. 2).

These activities of "conversion," "mobilization," and "coordination" are not easily accomplished among peers who have surrendered some degree of independence for the interdependence of cooperating with others. In order to manage their interactions, some associations turn to specialized, professional help. Association management companies and the association managers they supply offer expertise in the management of not-for-profit associations. Cooperative systems include action "intended to facilitate cooperation itself" and action "intended to maintain the cooperative system" (Barnard, 1938/1968, p. 33). The manager's goals are to facilitate the accomplishment of the association's mission through cooperation and to perpetuate the association through administrative activities. By accomplishing these two goals, the AMCs are accomplishing their mission and perpetuating their organization.

The profession of association management has designed a plug and play system of communication logic that resolves the multiple demands of the association members while preserving the professional identity of the association manager. In a plug and play system, the system (re)configures to accept to new inputs allowing the system to persist and to adjust the inputs to the pre-existing hardware. The ever-changing composition of volunteer leadership and workforce requires a system that is highly adaptive. The work of association managers reveals a highly structured, well-designed, adaptive system of communication.

This chapter explores the aspects of volunteer membership organizations that make them unique within the broader classification of organizations. Unlike for-profit organizations that are driven by a profit motive and depend upon motivating employees to generate that profit, associations are a coalition of volunteers with mission as the

motivation. The volunteer nature of associations leads to persistently changing leadership and workers and a decided lack of organizational memory. Each association is uniquely formed and distinctive in its base, mission, and outcomes. This chapter also examines the professional status, expertise, and identity of association managers. The nature of associations and the professional application of association management provide a unique context for examining communication work.

The Nature of Associations

"Thus, as I have said before, the technique of association becomes the mother of every other technique; everyone studies and applies it" (de Tocqueville, 1835, p. 522). Alexis de Tocqueville toured the United States in the early 1830s and subsequently published *Democracy in America* (1835) where he considered the interaction of the individual, state, and markets within a democratic society. Notably he commented on "free institutions" which represented those collectives freely joined without government compulsion or sponsorship. He believed that "men cannot live in society without undertaking some things in common" (p. 523) and these efforts were seen in political, civil, and industrial associations. In a prescient passage he comments that

> [o]ne cannot take part in most civil associations without risking some of one's property; this is the case with all manufacturing and trading companies. Men who have as yet little skill in the technique of association and do not understand the main rules thereof are afraid, the first time they combine in this way, that they may pay dearly for their experience….but they cannot belong to such associations for long without discovering how to maintain order among large numbers and what procedures enable men to advance in methodical agreement toward a common aim. They thus learn to submit their own will to that of all the rest and to make their own exertions subordinate to the common action…. (pp. 521-522)

De Tocqueville wisely noted the necessity for "procedures" aimed at maintaining order and achieving "methodical agreement," and the subordination of the individual will to accomplish a common objective. More than 180 years later, associations in the United States continue to operate on these same assumptions.

The American Society for Association executives (ASAE), the professional society for association management, "represents more than 21,000 association executives and industry partners representing 10,000 organizations" (ASAE website, 2011). They represent only a fraction of the associations in the United States where there are "90,908 trade and professional associations and 1,238,201 philanthropic or charitable organizations" (ASAE website, 2011). America's penchant for organizing, as observed by de Tocqueville more than 180 years ago, is alive and well.

Associations are coalitions whose purpose is to "achieve common goals, meet common needs, and solve common problems [and] is realized by sharing information, networking, or joining together for a common good" (Nappi & Vieder, 2007, p. 303). Associations are "intermediary entities" who "deal with some sort of inability, dysfunction, or disinterest of the other two main sectors in our economy, the private sector and the governmental sector" (McLaughlin, 2008, p. 1). Depending on their organizing mission, associations will "communicate the perspectives and views of members to officials in the legislative and/or executive branches of government," (Tabor, 2007, p. 250), provide "a legal way for competitors to share information that helps them compete more effectively and efficiently" (Sherman, 2007, p. 209), or generally meet the needs of their members "by advancing a cause, promoting an industry, or serving as a

collective force to fight for or against laws and regulations that affect the industry or

profession" (Shark, 2007, p. 350).

> Voluntary associations …play a major role in facilitating the civic dialog that is indispensable to a functioning democracy. Private individuals and organizations can't play that role, nor can government. The political and cultural environment is demanding that the private sector play a greater role in shaping public policy. The only large-scale vehicle for doing so is associations. (McLaughlin, 2008, p. 1)

Associations differ significantly from governmental organizations and firms

serving in the marketplace. They are not legislatively motivated, profit driven, or

hierarchically structured. They are motivated by accomplishing a mission and "are about

relationships" (D. Cooperrider, public speech, April 30, 2008) built around a democracy

of membership. It is important to understand the distinctive aspects of associations and

how those distinctives bear on the management process as applied in associations.

A Democratic Institution of Volunteers

Associations are democratic institutions where power resides in the membership.

Individual members (e.g., professional societies) and individual corporate members (e.g.,

trade associations) all have voting rights. In most cases members are nominated to serve

on a board of directors as the representatives of the individual members that comprise the

association. Once elected the representatives are charged with governing the association

and the board is responsible to the membership for its actions and outcomes. Associations

exist to serve the needs of the membership. The members are both the owners of the

association and the customers of the association and "success is primarily determined by

how well members' needs and interests are met" (Losey, 2007, p. 143).

Along with being the owners, customers, and responsible for governance, the
member volunteers comprise the workforce of the association. Yet "the volunteer portion
of the work force doesn't have to do anything it doesn't want to do. The traditional
concepts of motivation, as they are employed in the typical workplace, do not apply"
(Tecker & Fidler, 1993, p. 10).

All volunteers are not created equal. Writing in the *Journal of Association
Leadership*, Blanken (2008) warns of "volunteer refugees who are frustrated elsewhere in
life and come to volunteerism for attention…needing to prove self-worth and value" (p.
80). An example of a "prove self-worth" problem is a president who has a specific set of
goals for his or her administration and these personal goals "can really put a cog in the
wheels" (#24). In addition to personal problematic goals, some volunteers have
"developed some really bad habits as volunteer leaders" and seek benefit only for
themselves or a small group and govern with "self-indulgence" (#16) A third common
problem among volunteers is the lack of time to contribute to the association they have
agreed to serve. Volunteer leaders have "full time jobs and they are busy" (#17) and they
are not "going to give you a blank check for their time" (#24). On a daily basis,
association managers must engage volunteers who may or may not be committed to the
association mission, who are not obligated to perform, and are busy with their own
careers.

Rotating and Nested Constituencies

The democratic nature of associations and their dependence on volunteers is
further complicated by a standard procedure of volunteer rotation. In commenting on the

complexities of serving an association, a veteran association executive and owner

comments that

> you have a volunteer president, you have volunteer officers, you have a volunteer
> board of directors, and then you have every member who thinks that you work for
> them. So that's a little different. Another thing that's very different is the fact that
> your immediate boss, who is the president of the association, changes every year.
> (#1)

An association represents a nested set of constituencies. At the broadest level you

have the entire membership of the association. A subset of that membership consists of

the representatives that sit on the board of directors. From the board an executive

committee is chosen. Although there is variation in nomenclature across associations, the

executive committee of the association is usually comprised of the four top officers

including the past president, president, president elect, and secretary-treasurer. In some

cases the past president is not included and the secretary and treasurer roles may be

separate and fulfilled by two different people. The executive committee frequently is the

primary governing body (Coerver & Myers, 2011).

A key distinctive of volunteer-run membership associations is the constant ebb

and flow of new board members and executive officers. Board terms for members are

generally 2-3 years with some associations allowing board members to succeed

themselves. In 49% of the associations surveyed, three years is the most common tenure

for a board member (Leroy, 2007, p. 3). The rationale behind the rotating board is to

"ensure stability and continuity" and inject "new ways of thinking" by bringing on new

members (p. 3). The process of rotation also keeps "fresh blood coming into the

organization" and serves to "keep people engaged" (#6). If one assumes a three-year

cycle, one-third of the board is new each year leading to a complete change of the board

members during the three-year cycle. This consistent rotation "creates a rolling culture that keeps the board in flux" (Axelrod, 2004, p.7).

Some of the implications of this structure include: (a) dealing with a new president and "management style" every year or every two years (#7), (b) dealing with "various strong personalities" serving in the president's role who might "have a different agenda that is not always in sync with where the board wants to go" (#19), which can lead to (c) "a titanic about face with one president and then we turn right back around with the second president" (#20), and (d) "constantly educating all the new board members" (#10). In addition to the rotation in volunteer leaders, there is a constant turnover of members serving on committees and task forces.

Psychology of the Industry

Given the plethora of associations in the United States and the "rolling culture" of each association, the variability and diversity of associations makes each distinct from all others. Associations vary along numerous dimensions including mission, level of professionalization, commitment to their profession, willingness to spend money, their need for networking or something as simple as their adoption of technology. As a general rule, the more "professional and better educated a board is, the easier they are to work with" (#11). Association variability is a "reflection of its membership" (#9) and is variously referred to as the "psychology of the industry" (K. B., personal communication, August, 16, 2008), "the MO of their occupation" (#3), "the culture that goes along with different organizations" (#24), and "the personalities that come along with the disciplines" (#18). Although a number of different terms are used to describe the unique

characteristics of various associations, all of these descriptors are pointing out different

communities of practice and the distinctives that characterize them. The following

excerpts provide other examples of how association managers understand the

"psychology of an industry."

An interviewee (#4) who managed an association of ombudsmen noted that when

executing their roles they are neutral, impartial and confidential. She then commented on

the direct effect in their association.

> They have a hard time making decisions or taking a position because they make
> no judgments in their work about what they're listening to from their visitors and
> they don't want anybody to be unhappy with any decision. The first board call I
> was ever on with them, they were talking about a dues increase and they finally
> had a vote. They rarely bring issues to a vote in a board meeting because they
> don't want that kind of confrontation. They vote to approve the minutes and that's
> pretty much it. So they were voting on a dues increase, and after much discussion
> they brought it to a vote. They didn't want to, but I said, 'You really need to have
> a motion to approve this dues increase.' One person abstained and they revisited
> the whole dues increase again…Because they want everyone to be in concert.
> They want harmony. They're too nice. I'm always telling them that. 'You're too
> nice. Move on.'"

In much the same manner, an interviewee (#12) who works with the Association

of Mediators remarked that mediators

> actually mediate themselves during the discussion so if there's a conflict on a call
> another member will speak up and repeat what that person said and then ask the
> other person who has a conflict to join in and state their point. So the
> conversations in person are often mediated when there's a conflict. There are
> many conflicts, but that's how they are handled in that situation.
> *[So, the, the mediator association is your association with the most conflicts?]*
> Absolutely. They look for conflicts. You know, they hear something that
> somebody says and they try to see if there's conflict inside of it and they repeat it
> to make sure they have it clear without a conflict if possible. So, they sort of are
> always trying to hear what you're saying, but they hear if you are upset about
> something.

In working with associations of independent contractors, interviewees provide

examples to illustrate how the nature of one's work influences how members of

associations engage with the required work of associations. The following three excerpts

offer glimpses into associations representing retailers, lawyers, and consultants. For

example, in working with small retail organizations the AM presents how the detail of

retail affects the members' involvement because

> these guys run every aspect of their business from cleaning the bathroom to doing
> their marketing to their, you know, managing the books, so when it comes to the
> association world, they have a hard time stepping back from the details, because
> they're involved in the details on a daily basis. (#16)

In the world of court reporters, the collaborative nature of association work is

problematic. "Court reporting is a profession where work is done very independently,

without much group work and group problem solving. Suddenly being thrust into a

collaborative decision-making environment can be a significant transition" (Criscoe,

2009, p. 23). Court reporters have no experience working collaboratively. They are

independent contractors who work in courtrooms and depositions. Their professional

work conveys problem-solving as adversarial in nature (M. G., personal communication,

April 30, 2008) which shapes their approach to a collaborative enterprise.

Independent consultants have difficulty separating their view of billing from the

time they invest in association work. The consultancy model is based on billing time

when working. When these consultants volunteer in their association, they are not billing

their time and they are sensitive to the billing process. When speaking with their AMC

they are picky about billing issues and will ask, "are you going to charge for that?" (J. A.,

personal communication, February 9, 2012).

Individual sub-specialty characteristics are evident even within professions. An

interviewee (#18) who manages an organization that includes sub-disciplines within a

single medical phenomenon (e. g., psychology, oncology) notes the distinctiveness of

each specialty. For example, "psychologists tend to be worriers, but consensus builders and interested in the health and well-being of the organization and their peers" (#18) and nurses "tend to be detail oriented to the point of exhaustion" (#18). The emphases of oncologists differ according the patients they treat. An adult oncologist "is going after the cancer. I'm done with you. I don't care if you have pain. I don't care if you're suffering a life-threatening disease. All I care about is shrinking that tumor" (#18). For oncologists who treat children, the doctor and patient relationship matters in a different way. "A pediatric oncologist shares the relationship. [They have] the characteristics of a pediatrician who does care about that kid, who does care about pain, who does care about what's going on in that kid's life" (#18).

Other interviewees (#22 and #23) also suggest that the type of medical work one does effects how one engages with others. If one is an emergency room doctor, he or she approaches association meetings with tremendous energy. "The president [of the emergency room doctors' association] will wear sandals and shorts to a meeting…they are used to fixing things on they fly. They have a strategic planning session every year…everybody had an idea and everybody did it" (#22). In direct contrast to the energy of emergency work, members of the Medical Researchers' Association "don't relate to people well. They sit in front of beakers in a laboratory and they don't have much social interaction. They tend to be very black and white" (#23).

The "psychology of the industry" frames the way the association talks about issues and it also influences how the issues are addressed. Additional interview comments point to accounting associations who spend most of the board meeting reviewing the financial statements, attorney associations who threaten to sue some

alleged transgressor (e.g., conference center) at every board meeting, and engineers who always make dispassionate, rational decisions. Every interview that touched on this topic acknowledged the distinctive nature of each association. Associations as a whole exhibit characteristics that must be accounted for in the administering of these not-for-profit organizations. These three characteristics—democracy of volunteers, rotating/nested constituencies, and psychology of the industry—will be revisited after considering the characteristics of association managers who administratively manage all of this diversity.

The Role of Professional Association Managers

Association managers are third party interventionists that share some characteristics with other third parties, such as mediators and facilitator, but there are significant differences. Table 1 draws a contrast between one who mediates divorces and one who manages an association.

Table 1

Contrasting Mediators and Association Managers

	Divorce Mediator	Association Manager
Nature of the work	Episodic	On-going
Timeline	Short Horizon	Long Horizon
Responsibility	Process Management	Process Management + Content Preparation
Tension	Between two parties	Among multiple parties
Historical Knowledge	No personal knowledge of preceding events	Deep knowledge about preceding events
Implementation	None required	Responsible for implementation of solution

Association managers are involved in facilitation, mediation, consensus building, consulting, implementing programs and strategic direction, and frequently serve as the voice of the industry responsible for public relations and advocacy. Their role as a third party is distinct among third party providers.

In *Asylums*, Goffman (1961) says that every "large society has expert servers, but no society has given such service more weight than has ours" (p. 326). In what he refers to as the "tinkering service," he describes service providers.

> Ideally, the client brings to this relationship respect for the server's technical competence and trust that he will use it ethically; he also brings gratitude and a fee. On the other side, the server brings: an esoteric and empirically effective competence, and a willingness to place it at the client's disposal: professional discretion; a voluntary circumspection, leading him to exhibit a disciplined unconcern with the client's other affairs or even (in the last analysis) with why the client should want the service in the first place; and, finally, an unservile civility. (p. 326)

Associations engage association managers for their expertise in managing non-profits. In return the association should expect competence, discretion and an appropriate professional relationship. In this little known area of AMC-driven association management, what distinguishes the association manager from general managers? It is important to identify and explain several key characteristics of the association management role.

The Professional Status of Association Managers

For those engaged in the work of association management there is an opportunity for professional credentialing through the American Society for Association Executives. The requirements for the Certified Association Executive (CAE) certificate include (a)

employment in an association for a given period of time, (b) professional experience, (c)

professional development activities, and (d) the successful completion of the

credentialing exam. The exam, administered since 1960, tests 9 domains of business and

non-profit management. See the following link to view the CAE content.

(http://www.asaecenter.org/files/CAE%20Examination%20Content%20Outline%202011 .pdf).

The certification remains valid for a period of 3 years with a certification

maintenance cycle that requires completion of CEUs and/or completion of specified

professional development along with a written request to ASAE for recertification. It

should be noted that certification is not a requirement for employment at an AMC, nor is

it required to engage in the practice of association management. Of the 27 managers

interviewed for this project, 22 held the CAE certification. While some admitted to no

interest in pursuing certification, because of time or financial cost, two interviewees were

awaiting test results and another was not yet eligible to pursue the certificate.

While some may question the competency of a medical doctor or attorney at law,

their credentials indicate that they have mastered a body of knowledge. As with many of

the semi-professions, not endorsed by legal mandate, questions surface about the

knowledge and expertise of association managers. Certification alone is insufficient to

mitigate the reservations of some.

An association benefits by utilizing a professional manager because a manager

understands the management of a non-profit including knowledge of anti-trust issues,

relevant tax laws, membership development, and meeting facilitation (#7). Sometimes

associations raise questions about the benefit of these outside services because some

associations believe that a competent member of their own industry can provide the best management. Association managers understand this attitude as a failure to recognize the specific expertise of association management and perceive this as disrespecting "the body of knowledge and skill set that is required to run an association" (#4), or a general failure to "see it as a valuable good" (#11). The questions regarding professional status seem to exist within the camp as well as outside the perimeter. Consultants to association managers, Harris and Clemons (1997) note that "association professionals sometimes seem to be at the bottom rung of management professionals" (p. 102). In an interview with an AMC owner who is a major thought leader in the field, he discussed the role of an association manager and three times he queried, "if this is a profession" (#14). In a public address given at a 2011 AMCi meeting, the speaker noted, "collectively we do not have high self-esteem" (R. C., public speech, February, 18, 2011).

The nature of the association manager's role may contribute to the questions about the value they bring to the workplace. Association managers view themselves as part of a culture of service characterized by a self-effacing attitude. Association managers acknowledge that in their role one allows "others to take credit for your ideas" (#5), "no one cares who gets the credit" (K. B., conference speech, August 16, 2008), you are "making them feel good about their decisions and letting them think it's their decision" (#22), "it's okay that somebody else's name is on something" (#24), "leave your ego at the door" (#24), "you also just don't take credit for anything" (#9), and "it's not about us at all. If you are looking for your own recognition and glory, this is not the field" (#16). Their willingness to allow others to take the credit may diminish their status in the eyes of those they serve.

Association managers present themselves as professionals who bring non-profit management expertise to bear in independent associations. Their approach to management does not typically place them in front of the organization. Volunteer leaders serve that role. They function more in a backstage role as a "servant leader" (#22). Does the process of implementation (allowing others to take credit for their work, and working behind the scenes) undermine their role as professionals? Beyond their expertise in tax law and antitrust work, what exactly do association managers contribute to the healthy functioning of non-profit associations? Their primary contributions are evident in managing the process of collaboration, strategic management, membership development, and operations.

The Functional Role of Association Managers

Association managers are outsourced management talent who bring expertise and a relevant history from previous engagements. Their primary role in the association encompasses "servicing a mission" (#5) and "managing the affairs of the association" (#9). AMs typically describe their work as administrative or managerial in nature. One AM described the company's contribution as "we want you to be free to focus on the scientific mission [of] your organization and that means that we want to do everything else for you, all of the administrative work" (#25). The administrative and managerial work of the AM is broad and varied.

Association managers contribute an understanding of the process and procedures necessary to manage not-for-profit organizations. This work is described as "managing the affairs of the association" (#9), or more specifically, "I manage people, I manage

projects…pretty much everything under the sun" (#21), and finally, "I'm responsible for oversight of everything that the association does, which is quite complex…ultimately the buck stops with me when it comes to anything [association name] does from a management perspective" (#10). A recent industry publication establishes a connection between association members and the management professional.

> By design, an association involves two professions, one visible and the other not. An association's name identifies the profession for which the organization exists. Less apparent is the second profession undergirding all associations, the essential business of association management [or] ….the 'invisible profession' of association management professionals. (Carey, 2011, p. 66)

Administration and management occurs at the nexus of the particular association board and the AMC staff. AMs see themselves as the primary point of connection between the membership, as represented in the board of directors and association president, and the staff employed by the AMC. The board and its officers are the key customers of the AM. The association manager's "primary role is to work with our board" (#15) and serve as the "caretaker of the board" to ensure efficient board operation (#11). Caring for the board includes working "on their strategic projects," (#19) and providing the board with resources, information, and assistance as required. One senior AMC partner described her role as

> a partner with the board and the president. A strategic partner overseeing that all of the administrative tasks are handled in the meetings….I can be an advisor to them. They're the content experts for their field, but I can teach them how to make good decisions and how to be good board members and what it means to have an association. (#26)

In this description there is a clear distinction between the content knowledge of the association members and the process knowledge of the professional association manager.

The staff members that work within the association are employees of the AMC and are assigned to a particular association. They may spend all of their time with one association or have their time divided between or among multiple associations. The AM serves as the point of connection between the board and its officers and is responsible for managing the staff. The association manager is responsible for administering the association and the staff is responsible for mission realization and implementation as seen in the following association manager's statement that, "my role is to make sure that everyone on the staff knows what the mission is and what our [the association] goals are and then help them to achieve those goals" (#16). The AM is responsible *to* the board and responsible *for* the staff.

Administration and management are general terms that association managers apply to their work, but there are a number of specific tasks that comprise these concepts in the context of association management. Managing associations and societies requires an education process for incoming volunteer leaders. Managers educate new board members on legal issues surrounding non-profits, proper association governance, and advancing the association's mission. "It's a challenge that we have in terms of trying to educate them [volunteer leaders] on the role of the organization and understanding what their role is as leaders in the organization" (#3). This process is complicated by "turnover on the board…so you have to constantly be educating" (#10). The ASAE offers the Symposium for Chief Executive and Chief Elected Officers as a two-day seminar for the association manager and the new volunteer president to learn to work together in applying their respective roles and developing their working relationship. A description of the symposium "highlights the value of informed policy and strategy as primary tools

of the leadership team" (ASAE website, 2011). The effort to educate incoming volunteer leaders includes an effort to present the association manager as a professional. The goal is to inculcate "an understanding and appreciation of association management as a profession requiring unique skills" (Blanken, 2008, p. 81).

Association managers and their AMC bring operational benefits to any association they manage through economies of scale. These economies are seen in the physical attributes of the organization including shared costs of operating an association headquarters, technology applications, and other infrastructure costs (M. F., personal communication, June 4, 2008). There is also an economy advantage for the association by accessing AMC staff specialists in marketing, publications, accounting, and other functional areas on an as-needed basis (#1). The economy of scale value is also realized in "leveraging knowledge from one client to another" or "aggregating intellectual capital" (D. B., personal communication, February 13, 2009).

In many situations association managers are currently or have previously managed other associations. The various managers within a given AMC represent collective experience in the association field and AMCs will talk about the "brain trust" represented in their organization (#6). Collective history and experience lends credibility to the work of an association manager and allows for bringing new, successful ideas to an association. "They [volunteer leaders] look for my direction in what experience [AMC name] has with other groups" (#19). Based on their personal background, their AMC affiliation, and previous assignments, individual expertise puts the manager in the position of being "a resource for guidance and direction" (#16).

Association managers bring to their role a broadly based knowledge of "best practices" for managing not-for-profit organizations. Some of the clearly identified best practices include optimal board size (#1), strategic planning (#14), legal practices (#20), and peer-to-peer management (#20). One of the largest AMCs maintains an internally developed best practices manual that prescribes what should or should not be done in managing their associations. Those who are employees of this specific AMC are obligated to operate within the confines of the best practices manual and any deviation from it requires them to provide and document "a good reason" when choosing to not use a "best practice" (#6).

Association managers work in both informal and formal settings. Informal settings may include telephone calls, industry receptions, and group activities. Formal settings may include board meetings, committee meetings, annual meetings, and task forces. Most associations will conduct their business through board meetings, committees, and task forces. Association boards will usually meet 2-4 times per year with at least one of those meetings being face-to-face and others occurring through teleconferencing.

While the boards focus on strategic issues, associations will use standing committees and task forces to deal with more tactical needs of the organization. Board meetings are a critical point where the knowledge and skill of association managers becomes particularly valuable to the board president and board members. The work of association managers demonstrated in and around board meetings provides an important vantage point from which to examine and understand the day-to-day work of association management. Association managers express concern about their association boards being mired in the weeds among all things tactical as opposed to the preferred focus of strategy.

One manager insists that "my role first of all is at the strategy level" (#14) and another in a practical sense reports, "I've got a board for about 12 to 15 hours a year, and if we can't get them talking strategically, if we get mired down in the weeds, we're dead" (#3).

In an effort to effectively manage their boards, association managers engage in formal strategic planning meetings. These meetings will include board members and may, or may not, include outside facilitators. These strategic development meetings occur on a 3-5 year schedule. Using the output of these meetings, the manager will "run the board meetings through the strategic plan so our three key strategic initiatives drive our board agenda, and the budget process and everything else" (#14). The goal, as described by managers, is to generate an agreeable strategic direction and then use that consensus as the basis for driving the organization's initiatives and tactics. This approach allows the board to focus on strategy and the association manager to have a working tool by which to manage the organization. The strategic plan is very important to the association, and ultimately the association manager because it keeps the process coherent and aligned. Developing strategic initiatives and using them as a roadmap is a "best practice" in the world of association management (#14). Although identified as a best practice, Engle (2011) notes that his research is "the first quantitative study in the association community that substantiates the benefit of boards pending time on strategic issues" (p. 28).

In facilitating board meetings, the association manager takes up differing roles before, during, and after the meetings. Prior to the meeting the manager anticipates problem areas and frames the discussion to minimize potential problems. Although not a member, the manager frequently has a longer tenure at the board table than any other member. They use their historical knowledge and their process knowledge to prepare for

a congenial, productive meeting. The agenda is a key tool for guiding the meetings. The

quotation below is from an owner whose family has been in the association management

business for generations. He talks freely about the work, the thinking, and the strategy

that take place before the board convenes.

> We can pretty well anticipate what's going to be happening before a
> meeting begins. We know who the players are. We know where the hot
> buttons are. When you've been doing this long enough, you know how the
> game is played….We always try to anticipate where the land mines are,
> you know, what's going to blow up, who's going to blow it up. And really
> what we're trying to accomplish, you know, begin with the end in mind.
> (#3)

The board meeting itself is characterized by discussions of the various agenda

topics. As noted earlier, in the best-case scenario, these topics are derivative from the

overall strategic direction of the association. During the course of the meeting, managers

are called upon to make recommendations based on their history with the association.

Associations vary, but a number of topics will (re)surface periodically in the life of any

association. These topics might include the need for government advocacy, the

development of an industry standard, or the location for an annual show or conference.

Although these types of topics might have been discussed in depth in previous years, the

process of annually replacing the president and rotating board members means there is no

long-term organizational memory among the board members regarding these topics. In

many cases, the association manager, who is not a member of the association, has

significant organizational history that can be valuable in guiding these decisions.

A second aspect of contemporaneously managing the meeting process is the effort

to remain focused on rational, data-driven decisions while avoiding emotional or

personalized responses to the problems of the association. "In the association

environment, you don't stand much of a chance of making a case without data" (Coerver

& Byers, 2011, p. 146). Repeatedly managers articulate that they interrupt discussions

that are floundering with a reference to data gathering and the simple statement, "staff

will look into it" and report back to the board/committee (#21). Following the board

meetings, staff takes the lead in creating meeting minutes with the draft minutes generally

going through an approval process before being disseminated. In some instances minutes

may be approved by a secretary of the board, in others by the board chairman, and in

some cases they must pass through the association attorney as a final check.

Committees and task forces serve as support for the board and generally represent

where details are developed and tactics are implemented. Committees are ongoing

entities that focus on strategic issues such as finance and audit, nomination committees,

and executive committees. Task forces are generally more short lived and organized for

discrete tasks (O'Neil, 2008, p. 68). In most instances, AMC staff members will be

present at committee and task force meetings.

One type of committee that deserves special attention is the nominating

committee. Some managers counsel against involvement with the nominating committee

and say, you "have to be very careful of involvement with the nominating committee

process" (#3) or never "get involved with the nominating committee process" (#4). Other

association managers see being involved as a necessity of administering and managing

the association.

> I think of the exec as actually having a fair level of responsibility around
> volunteer leadership, grooming good volunteers, creating good opportunities for
> people to serve, always looking for and tracking talent, creating opportunities
> when you see talent in people, being a mentor to future leaders. I think if we
> don't do that, we, we really put the organization at risk. So, I think there's a high
> level of involvement. I believe a nominating committee is the deciding body but

taking a hands-off approach I sometimes think of it as a convenient way not to be accountable for the operation of the board. And that would be wrong. (#8)

Associations are made up of people joined together for a common purpose, but not everyone within an organization or on the same board has completely aligned purposes. In many cases a decision might benefit a segment of the association (e.g., large manufacturers) while negatively affecting others (e.g., small manufacturers). There is not a universal approach to conflict resolution among the interviewees. No one presented a "best practice" approach to conflict. One manager articulates that he "likes to identify it [conflict], pull it out into the sun early in the process so by the time the boards meets everyone's aware of this conflict" (#15). Writing in the *Journal of Association Leadership,* Axelrod (2004) notes "the tendency of some CEOs and board members to suppress criticism and conflict can undermine decision making. 'Dysfunctional harmony' can create a petri dish in which problems can fester" (p. 9).

Even when associations avoid or manage conflict, they still must deal with differing opinions and this requires consensus building. Consensus building, although not always identified by the term, is a major goal of association managers. Consensus building is described by a number of managers as a key attribute for a successful manager (#2, #7). Consensus building, as described by association managers, has strong components of listening, surfacing options, a fair and equitable process, and finding common ground among the members.

Finally, the association manager and his or her staff are responsible for implementing strategy and tactics as developed and decided upon by the volunteer organization. In working with both the volunteer organization and the staff from the

AMC, the association manager works "with our staff team to make sure we implement that vision" (#15).

Operationally, association managers take a key role in educating volunteer leaders in the governance of associations. They seek to implement best practices and use the specialists in their AMCs to provide expertise within business disciplines and bring collective experience to bear in managing the associations. There is a persistent flow or cycle to the operational activities of an association manager and his or her staff. Strategic sessions set the course for achieving the association's mission. The strategic initiatives are managed through board, committees, and task forces with the association manager taking major roles in the developing agendas, facilitating meetings, drafting minutes, and ultimately implementing the association's decisions. The specific nature of associations and the type of work that association managers engage in leads them to assume a particular identity in their role.

The Identity of Association Managers

The word "identity" was mentioned only three times during the 27 interviews conducted for this study. All of these mentions referenced the identity of a particular association, not the identity of an association manager. Although never directly referencing an individual's identity as an association manager, one can infer those attributes that comprise the identity of a professional association manager from their descriptions of their work.

An ideal that underlies the work of association management companies and association managers is transparency and openness across their entire community of

colleagues. This emphasis on a transparency primarily emerged while observing the industry trade association, AMCi, rather than through interviews with individual managers. A senior statesman in the industry discussed in detail the way various competitors shared their knowledge, helped with building his business, and allowed other owners' children to apprentice in their firms. This overall transparency about the business and desire to help other industry competitors is captured in his assertion that "there was institutionalized insanity in this group about sharing all they knew about this business" (C. W., speech, February 18, 2011).

During the course of their annual association meetings, association managers conduct break out groups that are divided by company size where they discuss their problems and how best to address them. All participants share the steps that have helped them grow and develop as a firm. In their annual meetings, successful firm owners and employees populate many of the panel discussions. Industry meetings select panel topics to address industry needs, and those from successful firms freely share how they built their businesses, manage problem clients, and develop human resource policies to grow their businesses. In a 2011 AMCi speech, the speaker referred to one of his employees, who came from outside the industry, who, when she saw the extent of sharing at the annual meeting, promptly warned against the dangers of such openness. The AMCi speaker then assured the group that as she came to understand the industry, she did not object to the transparency and had been rehabilitated (J. D., speech, February 18, 2011). This intense interest in sharing knowledge reflects a community of practice where people "share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, and creative ways" (Wenger & Snyder, 2000, p. 140).

Being transparent is only one aspect of the identity association managers assume. Another interesting facet of their identity is the clear recognition and acknowledgment that they are not members of the associations they manage. In a series of statements taken from interviews, this premise is made clear. Fully aware of their outsider status, association managers noted that, "The key thing is that an association executive director should never think it's their association" (#1); "It's kind of a mantra within the association community. We all have to remember that this is the members' association" (#2); "It's their association. If they want to have a comic book for a newsletter, what do you care?" (#4); "It's not my organization" (#5); "I mean the board owns the association" (#6); "This is not my organization. This is an organization of the volunteers" (#13); "You're not one of the members. You're not part of the board" (#17); "Fundamentally the organization is theirs and you're there to facilitate" (#18); "It's their society" (#20); "It's their association" (#22); and "It is our members' association and sometimes we need to accept that they make decisions that we don't necessarily think are wise" (#26).

The same outsider perspective is echoed in casual conversation with association executives at various industry functions. One AMC owner stated, "It is their association. They own it. It's their money, and once you think it is yours, you are in trouble" (H. B., personal communication, April 30, 2008). This operating premise of "not my association" leads to the inevitable conclusion that "in a sense, I'm an outsider" (#15); "you should just know that you're staff and you're never going to be one of them" (#22); and "you're part of the team, but you're never a part of the team" (#9). Thus the manager responsible for administration and management of the association must always work as an outsider to the association. Ultimately, these managers are hired help and external to the association.

Regardless of the length of involvement, sometimes spanning decades in a specific

association, or the depth of their integration into the workings of the association, these

outside managers are never insiders of the association.

The association manager, with very broad responsibilities, faces the competing

demands of being responsible for everything and in charge of nothing. Black and

Baumgartner (1983) characterize such roles as third parties offering assistance for

processes but having no official control over the outcomes. This paradox, which

association managers experience in their roles, requires creativity to successfully fulfill

their duties and maintain their identity as non-authoritative. This tension is seen in the

quotation below from an association manager who has extensive experience in managing

a stand-alone association and is now the president of an association management

company.

> Well, I think someone described it very well as being the president of a country
> club. You're not one of the members. You're not part of the board. But you have
> responsibility for oversight of [the] efficient running of the whole club. (#25)

His explanation captures the ambiguity and complexity of the association

manager. Resolving competing demands with the limitation of having only

administrative authority is difficult given the obligations of "running the whole

club."

Along with transparency and an outsider status, association managers embrace

neutrality as a stance toward all members of the association. As the administrator for the

association, they have a duty to fairly represent multiple perspectives. While association

managers consider themselves primarily responsible to the current board president, they

have responsibility to all members of the association. An AMC owner for 36 years

reported, "So you have a volunteer president, you have volunteer officers, you have a

volunteer board of directors, and then you have every member who thinks that you work

for them" (#1). This sentiment is echoed in the industry literature. "Association

executives must remind themselves that they serve the membership, not the board"

(O'Sullivan, 2007, p. 43). One association manager recounted an instance where a board

president overstepped an ethical boundary and ultimately was censured within the board

context for his behavior. The president charged the association manager with not being

loyal to him as president, but the manager countered

> our job was to be loyal to the client. That [the client] was the entire membership,
> and to it's duly elected and appointed officers. But once those officers step
> outside the bounds, we're not obligated to go outside the bounds. Right? So sorry.
> We had been loyal" (#5).

A clear example of maintaining neutrality is seen in how the association managers

avoid taking sides with one board member in opposition to another board member. "If

they [board members] have angst against each other, never get in the middle of that.

Definitely always stay neutral….never take sides with a board member against one

another" (#19). "If you've got two board members who are going at it, I think it's deadly

for the executive director to try to intervene, because you're essentially trying to fix an

argument between your bosses" (#26).

Given association managers commitment to transparency, their status as outsiders,

and their commitment to neutrality, they view themselves as relationship managers. This

understanding is evident throughout the interviews, in their conferences, and in industry

literature. Table 2 highlights interviewees' comments about relationship's role in their

work, conference comments about the role of relationship in association work, and

industry literature that supports these understandings. Relationship management is an

Table 2

Comments That Support Relationship's Role in Association Work

Source	Comment
Interview #1	"The relationship was in trouble—the relationship between our company and the association because the "executive director is the key to everything."
Interview #2	"It's still a relationship business"
Interview #3	"we are in a people business"
Interview #4	"It's a relationship business"
Interview #6	"this is a very relationship-oriented business"
Interview #7	"you want to build relationships"
Interview #8	"I think associations are really all about relationships"
Interview #15	"I'd like to think one of my strengths is having this great relationship with our volunteer boards."
Interview #17	"Well, they [XYZ] had a really excellent relationship with the owners [of the AMC] and didn't want to lose that."
Interview #22	"that [positive outcome] will happen if you've got the good working relationship especially with your past presidents"
Interview #23	"I serve as chief relationship officer [for three clients of the AMC] "to manage the business relationship between [AMC name] and the association[s]"
Interview #24	"It's a relationship organization"
Interview #25	"Over the years I've developed some very close friendships with the past presidents of XYZ. I've made it my point to get to know them. I've made it my point to see them in their office and get to know them and develop that kind of personal relationship and I think that's probably why I've been around for so long."
Interview #27	"one of the things that I also can't not do is develop a personal relationship" within the associations
2008 Global Summit on Corporate Responsibility – Speaker D. Cooperrider	"Associations are about relationships"
2008 AMCi pre-conference – private conversation	"It's a relationship business"
2009 ASAE Conference – Speaker David Nour	"You are not in the association business, you are in the relationship business."
Journal of Association Leadership – Kahan (2004)	"The association ecosystem is a series of complex relationships between different types of communities" (p. 28)

Professional Practices, 2007 – Balakgie	"Accomplished association leaders understand the intricacies of the interpersonal and groups relationships they must manage and are masters of the methods for maximizing the potential from each." (p. 88)
Professional Practices, 2007 - Benjamin	"Association management, at its essence, is a relationship management business." (p. 227).

overarching perspective brought to bear in the work of association managers. In the

absence of direct authority, they must depend on social capital in implementing their role.

Investments in relationship building generate social capital (Krackhardt, 1992),

which provides "social resources" embedded in the relationship (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998, p.

464). AMCs are contractually bound to an association only as long as the association

utilizes their services. In the market there are a number of AMC alternatives from which

an association may choose. Outside services provided are similar among the competitive

set and social capital is important for "competitive success" (Burt, 1992, p. 58).

The Work Context

The factors that characterize association managers and associations are not unique,

but it is important to highlight that the confluence of these factors creates a unique work

context. The democratic nature of associations might be seen in small family

organizations or partnerships but rarely on the scale of associations that have thousands

of members. The characteristics of associations are not entirely unique in a modern

economy replete with diverse organizations. One could argue that the psychology of

different industries is similar to organizational culture. While it is true that one normally

works within an organizational culture, there is usually a constant theme. An accountant may move from the ABC firm's accounting department to the XYZ firm's accounting department, but the accounting discipline itself offers a constant thread. Association managers work within their AMC's company culture, but must accomplish their role in distinct association cultures – often simultaneously. An association manager may be managing a professional society and at the same time managing a national association of independent auto repair shops. The volunteer nature of association governance and the rotating workers and officers is unique to non-profits. This combination of factors (democracy, psychology of the industry, and volunteerism) creates a unique work environment for association managers.

How association managers understand their status, their functional role, and their identity also affects the work they do. The lack of respect for one's expertise and self-doubts about one's status in his or her profession is not unique to professional association managers. Also, in their primary role they serve a similar function to other corporate managers in fulfilling their responsibilities in planning, meeting facilitation, implementation and other 'normal' managerial duties. The identity of the association manager as a neutral, outside party engaging in a transparent process is most similar to a mediator; however, the range of activities far exceeds that of a mediator. Combining an association manager's questioned status, extensive functional role, and complex identity creates a unique practice. The association model described above combined with the role of association managers as described resides within a unique organizational structure.

In a typical corporate structure we have the following top-down model: Owners, Board of Directors, Executives, Managers, Workers, and Customers. In this typical

hierarchical arrangement, workers answer to the managers who in turn answer to the executives, executives answer to the board and the board to the owners/shareholders. In most cases, at least in theory, the owners, board, executives, managers, and workers are responsible to their customers in general and the marketplace at large.

In the case of associations, we see the following top-down model: Owners (members of the association), Non-profit board (members responsible for governance), Executives (executive committee / president), Association managers, Workers (members of the association), and Customers (members of the association). When these organizational models, slightly simplified, are juxtaposed, they demonstrate the delicate context in which association managers fulfill their professional role. Table 3 illustrates this. "Associations are unique because they are like a triple-helix DNA composed of three intertwined threads – members as owners, members as customers, and members as workforce" (Tecker, Frankel, & Meyer, 2002, p. xi). This unique structure is contrasted with traditional organizational structures in Table 3.

Table 3

Organizational Structures Compared

Traditional Organizational Structure	Typical Associational Structure
Owners	Owners (members)
Board of Directors	Board of Directors (members)
Executives	Executives (members)
Managers	Managers
Workers	Workers (members)
Customers	Customer (members)

Practice Reconstruction: Problem Level

The combination of association characteristics, association managerial work, and the context in which all of this occurs creates puzzles or dilemmas. In the "normal" organization one has authority over those they manage. Even in a matrix organization, one has line authority for those areas for which they are responsible. In the case of associations, from a spatial perspective, the association managers must manage those *over* not *under*. An in-depth look begins to address this management puzzle.

Chapter V

THE TACTICAL WORK OF ASSOCIATION MANAGERS

This chapter continues the reconstruction process and focuses on the technical level of reconstruction. It demonstrates the visible practice and work of association managers through a created text about a meeting that essentially illustrates both problems and solutions. To avoid a disembodied recitation of the ways they implement their role, a fictitious trade association is presented with background material, board attendees, and a board agenda. These elements are then used to create an abbreviated board-meeting transcript that contextualizes the problems that surface and the techniques employed by association managers to address those problems.

This created account begins to illustrate how their work practice solves or is organized to address the dilemmas described earlier. The transcript indicates numerous interventions and how these interventions serve as points of introduction to a broader discussion on differing types of interventions and the temporal nature of interventional work. This created account offers an opportunity for a contextualized, coherent meeting and exposes a number of issues and techniques within a single board meeting. It is highly unlikely that any naturally occurring board meeting would include all of these illustrations. This compilation accurately reflects typical problems and solutions as articulated in the interviews. This chapter identifies interventions to understand how they are employed and with what effect. The interventions are grouped into 3 time frames (pre-interactional, in-the-moment, and post-interactional) and 5 types (administrative, process expertise, informational, backstage, and document-based).

The Board Meeting

The work of association managers occurs throughout the annual lifecycle of an association. During the course of a year there will usually be 2-4 board meetings, committee meetings, task force meetings, annual conferences, and multiple interactions in small groups, dyads, and via email and telephone. For one to see the role enacted it would be beneficial to shadow an association manager to account for all interactions and each step of the process. This research was not designed to follow a single association manager or a single association management company but was intended to capture, in aggregate, the work of association managers. Interviews were designed to capture the stories of the association managers as they described their role and their work. Because board meetings are the centerpiece of the strategic and planning function of most associations and where the majority of work is presented and ratified, association managers generally defaulted to board interactions when responding to interview questions about issues in managing volunteer leaders and how they accomplished their work. Schwartzman (1989) notes that the centrality and recursiveness of meetings offer a key place for research for "the practices of structure and the structure of practice" (p. 25). In studying the meeting process the role of association managers emerges. A key topic that surfaced during the interview process was the relationship between association managers and association board members with whom they regularly interacted.

Board meetings serve as both a forum for discussion and a point of ratification for the work of associations. In some instances, association managers will conduct the board meeting by personally facilitating the interaction and working through the meeting

agenda. In other associations, frequently based on history and precedence of the particular association, the volunteer president will run the meeting. Regardless of who actually conducts the board meeting, the association manager's hand of guidance is evident. The first step will be to make conspicuous the techniques used to shape the interactional space and, subsequently, to reveal the strategies behind the techniques.

Association managers, directly, or through the volunteer president, will follow a fairly consistent set of techniques, or interventions, in managing the board interactions. In an effort to provide a backdrop or context for considering these interventions, a fictitious association is presented below with a board agenda and created excerpts from a prototypical board interaction. It is not unusual for board meetings to last 4-6 hours. The sample below represents a severely edited exemplar. In this instance, the volunteer leader is conducting the meeting. This example provides a contextual framework to facilitate an understanding of the work of association managers.

Prototypical Trade Association Background

The National Pet Products Association (NPPA) is a fictional trade association comprised of manufacturers of pet products. The overall industry is $20 billion in retail sales and the trade association has 800 member companies ranging in size from startups to companies doing several hundred million dollars in revenue.

The Headquarters (HQ) association management company manages this association. HQ has a number of staff assigned to work on NPPA and all of the staff members are employees of HQ. Allison, as an employee of HQ, functions as the executive director of NPPA and also manages one other small HQ client. The assistant

executive director working with NPPA, also employed by HQ, is Adrienne and she splits

her time between the same two HQ clients that Allison services. Albert, the membership

relationship specialist and Anna, the public relations manager, are also employees of HQ

and serve NPPA, but also have other HQ clients. While other HQ employees work on

specific projects for NPPA (web development, publications, financial), only the

aforementioned HQ employees attend the board meeting.

The other attendees of the board meeting are representatives from various NPPA

member companies. In most cases the company representatives are company presidents

or other executives such as executive vice president of sales or marketing. The

association board is made up of an executive committee and the general board members.

The executive committee consists of Edward (Past President), Elaine (President), Eli

(President Elect) and Emilio (Secretary/Treasurer). The balance of the board consists of

nine additional board members. Four are executives from the top ten largest companies in

the industry. Their names are Tom, Tabatha, Taylor, and Ted. Three of the board

members, Michael, Mackenzie, and Mark are from mid-size companies and the last two

members, Sasha and Sam, are from small companies in the industry. Of these nine board

members, three are serving the first of their three-year term, three are serving their second

year and the remaining three are serving the last year of their term.

Prototypical Agenda

Table 4 represents a fictional handout of a prototypical agenda. This board agenda,

and all the relevant information for the upcoming discussions, would have been

distributed to all board members prior to the actual board meeting. The information

Table 4

Prototypical Agenda for a Board Meeting

The National Pet Products Association

Board Meeting Agenda

Mission Statement: The National Pet Products Association exists to advance the interests, growth, and well being of the pet products industry through public education, the development of consistent safety standards, and the development of the overall market for our products.

Strategic Initiatives:
Increase consumer awareness and demand for members' products.
Develop standards in conjunction with the ASTM International (ASTM) and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for product safety.
Increase the North American and international markets for members' products.

Call to Order (Elaine)
Approve minutes from the previous board meeting (Elaine)
Finance Committee Report (Emilio)
Nominating Committee Report (Edward)
Trade Show Committee Report (Taylor)
Charity Committee Report (Ted)

Lunch

Task Force Reports
Public relations report (Michael)
Update on social media campaign
Regulatory update (Tom)
New standards for protein certification
Update on recall of chicken from China
Report on International Market Development (Sasha)
Update on negotiation to merge the Canadian Pet Association trade show
Report on the Small Company Initiative (Mackenzie)
Report on the Retailer Relationships (Sam)

New Business: (Elaine)

Adjournment: (Elaine)

packets are not part of this presentation.

Prototypical Board Discussion

The following section represents a prototypical board discussion created to illustrate the correspondence between a predetermined agenda and the flow of the discussion. It illustrates the back and forth interactions among board members and staff participants. It demonstrates the process of handling normal business and how association mangers intervene in the discussion. The following is a limited transcription for illustration purposes.

Approve minutes from the previous board meeting (Elaine)

Elaine – *Good morning. I would like to open our spring 2013 board meeting with a welcome to our three new board members Ted, Mackenzie, and Sam. We are glad to have you join our happy band as we seek to steer our industry association.*

Does everyone have his or her copy of the agenda? Good. We will be carefully following the agenda in terms of both sequence and timing.

On our consent agenda this morning we have only three items. The first is to approve our meeting tomorrow at 10:00 with Carl Consultants to discuss new opportunities for special freight rates for our members. The second is to confirm our fall meeting on Tuesday afternoon at the close of our annual trade show, and finally an approval of the meeting notes from our last board meeting, which were previously distributed for your review. Is there a motion to accept the agenda? Thank you Tom. Any questions? None. The consent agenda has been passed.

In our board orientation yesterday, each of the new board members had a chance to review the strategic plan and our strategic initiatives for 2013 that were completed at our last board meeting. Ted, Mackenzie, Sam, do you have any questions about our association's direction?

Ted – *I have no questions.*

Elaine – *Thank you.*

Mackenzie – *None.*

Elaine – *Thank you.*

Sam – *I understand the document and think the strategy was well articulated. I am excited about the future of this organization.*

Elaine – *Thank you. So, each of you agree that these three initiatives reflect the most pressing issues in enhancing the role of our trade association?*

Mackenzie – *Yes*

Sam – *Absolutely*

Ted – *Yes.*

Elaine – *Thank you. With that agreement we will collectively move forward in building this organization.*

Emilio, if you would begin your report please.

Finance Committee Report (Emilio)

Emilio – *If you look at the financial statements included in your board information packet…*

Sam – *Before we finish, I have a question about the compensation history to the AMC. Why did we have 2% increases for 3 years and then this year we have a 5% increase?*

Elaine – *The association headquarters took on a number of additional projects for our association including the new educational conference and the social network expansion. Both of these projects required significant additional hours from headquarters.*

Sam – *Well I understand that, but I would like to see a breakdown of the projected hours and cost for those two projects as well as any 'standard' increase over last year. I have been on other boards and these fees surprise me.*

[Allison surreptitiously slips a note to Elaine]

Elaine – *We can provide a complete explanation of the increase that was approved at the last board meeting prior to you joining us. Emilio, would you have that information on hand or will you need to send it.*

Emilio – *I can send it when I have access to my computer this evening.*

Elaine – *Please send it to Sam as well as the other two new board members. If any of you have further questions on the issue, please let me know directly.*

Emilio - *…if there are no further questions, Edward will provide the nominating committee report.*

Nominating Committee Report (Edward)

Edward – *As you know the spring 2013 board meeting includes the installation of three new board members. We all had a good look at Taylor, Mackenzie, and Sam at the Karaoke bar last night and it seems they will fit in quite well with our group. Taylor will be chairing the charity committee, Mackenzie the new small company initiative task force, and Sam will head the retailer relationship task force.*

All three of our new members have completed their board training with our executive director and have already become quite immersed in their respective assignments.

….If there are no further questions, I will pass the torch to Taylor.

Trade Show Committee Report (Taylor)

Taylor – *We are currently seeking to finalize our contract for the 2016 trade show and are having a difficult time with the hotel arrangements in Las Vegas. The convention center is available for dates of September 18-21, but both of our normal hotel choices for housing are hosting additional large shows and cannot provide adequate room blocks we for our members.*

Sam – *I know I'm new here on the board, but why don't we investigate moving to Orlando? I was at a trade show there in my old industry and Orlando is a great place to take your family for a vacation while you are working the trade show.*

Taylor – *Allison you've had a lot of experience with this show moving from Dallas to Vegas, can you provide some history on how we settled in Las Vegas 4 years ago?*

Allison – *Taylor, I would be glad to respond. Sam, your question is a great one. I too have enjoyed a number of conventions in Orlando and love the city. It would be a good idea to re-visit this location as we look toward future shows. The amount of exhibit space we need for our industry is large compared to the number of rooms we include in our room block and this limits our opportunities in a number of large convention cities. Las Vegas has proven to be the most flexible in terms of exhibit space as compared to room commitment. Having several of our major member organizations situated on the west coast as well as our industries' two largest retailers being on the west coast has sometimes made Florida less attractive overall as a destination.*

Sam – *Thank you for the explanation, but I still think we should look at Orlando.*

Taylor – *Thank you Allison. We have three options available to us. We can move our show back to the week of September 4 which includes the Labor Day holiday, move it to the week of September 11 which would interfere with the Jewish holidays or we can get a room block at two additional hotels which are much more expensive than what we typically recommend. Before presenting the committee's recommendation, we would appreciate hearing your comments and questions.*

Ted – *I don't think putting it during the holiday week is a good idea. We had poor attendance 3 years ago when we overlapped with the holiday weekend.*

Tom – *I agree with Ted. What a disappointing show. I think option #1 is really not an option for us.*

Mackenzie – *How expensive are the additional hotels?*

Taylor – *In the two existing blocks the singles range from $120-$150. The two new hotels we are talking about, Mandalay Bay and Encore, range from $190-$240.*

Tabatha – *How many rooms do we have at the more basic hotels?*

Taylor – *800.*

Tabatha – And how many at the two new hotels?

Taylor – *400*.

Mark – *This provides a choice. If someone does not want to stay in the expensive option, they can choose one of the old standbys. I think some of our members would prefer to stay at Mandalay or Encore. They both have great restaurants.*

Michael – *Can we not send all of the information out and those who want the less expensive hotels can respond promptly…for a change? Maybe this will help us facilitate the whole booking process.*

Allison – *Sasha, you have not spoken on this issue. Do you have a comment on any of the options?*

Sasha – *Well, I don't want to make this too self-serving, but interference with the Jewish holidays would be a problem for me personally and of course a number of our retailers.*

Taylor – *I agree that the week of September 11 is really not an option. We wanted to bring it forward because it was possible to get the number of rooms we need during that week. If everyone is okay, we'll just assume that the week of the 11th is off the table.*

It sounds like the direction of the board is to stay with our dates and make the adjustment in terms of the accommodations.…

.…thank you for the thorough discussion and approval to move forward with booking the two new hotels. Again I would like to thank the staff for gathering the information for this discussion and evaluating the range of new hotel options.

Elaine – *In spite of the length of the trade show discussion we are almost on schedule. If we can have Ted report from the charity committee, we will then dismiss for lunch. Ted, are you ready?*

Charity Committee (Ted)

Ted – *Elaine, I am ready. I have been on the committee for two years now and I am happy to be the new chair as a result of my board position. I must confess my preparedness was certainly helped by Adrienne's reviewing the history and providing me with a full update on all of the charitable activities. Armed with that information, let's begin the report.…*

Lunch –

Elaine – *Welcome back. We have a full agenda this afternoon so I would like to keep things moving. We will stick to the agenda sequence and hopefully the time allotments as we move through the task force reports. Michael, would you please begin for us?*

Public relations report (Michael) –

Update on social media campaign

Michael – *Our task force has been evaluating various options to educate our consumer markets on the importance of purchasing quality products for their pets: Products that will protect and enhance the life of their pets and improve their own interactions with their pets. The social media frontier is wild and wooly and there are a plethora of options in crafting our message and disseminating it. During our last board meeting there was a long discussion about which social platforms offered the best reach into our target market. The staff has diligently gathered and prepared that information and Anna will now present her findings.*

Anna – *Michael, thank you. I want to note that while staff assisted in gathering the information, Michael and his entire task force has been diligent about reading the analysis and are a critical part of the recommendations that we will present.*

Michael - *…thank you for the discussion and we will move to the next phase of our project.*

Regulatory update (Tom)

New standards for protein certification

Tom – *We continue to be in regular contact with the FDA regarding the implementation of new standards for pet food and pet treats. The new standard is now circulating in a preliminary version and proposed revisions should be submitted to the FDA task force by July 1.*

Our next topic is the recall of chicken sourced from China. A number of our members have voluntarily joined the recall. As an association we have published an acknowledgment of the FDA findings and expressed our commitment to our membership providing safe and healthful treats.

Sasha – *I recognize that I am from one of the smaller companies in our industry, but I don't understand why our association doesn't condemn the sourcing of chicken from China?*

Tom – *Well Sasha, your comment seems a little short-sighted. Just because there has been a problem - one I am personally not convinced exists - it does not mean all products from China are bad. If you had apple juice this morning there is a 60% chance it is from China and if you took a vitamin C with your breakfast there is a 90% chance it is from China.*

Sasha – *So do we just give up?*

Tabatha – *Sasha, I think you have a legitimate concern, but our association can't condemn a sourcing strategy that affects a substantial portion of our members.*

Taylor – *China makes a lot of high quality products.*

Allison – *Sasha, I think it's important to understand that we expressed our agreement with the FDA findings, but to condemn the practice would bring extreme damage to a number of our members.*

Sasha – *I think our association needs to fund a research project that compares USA chicken quality to Chinese chicken. Don't we care?*

Allison – *It's clear we are not going to resolve this issue today. Staff will look into our research database and report back to the Regulatory Task Force on a comparison of existing research.*

Tom – *I want to assure everyone that we will stay in touch with the FDA on this recall activity and keep the membership informed of any further developments. Thank you.*

Elaine – *Let's take a quick break and then re-convene in 10 minutes.*

…Sasha if you will now give us an update on your task force….

Report on International Market Development (Sasha)
Update on negotiation to merge with the Canadian Pet Association trade show

Sasha – *My report will be brief. We had our second conference call last week with the Canadian Pet Association and they have decided to maintain their independence as an association, but would like to continue their Canadian pavilion at our annual show.*

Elaine – *Thank you. Mackenzie would you please present your report.*

Report on the Small Company Initiative (Mackenzie)

Mackenzie – *We have spent a considerable amount of time investigating other industries to see how they attract membership from the smaller companies in their industry. Apparently, this is a difficult area for most trade associations. We want to implement a plan to bring in new organizations to our membership that are selling like products and are exhibiting in our trade show. We feel they would bring a new perspective to our industry, provide future leadership, and of course increase our dues base.*

Edward – *How many companies are we talking about?*

Mackenzie – *We are not sure, but likely 20-30.*

Eli – *Can someone remind me of the calculation for the membership dues? Would all of these companies be in the lowest band? How much money are we really talking about generating?*

Mackenzie – *In most cases they would pay the minimum, but across 20 companies that would be an extra $20,000 to our bottom line.*

Eli – *Yes, but how much will it cost to generate those dollars?*

Mackenzie – *We don't really have a plan in place so we are not sure.*

Eli – *No plan?*

Mackenzie – *Albert, would you like to comment on this question.*

Albert – *Certainly. While we have nothing finalized, we do have an overall strategy. We feel strongly that reaching new members is always most effective when they are contacted by another member company. These small companies are much more likely to respond when Tabatha, or Taylor, or Michael, for example, might call to invite their participation and explain the benefits of being a member. A call from a respected peer is more influential than a call from a staff member asking for their involvement.*

Michael – *I am certainly willing to help, but we are all busy. Would we have a game plan or maybe a rough script?*

Albert – *We could assist with that.*

Sam – *I think we need some idea of the companies we are going to target, what the financial benefits would be to the association, and how to best achieve our targeted goals. Do we know what conversion percentage we are looking for?*

Allison – *I suggest staff looks into the data from our membership roles as well as the list of those non-member companies who participated in our show last year or are slotted for this year. We can propose a plan with metrics and the task force can present it at the next board meeting. Is that agreeable?*

Mackenzie – *It looks like everyone is in agreement with that approach so we will pursue it. Thank you. Sam, I believe you are next on the schedule….*

Report on the Retailer Relationships (Sam)

Sam – *We will have our second annual conference at the trade show with our retail partners. This year the keynote speaker will be Bill Goode from Goode Retailer Consultants. His presentation is oriented to building equal partnership between vendors and retailers to maximize the overall retail business.*

New Business: (Elaine)

Elaine – *We have allocated time on the agenda for new topics. Comments or questions?*

Mackenzie – *I think we might be shortsighted in not including retailers as full members of our organization. We are all manufacturers and we might benefit from having retailers join our organization. Also, this could have a huge positive impact on our finances.*

Elaine – *Mackenzie, this topic has come up before. Certainly our customers' perspectives are important to our overall mission and that is one of the reasons we have the task force on retailer relationships.*

Mackenzie – *I think that is insufficient.*

Allison – *Mackenzie, if you don't mind me commenting. These types of topics frequently arise in trade associations and in some cases retailers are included. I have been a part of an organization that was constituted in that fashion and it significantly changes the conversations around the board table because your customers are hearing all of your comments about the industry, your struggles, etc. I do need to point out that if you look at the strategic initiatives that help drive our mission, it does not include retailer involvement in the association.*

Mackenzie – *I think maybe it should.*

Elaine– *Then I suggest that you put together a proposal and submit it to the retail task force. This will put the topic in the right location for a fair and comprehensive discussion. The task force can evaluate the merits and, if they are convinced of the merit, they can bring it to the full board with information and data by which we can properly consider the recommendation. Mackenzie, thank you for your comments. Is there any additional new business?*

Edward– *I think we should consider an award program for industry person of the year or maybe for best product innovation for the year. This might help us garner additional public relations exposure.*

Allison – *If I may interject, we could recommend this to the public relations committee for evaluation. Michael, would you be willing to work with your committee and Eli on this topic?*

Michael – *Of course. We have considered something similar in the past and would love to tap into Edwards' experience to flesh out a proposal.*

Elaine…. *any additional comments?*

Adjournment: (Elaine)

Elaine – *Do I hear a motion to adjourn? Thank you Eli. A second? Thank you Tabatha. All in favor? We are adjourned. The meeting notes will be sent in the next few days.*

This text permits, in short order, the introduction of a problem, the association

manger's intervention to address the problem, and the reshaping of interaction that

follows the intervention. There is an effort on the part of association managers to be both

efficient and effective while honoring the democratic nature of the volunteer organization.

Some of the interventions in the NPPA will function to highlight and bring to life the

intervention categories that emerged from the data. The balance of the chapter details the

techniques used to address the dilemmas that emerge in the course of board interaction.

Interventions

The interview protocol led to rich narratives around the association managers'

work in board meetings as they provided multiple descriptions of techniques for

facilitating and guiding board meetings. A first step was to identify the interventions from

each interview. Interventions are techniques and procedures that serve to open up certain

types of interaction while discouraging others. Recommendations that altered the

interaction (e.g., let's move this to a committee) were identified as an intervention. These

included, but were not limited to, preparing volunteers to handle questions, agenda

preparation, agenda management, utilization of the associational structure, personal

conversations, and report preparation. These were collected across all interview data and

coded for type and temporality.

Although it is possible to organize the interventions along a number of

dimensions, the association managers' retelling of their work most naturally situated the

interventional techniques into three distinct divisions based on time. Interventions

undertaken prior to the board meeting are referred to in this study as *pre-interactional*. Those interventions recounted as occurring within the board meeting itself are identified as *in-the-moment interventions* and those occurring after the meeting's completion are identified as *post-interactional*. It will become evident that there is overlap in techniques across the time span, but they have been aggregated in a way that reproduces their most common occurrences. The following section begins with a discussion of the in-the-moment interventions.

In-the-Moment Interventions

In-the-moment interventions are steps taken to reshape interaction that is occurring real time in board meetings. The NPPA board meeting illustrates five major types of in-the-moment interventions that make up the association manager's repertoire: administrative interventions, process expertise interventions, informational interventions, backstage interventions, and document-based interventions. These five types, individually and collectively, serve to resolve the problems of the practice while protecting the position of the association manager. The first set of in-the-moment interventions is administrative in nature and is seen in Allison's affirmation of Sam's question and her invitation for Sasha to join the discussion on the trade show dates.

Administrative interventions. Association managers are hired as administrators and implement an administrative process that honors the democratic nature of associations: A process that is "an open transparent process" (#14) committed to listening to the members (#7, #24). There is a strong commitment to responding to the members with affirmation. The following comments indicate this commitment: "nobody is shot

down" (#13), we "work with our executive directors here to not be negative" (#1), "that's a great idea! They're all great ideas of course" (#3), and even "if somebody's taking over the discussion, I say 'Okay I appreciate your input, but maybe we'd like to open up the floor to others in the room and see if they have a response'" (#12). The process encourages "open dialogue" (#10) that respects "their [individual members'] opinion" (#24). In the spirit of this approach, association managers will "sit back and allow the discussion to kind of play itself out" (#2). An important part of the democratic approach is how association managers utilize process expertise.

Process expertise interventions. The second type of intervention is rooted in administration but is specifically focused on the process expertise of the association managers and their use of the system of boards, committees, and task forces that make up the operational structure of associations. We see these types of actions when Allison removes the topic of the Chinese chicken from the board discussion with the simple comment that 'staff will look into it.' Later in the transcript, Elaine recommends a task force for further analysis regarding the incorporation of retailer members into NPPA. The need to be effective and efficient during the limited time the board works together necessitates these types of moves.

> I will jump in if I think they're heading down a path that's not productive or is taking them off their mission and off their focus, or if it's something that's going take up way longer on the agenda than they've allocated, and say, 'clearly we can't come to an agreement, and can we carve out some time to do this at another time?' So it's not a matter of shutting it down. It's a matter of recognizing when you've walked into the weeds or walked into something that isn't going to help you accomplish what you set out to accomplish at that meeting (#17).

There are several reasons for removing a topic from discussion beyond time constraints and a descent into the weeds. In some instances the proper allocation of

resources might be a constraint. "Perhaps a task group look at that and build a short

business plan to see what it is going to take in terms of human and financial resources"

(#1). The "problem" might stem from a lack of readily available information.

> Sometimes they'll bring up something that has nothing to do with [the topic at hand] and then you don't have any information. The board hasn't prepared and so it's typically a situation of saying, 'I get that this is a hot topic for you, but the board really needs some background information and a chance to prepare and think it through before they can have this conversation, so why don't we put it on the agenda for next time,' and so that then becomes one of the parking lot issues that is put onto the next agenda. (#17)

It is possible that an item may be moved because it is not a topic for that

particular board meeting. This is seen in Elaine's move above. It is not accidental that a

volunteer president initiated the effort to move the topic out of the discussion. When

queried about off-topic discussions, an interviewee said, "Well, I think, hopefully I've

trained the presidents to say okay that is an interesting topic [notice the affirmation].

Where does that fit within our strategic plan [another interventional technique presented

below]?" (#27). Association managers tend to avoid discussions for which they and the

board are not prepared. In an effort to avoid a discussion fueled by opinion, they prefer

discussions informed by data.

Informational interventions. A third group of interventional techniques can be

considered under the broad term of informational interventions. An example of an

informational intervention occurs when Allison informs Sam about the discrepancy

between NPPA's trade show square footage requirements compared to the number of

hotel rooms required. Shaping the context of a contemporaneous discussion with

historical information is common across association interaction. In the NPPA transcript,

historical information is used as an informational intervention when Taylor asks Allison

to explain why the trade show is currently in Las Vegas. Finally, information enters the conversation because of the experience and expertise of the association manager. This is evident in Allison's comments on joint retailer/manufacturer associations.

Association managers are interested in decision-making that is "data-driven" (#16) with the board reaching decisions by "having sufficient and accurate data on which to base a decision" (#8) to avoid decisions based on "gut" (#13). The presumed objectivity of data presumably leads to objective decision-making. Within a discussion about a complicated insurance issue, one association manager channeled Detective Joe Friday and asserted, "I try to just present the facts" (#12). The AMC staff typically sources the research, and evaluates and presents the required data. One association manager described herself as "the gate keeper of all the data that comes through" (#13).

History is a special category of information that is brought to bear during the board discussion. A number of topics, such as conference location or speaker selection, resurface during the life of an association. The rotating nature of the board implies that previously discussed topics might not be in the collective memory of the board, but might reside only with the association manager. "I definitely am the consistent board. The board rotates, the leaders rotate....[b]eing able to provide that history, I think, is important" (#13). "Sometimes I'll say, well, just for history. This is why the board had made this decision in the past" (#22). The quotation below shows that historical interventions can be requested or, failing that, inserted. The idea of allowing the discussion to "play itself out" is the overall framework, but it is not always employed.

> We sit back and allow the discussion to kind of play itself out in some cases, because occasionally what will happen is, and [XYZ association] is a great example. You've got guys that have been involved….that have been around long enough now where they'll jump in sometimes and say, hey guys, you know, this

sounds like an issue we discussed before. Adam, Allen do you recall this? And set the stage for us to go and say, well yeah, we did talk about this three or four whatever it was and here's what the discussion was and here's how we ended up at that time….And in some cases when you don't get that, you still allow the discussion to go on and then we have to figure out a way to kind of insert ourselves to say, guys, look, we don't want to be raining on your parade here, but here's what happened years ago when we tried this and here's what, you know. So we're not afraid to speak up, but we don't always want to be the negative, heavy-handed old guys in the room kind of thing. And that's hard sometimes. It's not in Adam's and my nature to sit quietly. So we constantly have to remind ourselves to allow the discussions to go on. (#2)

The presentation of recommendations is another means of informational intervention. While there is a persistent positioning on the part of the association managers that they are process experts and not content experts, association managers have experience in the management of other associations and they can leverage that knowledge for their clients. The volunteer leaders benefit from the AMC's previous experience with other associations. This background means that association managers are asked for their insights and input. "They're paying us for our expertise….I may be very alone in this, but I do think it's our job to present the information and then tell them what we recommend" (#16). The strategy is not to simply be a bearer of bad news, but "if there's an issue or a problem, you always come up with recommended solutions" (#5).

Backstage interventions. The common understanding of the term backstage would indicate that it occurs somewhere other than front stage. In a subsequent section, backstage work will be more fully developed, but it is worth noting here that even within the board meeting, activities occur out of sight or out of hearing of the front stage participants. The board meeting is a front stage activity for the association, but a number of backstage interventions occur during the front stage activity of a board meeting. For example Allison slipping a note to Elaine during the NPPA board discussion represents

this type of intervention. The note is only for Elaine's eyes only and not for the full board

of participants. It is a backstage approach much like a script coach who would whisper

forgotten lines to an actor during the performance. Although the content of the note is not

disclosed, it appears that it was a reminder that a documented explanation of the dues

increase was presented, approved, and kept on file. Although interventions are grouped

into to thematic approaches, they are not totally independent of one another and

frequently travel together. In the following we see a backstage intervention that then

leads to an invitation to present a recommendation.

> I leaned over to the president and I said, well I think we need a decision tree of
> sorts that would help guide our thinking on this. We have another meeting coming
> up in three months. So I think what we should do is suggest to the publisher—
> well, I didn't even finish my train of thought and he said, 'please speak up.' So, I
> did and I shot my hand up. He called on me and I suggested this resolution to the
> problem and everyone shut up and said, 'fine, that's great.' (#23)

As noted earlier association managers present themselves as self-effacing and

willing to give others the credit. In another example of backstage board work, an

association manager says, "we lean to the person next to us and just make a comment and

let them decide if they want to take that forward. So that's really more like letting the

physician have a good idea that day" (#22). What began as a backstage whisper

progresses into an idea presented by a board peer and the association manager remains

comfortably in the background.

Document based interventions. The final set of interventions evidenced in the

NPPA board "transcript" is a set of interventions based on association documents.

Mackenzie proposed the inclusion of retailers in NPPA, and Allison points out that this

direction is not in concert with NPPA's strategic initiatives. Documents used to discipline

board interactions include the mission statements, the strategic plan, strategic initiatives,

the budget, and the board agenda. The NPPA board agenda has the mission statement and

strategic initiatives at the top of the agenda. As one association manager explains,

> We have the mission of the organization up top, and nothing gets on that agenda if it's not aligned with that mission. So if we get off on discussions, we can go back to that and say, 'Well that's great, Bill, but I don't see that falling in line with these five overarching objectives [or strategic initiatives] we set.' (#3)

The mission statement serves as the foundational purpose of the organization and

the strategic plan is built to help realize that mission. "We had implemented a strategic

plan for them to try to be their road map to the success of their future" (#10). This is

important because an association manager has "a board for about 12 to 15 hours a year

and if we can't get them talking strategically, if we get mired in the weeds, we're dead"

(#3). There is a common thread proceeding from the mission to the agenda.

> We go through strategic planning and we do a formal planning process every three years. We do an informal planning process every year, and then we run the board meetings through the strategic plan. So our three key strategic initiatives drive our board agenda, and the budget process, and everything else. We live to our plan. (#14)

This commitment to using the association's documents provides the association

manager with tools to intervene. Document intervention can be used in a variety of ways.

These interventions can be used to require more commitment on the part of the proposer.

For example, "This will have to come before the board and be approved as a budgetary

item or a non-budgetary item" (#3). Documents allow for delaying by saying, "you really

don't have the budget for that. Maybe we can put it in a strategic plan and budget for the

future" (#4). A benefit of document-based interventions is clear when one interviewee

comments that, "since they've done strategic planning….it's a lot easier to say 'no' from

the board if [the proposal] it's not in it [the strategic plan]" (#22).

Before commenting further on the types and usage of interventions, it is important to consider the post-interactional and pre-interactional occurrences as well. It should be noted that post and pre are designations with respect to a specific meeting time. The post-interactional work continues until the work morphs into the pre-interactional work for the next meeting.

Post-interactional Interventions

At some point in the sequence, that which was post-interactional to the first meeting time becomes the pre-interactional work to the next meeting time. At the conclusion of a board meeting the association manager and his or her staff write the minutes from the previous meeting (#3, #7, #9 #10, #12, #13, #16, #17, #19, #20, #22, #25, #26, #27 and #9). Volunteer officers (#10, #12, #16, and #19) review the minutes for approval before distribution to the board members.

The board transcript of NPPA implies that issues are always dealt with during the board meeting or are at least routed in such a way as to be managed through the process of committees and task forces; however that is not always the case. There may be issues that appeared to be finished at the conclusion of a board meeting that are subsequently re-opened. In some instances a false consensus occurs in the board meeting.

> You get in a board meeting, as an example, and you'll talk about a particular issue, and it appears that everybody is on board at the meeting. Then you find out after the fact—a phone call, email—somebody, one of the board members is not excited or not happy with the decision and doesn't agree with it. So then it's my role or the chief staff person's role to say, 'okay guys, now we've got to regroup, we've got a problem here, we need to come to consensus on this.' (#2)

As the interview continued the association manager re-visited this issue and provided additional detail.

I think what's happened though is you don't get them agreeing in the board meeting. They just remain silent. And then you get, as I said, where they are contacted a day later and say, 'I can't support this, or, here's a problem I have with what we did.' And then we've got to, I've got to involve the president or chairman immediately and say, 'hey we've got a problem, we've got to come up with a solution, here's the issue.' And again, part of our company philosophy is we don't just necessarily come up with a problem, we offer solutions. So it's like 'here's what we've heard and here's what we're thinking as a way to resolve this.' (#2)

In a similar discussion another manager offers that a good association manager would address this by starting to "have individual conversations with people to find out just how deeply they're dug in, and then start going about the business of trying to find common ground" (#6). The following excerpt points to the continuous nature of moving from post-meeting interventions to those that precede the next meeting.

Because I think the worst thing that can happen to a board is people walk away from a meeting not having fully examined the question or dodging an issue. So when there's conflict, what I like to do is identify it, pull it out into the sun, early in the process, so by the time the board meets everyone's aware of this conflict. They're aware of the issue. It's been discussed already and we can come and meet with no surprises and no secrets. I think surprises and secrets are things that can damage the functioning of a board and the relationship between the board and the executive director. So, fully examining, you know, transparency, and providing enough information. (#15)

Here in a single recounting is the process of following up on an unresolved issue, discussing with individuals, creating a transparent process, providing information, and preparing for the subsequent board meeting.

The ongoing nature of association management means there is no particular demarcation for moving from post to pre-interactional interventions. For the purposes of this research, pre-interactional interventions will be deemed to begin as the immediate follow up and minutes are completed from the board meeting.

Pre-interactional Interventions

The idea of recommending a task force is not limited to use during a board meeting. The same thinking is applied at the pre-interactional stage to properly situate a topic. Ideas presented in advance of a board meeting will be moved to a task force for vetting. "It will get on their agenda then if that task force decides to run with that concept, it's either a task force decision…or it'll go out to the board" (#13). Meeting preparation involves anticipating "volatile issues" (#8) and making preparation for those discussions by gathering data and talking "to all the people" involved in the upcoming meeting (#3).

Preparation for a board meeting necessitates preparation for all of the committee and task force reports also. The staff spends a considerable amount of time preparing all parties for the board meeting. Many of the interviewees described their process of pre-interactional work and we find several of the key concepts across the following three excerpts. These three managers work in different AMCs and in different areas of the country. One has association management certification and two do not. They represent a tenure ranging from 2 years to 25 years. In spite of these differences and variations, consistent themes emerge. In excerpt one, a manager comments that,

> Typically the leader, the committee has an agenda or has something that they're working towards. They'll sit down on the telephone. I ask them [staff] all to meet with them [volunteer leaders] at least a week, no more than two weeks, in advance to go through that agenda and make sure that they're up to date. These volunteers have full time jobs and they're busy, and I think it's unrealistic for them to always know exactly what they're supposed to do and recall what the agenda was when they didn't meet--except for 3 months ago. It's sort of a refresh. What did we talk about last time? Let's go through that. What did we say we were going to do? Here's your agenda. How are you going to handle these things and what of those are going to be controversies or require more discussion and how you handle that….I think you, it's, it's supportive of your leadership that they have a chance to think it out loud before they get put in a position of having to manage that. (#17)

In excerpt 2, an association manager comments that,

The president facilitates, so I write the agenda. I share it with the president. We review it together. Based on that, typically, 10-minute [review] phone call I pull the board packet of materials together. The board packet of materials ties back into everything that we talked about earlier. It's either a strategic discussion and there needs to be some supporting documentation for that and typically that would be me and the president, or me and the executive committee making sure we have that background information for the directors to review. Or it is stemming from one of the task forces and every task force chair has a homework assignment pre-board meeting and that board liaison knows that they're going to be on the deck to present, you know. Whether it's an update or a recommendation or some combination of both. The board meeting itself is lead by the president with input and sort of direction from me. (#13)

In excerpt three, the association manager takes a lighter approach to the preparation by suggesting that,

our staff will have written their minutes and their committee reports, for this group, the associate executive director and her assistant will have gone through everything and put the agenda together. I will sit down with them and go through it. One of the games I play with all of our clients here, but then this one especially, is what is the board going to ask us at the meeting? So which information should we have prepared beforehand…either to include in the agenda materials or if/when they ask us the question we have the answer. (#22)

Across these three texts we see association managers taking care of: (a) writing committee reports, (b) writing the meeting agenda, (c) meeting in advance with the volunteer leaders, (d) reviewing the agenda with the volunteer leaders, (e) giving assignments to task force leaders, (f) raising potential issues, (g) providing needed information for the upcoming meeting, (h) preparing the leaders for the meeting by connecting to that which preceded (providing continuity), and (i) coaching them how to manage issues that might arise in the upcoming meeting. Interventions are conspicuous when highlighted from a transcript and assigned to a specific type of intervention. They are not as conspicuous when they flow smoothly into the conversation from a professional manager interested in accomplishing the mission, gaining meeting efficiency,

avoiding conflict, providing history, handling administrative details, and demonstrating thorough preparation to best accomplish the work of the association.

Practice Reconstruction: Technical level

As evidenced in the NPPA board text, association managers have developed an extensive repertoire of communication strategies managing the problems that arise implementing their role. Their solutions to manage those for whom they work, directing without authority, and remaining a neutral outsider are rooted in administration, process expertise that is transparent, information provision, backstage work, holding the membership accountable to the association's documents, and persistent, extensive preparation.

These interventions are visible manifestations or techniques that emanate from a much deeper strategic and philosophical level. What association managers do is fairly represented in the description above, but the how and why of their work is not nearly as transparent as their interventional techniques.

Chapter VI

THE STRATEGIC WORK OF ASSOCIATION MANAGERS

The previous chapter considers how association managers implement their role as administrators of associations by primarily considering their interventions in and around board meetings. This chapter considers their interventions from a strategic rather than tactical perspective. Association managers are constrained by their identity and the governance structure of associations. They are committed to administering a fair and neutral process, remaining backstage as non-members, and avoiding conflict. A detailed examination of three areas of their strategy facilitates a deeper understanding and reconstructs the logic of the practice. These areas are best practices, backstage work, and conflict management.

Best Practices

"Best practices" is a broad term applied to a number of different issues in association management. The term encompasses board size (#1), strategic planning (#14), and peer-to-peer communication (#20). The concept of "best practices" was raised in multiple interviews and when queried about the source, one of the interviewees said, "I have a great best practices book that you can have for the afternoon" (#20). At the completion of the interviews for the day, a chagrined association manager admitted that she could not find her book or in any of her books used for the CAE exam, which she had

just completed, a list of best practices. She agreed to find the information and send it. A follow up email drew the response that she could not find anything to send.

One month later in an interview with a 30-year veteran the subject of best practices was discussed. The explanation given was that, "if there's a problem with a board member, a board member should address it—not the staff" (# 24). When asked about the "list," she responded that "it's in the books that you're studying from [for the CAE exam]….you're not going get it in a nice list" (#24). When contacting an employee in the credentialing area of ASAE and asking specifically about the best practice of peer-to-peer, staff-to-staff, and board-to-board, as it had been explained by association managers, she commented that this was a "critical best practice," but did not know immediately where it could be found in the literature (L. F., personal communication, January 24, 2012). She promised to find the list and send it but recommended in the meantime to consult *Professional Practices in Association Management* for a list of best practices. In a follow up, she admitted to not finding a list of best practices and said, "It appears to be that it [peer-to-peer] is such a basic fundamental principle, that the assumption is everyone knows it" (L. F., personal communication, February 9, 2012). *Professional Practices in Association Management* does not include a chapter on best practices nor is there a reference in the index. The book may describe best practices for the industry in a number of areas, but they are not specifically identified as such.

Best practices "embody pragmatic solutions that will work given the particular needs and circumstance of the organization" (Weil, Gotshal & Manges, 2012, p. 1-1). The term, best practices, was used as shorthand by association managers to identify industry approved approaches to specific issues. There were two particular issues that

were emphasized as best practices that need further explication based on their application

to the work of association managers. These best practices are peer-to-peer

communication and strategic planning.

Peer-to-Peer as a "Best Practice"

The concept of peer-to-peer is well ingrained as a best practice in the profession

of association management in spite of the elusiveness of a comprehensive list. There is

clearly a commitment to using peers to deal with peers. This principle is invoked in the

following circumstances: mediating between board members, addressing a board

member's performance, critiquing a volunteer, presenting or laying the ground work for

an idea, delivering an AMs idea as their own, delivering bad news, soliciting donations,

and redirecting a conversation.

Regarding problematic board interactions, an interviewee offers the following

explanation.

> I think we should also not get involved in individual board member to board
> member squabbles. That's when I think the president needs to step in. If you've
> got two board members who are going at it for something, I think it's deadly for
> the executive director to try to intervene because you're essentially trying to fix
> an argument between your bosses and that's the president's role—volunteer to
> volunteer. (#26)

When considering a board member's performance issues, the staff is not

responsible. There is a warning to not

> fall for the president or someone on the executive committee who may charge you
> with talking to board member about performance…it should always be peer to
> peer. You put yourself in the position of number one making an enemy and it's
> just not our role to address those kinds of things, that need to be addressed by a
> peer on the board and a peer, you know, in terms of their profession or industry or
> whatever. (#23)

There are occasions when a staff member may be asked about a volunteer's credentials

for moving into a more responsible role (e.g., from a committee to the board).

> There's kind of an unwritten rule that you never say anything disparaging about a volunteer leader to another volunteer leader. It's always a peer-to-peer interaction and never should a staff person be in the mix on those kinds of things. (#23)

As noted earlier there are times that an association manager would like to put

forth a proposal or recommendation. These may be solicited or they may be

recommended through a peer surrogate. The following narrative describes the approach

in detail.

> I think building a champion early on usually helps in these situations, find out who your champions are and let them be some of the voice of the message so that if there is something where maybe you're being perceived as your idea that you have a champion who has respect on the board to be able to, you know, help carry some of the weight of the argument or the discussion.
> *How would you go about building a champion?*
> I don't think you have to build a champion as much as you have to identify a champion. Meaning that, I don't think that necessarily I influenced a champion's decision….I think I discussed an issue and then, like they were kind of agreeing with me or not agreeing with me, I knew where they stood and then could use that to my advantage. I would have champions sometimes talk to people who I thought were polar opposite. I've had champions also work to kind of set groundwork for a discussion.….It's often better not to be the, always the person who's driving some of those heavy discussions, where I think it comes better when it is from a volunteer leader. (#24)

In an earlier section, we saw how a peer can champion an association manager's

idea. An idea is whispered. Then it can be taken up and presented by a peer. "We lean to

the person next to us and just make a comment and let them decide if they want to take

that forward. So that's really more like letting the physician have a good idea that day"

(#22).

The association manager can use members to deliver bad news. In a conversation

with an association manager at an AMCi pre-conference, she commented that Mr. Smith,

an industry icon, used to say "put a member between you and the member" (K. B., personal communication, August 16, 2008). When asked exactly what this meant in action, she responded that if an ED [executive director] has to say 'no' to member A, they need to recruit member B to act on behalf of the ED and deliver the message.

Peers rather than staff should do the solicitation of donations and grants. In referencing donation requests

> it has to be a peer to peer thing and this is one of the things that I've hollered about my whole association management career is that they don't understand that a lot of this, whatever it is they're doing, has to be peer to peer. The executive director going out and asking is just not going to have the same level of influence as your peer coming and asking you. Whether it's asking for a donation, whether it's asking for membership, whether it's asking you to come to the annual meeting, bring a poster to the annual meeting, whatever it is, if it comes from me, [it] just means nothing, but if it comes from a peer it has impact. And I have a lot of trouble getting them [volunteer leaders in the association] to understand that. (#9)

A member can be used to redirect conversations by taking the initiative to evaluate proposals against the strategic plan. "Hopefully I've trained the presidents to say okay that is an interesting topic. Where does that fit within our strategic plan?" (#27).

Not unexpectedly the peer-to-peer approach does not always work. In some instances the staff may depend on peer-to-peer communication to such an extent, that they choose to not intervene even when peers fail to resolve an issue. Vignette one illustrates an unwillingness to intervene when a peer fails to act appropriately.

Vignette one. Julie is the association manager for an association of medical technicians. She has a delicate situation. One of the members, Betty, has a for-profit company that provides training similar to that provided by the association. Historically, Betty was involved with the training committee, but this posed a conflict of interest for her and made it difficult for her to continue on the committee.

Betty chose to no longer be on the committee, but she maneuvered and succeeded in placing one of her employees on the association training committee. This action provided her with an unfair advantage in developing business, and put her in direct competition with the work of the association.

> The chair of that committee knows it's a huge conflict. It's been a conflict for over a year now, and we've pretty much stopped that program. I mean, it runs, but we don't have committee meetings because it's up to the chair to [have meetings]. In best practices, it's peer to peer. She's [Ellen] supposed to tell Betty that it is inappropriate and she doesn't have the courage to do it….I'm very willing to tell Betty that this is completely wrong, but Cathy [Julie's AMC manager] said 'it's their society. They voted her in. Ellen's the one who has the problem. She's the chair. She needs to say it or she needs to get consensus among her peers to say it and she's not done that' (#20).

Vignette two illustrates a situation where the peer group was not willing to censure a renegade president and the staff had to intervene. After the staff intervened and worked to engage the peer group, they agreed to reign in the president and his personal agenda.

Vignette two. The president of the association, Paul, was deeply involved in his leadership role and the staff appreciated his enthusiasm and involvement. However, the executive director, David, notes that "how do I say this thing delicately? He [Paul] thinks that the association is there to serve him from the social and benefit perspective" (#3).

In a board meeting of the association, the Paul proposed a special affair for the association's anniversary year even if it meant going outside the budget. The association did not have the money readily available to pay for such an event and the ED "approached it from three or four different angles" (#3). Paul said, "Frankly, I don't care." In recounting this incident, David noted that, "we didn't have the leadership structure around him to have enough intestinal fortitude to say no to irresponsible fiscal action"

(#3). David's assessment was that Paul "wants to be remembered five years from now as throwing this hell of a party"(#3). In this case "the staff had to intervene because the officers wouldn't, and say, 'you cannot do this'" (#3). The staff met with the entire executive committee in order to "convince them.…that they had to step up to the plate and tell this guy he's full of it and that this is just not appropriate." (#3)

The final vignette in this section is a counter story. In this case the association manager took it upon himself to resolve the issue rather than engaging a peer. He failed to successfully resolve the issue.

Vignette three. While associations share a number of common factors, each association may have special rules and regulations that are unique to their association. The XYZ association implemented a rule that to serve on the conference committee a member was required to attend the conference in question (e.g., 2013) and the prior year's conference (2012). A past president, Jane, of XYZ asked to serve on the 2013 conference committee, but she was not planning to attend the 2012 conference.

The policy about consecutive attendance meant that Jane could not serve on the committee, but given her past contributions, Aaron, an association manager, wanted to try to accommodate the request. On a regular weekly call with the president and president-elect, Aaron explained the situation and proposed that she be offered a role as a special advisor to the committee without being a committee member. This scenario would provide "the best of both worlds. We could adhere to our policies and could have" her input (#15). With the agreement of the president and president-elect, the proposal was then vetted through the senior manager and the education manager. When Aaron

explained the policy and then offered a role as special advisor, Jane refused to participate (#15).

What is evident about the peer-to-peer approach in the vignettes? The first vignette is confirmation that peers are primarily responsible for actions in the association. In this instance, the association executives were willing to permit a sub-optimal situation in order to remain consistent with the principle of peer-to-peer communication. In the second vignette, the staff intervenes because "we didn't have the leadership structure around him to have enough intestinal fortitude to say no to irresponsible fiscal action" (#3). It is important to note that ultimately the problem was resolved after the other association executives agreed with the association manager about the gravity of the situation. In this vignette, a failure to reign in the president would have resulted in spending outside the budget and would have the potential for a charge of fiscal irresponsibility being laid at their doorstep. This might explain the insistence in resolving the problem and is an example of being responsible to the membership over loyalty to an individual, an example of neutrality. At the denouement the entire executive committee participated in bringing discipline to the president. The third vignette finds its significance in being an exception to the widely held, widely utilized peer-to-peer approach in the association management field.

There are a number of observations to be made about the strategy of peer-to-peer communication. This approach is widely heralded as a best practice in the association management world. Peer-to-peer communication is not a staple in most organizational settings and this seems to be an approach that has been cultivated in association management. Their claims to honor process expertise and efficiency seem counter to their

peer-to-peer actions of finding, engaging, and depending upon peers within the

association membership to communicate messages. If this approach is not common in

for-profit organizations nor does it seem to be defensible on the basis of efficiency, what

might explain their default to peer-to-peer communication? Since the peer-to-peer

approach is not an appeal to efficiency, it could be explained by a willingness to teach

volunteers how to assume responsibility for their own association. But there is no

evidence to support this claim.

Choosing to avoid mediating a board member dispute, addressing a board

member's performance, or critiquing a volunteer allows the association manager to

demonstrate neutrality. To do otherwise would be to choose sides and thereby relinquish

the position of being an outsider to the organization. Using a peer to lay groundwork for a

concept or deliver an idea or redirect conversations is to stay outside of the organization

and perpetuates the ideal of transparency and openness. Not personally delivering bad

news, but finding a suitable (peer) messenger allows the association manager to preserve

relational capital with individual members and be seen as non-confrontational. The

instrumental tasks are achieved while protecting the identity of the association manager

as an outside resource that is transparent, neutral, and non-confrontational, while

preserving the association manager's relationships with individual members.

Strategy as a "Best Practice"

A second area that association managers emphasized in the interviews as a "best

practice" in their field was the practice of strategic planning. In a survey from 2005

association, CEOs indicated that strategic planning was the most requested need for

guidance (Gallery & Waters, 2008). Strategy is simply a "conceptual approach to accomplishing the mission and goals" of the association (p.55). Association managers recognize a need for strategic planning to help them in accomplishing the mission of the association. The following comments echo this point. "The executive director can really focus on what's best for the association strategically and not operation issues" (#1), "My role as this point for [XYZ association] is much more strategic" (#2), and "my role first of all is at the strategy level" (#14).

Strategic versus tactical. The association mangers' emphasis on strategy is in response to boards' foci on the tactical. Association managers express consternation at the board succumbing to working on the tactical versus the strategic. The responsibility for governance is compromised when the board's time is spent on tactics. Association mangers lament that governance will not be accomplished "if we get mired down in the weeds" (#3), or "my challenge tomorrow is going to be keeping them from wanting to drop down and talking about 'this press release ought to say….'" (#5).

Even when there is a strategic plan in place, there is a tendency for boards to want to look at the day-to-day work and outcomes.

> We had implemented a strategic plan for them to try to be their road map to the success of their future. We got them to agree to the process, but ultimately they couldn't understand or think about things from a 30,000 foot view and were really more concerned about what color the conference brochure was going to be and what size the font was going to be or, you know, whose signature was going to be on a letter that we sent to, you know, ABC Association about this issue. And ultimately, that is a challenge for entrepreneurial-based associations. I can tell you that. (#10)

There is a suggestion in the above quotation that the nature of the association may bear on their willingness to embrace a strategic plan and allow the mundane to be handled below the board level.

Another example of the tension between strategic and tactical approaches occurs when a strategic plan that isn't very strategic. "They have what they call a strategic plan. It's very tactical….I find a lot of these groups develop plans that are very good tactical plans, but the strategy isn't there" (#16). The constant effort to keep the board at a strategic level may be facilitated by a president who leads his association into the future. "If you have a good strong leader, they stay strategic. They're looking ahead…not just today's problems, what's coming down the pike, looking at the big picture" (#24).

The problems expressed by the association managers around the topic of strategic planning seem endemic to non-profit boards.

> Effective governance by the board of a nonprofit organization is a rare and unnatural act. Only the most uncommon of nonprofit boards functions as it should by harnessing the collective efforts of accomplished individuals to advance the institution's mission and long-term welfare. A board's contribution is meant to be strategic, the joint product of talented people brought together to apply their knowledge and experience to the major challenges facing the institution. What happens instead? Nonprofit boards are often little more than a collection of high-powered people engaged in low-level activities. (Taylor, Chait, & Holland, 1996, p. 36)

Developing a strategic plan. If strategic work is so difficult, how is the association's strategic plan developed and what is its value? Writing in the AMC industry magazine, Hollan (2009) argues that boards "are meant to be forward looking. It is their duty to formulate the answers to several simple questions. Why are we an association? What is our mission? What do we want to accomplish in the future? (p. 76). The process to answer these questions should include the board and key industry leaders (#14, #17) and may incorporate AMC leadership (#27) or outside facilitators (#15, #17, #27). These plans may be developed on an annual basis (#22), every 3 years (#13, #14), or every 5 years (#15).

The value of the strategic plan is to support the mission of the organization (#17; Gallery & Waters, 2008; Hollan, 2009; Taylor, Chait, & Holland, 1996). The strategic plan supports the mission by keeping the board out of the weeds (#13) and provides a focus for the association's resources. The plan becomes the association's "roadmap" (#10, #13, #15). An AMC owner who has the opportunity to observe and participate in multiple associations' board meetings, concludes the following: "We see 25 different boards working every year, that when they're not focused on the plan, you know, then they're, everything to everyone and get nowhere" (#14).

A roadmap is particularly significant for associations because it facilitates mission accomplishment, prevents a descent into the weeds, and also manages an association's process of rotational volunteers. As noted above, a strong president can keep an association at the strategic level, but associations do not always have strong leadership rotate into positions of leadership.

> One time when I was approaching the topic of strategic planning and he said, 'my idea of strategic planning is determining what I'm gonna have for dinner tonight,' and I was like, great, this is my incoming president. We're gonna have a long year. (#24)

Conversely, a new president may provide strong leadership, but he or she may not be working in concert with the association's mission. "There are various strong personalities frequently that have a different agenda. It's usually tied to the presidential line. The president at the time has a different agenda that's not always in sync with where the board wants to go" (#19).

The strategic plan is particularly important in light of the rotational process where the leaders "rotate in and out" (#8).

> They [the association] need to have continuity so that each time a president comes in he or she doesn't set an agenda that takes them off in a different direction, and we want them all to have a common vision of what the organization will look like in 5 years or 10 years or whatever, whatever realm of time they set and then we wanna keep their eyes on that vision (#26).

One interesting approach to ensuring the ongoing value of the strategic plan in spite of rotating board members is to gain the agreement of new board members as they rotate onto the board.

> There's a lot of history there of leaders who agreed that these were the five strategic initiatives. And then you bring in the three new board members for example, and you say to them, 'last year we did a strategic plan and here are the five things that we thought were the most important issues facing this industry and nine times out of ten they're like, yeah, I don't disagree with that at all. (#10)

By gaining the agreement of the new board members each year, the authority of the strategic plan remains in place. The strategic plan for an association is not merely an exercise in long-term planning. It becomes the filter for what is considered and debated by the board of directors. The strategic plan, properly implemented, becomes the fountainhead of governance and administration. What emanates from the strategic plan is a waterfall of documents and direction that shape the entire work of the association. How is this accomplished?

Strategic plans and strategic initiatives. Some associations work directly from the strategic plan and others create strategic initiatives that emerge from the plan. Strategic initiatives operationalize the strategic plan. The association managers embrace and utilize the strategic plan or the strategic initiatives in evaluating acceptable versus non-acceptable direction. "The [strategic] plan itself is reviewed at every board meeting" (#13); "our strategic plan is included with board materials. We refer to it on our board agenda" (#14); and "I integrate the strategic plan in our agendas. I update it constantly

with things that we talk about at board meetings or on executive calls or what the

committees are doing on it. It should be in front of us when we're doing the budget" (#27).

> The strategic plan and initiatives are used to create board agendas. Well, we know that almost all agenda items for a board meeting are going to be in some way associated with one of these three items [strategic initiatives], other than talking about the financial situation of the organization, taking a look at the minutes from the previous meeting, you know, that type of thing. Even under new business, more often than not, one of those items that we're going to talk about is associated with one of these strategies. (#10)

In some cases the "board agenda consists of parts of the strategic plan…not every

part of the plan is on the agenda every time, but we try to relate every agenda item to

parts of the strategic plan" (#15). "We run the board meetings through the strategic plan,

so our three key strategic initiatives drive our board agenda, and the budget process and

everything else. We live our plan" (#14). "Every committee or task force, when they

report to the board, has to identify which part of the strategic plan it's addressing. So that

they tie everything back to that" (#22). A well-implemented strategic plan allows an

association manager to say "no" to new ideas. It is a "nonpolitical sort of way of bringing

them back to home base" (#3).

Strategy and documents. A well-articulated, well-implemented strategic plan

leads to initiatives, guides the budget, shapes the agenda, and directs the work of

committees and task forces. In accomplishing this work, the strategic plan provides a

coherent set of documents to guide the strategy and the board agendas. These documents

have the explicit approval of the board and provide implicit authority for the association

manager. They become foundational to the administrative work of the manager because

they describe the association trajectory. Document-based interventions derive their

strength from the democratic, consensual development of a strategic plan. The

association manager utilizes association documents to filter proposals and, at the same time, to remain totally neutral with respect to each association member.

While the logic and value of this approach is inescapable, not every association uses the strategy as a coherent guide. When association managers take on new associations, they may find themselves in situations where the work of strategic development within the association has not yet occurred. During the course of an interview with a 25 year-veteran of association management, she commented on the process of strategic development when she takes on a new association that is not strategically oriented. In an interview, the following exchange occurred. R indicates researcher and I indicates interviewee.

> R: So it's a trade association. All right. Does this organization have a strategic plan?
> I: They have what they call a strategic plan. It's very tactical. I find a lot of these groups develop plans that are very good tactical plans, but the strategy isn't there.
> R: Ok, so will you go about trying to set up a strategic plan?
> I: They did this just about a year and a half ago, so not right now.
> R: Ah. 'cause they have one.
> I: They have one.
> R: How does the strategic plan relate to your board meetings?
> I: Not at all.
> R: Interesting. What drives the agenda for the board meetings then?
> I: That's a good question. I'm still working on that. I've only been to one board meeting (#16).

She appears to be strategic as she works through the tactical on the way to a strategic plan.

Backstage

Backstage work is at the heart of the association manager role. The nature of their role as AMC association managers is to be on the backstage of the association. They then

take steps to maintain their out-of-the-line-of-sight positioning as a way to protect their identity and direct without appearing to direct. Their extensive preparation and direction, their steps to influence, and their impact on the nominating committee serve to guide the association while they are positioned only as stagehands.

Examples of Backstage Work

Backstage work originates in a desire for the AMC to be invisible to the membership. As association managers work to blend into the fabric of the association, they consciously decide to suppress any reference to the AMC. Backstage works includes contact with members, behind-the-scenes positioning of the association manager and staff, preparation of the documents to support the volunteer leaders, and exerting influence.

Backstage contact. Association managers' penchant for staying out of the limelight has its origin in the very nature of AMCs. In the earlier board meeting transcript illustration, the association manager of Headquarters Association Management Company manages NPPA. If a member of NPPA were to call the NPPA office, the telephone would be answered as "headquarters." This would imply that this number reaches NPPA's headquarters, which it does. What is not obvious is that if a member of any other association managed by HQ calls the association "office," they would also hear "headquarters."

Many association management companies are also named in such a way as to allow this type of flexibility and anonymity. Staff emails point to the association rather than the AMC. When referencing the employees of the AMC, they are consistently referred to as "staff" or by their title such as public relations manager. It is common for

the AMC to be so far in the background they become part of the wallpaper. "I mean, from

the member experience, from the outside world we try to make the member experience

pretty seamless" (#11), and, consequently, "many members of associations that are

managed by AMCs don't even know they are managed by AMCs" (#6).

Backstage positioning. Association managers focus on emphasizing the success

of the volunteer leaders and minimizing association managers' obvious contributions.

This is seen in comments such as "always try to make your volunteer chairman look good"

(#10) and "it's our job to make sure that they [volunteers] look good" (#26). It is clear

that association managers purposefully divide the world into the front stage and

backstage. The first half of the following quotation emphasizes the front stage and the

second half of the quotation makes the backstage quite visible.

> On stage is when the president is in front of anyone else, the board, the
> committees, any members, so the business meeting, anything like that, he or she is
> running it….At the board meetings I sit next to them, but at the business meeting
> I'm in the audience like everyone else. But I have written their script. I've gone
> over all the conversations with them. You know, behind the scenes I've told them
> what we have to fit in, given them the timelines, and then any questions that they
> may have, so that they don't look stupid. (#22)

It is significant that the association manager sits next to the volunteer leader in the board

meeting, which is an intimate situation. In the general meeting the association managers

physically moves into the audience to allow the president to take the stage. During the

interview the association manager said she had "worked my way to not sitting" right next

to the leader during the general meeting. There had been a conscious effort to retreat into

the background in order to put the president in the foreground.

The interviewee from above (#22) works in an AMC that manages 26 different

associations. Across all 26 clients, there is only one association where the association

manager doesn't sit next to the president during the meeting" (#22). When asked about

this exception, the following story emerged.

> They do not want to be a staff-run organization. They were founded as an anti, of the other organization [one they had broken away from], and that one was staff run. So this one won't be. Now that being said, I've worked with them so long I pretty much know their wants, and if he's [volunteer leader] traveling or something, I'll make those decisions. I never could have done that 10 years ago, but because I've been with them so long I can do that now. And he wants me to. (#22)

In order to avoid appearing to be a staff-run organization, uncharacteristically, the

association manager did not sit next to the president and yet, the association manager is

quite comfortable and empowered to make decisions on behalf of the volunteer leader.

After the above quotation, the same association manager continued.

> Our staff will have written their minutes and their committee reports. For this group, the associate executive director and her assistant will have gone through everything and put the agenda together. I will sit down with them and go through it and we'll, one of the games I play with all of our clients here, but then this one especially. What will the board ask us at the meeting? So which information should we have prepared beforehand? (#22)

In the first quotation, it is obvious that she positions herself in such a way as to dispel

concern that the staff is running the association. The second quotation indicates that the

staff is very deeply involved in the backstage orchestration of the meeting. The work of

the front stage and the backstage is evident.

Backstage documents. Pre-interactional interventions also function as part of

association managers' backstage work. In the section on pre-interactional interventions, a

number of preparation items were identified: writing the agenda, preparing the

information, reviewing with leaders, and other necessary pre-meeting tasks. In answer to

a direct question about committee reports, a manager responded, "We write the whole

thing. We schedule the whole thing, and it's just like a board meeting then. The chair just

kind of runs it. We take notes on the same things we just wrote" (#20). Another

interviewee said, "the leaders are in the front and the staff are in a supporting role. Okay,

the truth of the matter is we do all the work, we put in some nice reports and we're there,

but we make them look good" (#23). The following statement captures the extensive

nature of the backstage preparation.

> Well, it's making sure everybody's prepared, I think. So the treasurer's going to report on the monthly financials, or the quarterly financials, whatever it may be. We'll want to send those to the treasurer as soon as they're prepared in advance of the meeting, make note of any discrepancies or anything that the treasurer might want to highlight for the board…we were way over budget on this is or under budget and here's why, or here's why this didn't meet expectations or here's why there's this extra income. So we would check in with that person and make sure that they're comfortable. Sometimes we'll even write their report for them so that they know exactly what to say. That really depends on how comfortable the treasurer is with financial reporting. (#26)

A treasurer is a member of the executive committee, yet we see the AMC preparing the

documents, highlighting issues that should be brought to the board's attention, and even

writing the report "so they know exactly what to say" (#26).

Backstage work is extensive. The detailed preparation and scripting that AMCs

provide for their clients is replicated in the work of the AMCi itself. The script for the

1.5-day AMCi 2010 pre-conference demonstrates the comprehensive nature of the notes

the association manager prepares for the volunteer president's address. (See Appendix F

for an AMCi 2010 Script Sample). During the 2012 AMCi conference, the new volunteer

president stepped to the podium and made the following statement: "I'm getting a feel for

what I do to my clients. Alice [association manager] said to make a few prepared remarks

and then I began to get a list from Alice…now I'm getting into Alice's list" (J. Nolen,

public speech, February 10, 2012). Association managers orchestrate board meetings,

committee meetings, and annual meetings, and they leave little to chance.

Backstage influence. There is a sense that the association manager is doing a lot more than is obvious. One manager said that "one of the great things about association management is you understand people. You can direct them anywhere you want them to go if you're the right association executive" (#3). Another provided a more nuanced explanation of influencing.

> Figuring out the right thing to do is not the hardest thing that we do, right? If our only challenge was figuring out what an association should do, that would be one thing, but in addition to that we need to position it with the board, position it with officers, there's, a lot of political, I don't want to call it political maneuvering, because that has a connotation of some sort of dark side or some sort of ulterior motive. So I wouldn't call it political maneuvering, but positioning things and making sure everyone is clearly aware of the issues and has the information they need to make a decision. Because if I would've gone to the president and president elect and said, here's my advice and that's it, oh, no, no, no, she would freak out. (#15)

Vignette four demonstrates the careful backstage work of an association manager when the outcome voted and agreed upon by the board caused concern for the association manager.

Vignette four. In an effort to improve the logo of the Medical Specialist Academy (MSA), the staff had designed a new logo, which was presented at the board meeting. The board president, Bill, was facilitating the meeting and the staff presented the new logo with their rationale and a survey report that showed its favorability. The young staffers had surveyed only the younger members of the society and had failed to garner opinions from "the old guard." The proposal was taken to a vote and the new logo was accepted with a vote of nine in favor and eight opposed.

At the lunch break Susan, the association manager, approached the president and quietly said, "you can't have that close a vote for something that is contentious and this important" (# 22). When Bill, questioned her observation, Susan responded with, "No,

you can't. You don't want to be remembered as the president who brought down the logo of the academy." When the meeting re-convened after lunch, Bill suggested that since the vote had been close it should be discussed over drinks at dinner and then formally re-visited on the following day.

The next day Susan quietly suggested to the president that staff create a number of options to address issues that had been raised during the board meeting and the informal discussion. During the board meeting, Bill "had the idea" that the staff could create a number of options to address issues that had been raised. With the dissemination of the options, everything would be reviewed on a conference call. Subsequently, a new logo was accepted and implemented for MSA.

This vignette, taken directly from an interview narrative, demonstrates the association manager confidentially telling the president that the vote he had executed and accepted was not a good idea. The president then goes to the board and presents the hesitation over the vote as his idea. Later in the process Susan makes another suggestion that the staff should prepare additional options. Bill feels comfortable also presenting this idea as his own. Without a doubt, volunteer leaders speak the words of the association manager.

Much has been said about the involvement in preparing agendas, committee reports, and other public presentations, but there is another arena, that is not so public, where association managers demonstrate influence. This arena involves the nominating committee and the process of nominating people who are subsequently elected to fulfill leadership roles.

Early in the data gathering process, a seasoned association veteran responded to

the question, "What should an association manager never do," by saying, "get involved in the nominating process" (#4). Another association manager took a different position on nominating involvement, but he did admit that his approach was not true for all association managers.

> I worked with them [a specific association] for 15 years. So while it was always the board's decision and the nominating committee's decision, I would suggest people… but I know some execs don't even like to be on the phone with the nominating committee or in the same room--yeah, that's not what I do (#15).

A third association manager, who is also involved in the nominating process, also admitted that, "I am very active, unlike some of my peers, I'm very active in the nominating committees of my organizations" (#18). It is clear that there is not a monolithic approach to being involved in the nominating process. Some eschew it while others readily embrace involvement. During the course of the remaining interviews that touched on this topic, it became obvious that total uninvolvement with the nominating committee represented the minority report.

For those actively involved in the nominating committee, they reframed it as a focus on leadership development. It is a role of the association manager to "develop strong leaders" (#10) and participate in the "talent search" (#27) and "I think one of the most important roles of an association CEO is to fill the channel of future leaders with competent, quality, big-picture, dedicated people" (#14). Involvement was not something to be avoided, but it was required if one wanted to participate in the development of future volunteer leaders. The search for talent begins long before someone is nominated to the board.

> The reality is the leadership development process starts when I meet someone at a meeting. I'm talking to them on the phone. I'm interacting with them via email and

I say, 'he'd be a great fit for this task force.' and then before you know it, I'm looking three years ahead and thinking, 'you'd be a great fit for the board.' (#13)

We actually try to identify them [future leaders] when the president is making up the committee rosters, so either getting them at least on the committee or chair, or co-chair. And so the president really looks to all the staff…making up the committees and from the committees is what will ultimately get you to the board" (#20).

One interviewee clearly saw nominating committee involvement as a serious responsibility of administering the work of his association.

I mean, I can't imagine not being involved in the administrative process. That would just sort of unconscionable…. I think of the exec …as actually having a fair level of responsibility around volunteer leadership, grooming good volunteers, creating good opportunities for people to serve, always looking for and tracking talent, creating opportunities when you see talent in people, being a mentor to future leaders. I think if we don't do that we really put the organization at risk. So, I think there's a high level of involvement. I believe a nominating committee is the deciding body. But, but taking a hands-off approach, I sometimes think of it as a convenient way not to be accountable for the operation of the board. And that would be wrong. (#8)

Others do not present their approach as pro-active but as reactive to a request for information.

I work with the nominating committee and …if they bring someone up who I think would not be a good board member, that's hard because you go to rule number one, don't gossip. Sometimes I will have to point out some of the work that they've done or concerns you might have. I mean, the one man was brought up [as a potential board member], and I thought, he's not been around long enough and you know, he's been a great volunteer, he's done a lot of work for us, but I think he needs more time on a committee level before so he understands the operations of [association name]. (#16)

The following quotation expresses a similar sentiment to the one above, but one notices that the backstage work of advising the nominating committee has its own backstage.

I have been asked my opinions by the committee and I will give them on the committee calls, but I don't offer unless I'm asked. And the chair will ask me again, offline, on a conference call before the big committee meets if I had any insight as to how a certain nominee has served, have they been missing in action or are they actually doing what they're supposed to do? (#20)

Sometimes the work of advising is situationally dependent on the committee's volunteer leader. One manager said that she gathered data and provided administrative running of the elections. When asked directly if she sought to influence people who move onto the board, she expanded her comments to say that,

> depending who's leading the nominating committee, I just sometimes interject my opinions based on my experience of working with them. But it depends on that leader there. Sometimes I know that my opinion is not as valuable based on that [leader's] personality." (#19)

The tenure of the association manager may also affect their level of influence as noted above. In another example

> Well, I support the committee. I say support. I advise and provide council because I've been with the organization so long they rely on me from the historical perspective…. I will be asked, and it's highly confidential in this meeting, what do you think about their leadership style would it fit the culture of the board…? I help them facilitate that process of the meeting which can be politically charged and sometimes it can be a little tricky. So, that's basically what I do. (#23)

Some associations offer more resistance to opinions from association managers.

> I'll know who the nominating committee is talking about…so we might do something as simple as say, well, they don't respond to staff's emails. Sometimes we're asked directly. They know I don't want to respond to that in an open forum. So do we have any influence? We provide information, I don't know that we necessarily have influence and that particular group is so democratic that sometimes the president doesn't have influence. (#22)

The extent of guidance and the level of influence exerted by an association manager are not obvious from their public statements. Association managers orchestrate and script meetings through extensive backstage preparation and, all the while, the work is done to foster the appearance of distance.

The majority of the interviewees take a role in the nominating process. Clearly the nominating process is not free of the influence of the association manager. History,

relationships, response to queries, and out-and-out recommendations give the manager a significant role in who will rise through the ranks of volunteer leadership. In the vignette below, the extent of influence may push the envelop of legitimate backstage work.

Vignette five. The contract between an AMC and their association clients must be reviewed and renewed on a periodic basis. In 2002 the American Underwriters Association (AUA) reviewed their contract with Headquarters Association Management (HAM). At the behest of the board of directors, Ted, the AUA president, engaged Resource Assessment, a consulting firm, to complete the evaluation. Resource Assessment returned a favorable review of HAM at the cost of $25,000 to the association. Jillian, the association manager from HAM, in spite of the positive review, was "angry" that their work had been questioned and investigated in detail (#27).

In 2008 HAM again had their work reviewed prior to the renewal of the AUA contract. Mike, the AUA president, selected, Analyze, a consulting firm, as an outside evaluation firm. Again, Jillian expressed her dissatisfaction with the review process. "They spent $60,000 and we came in right in the ball park, but I was just angry that the board couldn't figure out another way to do its due diligence in evaluating us" (#27).

The truly significant element of this narrative is not obvious. In 2006 Ted served as the head of the nominating committee and proposed that Mike serve as president during the 2008 term. Ted and Jillian coordinated their efforts in 2006 to engineer that Mike (a personal friend of Jillian and her husband) would be president during the 2008 contract renewal. This obviously accrued to the benefit of HAM.

Managing Conflict

The exploration of conflict in this study differs from the way that best practices and backstage were explored. The previous two strategies (best practices and backstage) are used in the course of normal, non-conflictual consensus building. While they remain present in situations that can be described as conflictual, considering specific conflict events shows how association managers reflect in practice and adapt their approach to and during conflicts (reflection-in-practice). Conflict vignettes are also salient to understand how association managers utilize the same process approach in particularly difficult situations.

This study began with the expectation that association managers would regularly face conflictual situations requiring highly developed conflict management and consensus building skills. The research expectation was that detailed narratives of conflicts and their resolutions would emerge. Although there were tales of conflict, they were not nearly as plentiful as anticipated and in most cases the interviews lacked specificity regarding conflicts and the steps to resolution. When pushed to talk about specific instances of disagreement, many of the interviewees would talk in generalized terms and frequently about an event that was many years old. For the purpose of this study, conflict is "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive the opposition of goals, aims, and/or values and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals" (Nicotera, 2009, p. 165).

When queried about conflict, disagreements, dissension, or differences of opinion, the negative responses included that "rarely at a meeting have I ever seen anybody lose

their cool or get up and walk out or any of that. As I said, usually it's pretty amicable" (#2); "in my five years, I've rarely seen the butting of heads" (#10); "It's really difficult for me to think of a particular scenario because the institute is sort of just this group of individuals that play so well together….if there is a conflict they're discussing it amongst themselves in the hall and it never bubbles to a level that needs to sort of be handled officially" (#13); and

> If there's conflict in person or on conference calls, quite honestly they respectfully disagree with each other. From what I can tell everyone still gets along, but someone will say, you know, I disagree with that idea, and I know, but I'm outvoted or whatever the case may be. So managing conflict with both of those groups [two associations she manages] really isn't a big challenge or a big part of what I have to do, luckily. (#21)

In two interesting cases, association managers admitted that conflict occurred, but not necessarily on their watch. In one instance when asked about conflict, an AMC owner responded, "I have some pretty agreeable boards, very lucky that way" (#11). He then went on to say, "I get a lot of people telling me in the office that I have easy clients" and then suggested an interview with another association manager in his office who had difficult boards because she could "probably tell you stories until your eyes turn blue" (#11). Upon completion of the interview with #11, the association manager with the difficult boards was interviewed. In an interview that spanned more than 55 minutes, she mentioned that her association of mediators "mediate themselves" and then said, "I generally don't have major conflicts on the boards" (#12). Another manager recounted a history of conflict with the group he currently managed by saying, "I understand historically that there has been many times where they've been contentious, but I will tell you, since I've been in the ED role [conflict] hasn't been an issue" (#17).

On the part of many association managers there is an acknowledgement that conflict exists at the board level, but it is not something they are intimately acquainted with in their work. The idea of being seen as non-conflictual has a natural appeal in the world of association management. Why would an association hire an outside manager they perceived as conflictual? This is not to say that conflicts do not occur, some of which will be presented later, but there was no effort to regal the interviewer with stories of conflict and conquest.

It would be unreasonable to expect collaborative action without disagreements, dissension, and conflicts over values and goals. In most cases the association managers diminished the occurrence and importance of conflict in their role. The techniques they employ for dealing with problems are designed in such a way as to avoid open conflict (e.g., moving a topic to a task force). The commitment to topic and meeting preparation and the effort to have individual conversations around potentially sensitive topics all serve to mitigate open conflict. In spite of the consistent efforts of association managers to avoid open conflict, it does occur. The following six vignettes describe various levels of conflict and varying degrees of response from the association managers in managing that conflict. These vignettes, when taken together, demonstrate a conflict management approach that is isomorphic with their approach to typical board meetings.

Conflict Vignettes

In spite of the seeming absence of conflict, conflict does occur. The three brief vignettes below demonstrate three different approaches to resolving conflictual situations.

In vignette six the conflict is between two board members and the conflict occurred during a board meeting with the full board and staff in attendance.

Vignette six. The association had the unfortunate situation of a president and president-elect who "hate each other." The association manager had been fired six weeks earlier by the AMC and the interim manager was sitting in on the board meeting. "There was yelling and obvious dissent among them" (#22). At the lunch break, the board members talked among themselves and "when they came back they were pretty much holding hands and singing Kumbaya" (#22). During the lunch event, the association manager and the AMC staff avoided sitting at the tables with the board members. This physical distance allowed the board to work through their issues (#22). The approach to conflict resolution was to allow the members to self-regulate. This is yet another instance of association managers remaining neutral and allowing a discussion, a special type of discussion known as conflict, play out without direct intervention.

Vignette seven. The next conflict arose between two company presidents in a trade association, but the conflict did not occur in a board meeting. The conflict surfaced during a phone call to the association manager. Acme Corp introduced a new product, new widget, into the marketplace. In their consumer marketing, they positioned the product as a "safe" alternative to an existing product, old widget. Old widget represented a substantial amount of business in the industry and was sold by a number of manufacturers.

Standard Corp was the industry leader in old widgets. Their company president called the association's headquarters and complained that the Acme Corp president, who was on the board of directors for the association, was denigrating an industry wide

product category while serving as an industry board representative. Acme's consumer message was insinuating that old widgets posed a hazard for the consuming public.

The association manager called the president of Acme Corp. He suggested that Acme Corp should be aware of what their marketing approach was doing to harm the current product line in the industry. The Acme Corp president altered his marketing campaign and withdrew the safety critique of the old widget category (#2).

The conflict in this situation was not on the personal level. It was corporate conflict between two major companies that had industry-wide implications. The association manager's role was to call the board member and suggest that Acme avoid attacking an industry category. The suggestion alone was successful in mitigating the situation.

Vignette eight. The conflict example occurred in the same industry as conflict seven reported above and was managed by the same association manager as in vignette seven. This conflict stemmed from the offended party feeling as if their product design had been illegitimately copied.

SmallCo introduced a new and innovative product into the market and realized success with both the retail community and consumers. In an industry where innovation is rare and frequently unsuccessful, other companies noticed this success. BigCo copied the SmallCo product. With their larger budget and more substantial sales and marketing effort, they began to encroach on SmallCo's success.

The president of SmallCo called the association manager and asked how the association could allow a blatant copy. The association manager explained to the

SmallCo president that it was not the association's role to protect member innovations. He went on to say,

> if you get a court order, I'll support that. [If] they try to show that product in the [trade] show I can say, 'Hey, sorry SmallCo has a court order and you can't have that product here.' Until that point there's nothing I can do. It's a free world. You guys are allowed to compete. (#2)

The association manager did not seek to arbitrate a dispute that could be settled upon legal grounds. The request for a court injunction would provide legal standing to address BigCo, but without an authoritative document, the association manager endorsed a free market resolution.

In each of these conflicts the resolutions were brought about in a simple and somewhat amicable approach. In vignette six the staff allowed the volunteers to work through to a solution without their direct involvement. In vignette seven, the problem was resolved based on an appeal to the good of the industry. Vignette eight was a conflict that the association manager saw as outside the scope of the trade association. There are consistent approaches that are seen throughout the work of association managers and they are evidenced in the handling of these three situations. These approaches include association volunteer self-regulation, proposing recommendations, and dependence on authoritative documentation.

The next three conflict vignettes share a single theme of association volunteer leaders stepping outside the bounds of their fiduciary responsibilities with the result that interventions were necessary to protect the association as a whole. In the first case, the president of the association was negotiating for personal benefit. The second illustration describes a trade show chairman negotiating for personal benefit, and, finally, the third narrative is about a president acting outside of his authority to requisition work from an

outside legal consultant using the association's funds. Each of these situations invoked similar processes of resolution, but yielded different outcomes across the three situations. Taken together they reveal a process of addressing serious conflicts in the world of associations.

Vignette nine. The AMC office serves as the headquarters for the various associations they manage. In this case a fax, the AMC office received a fax indicating that the president of the association was in dialogue with a hotel in Hawaii. Bill, the president of the association, was working to guarantee this hotel that his trade association would plan a meeting in their facility and use their rooms. In exchange for the association's commitment to the hotel, Bill would receive an ocean view suite free of charge. Moe, the AMC owner, decided to handle this situation directly rather than having his executive director manage it because the executive director was new in his role. Moe "called their lawyer" and expressed his concerns. The lawyer confirmed the legitimacy of Moe's concern. Moe documented the call.

Within a few days, Moe was attending a meeting for a different association. Since it is not unusual for volunteers serving in one association to be involved in multiple associations simultaneously, Bill, the president, was also a director in this association and present for this meeting. Moe arranged to bump into Bill during the evening and proposed a hypothetical situation. He constructed a narrative about the selection of a new Public Relations firm which had allegedly offered two female board members $500 each to assure the firm that they would receive the business. Bill became excited and, because this posed a serious political problem, mentioned that although these ladies had a good

reputation, he would love to get them on this indiscretion. When Moe queried Bill about whether this was a conflict of interest, Bill responded "absolutely" (#5).

At that moment, Moe pulled a copy of Bill's fax from his pocket and asked, "What do you think about this?" Bill unfolded the fax, read it, and said, "What's this, a witch hunt?" Bill immediately defended his actions. Moe reported, "it took me three days over the course of the time of being at the meeting for him to finally realize that he had a problem" (#5). The three days included conversations about the issue and an admission from Moe that he had contacted the association's lawyer about the circumstances. By the end of the meeting, Bill asked what action he should take. Moe proposed three actions. First, Bill was to come to the next board meeting with a policy statement that says this is not to be done. Secondly, Bill was to present a "board duties and responsibilities statement" prepared by Moe, and thirdly, Moe was going to send a letter to the hotel "telling them that they are not to do this or we will cancel the contract" (#5).

At the next board meeting, Bill passed out the "board duties and responsibilities statement" and all agreed to sign the document, except amazingly, Bill. Once again Moe explained to Bill why it was necessary for him to sign the document. At this point another board member, in his wonderfully eloquent British accent said, "if you don't sign that statement, I will make a motion to have you sanctioned and removed from the board and I think there will be enough votes around this table for that to carry" (#5). Bill signed the document. Later Moe said "we didn't penalize the guy" and that the association bore some responsibility for not having a protocol in place. The creation of the "board duties and responsibilities" statement corrected this oversight (#5).

Moe's first step was to contact the appropriate legal counsel and request a legal opinion of the situation. This legal opinion provided a standing from which to proceed with the process. In the case of Bill's transgression, Moe knew Bill from two different associations and used his personal relationship to approach Bill with the situation. He directed Bill to present a policy statement at the next board meeting where every board member would be required to sign it. This effectively served to preserve Bill's relationship with his fellow board members (#5).

The problem intensified when Bill alone failed to sign the document. Bill questioned the AMC's loyalty to him, but was told that responsibility of the AMC was to be loyal to the entire membership. At this point in the saga, the other board members brought the entire episode to a conclusion by threatening Bill's removal from the board. In this situation there is (a) the garnering of an authoritative document, (b) the creation of a document to preclude this reoccurring, (c) an effort to preserves Bill's relationships, (d) a demonstration of neutrality in protecting the entire membership, and (e) a peer mediated conclusion to the matter (#5).

Vignette ten. This vignette is also about a hotel suite, but this time the location is Las Vegas. In this case the offender is not the president of the board, but a board member who chairs the trade show committee. Many trade associations utilize standing committees to mange their trade show and usually the chairman is usually one of the members of the board of directors. In the case of the Manufacturers of Product (MOP) association, Jim was on the board and filled the role of trade show chairman. Jim was heading up the process of negotiating a multi-year agreement to move the trade show to a conference center in Las Vegas. As part of the evaluation process, Aaron, the association

manager; William, the director of meetings representing the staff; and Jim planned an on-site visit.

When Aaron arrived at the airport the morning of the scheduled meeting, William met him and explained that Jim was alleged to have met with the sales director of the conference center and said, "if we're going to sign this agreement it has got to get past me and I would really like to have a suite for several years in a row in this facility" (#15). He then followed up his request with a disclaimer that he was "not saying this in my capacity as trade show chair, but because I'm one of the biggest exhibitors at this conference" (#15).

Aaron went directly to the conference center and met with the sales director who confirmed that the reported conversation had taken place on the prior day. According to the sales director, Jim implied demands and threats to "throw you [the sales director] under the bus" (#15).

Aaron returned to his hotel "room and I immediately call[ed] our legal counsel for the association" and explained the situation with Jim. The lawyer confirmed that Jim had a conflict of interest, was violating his fiduciary duty, and using his position for authority. Aaron told the lawyer he would call an emergency meeting of the executive committee to be held via conference call. The executive committee officers, disturbed by Jim's actions, formulated a plan of action.

The next morning Jim, Aaron, and William sat down and Aaron confronted Jim about the meeting with the hotel contact. Jim said he asked for a suite and an upgrade, but only did so as an exhibitor. He said "I made it very clear this had nothing to do with me being trade show chair" (#15). Aaron explained that given Jim's position on the trade

show committee, the sales director would interpret his request as a quid pro quo and that Aaron would need to inform the association president of the action. Jim said he understood.

The executive committee considered removing Jim from the board, but did not choose that option because (a) it would require a letter to the entire membership requesting a vote to remove him from the board, and (b) they were concerned about any liability if Jim's business were damaged as a result of the action. Ultimately, the executive committee removed him from his position as chair but allowed him to remain on the board of directors.

Aaron and the association president contacted Jim by telephone, let him know that their plans had been vetted through counsel, and then told him that he was not longer chair of the trade show committee. Jim followed with a letter to the executive committee stating his position again. Aaron wrote "a very carefully worded response, which again I vetted through legal counsel and all through this we were trying to preserve his dignity and preserve the right of the board for information" (#15).

> Ultimately, what we did was our president sent a letter to the board and nested with the letter to the board was a letter from Jim stating, 'I've agreed to step down as trade show chair…I don't agree with this conflict of interest, but I will be happy to serve on another committee.' (#15)

In commenting on the incident Aaron said, "it was actually a very well-worded letter, so there was transparency to the board" (#15). Aaron emphasized that Jim preserved his dignity throughout the process. Jim had been quite angry with Aaron and had even illegally taped telephone conversations relative to this event. Aaron was pleased that "ultimately Jim and I restored our relationship" and "right now my relationship with this guy is great" (#15).

Aaron took specific steps to resolve this conflict. After receiving the confirmation of a fiduciary violation, Aaron contacted the executive committee so they were fully aware of the circumstances. They formulated a plan to resolve the situation. Aaron and the president called and removed Jim from his position as chair, but allowed him to remain on the board. This was followed up with a letter from Aaron detailing the board's response while seeking to preserve Jim's relationship with the other board members and Aaron. Here the association manager (a) has a legal opinion as authority, (b) engages the executive committee to address the peer issue, and (c) preserves the relationship of the offender with both the board and the association manager.

Vignette eleven. Associations operate on the basis of bylaws which contain standards of conduct regarding fiduciary duty, lack of good faith, and self-dealing. Vignette eleven deals with properly discharging one's fiduciary responsibility with respect to the non-profit membership. The president of a board serves as the senior volunteer leader for an association and his/her role is generally seen as providing guidance for accomplishing the association's mission. At times personal agendas become an impediment to accomplishing the mission.

Sam was the secretary/treasurer of his association and began to receive invoices from an outside legal consultant. The invoices indicated they were for work performed for the association president, Charles. Recognizing that the executive committee did not authorize the legal work, Sam contacted the association manager. Teresa, the association manager, knew that Charles and Sam were "both high strung" and when you "put the two together it was fireworks' and "we had to tread very carefully" (#20).

Teresa contacted the attorney her AMC retained and informed him of the situation and "we were working with him" to understand the situation. The lawyer confirmed that this action was "at least unethical and probably illegal." The executive committee discussed various options open to them and, if things did not improve, he would need to step down from his role "for the best of the situation" (#20).

Teresa and Betty, the AMC managing partner Teresa reported to at the AMC, presented the information gathered from the AMC lawyer to Sam. Teresa and Betty put "the ball in his court" (#20) and asked him how he would like to proceed. Sam was uncertain as to his next steps and decided to ask "his peers what they thought" (#20) should be done. He called each of the members of the executive committee, the president elect, and the past president, to garner their opinions.

The executive committee chose three options and decided the appropriate implementation sequence. Sam contacted Teresa and Betty with their decisions and Teresa and Betty implemented them. The first step was to contact Charles to present "what the lawyer had said was unethical and what was breaching" his fiduciary responsibility (#20). The information was delivered to Charles via mail, email, and telephone. All three attempts to contact Charles and convey the information directly were ignored by Charles. There was no response to the mail, the email, or the voice message. This refusal to acknowledge the information led Teresa and Betty to implement step two.

Teresa and Betty notified the executive committee of the lack of response and their implementation of the next step. Step two was to stop "all payments to the legal counsel" and "letting her [the legal counsel Eloise] know what the boundaries were she was crossing" (#20). The legal counsel did not know that Charles was acting without

association authority. It was not necessary to implement the third step because of Eloise's cooperation. Every time Charles reached out for unauthorized legal work "she said, 'we need to get on a call with staff and executive committee to discuss that'" (#20).

With the implementation of step two, Charles was "very angry" and "furious with the secretary treasurer" (#20). Charles was the last president in the association to serve a 2-year term before their shift to 1-year presidential terms. It was during his first year as president that this sequence of events occurred. His "second year was better. We had him reigned in and he wasn't doing anything immoral or illegal" (#20).

The association had four board meetings per year: two via telephone conference and two face-to-face. Charles canceled the regularly scheduled in-person board meeting that followed this conflict. When the next in-person board meeting occurred, Charles requested the presence of a "mediator on board relations" (#20). Teresa and Betty worked with the consultant and gave "her the full background so that she wasn't blindsided." It was clear that Charles was "targeting the secretary treasurer" (#20).

Sam figured out that Charles was planning to attack him and "called him out on it" (#20). What followed was "a shouting match of which the entire board and staff were just sitting at the table and the consultant was trying to get everybody under control" (#20). The staff continued to sit silently and "between the consultant and the board peer pressure" the meeting ended and with it the last annual in-person meeting of the year (#20). As a postscript to the meeting, at the conclusion of Charles' presidency, he remained on the executive committee as past president and Sam served as the new president of the association.

A summary of the eleventh vignette demonstrates the association staff (a) seeking a legal opinion as a basis of authority, (b) providing information to the secretary treasurer, (c) implementing the recommendations of the executive committee, (c) working backstage to keep all parties informed (i.e., the outside mediator), and (d) allowing the volunteers to ultimately resolve the situation. These three vignettes are compared side-by-side in Appendix G for Ethical Violations with all direct quotations from the interviews denoted by quotation marks.

In vignettes six through eight the efforts to bring about conflict resolution are minimal. In vignettes nine through eleven the conflict is more intense and the work to bring about resolution is a longer, more complicated process. Although there are a lot of details across these three vignettes, it is important to note the consistent overall approach to these three situations and how this approach reflects the process that is used in the normal flow of managing the association.

Consistent Approach to Conflict

In vignettes nine through eleven there is a fairly consistent approach. The specific details are presented and then the overall conflict management procedure is articulated. The association executive sought a basis of authority for the interventions when he or she "called their lawyer" (vignette nine, #5); "call[ed] our legal counsel" (vignette ten, #10; and "were working with him [legal counsel]" (vignette eleven, #20). Secondly, the association managers engaged peers in the process. In the case of vignette nine, it is not clear when the peers became involved, but in both ten and eleven it was very early in the process. In each case the peers of the offender were instrumental in resolving the conflict

as evidenced in the following statements: "if you don't sign that statement, I will make a motion to have you sanctioned and removed from the board and I think there will be enough votes around this table for that to carry" (vignette nine, #5); "Ultimately, what we did was our president sent a letter to the board" (vignette ten, #15); and "between the consultant and the board peer pressure" (vignette eleven, #20). A focus during the entire process was to protect both the offending member and the association manager's relationship with the offending party: "we didn't penalize the guy" (vignette nine, #5); "we were trying to preserve his dignity" and "ultimately, Jim and I restored our relationship" and "right now my relationship with this guy is great" (vignette ten, #15).

In the case of vignette eleven it is not clear that the relationship was preserved or at what level. It is clear from the interview that the president served out the second year of his presidency ("we had him reigned in and he wasn't doing anything immoral or illegal" #20) and stayed in the volunteer rotation and completed a third year as past president. In each case the association executive managed the overall process (e.g., calling the lawyer, engaging peers, presenting the facts, etc.).

The process in resolving each of these instances of conflict follows essentially the same pattern. As noted earlier association managers prefer to not take steps without an authoritative base for their actions (e.g., association documents). In these instances where there are legal implications, they all defaulted to legal opinions as a precursor to resolution. This represents them accessing a different authority than previously discussed, but the point is they do not move forward without a formal basis for their action.

In all three cases, the association manager sought to limit the involvement to as few people as possible. They worked to notify peers who had governance authority to

deal with violations of this nature. The association manager's goal is clearly to allow peers to be ultimately responsible for any actions of censure. There is a consistent theme to preserve relationships, both with the offender and among the membership.

The ethical violations discussed in vignettes nine through eleven are different than the conflicts that arise over where to hold a conference or what topics appear on the annual agenda. These are more egregious in nature and had the potential for serious legal ramifications. A legal basis existed to discipline the offender and remove them from leadership. Instead of resorting to a different type of management style, the association managers followed the same overall process of operating with authority, managing a fair process, engaging peers, and protecting relationships.

In spite of the fact that association manages use a consistent process, they cannot guarantee a consistent outcome. These three vignettes (nine, ten and eleven) lead to different outcomes. In vignette nine a new document is created to preclude this problem from reoccurring. In vignette ten, the offender never admits wrongdoing and basically his move to another committee is a face-saving device and an agreement to disagree on the facts of the case. In vignette eleven an uneasy tension remains and they "just got through the rest of the year" (#20). In each case the association executive administered a fair, transparent process, rooted in authority, executed to protect the association and the individual member. Outcomes are neither identical nor predictable, but the process is consistent.

Chapter VII

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents all three levels of the GPT reconstruction of the practice of association managers. It discusses in detail the development of the situated ideals. After a presentation of the reconstruction, Finding 1 and Finding 2 provide the details of the philosophical development of the situated ideals. Finding 3 specifically addresses RQ1 by describing the operational dialogue constituted in and by the practice. Finding 4 addresses RQ2 by articulating the practical theory of interaction implemented by association managers. Collectively, these findings provide a thorough background and justification for Finding 5. Finding 5 reveals, describes, and contrasts a specialized type of unobtrusive control that I identify as inverted control. The chapter ends with comments on the topics discussed in the literature review (neo-institutionalism, professional communities, interorganizational control, and communication as design), comments on grounded practical theory, strengths of the research, limitations of the study, implications for practice, and implications for future research.

Practice Reconstruction

For the purposes of clarity and continuity, the information on the first two levels of reconstruction, which were stated earlier in this document, are inserted below. The third paragraph, which focuses on the third level of reconstruction, is presented for the first time.

Practice Reconstruction: Problem Level

The combination of association characteristics, association managerial work, and the context in which all of this occurs creates puzzles or dilemmas. In the "normal" organization, one has authority over those they manage. Even in a matrix organization, one has line authority for those areas for which they are responsible. In the case of associations, from a spatial perspective, the association managers must manage those *over* not *under*.

Practice Reconstruction: Technical level

Association managers have developed an extensive repertoire of communication strategies managing the problems that arise implementing their role. Their solutions to manage those for whom they work, directing without authority, and remaining a neutral outsider are rooted in administration, process expertise that is transparent, information provision, backstage work, holding the membership accountable to the association's documents, and persistent, extensive preparation.

Practice Reconstruction: Philosophical Level

Explicit ideals are those which are easily expressed when one is questioned about purpose. In the case of association managers they would state their explicit ideal as facilitating the mission of the association. Situated ideals are concerned with "a reasoned basis for resolving pragmatic dilemmas or trading off competing goals in one way rather than another" (Craig & Tracy, 1995, p. 259). The situated ideals underlying the work of association managers include (a) a commitment to neutrality regarding the governance of

the association and (b) a recognition that without the influence and continuity afforded by association managers, volunteers could not sustain and accomplish the association's mission. These ideals provide the rationale for resolving dilemmas through the authority vested in administration, documents, and continuity and additionally these ideals result in association managers protecting identity goals through backstage work, peer-to-peer communication, and interventions rooted in association artifacts. Finding 1 and Finding 2 provide the development and full explanation of the situated ideals emerging from the practice.

Finding 1

Association managers establish their role through the authority of administration, the authority of documents and the authority of continuity and history.

Association mangers are employed as administrators of associations and have utilized that limited authority as a basis to exert significant control over the associations they manage. The association manager's role is to facilitate the mission of the association they manage and they do not have direct authority over the volunteer workers to accomplish that mission. While employee "status denotes subordination" (Lortie, 1969, p.2), in the case of association management, the subordinate must manage those to whom he or she reports. One of the dilemmas they face is how to manage from below rather than above and how to direct without the authority to direct. Their careful appeal to different authoritative premises in the course of implementing their role facilitates the non-authoritative nature of the association manager's role. These authoritative premises

include authority rooted in administration, authority of documentation, and authority of continuity and history.

Authority Rooted in Administration

Associations engage association managers as outside parties because association managers bring an understanding of the not-for-profit world. The association manager's administrative duties reflect a wide range of responsibilities. These responsibilities include acting out of their industry expertise; educating the volunteer members; managing the associational structure, the nomination processes, and their staff; and utilizing data to facilitate decision-making. The hiring of a professional outside manager implicitly acknowledges their potential contribution as an expert in the non-profit world. Their expertise includes understanding regulations surrounding anti-trust and tax laws, as well as, expertise in membership development and meeting facilitation.

In addition to providing a level of non-profit expertise, association managers, must educate volunteers to the work of the association. As volunteers rotate in and out of service to their association, association managers are responsible for educating new board members "on the role of the organization and understanding what their role is as leaders in the organization" (#3). The educational process goes beyond explaining the role of a volunteer leader and extends to an inculcation of the AMC management model of non-profits. Part of the education of volunteers is to create "an understanding and appreciation of association management as a profession requiring unique skills" (Blanken, 2008, p. 81). In the case of board leaders who move through the leadership circuit to become president of their association, association managers educate these board leaders through

formal seminars delineating volunteer and managerial roles. In executing this role, the association manager clearly instructs the volunteer on their respective areas of contribution to the association's mission.

Beyond association managers' expertise and in-depth knowledge of associations and the education of volunteers, the association manager gains authority through his or her management of the associational structure. As an expert in the management of non-profits, the manager utilizes the structure of the association to manage the association. This structure consists of volunteer leadership, scheduled board meetings, committees, and task forces. They manage this structure by recommending volunteer leadership, administering board governance, and overseeing committees and task forces as they move through the association's annual cycle. Most association members carry on their professional roles in more traditionally structured organizations that are distinct from the association model and the association model is foreign territory for these volunteer members. The association manager acts as a seasoned guide. In this role, the association manager uses the network of committees and task forces to position and vet ideas and proposals that would make their way to the board.

The process of nominating members for committees, task forces, and the board offers association managers opportunities to exert authoritative influence on the present as well as the future of the association. In some instances the association manager responds to queries about the suitability of certain volunteers to move into leadership positions. In other instances, there is an affirmative move to influence the selection of leaders. Those chosen for involvement in committees and task forces will generally be the volunteers who will then rise into the board leadership ranks.

The association manager is primarily responsible to the president and the board of directors. To respond to the president and board of directors, the association manager has a staff dedicated to implementing the mission of the organization. The relationship between the manager and the staff reflects a typical hierarchical authority structure with the ability to direct, reward, and reprimand. The employees of the AMC comprise the association staff and, with respect to the work of the association, the association manager has complete and direct authority over the staff's work. When the staff conducts research and data gathering, they are responsible to the association manager. When the staff implements the decisions of the board of directors or committees, they are responsible to the association manager.

An association manager is the "gatekeeper of all the data" (#13) because their staff is primarily responsible for gathering, sifting, interpreting, and presenting the data. In their role as "gatekeeper," association managers emphasize the importance of data-driven decision making in associations. A focus on data presumably avoids personalities, factions, or special coalitions controlling the association's decision-making. The reliance on facts moves the decision model to a perceived solid footing. In addition to association managers' administrative authority, they also root their authority in documents.

Authority Rooted in Documents

At the meta-level, association bylaws govern associations. A bylaws document articulates the overall structure and governance policies of the organization. They typically include information on who shall be directors, what constitutes the board, how frequently the board should meet, what committees are to be formed, and what steps

should be taken to honor the fiduciary duty of the association and its officers. Typically, bylaws are drafted and signed at the creation of an association. These types of documents focus on the inception and broad operating principles of an association, but they do not serve as strategic documents guiding the routine activities of an association. The day-to-day guidance from an association stems from the strategic documents endorsed by the board of directors.

A primary responsibility of a professional association manager is to facilitate the development and implementation of an association's strategic plan. The strategic plan, once adopted by the board of directors, provides a roadmap for the association's direction. The importance of the strategic plan as a document for control cannot be overestimated, because it is the first step in what will become a waterfall of documents that serve as authoritative guides for the association. The strategic plan is operationalized by strategic initiatives, which then become the lens through which board, committee, and task force agendas are measured. The plan as delineated, serves as the guiding documents for the association's mission accomplishment. Just as the strategic plan authoritatively guides the association manager's work, the association manager accesses history as another means to exercise authority in their role.

Authority Rooted in Continuity and History

The "rolling culture" (Axelrod, 2004, p. 7) of associations militates against organizational memory in the association membership. The authoritative advantage of history is on the side of the association manager in three respects. They retain memory of specific decisions that have occurred over the life of the association and because of the

rolling culture; only they can speak authoritatively on what transpired in previous situations and what led to earlier association decisions. Secondly, they provide continuity in achieving the mission of the association. More than any of the members, the association manager has been a part of the overall process of strategy, initiatives, and accomplishment. Finally, volunteers are just that – volunteers. They are busy with their full-time occupations and do not maintain daily contact with association issues. Associations rely on association managers for continuity that transcends the annual president's administration. This positioning accords a significant level of authority.

Finding 2

Association managers protect their identity as transparent, neutral, non-conflictual outsiders and exercise their professional role through backstage work, peer-to-peer communication and strategically chosen interventions.

The next section reviews various aspects of the association manager's identity. The subsequent discussion of their role demonstrates how they protect their identity through interactional choices.

Identity

Professional association managers have developed a communication design practice that allows them to accomplish the association's mission and protect their identities. The means chosen to facilitate the association's business is designed in such a way as to protect who they are. "Who people are is what communication theorists call

identity" (Tracy, 2002, p. 5) and "there are ways of talking that routinely go with being a certain kind of person, doing particular activities and having certain relationships" (p. 4). Association managers design communication to accomplish particular activities while maintaining their identity as transparent, neutral, non-conflictual, and outside service providers.

      Transparency. An important aspect of association managers' identity is transparency. Association managers bring to the management process a commitment to transparency that offers a fair process in reaching decisions for the benefit of the association and that invites and encourages member participation. Associations represent democratic ideals of independence, a voice in the process, and the right to assemble for collective action. Those who would manage in this context cannot be seen as violating those principles. Woven into this transparent quality, association managers need to be viewed as neutral parties in the particular decision-making activities of the associations.

      Neutrality. An association manager interprets neutrality as careful avoidance of siding with one board member in conflict with another board members, with someone in the general membership against another member, or with one faction against another faction within the association. They cannot be seen as choosing sides because they are, by definition, independent parties. To openly choose a side would be to compromise their non-conflictual approach to process.

      Non-conflictual. Their non-conflictual orientation is most evident in their constant appeal to the associations' strategic documents for support, their insertion of historical data as a way to inform, their approach to move contentious issues to task forces and committees, and their persistent default to using peers to communicate bad

news, ideas, and solutions. Their non-conflictual process deals with issues from a strategy standpoint rather than a preference standpoint. As association managers receive compensation to facilitate consensus among equals, they strive to be seen as non-conflictual. An association manager speaks as a professional, not as an individual party. An association manager's identity as transparent, neutral, and non-conflictual facilitates his or her identity as outside service providers.

Outside service providers. The association managers readily acknowledge their outsider status as non-member service providers dedicated to the mission of those they serve. It would be presumptuous to act as an insider because associations are volunteer organizations, and association managers are not paid employees nor are they members of the association. The association manager faces a dilemma in managing an association where members are united on an overall association mission but are not necessarily united on all aspects of the mission. While an association may appear to be a cooperative, coherent collection of members, in reality they may be extremely diverse and contentious on all issues outside of the association's mission. An association manager, who clearly identifies as an outside manager, faces a complicated task as volunteer members own, govern, and work within the association.

The heart of the association manager's dilemma is how to manage in this organizational context while remaining transparent, neutral, non-conflictual, and outside the organization. To cross these lines would put the business model of association management companies at risk. It must be acknowledged that the appropriate implementation of the association management model is required for AMC's to persist in collecting fees and advancing their businesses.

Role

The following elements allow association managers to design their practice in pursuit of their role in such a way as to protect their transparent, neutral, non-conflictual, and outside service provider identity. Association managers depend on backstage work, peer-to-peer communication, and interventions that are solidly rooted in the inventions of the association to exercise their professional role. These elements are not discrete activities and there is significant overlap.

Backstage work. On the surface the role of the association manager might naively be seen as preparing for board meetings, selecting speakers for special events, and facilitating meetings. Meetings are but a small portion of the work of the association manager. Meetings serve as opportunities for general discussion and a point in time for ratification of decisions. What remains behind the curtain (backstage) is the manager's work in pre-selecting volunteer leaders, conducting pre-meetings, preparing officers, setting the agenda, intervening directly in meetings, following up on open issues, publishing the minutes, gathering data, and then conducting pre-meetings. This entire process is done with individuals or small groups of volunteers, out of the public eye and justified under the responsibility of professionally administering the business of the association. Meetings serve in space and time as the moments when the curtain rises.

From the backstage of the association, association managers prepare reports and provide information for those items that will appear and be discussed on the agenda they have written. The volunteer leaders will be prepared to present information, to respond to questions, and to remove illicit topics from the meeting. In some cases managers will find

a champion to present the manager's ideas or recommendations in a non-threatening way. They refer to this process of managing communication as peer-to-peer communication.

Peer-to-peer communication. A key to association managers accomplishing their work while protecting their identity is the communication design that uses members or peers to effectively communicate to other peers in the association. Whether the goal is to present an idea, deliver bad news, enforce a policy, or redirect a discussion, the use of peers allows the manager to appear fully neutral and avoid conflictual situations. For example peer-to-peer communication may occur at the direction or suggestion of a manager but be initiated or implemented backstage.

Interventions. One situation in which association managers cannot always take advantage of backstage work and peer-to-peer communication is in an active meeting. There are instances in board meetings of backstage work (e.g., whispering a comment to president) and peer-to-peer communication work (e.g., a president suggesting a task force); however, frequently the association manager chooses to directly intervene during an ongoing meeting. When association managers intervene directly during meetings, their interventions must be designed in such a way as to protect their neutral identity.

They protect their neutral identity by utilizing interventional techniques that do not threaten the members or reveal any bias on the part of the manager. Inventions are artifacts available as tools for coordinating action. Artifacts are not evaluated on the basis of "what they are but how they work" (Krippendorff, 2006, p. 112). These are "procedures and social structures" (Aakhus & Anderson, unpublished manuscript) that are depended upon. For example, association managerial interventions are not "well, I think you should do this," or "my opinion is." They are clearly rooted in previously

existing artifacts that provide authority for the claim being made and these artifacts distance the manager from the intervention.

Finding 3

Association managers coordinate collaborative action through an operational dialogue.

Collaborative action is the outcome of a diverse group of association members coordinating their efforts to achieve the mission of their organization. In the case of this study, the association manager coordinates the associations' work. The **RQ1** that informed this study is: **What do association managers do to coordinate multiple actors for collaborative action?**

The theoretical orientation of this study did not use organization theories, but considered the problem from the vantage point of communication theory. The statement from March and Simon (1993) in the introduction of this document is appropriate to repeat in identifying what association managers do in coordinating multiple actors. Shifting from the March and Simon "organizational theories" theoretical frame, to a "communicational perspective" (Craig, 1999, p. 126) this study seeks to describe "the delicate conversion of conflict into cooperation, the mobilization of resources, and the coordination of effort that facilitate the joint survival of an organization and its members" (March & Simon, 1993, p. 2) while using a communicational perspective.

Association managers coordinate multiple actors in their role as managers and administrators of an association. They deploy their process expertise to achieve the mission of the association through effective and efficient use of the association's

resources. Through careful use of the strategic plan and the associational structure they shepherd ideas and initiatives through the association. Much of the work is done backstage. This includes not only working with the volunteers that make up the association, but also the directing of the staff in the gathering and presentation of data. They accommodate the democratic nature of associations by remaining independent of individual positions on association issues and, through a fair process of consensus building, they remain neutral with respect to each member of the association.

The overarching means by which they coordinate collaboration is through the careful implementation of a specific type of dialogue, an *operational dialogue*, which constrains the decision-making premises of the association. This dialogue uses the association's mission and strategy as a background against which all topics must be measured. Even though associations are democratic in nature, the operational dialogue process does not allow for any member to bring up any topic at any time. When a topic is raised, the initial question is, "Does it (whatever topic is introduced) support the mission and strategy of the association?" This question sets in motion a process that requires the use of the associational structure (e.g., committees) as a means of vetting and researching potential topics before these topics can be brought to the level of a board discussion. The dialogue avoids a "he said, she said" appeal to popularity, personality, or persuasive action by constantly driving the board members to data-driven, strategic decisions. The primary conduit for researching, gathering, analyzing, and presenting data is the staff that reports directly to the association manager.

The dialogic system, or operational dialogue, also manages the "rolling culture" of associations by educating board members regarding their duties as they join the

leadership of the association. As new board members rotate onto the board, they are introduced to the association strategy and asked to affirm their commitment to it. This commitment sets the stage for each board member to voluntarily put himself or herself under the authority of the association's strategy and by extension the operational dialogue. The changing nature of the volunteer work force and the historical continuity provided by the association manager facilitate this process. The volunteer members come to think of problems and solutions in light of the vocabulary and constraints of the dialogue. The operational dialogue employed by association managers is similar to a professional language. A professional language

> is developed and used by people for some professional purpose, i.e., performing professional tasks in a specific field and communicating about them. A professional language consists of vocabulary (terminology and concepts) and types of communicative acts (including typical intentions). (Goldkuhl & Lyytinen, 1982, p. 15)

The characteristics of vocabulary, concepts, and specific communicative acts are evident in the operational dialogue.

Honoring the democratic nature of the associations, being responsive to the strategic plan to achieve the association's mission, providing a rational structure for evaluating inputs, and endorsing and implementing the professional expertise of the association manager are all activities that validate the comprehensive operational dialogue approach. The operational dialogue has the added benefit of accommodating rotating constituencies and being equally suited to managing heart surgeons, bolt manufacturers, and associations comprised of independent consultants. Association managers implement the operational dialogue as their main tool for coordinating collaborative action.

Finding 4

Association managers' practical theory of communication governs implementation of the

operational dialogue.

A practical theory of communication consists of the implicit principles that guide

interaction and can be inferred from the nature of the interactional process. The nature of

associations as democratic entities and the specific role an association manager is called

upon to enact shape the association managers' practical theory of communication. The

RQ2 that informed this study is: **What role do practical theories of communication**

play in shaping association managers' work? Five key characteristics offer evidence of

their theory of interaction: fairness, preparation, backstage positioning, professional

positioning, and peer-to-peer communication.

Fairness

There is a consistent theme in their interactions to assure that everything operates

on the premise of a fair process. This approach emphasizes an encouragement to hear all

parties and truly understand the position from which they articulate their concern

demonstrates this presumption of fairness. Association managers use a consistent system

of evaluation so that all topics proceed in a similar fashion through the associational

levels prior to a board discussion to further demonstrate fairness. Framing decisions as

always data-driven rather than subjective, gut feel, opinions, or the whim of leadership

facilitates the fairness of the process.

Preparation

Association managers access another principle of logic underlying their communication approach: do not discuss anything substantive until you are prepared to discuss. They use a number of techniques to preclude premature discussion. These techniques include requiring a written proposal, requiring a short business plan, moving a topic to a task force, moving a topic to a future agenda, and delaying a discussion for information gathering and data collection. This principle is also seen in their almost religious fever of anticipating topics that might arise in a public forum. They exert a significant amount of effort to avoid surprise discussions. Association managers subscribe to the maxim of a "place for everything and everything in its place" and expend great effort to make sure that topics find their appropriate homes (e.g., committees, task forces, staff) for discussion and are never presented at the board level until they are ready for the boardroom. They studiously avoid conversations or meetings where they have not yet prepared for the discussion.

Backstage Positioning

The premise of "not my association" leads association managers to consistently take advantage of the backstage in their work within association management. They pursue their management of the staff, the work of meeting preparation, the work of individual conversations, the work of consensus building, and the work of leadership selection as much as possible on the backstage. The front stage is primarily reserved for pre-planned, well-informed discussions and board ratification of well-orchestrated plans. Volunteers are the key participants on the front stage. Meetings "are important for seeing

one's place in the organization" and the association manager and staff are positioned on the backstage (Schwartzman, 1993, p. 43).

Professional Positioning

Another aspect of their practical theory of communication is to avoid speaking as an individual person when speaking on association topics. The converse is to always speak as a professional engaged in managing the association. Framing contributions and directives as emanating from professional expertise, implementing appropriate process management, utilizing history and continuity, or appealing to the mission and strategic documents instantiate this principle. When an association manager speaks as a professional, they may do so on front stage or backstage. When they choose to speak as an individual, they consistently engage in those conversations on the backstage.

Peer-to-Peer Communication

In addition to the characteristics of fairness, preparation, and positioning, association managers' choose to work through peers within the association to communicate to other in the association. The commitment to a strategy of peer-to-peer communication protects association managers and assures that whenever possible a member is interacting with a member. This peer-to-peer logic of practice allows the association manager to accomplish instrumental tasks while protecting the association manager's relationships, avoiding conflict, and enacting their neutral identity.

In summary the practical theory of communication implemented by association managers is invigorated by commitment to a process that is fair to all, a commitment to

preparedness, the private work of backstage actions, speaking always as a professional

and never as a private party, and a persistent pursuit of peer-to-peer communication.

Finding 5

Association managers' utilize an operational dialogue to facilitate unobtrusive control

through a unique process of inverted control.

Association managers are granted authority as administrators for the associations

in which they work. As seen in Finding 1, they use administrative authority as well as

authority derived from association documents and the continuity and history they provide.

Finding 2 articulates their approach to management that allows them to protect their

identity. They protect their authority and their identity through their use of backstage

work, peer-to-peer communication, and intervention choices. Their practical theory of

communication (Finding 4) guides their role and is operationalized through their

dependence on an operational dialogue (Finding 3). When taken together all of these

Findings (1-4) form a foundation for the exercise of unobtrusive control. The specifics of

their work context make their inverted control distinctive from unobtrusive control as

presented in the literature and inverted control is further distinguished from concertive

control.

Understanding Control

As claimed earlier in the findings section, association managers establish their

role through the authority vested in administration, documents, and continuity and history.

In so doing they exert unobtrusive control in managing associations; however, it is important to situate this claim within a broader control literature and compare and contrast their control with other instantiations of control.

Perrow (1972) receives credit for articulating the phrase "unobtrusive control" (p. 128), but he credits the concept to the much earlier work of Simon (1945) (see Tomkins & Cheney, 1985). In an effort to understand the concept and its development, it is important to identify what is meant by control and then how communication researchers define unobtrusive control.

Organizational control. Dubin (1951/1961) sees control "as (1) a means for telling members what is expected of them, and (2) a means for insuring that they do what is expected" (p. 389). Tannenbaum (1968) identifies control as "any process in which a person or group of persons or organization of person determines, that is, intentionally affects, the behavior of another person, group, or organization" (p. 5). Tompkins and Cheney (1985) identify control as "the exercise or act of achieving a goal" (p. 180). All three of these definitions acknowledge intent, action, and outcome.

Allport (1955) (as cited in Tannenbaum, 1968) highlights that all systems "[tend] toward (maximum disorganization or disorder)" (p. 475) and require a "means of negating the entropic tendency" (Tannenbaum, 1968, p. 17). Thus "organization is inconceivable without some system of control" (p. 17). We should suspect that if all organizations face entropy, the association model that includes volunteer leadership and rotating constituencies might confront entropy at an even faster rate than a for-profit organization. Control is not simply a manifestation of ego in action, but it is necessary to accomplish collaborative work. Control is a natural feature of social organizations and

should be expected in a volunteer association. Before looking specifically at the control

as exhibited in associations, I offer a brief history of organizational control.

Writing as a political Marxist, Edwards (1979) spends a considerable amount of

time developing the theme of control and articulates 3 distinct types of control: simple,

technical, and bureaucratic. Simple control can be implemented capriciously and is

evident in the arbitrary powers of a boss or unrestrained foreman. It was this type of

control or power that Weber saw mitigated by the rational bureaucracy with rules that

applied to all (Weber, 1947). Technical control was implemented as a specified

manufacturing process or through machinery pacing the worker. Bureaucratic control was

implemented through company rules and policies applied to workers and supervisors

alike. For Edwards the purposes of control are to direct worker tasks, to evaluate worker

performance, and to reward and discipline workers. Edwards argues that the system of

bureaucratic control

> rests on the principle of embedding control in the social structure or the social
> relations of the workplace. The defining feature of bureaucratic control is the
> institutionalization of hierarchical power. (p. 21)

Simple, technical, and bureaucratic control all rest on the premise that those

implementing control have the authority and "the power of appointment, promotion,

demotion, and dismissal" (Weber, 1947, p. 58). Simple and technical controls are not

germane to this study, but bureaucratic control is and bureaucratic control uses a chain of

command "in which superiors give orders subordinates are obligated to obey" (Blau &

Schoenherr, 1973, p. 14).

Etzioni (1964) classifies control into three analytical categories including

"physical, material, or symbolic" (p. 59). Control using physical means is "coercive

power," while the use of material means (e.g., money) is "utilitarian power" (p. 59).

Control through the use of symbols is more nuanced and may be evidence in three ways.

Normative symbolic control is when "those in higher ranks" control the "lower ranks" (p.

59). This control may be exerted through commitment to common goals and values and

does not resort to coercion or material means. Normative-social control is when someone

in a higher rank appeals to "the peer group of a subordinate" to assist in control (p. 59).

Etzioni uses the illustration of a teacher calling on fellow students to ignore the disruptive

behavior of a classmate. The third form or aspect of control exerted through symbols is

identified as social power. Social power is "the power which peers exercise over one

another" (p. 59) and in an interesting footnote Etzioni says that social power "is not

discussed because as such it is not an organizational power" (p. 60). With the exception

of social power, all of the approaches to control assume a hierarchy, which forms the

basis of control.

Unobtrusive control. Perrow (1972) develops the idea of obtrusive versus

unobtrusive control. He conceptualizes control as fully obtrusive, fairly unobtrusive, and

fully unobtrusive. He defines "fully obtrusive [control] as giving orders, direct

surveillance, and rules and regulations" (p. 129). This control can be seen as simple

control or in some instances bureaucratic in nature. Fairly unobtrusive control considers

bureaucratic control through "specialization and standardization and hierarchy" (p. 129)

and would be found in bureaucratic environments or where control is exerted through

normative, or normative-social means. Fully unobtrusive control is the "control of the

cognitive premises underlying action" (p. 129) or the control of the decision premises.

This level of control finds its genesis in the work of Simon (1945/1997).

Simon (1945/1997) implements a view of administrative control through the control of decision premises and suggests that, "organizations can be understood in terms of their decision processes" (p. vii). He defines "any process whereby decisional premises are transmitted from one member of an organization to another" as communicative in nature (p. 208). The decision-processes theme continues in the work of March and Simon (1958/1993) where they summarize that "the central unifying construct of the present book is not hierarchy but decision making, and the flow of information within organizations that instructs, informs, and supports decision making processes" (p. 3). They understand decision making as "an orderly pattern of attention-constrained action" (p. 4).

Thompson (1980) notes that control "is pre-established in the premises of decision-making" (p. 220) and Tomkins and Cheney (1985) pick up this theme and discuss decision premises in terms of a "syllogistic decision-making process" which they identify as enthymeme$_2$. Enthymeme$_2$ is operative when "a conclusion is drawn from premises (beliefs, values, expectations) inculcated in the decision maker(s) by the controlling members of the organization" (p. 188). This perspective moves control from external factors (directives or inducements) to within the decision process itself. One means of incorporating decision premises is through common values.

Tompkins and Cheney (1985) identify concertive control as a post-bureaucratic type of control. They define a concertive organization as one where

> the explicit written rules and regulations are largely replaced by the common understanding of values, objectives, and means of achievement, along with a deep appreciation for the organization's 'mission.'" (pp. 183-184)

Mission and values serve to shape the decision premises.

Barker (1993) develops the theme of concertive control in his research on self-managing teams. When moving from traditional bureaucratic control, team members find that the team exerts greater control "through value-based normative rules" (p. 408) than the control exercised through the bureaucratic system. The increased control is less apparent than bureaucratic control and is "manifest in organizational interaction" (p. 433). Team interaction, not the directives of the management, implement control. Barker's research (1993) confirms the strength of social structures to exert control. Control is essential to the proper functioning of an organization. In a volunteer association, control is more likely seen as fairly unobtrusive or fully unobtrusive. The setting of decision premises in an association extend much deeper than the mission statement. Beyond the mission and values, how does an organization set decision premises?

Using March and Simon's body of work, Perrow (1972) comments on the ability of a superior to "structure the subordinate's environment and perceptions in such a way that he or she sees the proper things and in the proper light" (p. 125). This structuring, or shaping of decision premises, can occur through a budget, which is an "explicit elaboration of previous commitments," "allocation of functions," (Cyert & March, 1963/1992, p. 99), "good business practice," (p. 124) and through supplying information.

Cyert and March (1963/1992) demonstrate that the one responsible for gathering information is potentially important "because the person who gathers the information is also the first to communicate, condense, and evaluate it" (p. 128). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978/2003) address the issue similarly by saying "It is the case that if one controls the information used in decision making, one can control decision outcomes. To the extent that managers rely on staff, they lose discretion and admit the importance of the staff and

the need for them" (p. 270). The key addition in their comment is that reliance on staff diminishes discretion in decisions. Five elements create the substructure underlying the control exhibited by association managers. They are seeing things in the proper light, previous commitments, allocation of functions, good business practices, and provision of information. The following section illustrates these five elements of control.

Control in associations. Association managers, through their use of an operational dialogue, structure the "environment and perceptions in such a way that he or she [association member] sees the proper things in the proper light" (Perrow, 1972, p. 125). Association members are invited into the dialogue as participants, but they communicate within the framework of the dialogue. The association language game has a vocabulary and a process that allows for contributions. It is based on convention and must be learned, in this case through socialization, for one to effectively engage (Wittgenstein, 1958).

The mission statement provides an overall direction to the association, but it is cast at such a high level that it might not be effective in setting decision premises in ongoing decision processes. Subsequently, the board develops the strategic plan and the ensuing waterfall of documents including initiatives and agendas are used as an "elaboration of previous commitments" (Cyert & March, 1963/1992, p. 99). These "previous commitments" are used to discipline the communication activities as evidenced by their use in interventions.

Associations engage in the "allocation of functions" (Cyert & March, 1963/1992, p. 99) by educating of board members regarding their role as a volunteer leader and carefully articulating the association manager's role as administrative in nature. The

authority to administrate provides a basis upon which to exert authority in a broad

process that includes facilitating meetings, interpreting and applying documents, and

artfully using the associational structure.

The appeal to "good business practice" (Cyert & March, 1963/1992, p. 124) is

seen in the work of association manager's by their reliance on best practices as a

justifying principle for their actions. In spite of having no official or theoretically

defensible list of association best practices, association managers use best practices as a

defense for actions and activities because these practices have proven to be an effective

means of administering associations.

Finally, the identity of those who gather information is consequential for how

information is sifted and presented (Cyert & March, 1963/1992; Pfeffer & Salancik,

1978/2003). The association staff, functioning as direct employees of the association

management company, is responsible to the association manager. The staff is primarily

responsible for gathering, analyzing, and presenting information. This process provides

the ability to exert control directly through information dissemination and indirectly on

the decision premises through "narrowing choice" (Barnard, 1938/1968, p. 14). It also

diminishes the "discretion" of the volunteer members (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978/2003, p.

270). In addition to these five components, there are four additional elements that

facilitate control through the administrative process.

Perrow (1972) suggests that when organizations (e.g., associations) "'buy'

personnel" who are professionals, these professionals come pre-wired with a set of

"complex rules built into them" (p. 22). When associations hire professional managers,

they "provide a major mechanism of control" (Blau & Schoenberr, 1973, p. 16) and serve

as "indirect forms of control [that] are more compatible with democratic values" (p. 17). The choice to hire professional managers is, at a minimum, an endorsement and submission to their expertise. The consistent theme that volunteer members are content experts and that association managers are process experts reinforces the association managers' status as knowledgeable professionals.

Secondly, associations experience the free rider problem in terms of those who benefit from the association and do not join or, alternatively, those who join but do not engage directly in the work of the association. Associations are generally directed by the few while "the majority do [sic] little or nothing" (Oliver, Marwell, & Teixeira, 1985, p. 524). It is only the few who "contribute the time and effort that decision-making requires" (Koza & Thoenig, 2003, p. 1223). The work of AMCs is a public good from which all members benefit. This implies that although association managers serve the entire membership (which can range from a few individuals to thousands), they work with the few as primarily represented in the board and, except in rare cases, the board makes decisions for the entire association. This is important because as association managers facilitate decision-making and inculcate decision premises, they do so through the few, primarily the volunteer leaders, rather than the entire body of the association. This significantly narrows the scope of their efforts while expanding the scope of their influence.

Because of socialization within the volunteer association, association managers benefit in their administrative role. In a typical hierarchical situation, a subordinate is socialized to understand that superiors will make decisions and the subordinate will respond appropriately. The subordinate must accept the directive as "the basis of action"

or he or she can choose to ignore the directive and deny its authority for them (Barnard, 1938/1968, p. 163). In a typical organization, an appropriate response is encouraged by the superiors' ability to reward or punish the subordinate; however, even in a volunteer association, the volunteer must accept the basis upon which administrative action is taken. In this study instances were reported where the volunteer did not agree with the direction proposed by the association manager. The association manager can neither reward nor punish a disagreeing volunteer. Why would a volunteer accept the administrative control of the manager?

As noted earlier accepting the administration of the association manager stems from the managers' authority in the process, authoritative documents and the authority vested in continuity and historical knowledge. Additionally, the process of socialization as a volunteer leader likely contributes to taking the manager's administrative work and influence as a "basis of action" (Barnard, 1938/1968, p. 163). Etzioni (1964) notes that "the degree to which an organization selects its participants affects its control needs in terms of the amount of resources and effort it must invest to maintain the level of control considered adequate in view of its goal" (p. 95). As association managers engage in advising volunteer leaders about the nominees for committee and board positions, they take into account the social interactions and previous staff experiences with those who would be future volunteer leaders.

Etzioni (1964) notes that selection "is based on the qualities of participants as they enter the organization [or leadership ranks]; organizational socialization subsequently adapts these qualities to make them similar to those required for satisfactory performance of organizational roles" (p. 70). Etzioni then references Simon (1945/1997)

and Simon's emphasis that "the more effective the socialization, the less the need for control" (Etzioni, 1964, p. 70). The process of working on committees, being taught the proper role as a volunteer leader, and depending on the process expertise of association managers socializes the volunteer to yield to the authority of the overall process of management and governance they find upon their arrival on the board of directors. By virtue of the process, volunteer leaders are coopted "into the leadership or policy-determining structure of an organization as a means of averting threats to its stability or existence" (Selznick, 1948, p. 34).

Finally, in the process of administration, association managers are "trying to control concrete human behavior in the cooperative situation, which is the only means through which ultimately the common objective can be attained" (Roethlisberger, 1951/1961, p. 390). Because cooperation cannot be taken for granted, "'control' can be exercised only by understanding the cooperative phenomena involved" (p. 392). The association manager's understanding of the phenomena leads them to construct a world where the operational dialogue appears natural. Clegg (1979) makes the point that control "maintains its effectiveness not so much through overt action, as through its ability to appear to be the natural convention" (p. 147). The operational dialogue is certainly in plain view of the volunteer leadership, but it is likely seen as "what is" rather than a particular social construction. To this point Searle (1995) argues that one's social reality is "weightless and invisible" (p. 4).

In summarizing the concept of an operational dialogue, association managers are professionals who own the administrative process. They engage in shaping decision premises and carefully managing the associational structure. They educate and socialize

volunteer board leaders to their role, provide research and data, and root their interventions in the associations' documents and other artifacts. They employ best practices as a guide for management, and incorporate all of these components in their operational dialogue. These elements allow them to accomplish the associations' missions, protect their identity as professional neutral outsiders, and exercise unobtrusive inverted control that is essentially concealed from view.

Inverted control in associations. Inverted control is clearly control because there is intent, action, and outcome associated with its implementation. It is unobtrusive and differs from the administrative and bureaucratic control of Simon (1945/1997) and Edwards (1979) as seen in a pure bureaucratic environment. The association manager does not have "the power of appointment, promotion, demotion, and dismissal" (Weber, 1947, p. 58). On the contrary, the association manager is the employee rather than the employer and as Lortie (1969) reminds us, "[e]mployee status denotes subordination" (p.2).

The process of unobtrusive control, as evidenced in associations, differs from concertive control, which is primarily built around values. Concertive control clearly represents the symbolic social (Etzioni, 1964), where peers exercise control over one another (Barker, 1993). To review Etzioni's (1964) control by symbols, he proposes three instantiations. Normative symbolic control is when "those in higher ranks" control the "lower ranks." Normative-social control is when someone in a higher rank appeals to "the peer group of a subordinate" to assist in control and social power is "the power which peers exercise over one another" (p. 59). If one concedes that the association manager is

not a hierarchical authority, but an administrative authority, all three of Etzioni's types of

symbolic control are exercised in the inverted control of association managers.

To rephrase Etzioni's (1964) work, those in administrative ranks control the lower

ranks or members (normative symbolic). The administrator appeals to the peer group of

the subordinates, or members, to assist with control (normative social) and peers are

trained and educated to exercise authority (social power). Members of the association

leadership, whether aware or unaware, are willing participants in submitting to and

sustaining inverted control.

Inverted control is unique in the control literature and represents administrative

control without the framework and authority of bureaucratic administration. It is allowed

to persist because of association managers' expertise, their deep involvement in the

association, and the associational structure. The process of control is primarily exerted

through the operational dialogue and allows for control from the bottom up. In the case of

AMC association managers, it is implemented by outside contractors, but inverted control

could be exercised in a circumstance where those in charge of the dialogue are insiders

and subordinates.

Although writing from a political perspective, Edward's (1979) summary of the

federal political system is helpful in understanding the inverted control evidenced in

associations.

> [When] the various great federal departments impose their will, they erode
> democratic power by replacing it with administrative power. Choices are removed
> from the political sphere, where they can be seen as products of clashing material
> interests, and instead are placed in the hands of administrators and technocrats,
> who can make decisions on the basis of technical or administrative criteria. The
> distinction is apparent even in their manner of selection: the Congress is popularly
> elected, of course, while the bureaucracy and court positions are appointive.
> Moreover, while officials in popularly accountable bodies tend to serve fairly short

terms (two, four, or six years), the nonaccountable agencies are run by officials enjoying, as an additional protection from popular will, extremely long terms (five, seven, or ten years, or even life). (p. 212)

Few would suggest that with every presidential administration change in Washington, DC, the entire administrative network in Washington should change. To do so would be to invite chaos. Those who toil administratively provide continuity that is crucial to the ongoing function of the federal government. Correspondingly, a democratically constituted association cannot function without the oversight and constancy of the association manager and his or her staff. Democratic action is impeded by "lack of stability" and "difficulty of mobilization" which Michels describes as the "two gravest defects of genuine democracy" (Michels, 1915/1959, p. 103). The work of AMCs and their association managers mitigate both of these grave defects and allow for efficient, effective democratic action.

Summary of the Findings

The contributions of CaD as a framework for this study are seen in the following review of the key tenets of CaD: (a) interventions, (b) inventions, (c) managing of identity goals, (d) shaping interactivity, and (e) practical theory of interaction.

Chapter V is built entirely around identifying interventions, understanding how they are employed, and with what effect. The NAPA fictional construction allowed a forum to illustrate the interventional moves of association managers. Chapter VI looks at the interventional strategies of peer-to-peer, best practices, and backstage work. In the conflict vignettes we see how they handle diverse issues, but follow a similar, isomorphic process even in the most egregious situations.

Finding 1 demonstrates how association managers establish their role and how their interventions are rooted in the inventions of administration, documents, and continuity and history. Finding 2 demonstrates how association managers manage identity goals and protect their identity as transparent, neutral, non-conflictual outsiders. These identity goals are evident as they exercise their professional role through backstage work, peer-to-peer communication and strategically chosen interventions.

Finding 3 illustrates the efforts to coordinate collaborative action through their development of an operational dialogue Association managers engage in shaping interaction at the micro level through their ongoing interventions. Their micro efforts eventually create an entire dialogue and practice through their process of interventions. Their practical theory of interaction includes fairness, preparation, backstage positioning, professional positioning, and peer-to-peer communication. This practical theory of interaction governs the implementation of the operational dialogue. In Finding 5 association managers utilize an operational dialogue to exercise unobtrusive control through a unique process of inverted control. This demonstrates that through their ongoing work they have created a preferred form of communication that meets the demands of their unique work environment, an environment that merges their role as outside service providers with the democratic nature of volunteer organizations.

Contributions to the Reviewed Literature

The literature that framed this study included neo-institutionalism, professional communities, interorganizational communication, grounded practical theory, and

communication as design. The following section demonstrates that a study of the reflections about the interactional processes of this community of practitioners yields insights and furthers our understanding of each of these areas.

Neo-institutionalism

Institutionalism highlights the building of controlling structures that come about as a result of individual choices that aggregate over time and distance. Scott (1994/2001) emphasizes that one can understand institutionalism from different perspectives. The regulative perspective emphasizes rules as the process of creating and maintaining institutions and most closely identifies with traditional views on institutionalism. The normative perspective emphasizes agreed upon norms and values rather than the rules of the institution. This perspective is clearly seen in Barker's (1993) research on self-managing teams. Scott's (1994/2001) third perspective, or pillar of institutionalism, is cultural-cognitive and focuses on social practices (see also DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The focus on social practices acknowledges that, "meanings arise in interaction" (p. 57) and "cultures are continuously constructed and reconstructed through interaction and intervention at the everyday level" (Bate, Khan, & Pye, 2000, p. 198).

Founding documents and strategic plans guide associations, but the nature of the constituency and the collective nature of the mission are not conducive to the creation of rules or regulation by rules. Likewise, the collective members, who may be in agreement only on the mission of the association, may not internalize norms and values that are sufficient for the day-to-day operations of the association.

The focus on social processes and micro interactions proves to be the best explanation for the institutional nature of associations and their management. It is in the process that the institutional nature of AMC-managed associations emerges. Powell and Colyvas (2008) submit that a deeper understanding of macro categories will arise from a more thorough understanding of micro-processes, yet neo-institutionalists do not make it a focus of their work to study interaction. This study, through participant interviews, begins to lay the foundation for an observational study sensitive to the demands of interaction.

The routine interactions instituted by association managers including the educating of volunteer leaders, strategic planning and its implementation, the preparation and managing of board interaction, and the use of the associational structure leads to standardization in spite of association diversity. The way things are done become the way things are (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). These constantly reproduced patterns of social interaction form an implicit standard operating procedure.

> In general the specific procedures most likely to be treated as fixed are those incorporated in the explicit standard operating procedures of the firm. These procedures change slowly. They give stability to the organization and direction to activities that are constantly recurring. In addition to providing needed stability, the standard operating procedures influence and in many cases dictate the decisions made in the organization. (Cyert & March, 1992, p. 122)

When individual association managers were considered in aggregate, a clear process, or operational dialogue, emerged indicating that the individuals were implementing and reproducing a consistent process. The process, reconstructed and described in this study, was utilized, not only in the multitude of associations managed by the 13 AMCs from which the interviewees were drawn, but the same process of an operational dialogue was used in the managing of the trade association (AMCi) of the

AMCs. The process these association managers use in the management of diverse

associations is the same process they use in the management of their own association.

The consistency observed across the association managers who participated in this

study may stem from four separate but interrelated sources: certification, the professional

society, the trade association, and socialization. The persistent commonalities of how

association managers approach their role may be explained through their certification

process (CAE). The CAE credentialing process serves as common education and training

for the association manager; however, five of the interviewees did not have CAE

certification (#12, #13, #17, #19, and #9) and their interviews revealed no appreciable

differences in their approach to managing associations.

Membership in the professional society (ASAE) may contribute to the consistent

approach to association management. The annual meetings and publications disseminate

a common approach to the problem of managing non-profits. Although the industry

journal was discontinued, research projects are sponsored by ASAE. These projects are

presented through industry publications, meetings, online resources, and educational

seminars. ASAE is committed to developing and codifying best practices for association

managers.

This study focused on association managers working in an AMC environment and

the industry trade association (AMCi) that is committed to furthering the AMC model of

association management. Their bi-annual meetings are a common source of information

for AMCs and their management model. The AMC institute (AMCi) is always managed

by an AMC and the management model used in managing the AMCi (e.g., interventions,

operational dialogue, associational structure) is the same as the model used by all of the

interviewees in describing their approach to association management. At the level of AMCs, there is a consistent way of doing things that is encouraged and demonstrated by the work of the AMC institute. This study contributed to identifying the communicational practices and processes that guide this professional community as they develop their "institutionalized thought structure" (Warren, Rose, and Bergunder, 1974, p. 20).

Finally, the process of socialization within the AMC contributes to the institutionalized approach. The 27 interviewees were employed by 13 different AMCs. There were certainly differences in the way individual association managers within a single AMC described their role and there were difference across AMCs. But the process described by each of the association mangers across all interviewees was consistent. While nuances existed, there is an institutionalized approach to resolving the dilemmas faced by association managers.

This study demonstrates institutionalization in association managers' approach to managing associations. Their work is clearly a system of action or practice (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). What is noteworthy is that the practice orients around a consistent sense of problems and puzzles of interaction and how to address them.

Professional Communities

Professions are important in a theory of institutionalism (March & Olsen, 1984) and play a major role in "theorizing change, endorsing local innovations and shaping their diffusion" (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002, p. 58). Professions are "highly institutionalized" and the "delegating of activities to appropriate occupations is socially expected" (Meyer & Rowen, 1981, p. 306). Professions offer a context to study

institutional practices (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991) as they emerge from the everyday

interactions and processes of the members of a given profession (Powell & Colyvas,

2008). The community of association management company organizations makes up an

organizational field and "is instrumental to processes by which socially constructed

expectations and practices are diffused" (Greenwood et al., p. 58). The association

management role that individual managers describe, across AMCs, and within the

industry's trade association illustrates the social nature and activity of these institutions.

The emphasis on sharing that permeates that organization tends to assure a consistent

diffusion of innovation.

Association managers represent a community of practice that includes "a *domain*

of knowledge, which defines a set of issues; a *community* of people who care about this

domain; and the shared *practice* that they are developing to be effective in their domain"

(Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 270). The development and sharing of

knowledge is a hallmark of communities of practice and this is readily visible among

association members within an AMC (an internal practice group) and within the AMCi.

Professional communities offer "affiliation, access to best practices, and forums for

discussing policy changes and other important trends" (Kahan, 2004, p. 28). A significant

aspect of communities of practice is that their practice know-how is "being generated by

the practitioners themselves, not a centralized source" (p. 28). This represents a practical

knowledge or praxis rather than theoretically driven knowledge. While theoretical

approaches focus on explanation and prediction, rational reconstructions "provide

reasoned normative models—rational reconstructions—to inform praxis and critique"

(Craig, 1995, p. 265). The practice approach arises from the specific dilemmas faced in implementing the association manager's role.

Increasingly non-profit associations depend on professional managers to facilitate the work of their association. This leads to an increased emphasis on "organizational practices that facilitate rationalization, ostensibly to improve accountability and efficiency" (Hwang & Powell, 2009, p. 271). A significant aspect of organizational rationalization is the use of strategic plans as means of achieving associational goals that are designed to "promote effective management by prioritizing goals under resource constraints" (p. 272). We see in the work of association managers the increasing rationalization of associations through an emphasis on strategy and efficiency.

While association managers admit doubt about the public positioning of their profession, they adamantly persist in presenting themselves as having special knowledge in managing non-profits. Although the academic backgrounds of association managers vary significantly, through company acculturation, professional associations, and credentialing, association managers present a unified approach to managing the dilemmas of managing non-profits.

Their work calls forth the image of Schön's (1983) "indeterminate zones of practice" characterized by "uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict" (p. 6). Association managers do not have the luxury of applying a technocratic solution to specific problems, but face "wicked problems" which "do not have a criterion which would determine whether a solution is correct or false" (Rittel, 1971, p. 19). The profession of association management develops reflective, systematic ways to incorporate the volunteerism of non-profits. Association managers recognize that others "have

relevant and important knowledge," "seek out connections to the client's thoughts and feelings," and "look for a sense of freedom and of real connection to the client" (Schön, 1983, p. 300). The professional approach of association managers regularly confronts and solves the unique dilemmas faced by diverse associations.

As association managers reflect upon, confront, and seek to solve the unique dilemmas, they access a unique knowledge base to do so. There is a theme throughout the interviews that association management is not understood or appreciated for its unique knowledge base. This lack of appreciation for their knowledge base leads major leaders in the field to even question whether they represent a profession. As they purposefully obscure the involvement of an AMC in managing an association, intentionally conduct much of their work backstage, and choose to communicate through member peers, they actually exacerbate this problem. The paradox is that as association managers demonstrate expertise in managing the association and working behind the scenes and through members, this expertise obscures their contributions from the associations they manage. Through their efficiency and hidden work, they actually become invisible to the organizations that they serve.

Interorganizational Communication

Associations are a good example of interorganizational relationships that manage environmental uncertainty (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003) and provide structure to coordinate activities through communicative work (Van de Ven & Walker, 1984). Doerfel (2008) argues for future research to understand "IOC processes that facilitate such collaborative endeavors and result in collective advantages" (p. 5). This study of the role of association

managers demonstrates that in those associations managed by a third party, the third party is indeed a key to the facilitation of collaborative endeavors. The ability to maintain a consistent strategic direction, engage the membership, and preserve the association's organizational memory contributes to the ability of an association to sustain its impact over time.

In trade associations, an association provides a forum for the legal cooperation of competitors. Association managers serve as intermediaries for competitors to form cooperative relationships for the collective good of an industry. The association manager is uniquely qualified to maintain contact with all members of an entire industry and has a special knowledge base that reaches into the corners of an industry. The operational and strategic insights from this vantage point make the association manager a valuable resource to individual association members.

In the management of associations, the implementation of an operational dialogue provides a means to be heard and limits the type of contributions that can be made within the network structure. A commitment to an organizational network that is motivated by working across organizations requires relinquishing independence and subjugating the individual will to the authority of the collective. Selecting association managers as an obvious third party enhances these communicative process.

Grounded Practical Theory

This study extends the use of GPT to reconstruct practices by using transcribed interviews (Tracy, 1997; Tracy & Ashcraft, 2001; Tracy & Muller, 2001) as the primary data source for the reconstruction process. This study takes advantage of combining GPT

and its emphasis on rational reconstruction to identify the problems, techniques and situated ideals of the practice. Utilizing this reconstruction of the practice, the Communication as Design lens is then applied to investigate the interventions, inventions, management of identity goals, shaping of interactivity, and the practical theory of interaction that emerge from the association managers' professional practice. The combination of these two theoretical approaches proved useful in articulating the practice at multiple levels.

A further contribution of this research is seen in the elaboration of the two identified situated ideals. The "commitment to neutrality" is fully developed in Finding 2 where the various aspects of the association managers' identity are explicated. The second ideal of "influence and continuity" is discussed in Finding 1 and explains the basis upon which association managers expand their administrative role to authoritatively manage the association and facilitate accomplishing the association's mission.

GPT presumes "competing goals or purposes such that conflicts among goals often emerge to block ongoing discourse" (Craig & Tracy, 1995, p. 254). The elaboration of the situated ideals demonstrates in detail the "how" of managing the competing goals of instrumentality and identity. The work of the association (instrumental goals) is managed *subject to* protecting the association managers' identity (identity goals).

Communication as Design

This study makes four contributions to the communication as design literature. The first is the demonstration that specific interventions by the association managers are rooted in invention. The second is a taxonomy of specific inventions that are utilized in

shaping interaction. The operational dialogue demonstrates the accretion of consistent interventions, processes, and a vocabulary to create a specific type of dialogue. Finally, the identification of inverted control introduces power and control into the communication as design literature.

Interventions. Association managers root each of their interventional moves in an authority outside of the association manager. Interventions based on administration, expertise, providing information, and preparation are an outworking of the administrative authority granted to the association manager. To the extent that managers root their interventions in a broad application of this authority, they protect themselves from any charges of personal intervention or trying to act as a participating member of the association. Rooting interventions in the documents of the association provides authority because these documents represent the democratically developed and endorsed strategy of the association. The same appeal to the association managers' administrative efforts frames the backstage interventions and personal conversations that help members achieve the mission of the organization.

During the course of all 27 interviews there was one instance of an intervention that was not rooted in the association manager's authority. This is not to say that this is the only occurrence, but it was the only occurrence recounted across all 27 interviews. Using this as a counter example will further demonstrate the consistency observed across all of the interviews. The background is as follows. An association of surgeons was planning their annual 4-day meeting in conjunction with a smaller association of medical technicians whose sole work is to support these surgeons. The 2-day annual meeting of the medical technicians was always scheduled during the physicians meeting. The

meetings for each association were held on different floors in the conference hotel and

the two associations combined their housing needs to obtain a better contract with the

hotel, thus benefiting both associations.

As part of the hotel contract, the hotel provided 4 free rooms. Historically, the

president and president-elect of the surgeons association received two of the compensated

rooms and the president and president-elect of the smaller association utilized the other 2

free rooms. During a board meeting of the surgeons' association, a new president

declared that their association should use all 4 free rooms for the entire executive

committee of the surgeons' association. "I" indicates interviewee and "R" indicates

researcher. Italics are added for emphasis.

> I: So he proceeded to get the board to approve that basically all the perks of this contract would go to the surgeon group and not the [technicians] group. And I'm not--*staff is not allowed to just blurt out* and I was not executive director at this point. I was meeting manager and I did blurt out, because I was just so appalled. So, *very inappropriately I said,* "but it's part of their numbers that helped us get that" [a total of 4 free rooms] (#20).
> R: What happened?
> I: They all just stared at me and *I realized what I had done* and just sat there and the president said, "thank you for the information." He called for a vote and they all voted with him, so now I have to renegotiate my contract so I can get all 4 complimentary rooms for the surgeons and 2 more for the [technicians'] group.

This interchange is interesting in its stark departure from the approach of the

normal, authorized interventions. The association manager that recounted this instance

commented in the retelling that "staff is not allowed to just blurt out" and "I realized what

I had done." There is an obvious recognition by the association manager that this is not

how interventions *should* or normally *do* occur. Based on the normal strategy of an

association manager to position their comments as rooted in some authoritative position,

the expectation would have been recourse to the language of the contract to justify the

prior allocation of the 4 rooms. This appeal to the good will of the president was an *interruption* rather than an effective intervention. It was clear that without some authoritative basis, the staff member's comment was totally ineffective.

Inventions. Inventions are artifacts that are utilized in the "form of procedures and social structures that function as tools for coordinating collective action" (Aakhus & Anderson, unpublished manuscript). Artifacts provide affordances and "the fate of all artifacts is decided in language" (Krippendorff, 2006, p. 148). How affordances are taken up and utilized is critical to the outcome of design. Association managers are adept at using association inventions in shaping the interactional context. Examples of association managers' utilization of artifacts are documents that provide a guiding framework; the appeal to best practices as a guide for effective governance; the associational structure as implemented through meetings; and the task force, committee, and board process of evaluation. The operational dialogue is a particularly salient artifact (invention) for association managers and frames all of their work.

Operational dialogue. The operational dialogue is a consequence of a series of communication design decisions that take into account the instrumental, identity, and relational goals of association managers. Over time and across associations, the industry and profession has successfully created a meta-language about dialogue that emerges from and is reinforced in their micro interactions. The operational dialogue that characterizes the work of association managers exemplifies the criteria of a discourse as delineated by Krippendorff (2006). Krippendorff identifies five characteristics of a discourse. A discourse is something that: (a) "surfaces in a body of textual material...and…[t]extual matter is the literal heritage of a discourse," (b) is "kept alive

within a community of practitioners," (c) "institutes its recurrent practices," (d) "draws its own boundary, distinguishing between what belongs and what does not," and (e) "justifies its identity to outsiders" (pp. 23-24).

The following explanation references each of Krippendorff's (2006) five characteristics. The operational dialogue (a) texts consist of the association documents as agreed upon by the democratic process (e.g., strategic plan) as well as the agendas, committee reports, and board minutes. The (b) community of practitioners maintains the discourse through their professional (ASAE) and industry associations (AMCi) and (c) reproduces it in their daily practices. The operational dialogue (d) determines what qualifies as a topic for discussion and what counts as a contribution. The operational dialogue is (e) self-justifying because of its use across and entire industry and its effectiveness in managing the mission of volunteer, non-profit organizations.

Inverted control. In Jacob's (2002) discussion of mediator neutrality he identifies three techniques that may influence the direction of a discussion but allow for maintaining an appearance of total neutrality. These techniques are indirect advocacy, framing of advocacy, and equivocal advocacy. Aakhus (2003) studied mediators and identified three specific techniques of intervention including redirect, temporize and relativize. In two articles, Jacobs and Aakhus (2002a, 2002b) isolate three distinct rationalities used by mediators that frame the mediation process differently and lead to different interventional activity. None of these studies address the issues of power and control in the process of designing communication. The articulation and explanation of inverted control highlights the elements of power and control within this communication literature.

Strengths of the Research

The association managers chosen for this study were all employees of AMCs. These AMCs are participating members in the AMCi, the national trade association representing AMCs. Many of the interviewees came from large influential AMCs and a number of the interviewees are industry leaders. Interviewees also represented a range of different geographical areas of the United States. While interviews served as the major data source, there were extensive observations of association managers in formal and informal settings, as well as, a thorough review of industry literature.

The interview process encourages the gathering of data from numerous participants and facilitates immediate expansion and clarification of topics as they arise. The interviews generate an official view of association managers' practice and attempt to gain the participants' perspective on their own professional practice.

Limitations of the Study

The goal of this study was to understand the role and influence of association managers. The consistency across multiple interviews provided evidence of a coherent picture or story, but all discussions of dilemmas and the subsequent resolutions were self-reported accounts from association managers' perspectives. There would be benefit to actually observing a series of meetings in multiple associations to observe the interactional work of association managers.

The process of interviewing association managers encourages them to tell stories about their practice. The practice *in situ* might not appear nearly as coherent or intentional as the managers' accounts of their practice. There are two matters to keep in mind when considering the evidence developed and used in this study.

First, the dependence on association managers' accounts of their work generates a one-sided view of the practice that likely emphasizes the association managers' point of view, their agency, and their interpretation of role and context. Of course, this was the point of the study design but it should be kept in mind that the reconstruction of their practice likely further articulates an official view that may even risk being a sanitized view. While the study design attempts to address this there is always the prospect that the interviewees did not tell about all aspects of the practice during the interview.

Second, the reconstruction, at least the descriptive aspects, has a political alignment with the managers as it attempts to articulate their view and may evidence "managerial bias" (Deetz, 1987, p. 38). The rational reconstruction developed here focused on fully engaging their perspectives as they told it in order to articulate the practitioners' situated ideals of their work. In this sense, the method of data analysis more closely conforms to GPT's approach to reconstruction emphasizing a more therapeutic, reflective approach. This therapeutic, reflective approach contrasts with rational reconstructions that assess practice against a normative, philosophical ideal such as contrasting the apparent democratic commitments of AMs with an actual normative standard for democratic decision-making (see Aakhus and Jackson, 2005, pp. 421-427).

This singular focus on the association manager's telling informs the agenda for future work with board members to understand their perspective on the association

managers' practice. Do they consider association managers as neutral, transparent, non-conflictual, and / or authoritative? How do they view the association managers' identity?

This study focused only on association managers that were employed by AMCs. The population of association managers that are direct employees of associations is much larger than that of the AMCs. Those who manage stand-alone associations are direct employees of a non-profit association. They are not members of a for-profit company servicing non-profits. An investigation of their practice of association management would be important to understand similarities and contrasts with the AMC association managers.

In a private conversation with interviewee #2 at the 2009 AMCi annual meeting, he discussed three types of AMCs. First, he identified "lifestyle" AMCs. There are typically small companies, often a husband and wife who frequently manage a single association. Owning a small AMC allows for tax benefits and opportunities to "travel to nice places." Second, he noted a type of AMC referred to as "cruisers." These companies are not actively building their portfolios of clients but focus on maintaining their existing business. The third group of AMCs was described as "ROIDS." They represent professionally managed AMCs that are responsive to return on investment drivers. All of the AMCs represented in this study were drawn from the anecdotal category of ROIDS. To understand the association management work of "lifestyle" and "cruiser" AMCs would provide a counter to the focus on ROIDS.

Implications for Practice

Association managers utilize a designed system of communication, or an operational dialogue, that arises specifically from their work context but proves effective with diverse association groups. The ability to create and use an operational dialogue offers the association managers a means to exert inverted control. The association managers' process carefully manages the trade-offs between instrumental, relational, and identity goals. All who manage without direct authority can benefit from the lessons of interventions rooted in authority (administrative, document, continuity and history) and an operational dialogue that defines the conversational boundaries and supports the work of those who utilize inverted control.

Implications for Future Research

As is true in any research study, the process of research unearths layers of thinking and activity that invites more investigation. In this section there are recommendations for future research opportunities stimulated by this study. Areas that would be likely avenues for future research are third party work and authority, peer-to-peer communication, board contexts, application of the AMC management model in different contexts, and understanding "best practices."

Association managers are inside outsiders and are well integrated into the organizations they serve. There are other 3rd providers that are true insiders but do not have direct authority over those whom they manage. Internal project managers would be

an example of these types of 3rd parties. Investigating a practice of this nature would allow for further exploration of the concepts of operational dialogue and inverted control by insiders without hierarchical authority.

Association managers embrace their responsibility for facilitating the association's mission and they quickly deny having any authority other than administrative. Their role takes advantage of authority rooted in administration as well as authority stemming from documents and continuity and history. There were few instances in this research where the association manager admits to being challenged when they made recommendations. There is an opportunity to conduct research that focuses on the challenges to their recommendations, how they handle those challenges, and what subsequent communicative moves are taken to resolve those challenges.

Peer-to-peer emerged as an effective means of communication that takes into consideration power structures and leveraging existing relationships. Peer-to-peer communication, as described in this study, is not represented in the business literature or organizational communication literature. There is research on horizontal communication, but it is primarily concerned with communication flows across corresponding business units. It does not address the strategic use of peer communication to further organizational goals. Association managers, in spite of having direct relationships with individuals, choose to use the peer-to-peer network rather than a direct approach. Peer-to-peer communication, as a strategic choice to accomplish goals and protect identity, could be investigated in other non-profit settings and for-profit organizations. There is an opportunity to develop a rationale about this communication design practice beyond this professional community. Points of research could include understanding how to identify

these peer-to-peer networks, the type of organizations that use them, how broadly these networks function, and the value of this communication design intervention in other interorganizational settings.

The context of the non-profit board meeting offers opportunities for additional research. First, a longitudinal study dedicated to observing a sequence of board meetings over a period of three years would offer enormous opportunities to evaluate cultural changes in a board as members rotate off and on. Do rotations change the board culture and, if so, in what ways? Secondly, many of the association managers interviewed for this study serve as executive directors for multiple associations simultaneously. A study that included observing the board interactions of a single association manager engaged in managing multiple associations would have the potential to further explicate the subtle, maybe unconscious, communication design nuances and differences that might emerge as a result of the specific association characteristics and participants.

A further opportunity for studying board interaction would be to observe board meetings and identify the interventions and their consequences through analyzing meeting transcripts, rather than self-report measures. Video recording a board meeting and then reviewing the recording with the association manager could augment this work. During this video review process, it could be useful to ask managers to comment on what they were experiencing at a given point in the meeting (L. L., personal communication, September 5, 2013).

As association managers become more dependent on virtual board, committee, and task force meetings, there is an opportunity to study their use of technology.

Technological tools add a further layer of complexity in communication design and have the potential to significantly influence interventional choices.

The current study investigated the management of 501(c) (6) organizations that included both professional societies and trade associations. During the course of the interviews there were several comments about some differences in managing professional societies as compared to trade associations. A study that specifically focused on the differences in managing these two types of organizations might offer additional clarity to the practice of association management and their communication design work. Another study to understand association management differences could contrast the stand-alone management model and the AMC model. To understand these differences, it would be important to find a matched set of associations and study the management approach applied in each.

The emphasis placed on "best practices" in the interviews suggests the importance of this concept in the thinking of association management work. There is an opportunity to conduct a broad scale survey of association managers both in and outside the AMC model to gain understanding about what constitutes "best practices" in the association management world.

Final Thoughts

I began this study with an admiration for the work of association managers and after their sharing reflections about their practice, my admiration continues. Their insights only serve to bolster my interest in their contributions to the communication

literature. I consider it a privilege that they have shared their stories and thoughts with me and allowed me to comment about their communication work. Any conclusions presented in this paper represent my interpretations of their words using the grounded practical theory and communication as design lenses. The rational reconstruction of their practice might mistakenly send the message that they are manipulative in their work. After interviewing these managers, enjoying casual conversations with them, and participating in their industry meetings for several years, I believe they are indeed driven by the ideals of facilitating the association's mission and doing it in a fair, well-ordered way through their design of communication. All of these reflections suggest that this research is clearly a beginning point to understand the value of studying the work of these influential individuals.

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Appendix A

Grounded Practical Theory Chart

Authors	Date	Practice	Observations
Craig & Tracy	1995	Academic Colloquia	YES
Tracy	1997	911 Call takers	YES
Tracy & SJ Tracy	1998	911 Call takers	NO
Tracy & C. Ashcraft	2001	School board and its community	YES
Tracy & Muller (Tracy & Naughton, 1994)	2001	School Board	YES
Agne & Tracy	2001	Branch Davidian Negotiations	NO
Aakhus	2001	GDSS Facilitators	YES
Aakhus	2003	Dispute Mediators	NO
Craig & Tracy	2005	Classroom discussions	
Dempsey	2007	NGOs	YES
Alexander & Mirivel	2009	Pharma Sales	NO

Authors		Transcribed Interactions	Transcribed Interviews	Transcribed Focus Groups	Natural Documents
Craig & Tracy		Transcribed Interactions			
Tracy		Transcribed Calls	Transcribed Interviews		Training and procedure manuals
Tracy & SJ Tracy		Transcribed Calls			
Tracy & C. Ashcraft		Transcribed Videotaped Meetings	Transcribed Interviews with board members		Policy documents from the website, meeting minutes and agendas
Tracy & Muller (Tracy & Naughton, 1994)		Transcribed Board Meetings	Transcribed Interviews with board members, district personnel, and community leaders		Newspaper clippings, official agendas, minutes from meetings, and policy documents
Agne & Tracy		Transcribed Conversations			
Aakhus			Transcribed Interviews with practitioners	Focus Groups with practitioners	
Aakhus		Transcribed Mediation Interactions			
Craig & Tracy		Transcribed Audio and Video tapes			
Dempsey		Transcribed Meeting Talk			
Alexander & Mirivel					Internal Documents

Appendix B

Initial Interview Protocol

Cluster 1 (designed to introduce the topic and create a general overview of the work and identify routines)

- o How long have you been involved in managing associations?

- o How many associations do you currently manage? Can you describe them?

- o Please tell me about a typical day in the life of an association manager?

- o Are some aspects of your job more challenging than other? What makes them more challenging? Do you spend a lot of time on this/these challenging aspects? What would be a good example of this situation?

Cluster 2 (designed to focus on problems and issues that are specifically associated with interactions and communication)

- o Do you think this type of work is important for industry? Please expand on that answer.

- o What is the process for finding clients?

- o Can you please talk about the primary expectations of your clients? Are some expectations more difficult to meet than others? Talk about the difficult client expectations.

- o Please discuss how you prepare to meet these expectations.

- o Tell me about impediments to accomplishing your job? Can you relate a specific instance?

Cluster 3 (designed to elicit a narrative about a particular problem)

- o Does the process sometimes unravel? What happens?

- o Can you remember a particularly difficult circumstance in which you were responsible for the process?

- o Please explain what happened how you worked through the issues.

- o What happens after these situations are settled / diffused / resolved?
- o Looking back on this situation today, would you do anything differently?

Cluster 4 (designed to explore their knowledge and perceptions regarding association management and managers)

- o I don't need know the name, but can you think of someone you would consider a good association manager. Now, can you talk about them and their work? (Explore areas such as attitudes, actions, capabilities, etc.)
- o What would characterize a veteran association manager? What do they know/do that a new manager might not understand?
- o Does the work of association management occur over the phone, face-to-face, in meetings, or in other venues? Can you talk about any differences in these different methods of interacting?
- o Are there things one should never do in the role of an association manager?
- o Can you please talk about your strengths in this role? Is there a specific situation that illustrates this? Can you describe it? Is this a common situation or an uncommon situation?
- o Are there areas in which you would like to improve? Can you talk about those? How do you personally address areas that need development? Have you ever had or currently have a mentor? Is there certain books / journals / literature you read seminars you attend, or other training opportunities?
- o Assume a bright, capable senior in college is considering a career in association management. They are interviewing you for a class project and want to know what really goes on in this field and what is important for them to know to be a successful association manager. Please tell me about that interview.

Appendix C

Second Interview Protocol

- o How long have you been involved in managing associations?

- o How many associations do you currently manage? Can you describe them?

- o Owner?

- o CAE?

- o What is your educational journey?

- o Describe your role as an association manager.

- o Tell me about impediments to accomplishing your job? Can you relate a specific instance?

I would like to focus on specific dilemmas and problems you have faced as an executive director. Situations where people have a difference of opinion or take different sides of an issue and you are responsible for seeing it through to resolution.

Please tell me about a specific issue and how you worked it. Just tell me the story.
(It may involve a single meeting or a series of interactions before it was resolved.)

- o Does the process sometimes unravel? What happens?

- o Can you remember a particularly difficult circumstance in which you were responsible for the process?

- o Please explain what happened how you worked through the issues.

- o What is a difficult or uncomfortable situation you faced as an executive director? Please describe the situation and the process of dealing with and / or resolving the issue?

- o Are there things one should never do in the role of an association manager?

Appendix D

Journal of Association Leadership

Issue		Article	
1	Summer 2003	1	A Memo From the CEO
1	Summer 2003	2	A Question of Relevance
1	Summer 2003	3	Jim Collins Speaks the Truth
1	Summer 2003	4	Learning at the Top
2	Fall 2004	1	From the Editors
2	Fall 2004	2	In the Boardroom, Culture Counts
2	Fall 2004	3	The Café Model: Engaging Associations in Meaningful Conversation
2	Fall 2004	4	Surfacing the Invisible Organization
2	Fall 2004	5	Conflict and Trust: Expressions of Culture and Keys to Organizational Success
2	Fall 2004	6	Missing Conversations: What Associations Should be Talking About but Aren't
3	Winter 2004	1	From the Editors
3	Winter 2004	2	Living Strategy: Guiding Your Association through the Rugged Landscape Ahead
3	Winter 2004	3	Engagement, Identity, and Innovation: Etienne Wenger on Communities of Practice
3	Winter 2004	4	Customers' Customer Analysis and Demand-Driven Association Strategies
3	Winter 2004	5	

MEMO:

They seem to be keying on literature that is relevant to associations –

Cross on Networks, Surowiecki on Crowds, Jim Collins, etc.

Appendix E

Interviewee Data

Number	Gender	Role	CAE	Years in AM	Currently managing an assoc.	Primary Location	Comp Size	Education
1	M	Owner	Y	37	No	NE	Large	B. S. Bus. Adm.
2	M	Owner	Y	20	Yes	NE	Large	B. S. Bus Mgt.
3	M	Owner	Y	33	Yes	NE	Large	B. S. Psych.
4	F	Owner	Y	36	No	NE	Small	
5	M	Owner	Y	15	Yes	W Coast	Small	B. S. Psych/ M.S. Public Policy
6	M	Pres. (ESOP)	Y	30	Yes	Mid-Atl.	Large	B.B.A. Mrktng/ MBA
7	F	Sr. Mngr. (ESOP)	Y	20	Yes	Mid-Atl.	Large	Intntnl. Relations
8	F	Owner	Y	31	Yes	W Coast	Small	B.F.A. Music/ M.F.A. Music
9	F	CSO	N	36	Yes	NE	Large	B.A. Jrnalism./ M.A. Am. Studies
10	M	Sr. Mngr.	Y	19	Yes	NE	Large	B.A. Eng. And Poly Science
11	M	Owner	Y	8	Yes	NE	Small	B.A. Econ.
12	F	Mngr.	N	3	Yes	NE	Small	B.A. Comm.
13	F	Mngr.	N	5.5	Yes	NE	Large	Mrkting/ MBA
14	M	Owner	Y	25	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. S. Finance/ MBA/

								Doctorate in Mgt.
15	M	Mngr.	Y	15	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. A. Anthro./ M. S. Bio Anthro./ Ph.D. Bio Anthro.
16	F	Mngr.	Y	25	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B.A. Org. Comm.
17	F	Mngr.	N	2	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. S. N./ MBA
18	F	Mngr.	Y	12	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. S. Dietetics/ MBA
19	F	Mngr.	N	12	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. B. A. Marktng.
20	F	Mngr.	Y	9	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. A. Comm. And Comp. Sci./MBA
21	F	Mngr.	Y	11	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. A. Comm. Ldrshp. And Dev.
22	F	Owner	Y	25	Yes	Mid-West	Large	B. B. A. Acctng/ MBA
23	F	Mngr.	Y	25	Yes	NE	Large	B. A. Eng.
24	F	Retired	Y	30	No	NE	Large	1 yr. of College
25	M	Pres.	Y	12	Yes	South	Small	B. A. Religion/ M. S. Rehab. Cnslng./ Ed.D Sp. Ed.Rehab. Csnlng.
26	F	Mng. Partner	Y	29	No	NE	Med.	B. A. Eng.
27	F	Owner	y	29	Yes	NE	Large	B. S. Mrktng./ MBA

Appendix F

AMCi Script Sample

Friday, August 20, 2010

2:30 -2:45pm Opening and Introduction (Diamond Ballroom Salons 8-10)

JOHN DEE (gist of these opening comments; kick off program, thank the planning committee and speakers, set the tone for the next day and half, welcome ASEA reps to microphone)

- Good Afternoon!
- John introduce himself
- Welcome to the 2010 AMC Institute—AMC Community Preconference Program
- This program marks the 7th year of collaboration between ASEA and AMC Institute
- Over the rest of today and tomorrow, you'll hear great ideas you can use to do business even better, have a chance to reconnect with old friends and as well as make some new ones, and have a chance to hear about the many accomplishments that we have worked together to accomplish over the past year—as well as a look ahead to future collaborative endeavors.
- While you're here please be sure to meet and introduce yourself to staff, Francine Butler, Executive Vice President, and Andrea Bower, Executive Director.
- On the RFP front, we have some exciting news to share that will enhance the AMC Institute business referral program and make the AMC model increasingly accessible to association executives. In response to a growing market demand for the outsourced management services and project work, just a few days ago AMC Institute rolled out an online, Outsourced Services RFP tool at AMCInstitue.org. The new RFP function allows association executives and volunteer leaders to request specialized managements support services from us—member AMCs—on a recurring or one-time project basis. The menu of management services ranges from leadership development and strategic planning to financial management, membership, meetings, marketing and communications, website development, international expansion and more. Both the Full Service Management and Outsourced Services RFP tools live on the member platform, to enhance visibility of the new RFP tool and clearly direct association executives to the correct form. If you haven't already, we encourage you to check out the new Outsourced Services RFP on the website, and get ready to see more project work in the coming months! Thanks to the RFP Task Force and chair, Bob McLean for driving this effort. We see this as a terrific business benefit for members, and a great new tool for association executives and volunteer leaders considering the AMC model. Keep an eye out for follow-up reports on the success of this program. In the meantime, if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Jennifer Miller with headquarters, who's holding down the fort in Philadelphia

this weekend, or seek out any of the RFP Task Force members who are here at the Preconference.

- Call for volunteers: Now is the time to get involved in AMC Institute. With more than 70% of member companies represented on a Task Force we invite you to come and join the excitement and learning experience. With 11 Task Forces and various Work Groups in place, you are sure to find one suited for your interests while as the same time allowing AMC Institute to make great strategic strides for our members and the industry as a whole.

- Before I turn the microphone over I would like to thank the planning captain of this year's AMC Community Conference, Fred Stringfellow, as well as the members of his task force:

> Members:
> Delaine Bender
> Tonya Cummings
> Kristen Darga
> Mike Deese
> Wade Delk
> Phil Forte
> Nancy Frede
> Lori Gordon
> Bill Grusich
> Michael Palmer
> Lisa Simon
> Nicole Singleton
> Jonathan Strauss
> Bob Waller
> ASAE representatives:
> Bland O'Conner
> Bill Yanek
> Linda Guild
> Pam McKenna
> Mark Milory

{Pause for recognition and applause.} Thank you for your hard work.

I would like to thank our speakers:
> Jeanne Bliss
> Jeff Gibbard

And our AMC Institute member who will lead or assist in leading sessions:
> Michael LoBue
> Bob Waller
> Bob McLean
> Jaime Nolan
> Greg Schultz
> Aurelie Alger

> Sue Pine
> Lori Gordon

{Pause for recognition and applause.}

- All of these folks have taken time from running their business to help make it possible for us all to benefit from this program. I would ask that you at some point in the conference that you take the time to share back with them some of the Key take-aways you gain from the program. Let's give them another round of applause.
- Also, if you are staying for the full ASAE Annual Meeting, make sure you stop by our booth (#1032) in the exhibit hall.
- Invite Greg Melia, ASAE & The Center, Vice President, Member Relations and Credentialing to podium

Appendix G

Ethical Violations

	#5	#15	#20
Step 1	"I picked up the phone and I called their lawyer"	Met with the conference center sales director to confirm the allegations.	ED called the lawyer
Step 2	Write a file memo of the conversation with the lawyer	"I immediately called our legal counsel for the association."	Involved the secretary / treasurer and provided information from the lawyer
Step 3	Saw the president at another function and proposed a hypothetical situation in association (of which the offender was a part) that paralleled his situation	Schedule an emergency meeting of the executive committee	The secretary/treasure made phone calls and involved the president elect and past president
Step 4	Present the fax to Bill	Confronted Jim with the facts while including the director of meetings staff member as a witness.	The small group chose a 3 step process of resolution
Step 5	"It took me three days over the course of time being at that meeting for him to finally realize that he had a problem." This included letting him know that he had spoken with the lawyer.	The executive board discussed all of the relevant issues in seeking to resolve this issue. (Decision was to keep him on the board and remove him as trade show chairman.)	The executive board and full board were made aware of the situation and the proposed options for resolution.

Step 6	"You show up at the next board meeting with a policy statement that says your not going to do this again. You also show up with a board duties and responsibilities statement that I will have prepared and every board member will sign it and date it saying they agree to it."	The ED and president called on the phone and said he would be removed from his chairmanship.	The secretary/treasurer notified the staff of the three options for resolution and the order of implementation.
Step7	A letter was sent to the hotel warning them to desist from this type of activity.		Option 1 implemented - Notify the president that the lawyer felt there was unethical behavior and a breach of fiduciary responsibility. The ED and ED's AMC managing partner handled this implementation. They sent the information by mail, email, and a follow up voicemail.
Step 8	Board Members sign the document. "The individual board responsibility statements were passed out and everybody agreed to sign it except the president (Bill)."		The ED and AMC managing partner notified the executive committee of the failure to reach the president.
Step 9	Bill does not sign the document.		They implemented option 2- which was to stop all payments to the legal consultant and notifying her that the president had been acting outside of his authority.
Step 10	Explain again		When the president would reach

	why this must be signed. First of all, he thought we were not loyal to him. He was very upset with us. And I told him that he was confused. That our job was to be loyal to the client, that was the entire membership, and to it's duly elected and appointed officers.		out to the legal consultant she would say to him, "we need to get on a call with staff and executive committee to discuss that."
Step 11	Board member forced the issue. And one other board member said to him, in his wonderfully eloquent British accent, said, If you don't sign that statement, I will make a motion to have you sanctioned and removed from the board, and I think there will be enough votes around this table for that to carry.		The annual meeting was the first time the board met with the president face-to-face.
Step 12			The president requested a mediator on board relations.
Step 13			The AMC staff engaged the mediator consultant and provide a full background on the situation for the consultant.
Step 14			The secretary / treasurer realized this was a set-up. "Because the secretary /

			treasurer is not dumb and he figured it out in the middle an the called him out on it, so then there was a shouting match of which the entire board and staff were just sitting at the table and the consultant was trying to get everybody under control.
Conclusion	"So, short answer to this question is what I did was report the facts and produced concrete and corrective steps as choices for the board to take and exercise. And we didn't penalize this guy. We basically said, it isn't going to happen again. Shame on us for not having, you know, but it's not going to happen again. Here's the new rule."	"Ultimately what we did was our president sent a letter to the board and nested with the letter to the board was a letter from Jim stating, you know, here's the deal, I've agreed to step down as trade show chair, BJ, I'm sorry, our president and staff believe that there was a conflict of interest, I don't agree with this conflict of interest, but I will be happy to serve on another committee."	"In the end between the consultant and the board peer pressure, because staff just sat very silently, it just came down to a difference of opinion and we just got through the rest of his year.