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DE(CONSTITUTING) ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS:
THE FOUR FLOWS OF ANONYMOUS COMMUNICATION

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

(De)Constituting Alcoholics Anonymous:
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To promote supportive interactions among stigmatized individuals, anonymity seems desirable. However, anonymity is a complex construct that could positively or negatively influence support depending on its use. To uncover the role of anonymity as a core communication principle in the context of support groups and organizations, this dissertation aims to understand the constituting (and potentially deconstituting) aspects of anonymous communication in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Adopting the anonymous communication model and the four flows model, this dissertation specifically explores how anonymity enables and constrains key organizing processes and key organizational/group/individual outcomes of AA. Using a mixed methods multiple case study of anonymous communication, 16 in-depth interviews and 93 questionnaires were analyzed from members of four AA groups. The data provide a rich description of how anonymity enables and constrains organizing processes of AA. Overall, despite anonymous communication's constraining force, it mostly serves to constitute the organization across the various flows and it plays a significant role in this social support organization.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Substance abuse including addiction to alcohol and illicit drugs is a major public health problem in the U.S. (National Institute of Health, 2010). These addiction problems not only impact one's physical and mental health, but also cause societal problems such as car accidents, crime, and domestic violence (Peele, Brodsky, & Arnold, 1991). The social cost of substance abuse and addiction (e.g., crime, lost workforce productivity, and health care costs) is about \$410 billion a year, which is three times greater than the social expense for cancer or diabetes (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2015). Thus, it is easy to claim, American society suffers from substance abuse and addiction.

For a variety of reasons, individuals with addiction problems experience stigma (Dean & Rub, 1984). Since society links stigma of addiction to issues of morality and deviance, most addicts experience disruptive social interactions (Goffman, 1963). Although these addiction problems are mostly treatable, the stigma surrounding addictions strongly discourages individuals from getting proper treatment. Thus, patients with addiction live with heightened stress that adds to what are usually physically harmful addictions, all of which negatively influence various health outcomes (Sanders, 2012; Smith & Hughes, 2014). Furthermore, health care professionals often reject treating addictions (Bartlett, Brown, Shattell, Wright, & Lewallen, 2013). Also, pharmaceutical companies invest less in treating addictions than in cancer and other chronic illnesses due to the stigma of addiction issues (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2016).

To improve physical and psychological well-being, it is often beneficial for individuals with addiction problems to be a part of mutual support organizations

including 12-step support groups or various online and offline social support programs (Corrigan, Sokol, & Rusch, 2013; Smith, 2007). Social support organizations alleviate the experience of social isolation. If a stigmatized individual can create a “new” social identity as a part of a support group, their deviant or negative social identity related to stigma can be normalized (Goffman, 1963). Also, the stigmatized may more freely disclose physical concerns and feelings without worrying as much about any relational and social consequences when in these support groups (Silver & Wortman, 1980). Stigmatized people are able to expand their social network, enabling potential opportunities for getting more informational and emotional support from others (Wright & Rains, 2013). Also, patients may be empowered by helping others in a wide range of difficult situations in support organizations (Robinson & Tian, 2009). In addition to perceived benefits, social support organizations reduce spending for treatment of substance abuse and addiction. Since the medical cost of treatment is often quite substantial, the minimal cost of mutual help support organizations attracts individuals with addiction (Coleman, 2005). Because of the advantageous nature of social support organizations, the stigmatized are likely to join these groups as a way to cope with their stigmatized circumstances.

Despite the potential attractiveness of these social support groups for stigmatized individuals, less is known about how these support organizations achieve desired outcomes via supportive interactions (Toumbourou et al., 2002)—even though we know that communication generally plays a pivotal role for successful supportive interaction in support groups (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987). Individuals communicate information and emotional comfort in order to cope with their stigmatized conditions. If the process is

more fully understood, the current interventions and programs for stigmatized individuals suffering from addiction and substance abuse can be better designed in order to increase high commitment and involvement—which, in turn, should lead to more positive health outcomes.

One of the less-examined aspects of supportive communication is anonymity. To promote supportive interactions among stigmatized individuals, anonymity may be desirable (Marx, 1999). Mutual help support groups use disclosure of private information as way to achieve support that “requires collective outcome” (Petronio, 2002). When tainted personal identity is less noticeable because of anonymity, stigmatized individuals may interact with others with less fear. Accordingly, social support organizations that allow for or encourage anonymity enable members to have a safe communication environment where they may more freely express themselves and talk about their situation. These support organizations that provide some degree of anonymous communication may be better able to positively influence a stigmatized individual’s wellbeing and improve overall public health.

Despite anonymity’s positive outcomes, the role of anonymity as a core communication principle has not been fully studied in the context of support groups and organizations. In fact, anonymity may perpetuate a lack of accountability for one’s addiction and abuse problems. Also, a lack of identifiable information about members may make follow-up difficult or even almost impossible. If such negative outcomes of anonymity weaken interactions in these support organizations, anonymous communication could have undesirable and perhaps even severe consequences for individuals and the broader society.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to understand how anonymity enables and constrains the key processes and outcomes in support organizations generally, and those dealing with substance abuse and addiction specifically. Also, the current dissertation adopts a theoretical framework from the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) perspective that explains the role of anonymous communication across multiple levels of organization. All this is done to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of anonymity in this type of mutual support organization.

Anonymous Organizational Communication

Anonymity has an established history in the study of its use related to individual privacy in human communication. However, anonymity in organizational contexts has been largely ignored and sometimes even criticized by scholars in the field, because invisibility and secrecy related to anonymity may be linked to illegal and unethical practices. Because of these judgmental assumptions about anonymity in organizational contexts, the amount of research is relatively small. Also, the context of existing studies on anonymity is relatively limited. Thus, relatively little is known about the role of anonymity in organizational contexts.

The current literature on organizational anonymity reflects somewhat opposing views. Against anonymity, organizational transparency and openness are linked to accountability and positive governance (Christensen & Cheney, 2015). Accordingly, secrecy and invisibility related to anonymity are often linked to legal and ethical challenges such as those associated with clandestine organizations (Stohl & Stohl, 2011; Schoeeneborn & Scherer, 2012; Wolfe & Blithe, 2015). A fair amount of research

perceives anonymity as the dark side of organizations, because anonymity perpetuates illegitimacy of organizations.

However, a different set of literature has uncovered organizational contexts in which anonymity is appreciated. At a micro level, anonymous organizational communication is particularly beneficial for upward feedback (Reilly, Smither, & Vasilopoulos, 1996), 360-degree feedback (London & Beatty, 1993), whistle blowing (Elliston, 1982), and group decision support system (Postmes & Lea, 2000). In these contexts, anonymity provides organizational members with the ability to protect themselves from potentially negative consequences of revealing their identity. At a more macro level, organizations that deal with stigmatized clients use anonymous communication strategies as a way to protect their clients and employees in the contexts of homeless shelters (Harter, Berquist, Titsworth, Novak, & Brokaw, 2005; Jensen & Meisenbach, 2015) and domestic violence prevention centers. Overall, this research addresses the potential role of anonymity for facilitating positive outcomes for organizations and their members.

In addition to these generally opposing views on anonymity and the limited empirical research for either perspective, the literature on anonymous organizational communication has three critical limitations. First, anonymous communication as a norm of organizations has not been considered. For instance, the appropriateness and use of anonymous communication differ among members, which can create conflicts, mistrust, and misunderstanding (Scott & Rains, 2005). If researchers understand anonymous communication only as a strategic form of communication used in isolated ways, the whole process of anonymous communication in the system of organizations can be

completely missed. Since researchers only have looked at anonymity's strategic use by a few people in limited organizational contexts, the dynamics of anonymous communication in organizations have not been extensively captured. Second, research on anonymous organizational communication has been conducted only at a single level without considering the complex nature of anonymity that is processed across levels. Although the macro-micro problem of research is not a new criticism in organizational communication (see Kuhn, 2012; McPhee & Poole, 2000), this methodological gap should be addressed as a particularly important issue from an anonymous organizational communication perspective. In fact, anonymity requires cooperative understanding and practice to communicators involved in interactions (Anonymous, 1998; Marx, 1999). Accordingly, studying anonymity from a particular communication level is quite limited in terms of grasping the complex process of how anonymous communication is collectively achieved across individual, group, and organization levels.

Finally, anonymity has not been understood as a process. Although anonymous communication is constructed over time within various organizational contexts, the processes involved with anonymous organizational communication remain poorly articulated. What motivates and facilitates anonymity has not been investigated alongside a communicative response to anonymity. Furthermore, any positive or negative consequence of anonymous communication have not been linked to other key organizational and individual outcomes. Therefore, the organizing processes that may describe and explain overall anonymous communication should be examined for further understanding.

The Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO)

To explore how anonymous communication influences and is influenced by organizations and organizing processes, it is beneficial to adopt the CCO perspective that emphasizes communication as a core mechanism of organizations (see Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009). The CCO perspective is different from other scholarly traditions because of “its novel ways of theorizing and analyzing how organizations as discursive-material configurations are reproduced and coproduced through ongoing interactions” (Brummans, Cooren, Robichaud, & Taylor, 2014, p. 173). Accordingly, the CCO perspective is highly suitable for uncovering the (de)constitutional role of anonymous communication, which may enable or constrain constitutive processes in all aspects of organizing. The four flows model (McPhee & Zaug, 2000) of the CCO perspective is distinguished in particular from other CCO theories, since this model aims to explain how four communication flows (member negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning) specifically contribute to an organization’s constitution (see Bisel, 2010; Brummans et al.). This communication is arguably complex and takes many forms and different types of communication may be expected to constitute or even deconstitute the organization in various ways. Anonymous communication provides an interesting and important example of how a key aspect of the communication flow may influence the (de)constitution of an organization; yet, since existing research suggests competing views about the influence of anonymity, it is necessary to have a better understanding of anonymous communication through the CCO perspective. To that end, the overall constitutive role of anonymous communication in an organizational context can be examined through the four flows model.

Accordingly, by adopting theory and research about anonymity (Anonymous, 1998) and applying the four flows model (McPhee & Zaug, 2000), this dissertation aims to uncover the extent to which anonymity influences the four flows in an organization such as AA and how those flows related to key outcomes at multiple levels of organizing. This research will provide a unique perspective by focusing on anonymous communication as constitutive of organizations. Uncovering this (de)constituting process through anonymous communication will help in understanding the role of anonymity in various types of organizations—particularly those involving some sort of supportive communication or those which are hidden for various reasons. Also, the practices of anonymity that will be uncovered through this research also may help educate organizations, groups, and their members about how to potentially use anonymity in appropriate ways to achieve desired outcomes.

Anonymity as an Organizational Norm in Alcoholics Anonymous

To extend the understanding of the constitutive role of anonymity in organizational contexts, the goal of this dissertation is to investigate Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) as a support organization that distinctively practices anonymity as a communication norm as well as a core value within its structure. Therefore, the current study aims to examine how the four flows of anonymous communication enables and constrains the key processes and outcomes across individual, group, and organizational levels of AA.

AA is often regarded as the most successful social support organization in the world (Kelly & Yeterian, 2012; Rice & Tonigan, 2012). Started in 1935, more than two million active members currently attend AA meetings in 115,326 local groups across the

world (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2015). Also, the American Psychological Association warrants the effectiveness of 12-steps and 12 traditions of AA as a “scientifically proved” method to deal with addiction problems. Due to the organizational success of AA in terms of its growth and effectiveness, more than two hundred other 12-step support organizations have modeled themselves from AA. Literally, AA’s 12-step formula is a “dominant” social support program in the U.S. (Kelly & White, 2012).

Originally, the tradition of anonymity in AA was started out of fears of stigma. Because most early members of AA were working professionals, the primary concern of this group was to avoid negative social judgment on alcohol addiction. Evidently, the affiliation of AA was completely secretive because any relations to alcoholism could jeopardize their reputation and relationships with others (see Goffman, 1963).

Accordingly, AA did not even have the name of the organization at all since it was started as relatively small organization completely hidden from non-members. Due to these factors, AA was called just “anonymous,” which meant “no name.” As a tradition of AA, the anonymity operates as an organizational principle that should be used properly among members. Anonymity is officially presented by AA as a communication norm for the stigmatized to achieve desired levels of supportive interaction in AA (Valverde, 1996; Valverde & White-Mair, 1999).

Communicative interaction itself creates and shares the ideology of AA (Wright, 1997). However, existing studies neglect “anonymity” as a communication principle, which must be legitimized and practiced to at least some degree in order to participate in AA. Accordingly, anonymity as a fundamental communication principle directly and indirectly influences achieving the collective outcome of social support. For example,

anonymity positively facilitates disclosure among members, since this norm provides a secure place to talk about sensitive information related to the stigmatized conditions (Rains, 2014). Also, new members are easily able to attend the meeting without the fear of social judgment on their membership and participation in a stigmatized support groups (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2014). Therefore, anonymity can be a valuable communication norm in supportive organizations.

As a way to maintain a positive organizational image and avoid controversy related to their programs, anonymity is generally promised and practiced in several ways by the organization as well as its members. By anonymizing members' identities, any consequences from members' relapse and personal opinion against AA can be reduced as well. In addition to that, members do not typically name themselves in order to protect themselves from any criticisms. Explaining the purpose and the anonymity related norms, AA strongly encourages individual members to adopt the principle of anonymity.

In spite of the fact that the anonymity principle is meant to protect AA and its members (and to help achieve other desired outcomes), there may be negative aspects of anonymity in AA as well. In order to achieve anonymity, AA restricts members from sharing their opinions on behalf of the organization in public. When individuals are not encouraged to reveal their organizational membership to AA externally, this restriction may negatively influence one's identification and the ability to attract others in need of these services. Additionally, local groups have different opinions or thoughts about AA (Witmer, 1997), which extend to different views about the value of anonymity. If local groups do not value anonymity as they get close to each other, the anonymous communication principle might not be aligned with the organization's values on

anonymity. Also, these perceived differences of anonymity among groups might confuse new members who have different experiences of anonymity from other settings. Also, anonymity may negatively influence source credibility and trust. When messages or senders are not fully identifiable, receivers may have concerns about credibility of information (Rains & Scott, 2007). Some people who positively identify with AA want to shares their stories with others, since they want to share positive aspects of AA; however, restricted identification with AA in public likely reduces ability to defend or advocate AA to others.

Breaches of anonymity and disclosures of identity also become important here. When one breaches an anonymity norm, these breaches can have negative impacts on trust and future interaction (Petronio, 2002)—potentially limiting more open communication and self-disclosure. Since AA's program heavily relies on self-disclosure, breached anonymity can be highly problematic. However, AA and its members are also part of the movement that sees increasing use of social media in organizations as a way to increase visibility (Maryland Recovery Center, 2015). Currently, AA does not use any form of social media officially, because social media can easily break anonymity self and others—but to attract the attention and meet the needs of younger generations, social media usage holds great potential. This may parallel a changing social climate where such additions are also less stigmatized than in previous eras (Colman, 2011)—and thus arguably in less need of strong anonymity.

For AA, anonymity is a key organizational construct. Maintaining anonymity is a complex organizing process, because a desired level of anonymity can be achieved only through cooperation of organizational members involved in communication

(Anonymous, 1998; Marx, 1999). When new members join AA, shared messages and new members' identity are more likely to remain anonymous because less is known about new members when they only use their first name. However, the more members disclose about themselves during meetings, the less anonymity members achieve. Increased self-disclosure and other contextual factors may reduce anonymity (Anonymous). It may challenge members to maintain anonymity at a similar level as they get to know each other for a longer time period. It is also possible that anonymity may matter less because some members do not worry about identifiability within this fellowship of AA.

Also, anonymity as a perceived social construct can be a challenge in terms of making ground rules for all communicators. Whereas AA at the organizational level provides only two traditions about anonymity in abstract manners, actual practices for maintaining anonymity can vary from one meeting group to another. When organizational members interpret those abstract organizational goals and seek to operationalize them, this may "reflect choices among competing values" (Perrow, 1961, p. 855). In other words, individuals must negotiate between group and organizational understandings of anonymity. More specifically, the General Service Office (GSO) as a main office of AA provides the basic principle of anonymity to be practiced in local meetings. But, this anonymity principle encouraged by the GSO can be challenged and negotiated based on other communication norms in more local groups. Since AA local groups provide a wide range of supportive interactions such as different degrees of publicness (open vs. closed), focus on certain demographics (LGBT, female, African American), and various times/places, these contextual factors might be linked to how they understand and practice anonymity. For example, the general location of a meeting

may be a significant factor considering whether it takes place in a more urban or rural area—since people perceive higher anonymity in metropolitan cities than in rural areas (see Anderson & Shaw, 1994; Garside, Ayres, Owen, Pearson & Roizen, 2002). Open and closed meetings also have obvious connections to issues of anonymity as well. All this suggests a rather complex and poorly understood role for anonymous communication in (de)constituting an organization such as AA.

Dissertation Purpose and Objectives

The goal of this dissertation is to better understand the constituting (and potentially deconstituting) aspects of anonymous communication in the context of a social support organization such as AA. Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed: To what extent does anonymous communication during member negotiation (de)constitute AA? To what extent does anonymous communication during reflexive self-structuring (de)constitute AA? To what extent does anonymous communication during activity coordination (de)constitute AA? To what extent does institutional positioning (de)constitute AA? To what extent are the four flows of anonymous communication related?

Also, this dissertation aims to understand how these anonymous communication flows link to key outcomes of AA at all levels with a second set of question: To what extent are the four flows of anonymous communication related to key individual outcomes (e.g., sobriety length, AA attendance, or sobriety efficacy)? To what extent are the four flows of anonymous communication related to key group outcomes (e.g., group cohesion, group identification, or group satisfaction)? To what extent are the four flows

of anonymous communication related to key organizational outcomes (e.g., organizational identification or organizational satisfaction)?

To address these research questions, a mixed-methods multiple case study was conducted in the context of AA. Once cases were selected through purposive sampling, the qualitative and the quantitative data were collected concurrently. For the qualitative inquiry, direct observation and semi-structured in-person interviews were conducted. Finally, survey questionnaires were distributed to members in selected groups for the quantitative part of the dissertation.

Taken together, this dissertation will provide a better understanding of anonymous communication and its role in the organizing process. Although this dissertation examines AA as a multiple case study, the findings also can be generalizable to other 12-step groups and applicable to both other supportive organizations and partially hidden organizations that need anonymous communication. As an empirical study of anonymous organizational communication, this research will also expand the heuristic value of two key theoretical frameworks: the model of anonymous communication (Anonymous, 1998) as well as the four flows model (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Also, using a mixed methods multiple case study of anonymous communication in the structure of AA will improve the validity of the research by providing a rich description of how anonymous communication is related to key organizing processes and outcomes.

Preview of Dissertation Structure

The layout of this dissertation is as follows. Chapter 2 includes background information about anonymous communication as well as the four flows model. This

chapter also defines anonymity and reviews research on anonymous communication in organizational contexts. The constitutive role of anonymity in AA is discussed adopting the anonymous communication model and the four flows model—ultimately leading to a set of key research questions. Chapter 3 includes the rationale for a mixed methods multiple case study and describes the process of qualitative and quantitative data collection. Chapter 4 describes and interprets findings. General conclusions, implications and directions for future research will be found in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Anonymity in Social Contexts and Academic Research

Chapter 2 includes background information on anonymous communication in different social contexts to provide a conceptual foundation of this dissertation.

Anonymity is defined and described in various social contexts. Then, the role of anonymity in organizational contexts is described. The chapter concludes by describing existing research on anonymous organizational communication.

Anonymity in Society

There has been a long history of anonymity as a form of communication in society (Scott & Rains, 2005). Anonymity has been used in a wide variety of social contexts. Broadly, anonymity is linked to freedom of speech and the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States (Anonymous, 1998; Marx, 1999; Scott, Rains, & Haseki, 2011). Since anonymity preserves the right of freedom of expression (Akdeniz, 2002), this fundamental human right becomes a significant motivation for anonymous communication. To that end, anonymous political speech becomes protected. This allows the actual content of the message to be discussed in public without attacking the speaker. Also, readers of many magazines, newspapers, and various online platforms such as blogs, can often send anonymous letters to the editors to share their thoughts without any consequences related to their personal identity (Saks & Ostrom, 1973). Due to the perceived social value of anonymity when it comes to protected speech, people have expanded these general uses of anonymity into various social contexts.

Benefits of Anonymity

Anonymity positively influences human interactions in different social contexts. As an example, anonymity allows people to manage privacy as one option for controlling their personal information (Woo, 2006). Based on individual preferences, people can communicate with limited personal information. In particular, individuals have a broad range of privacy setting options when using various type of communication technology that afford different degrees of anonymity (Marx, 2004). Anonymity in many different formats gives people a sense of control over identifiable information about themselves.

Relatedly, anonymity is particularly valued in various parts of academic research. Concerning a participant's protected identity, many social science researchers tend to value participant anonymity to encourage respondents to share more accurate information (see Corey, 1937; Scott, 2004). When people feel secure in interactions with researchers, participants are more likely to share their experiences and opinions to investigators. In addition to the fundamental role of anonymity during data collection, researchers are likely to value anonymity in the publication review process because anonymity reasonably provides a sort of objectivity (Anonymous, 1998). Reviewers' identities and authors' identities are supposed to be hidden in commonly-used double blind-review processes.

A number of health-care organizations, as well as self-help groups, appreciate the role of anonymity in terms of improving their services and attracting patients. For example, HIV/AIDS service organizations often offer anonymous testing services. These public health agencies notice the active role of anonymity in terms of protecting one's privacy (Kaai, Bullock, Burchell, & Major, 2012; Phillips, Maddala, & Johnson, 2002).

Because getting tested for HIV/AIDS comes with social and ethical stigma, anonymity can encourage individuals at higher risk to get tested. Similarly, self-help groups often recommend anonymity principles in order to protect their members from social and ethical stigma. Due to the fact that being a member of a self-help group related to a stigmatized condition might threaten one's personal and social identity, anonymity actually protects one's privacy as well as encourages active participation in social support groups. Therefore, the role of anonymity is potentially quite useful in health-related contexts.

In particular, there has been increasing interest in the role of anonymity in the development of information and communication technologies or ICTs (Anonymous, 1998; Marx, 2004). Actually, anonymous communication also exists in the absence of digital technology such as letters without a return address, organizational evaluations, anonymous support groups, etc. (Anonymous). However, it is generally difficult to employ anonymous communication in face-to-face (FtF) interaction. Compared to FtF communication, individuals have a wide range of anonymous communication options via a variety of ICTs that afford different degrees and types of anonymity. Accordingly, anonymous communication via ICTs has enhanced human interactions in various contexts. For example, individuals can avoid any embarrassment or negative responses while they discuss sensitive topics online. Using online knowledge management systems or social media that afford anonymity, employees are more likely to share work-related problems freely since anonymity reduces social persecution (Huerta, Salter, Lewis, & Yeow, 2012; Kim & Scott, 2018). Also, ICTs enable individuals to connect with others who are not in their social network. When individuals can communicate with an

unspecified audience, anonymity can be achieved relatively quickly. For example, in an online discussion forum, individuals are more likely to talk about sensitive topics such as death (Leonard & Toller, 2012) and to seek stigmatized mental health information (DeAndrea, 2015). These types of online forums and support communities provide a fair amount of anonymity to those in need.

In addition to these benefits of using anonymous communication, anonymous communication encourages individuals to provide more honest feedback and assessment. Since it is difficult for identified individuals to avoid negative consequences of their opinions, individuals are likely to use anonymous communication to minimize any potential threats related to their honesty. Using Internet-based anonymous reporting systems, healthcare professionals report medical malpractices and errors to improve patient safety more than before the anonymous system was implemented (Grant & Larsen, 2007; Suresh et al., 2004).

Also, anonymous tips have been resources for law enforcement to detect illegal activities (Teich, Frankel, Kling, & Lee, 1999). Without identifying themselves, individuals are able to report crimes and suspicious activities. Since these anonymous tipsters avoid unwanted additional requests or any possible threats, these anonymous tips have been widely used. For example, individuals report drunken driving and drug transactions through anonymous tips. Similar tiplines are often available in organizational settings for whistleblowing and the reporting of wrongdoing.

Taken together, anonymity can be used in ways that provide positive influences on society. With technological advances, the use of anonymity has been expanded in various social contexts. Having great accesses to technologies that provide varying types

and degrees of anonymity, individuals are also increasingly familiar with anonymity. It is expected that this positive perception toward anonymity, at least in certain situations, may lead to a wider application of anonymity in society.

Dangers of Anonymity

Despite several benefits of anonymity, there are overarching concerns with anonymity as well. In particular, anonymity challenges accountability (Marx, 1999; Scott, 2004). Due to the lack of accountability, anonymity may facilitate crime and become a threat to free speech (Stein, 2003). Since one's identity is concealed, anonymous individual may not take responsibility for their behavior. Accordingly, the problematic use of anonymity is frequently linked to anti-normative and anti-social behaviors (Chui, 2014); although, there is no direct evidence that supports the direct relationship between anonymity and socially deviant behaviors. There are increasing concerns about cybercrime and vandalism related to online anonymity. Anonymous users are able to quickly and easily post and distribute false information about others without much fear of social and legal consequences for their wrongdoings. When people physically do not need to confront others in a virtual setting, people are more easily able to be a part of socially unacceptable behaviors, which are less prevalent in face-to-face (FtF) interactions. For example, cyber bullying is often based on technological platforms that afford anonymity (Brandtzæg, Staksrud, Hagen, & Wold, 2009). Because of the nature of anonymous platforms such as chat rooms and certain forms of social media, it is relatively difficult for victims to even identify the perpetrators.

In terms of anonymity as a threat to free speech, anonymity may facilitate flaming and trolling online (Hardaker, 2010). Flaming is considered as the exchange of impolite

and aggressive words among online users (Barnes, 2003). Since anonymous individuals are less accountable online, seriously attacking others is more prevalent. In the context of online political discussions, anonymous individuals are more likely to engage in flaming than identified individuals when their political views are challenged (Hutchenes, Cicchirillo, & Hmielowski, 2015). Also, anonymous individuals engage in trolling, which is defined as a disruptive posting, done mostly for the troll's amusement, to distress others in an online community (Phillips, 2015). For example, racist trolling frequently appears in online forums and social media platforms (Livingstone & Mallory, 2012). Aggressive sexist trolling may make it difficult for women to participate in public forums (Mantilla, 2013).

Anonymity also challenges credibility. When individuals do not clearly identify the source of a message, people are likely to question the credibility of that message (Sternadori & Thorson, 2009). Regardless of the authenticity of the message content, the overall quality of the message is likely to be questioned by message receivers because of the anonymity of a message. For instance, news stories based on anonymous sources are not perceived as having as much credibility among journalists as well as readers (see Pjesiva & Rui, 2014). Also, questioning the credibility of unidentified health information online, healthcare professionals strongly encourage patients to avoid anonymous health information (Winker et al., 2000). When the source of health information is not identified, accuracy and trustworthiness of health information are difficult to evaluate. Accordingly, anonymity is not desirable for those who look for accurate and authoritative information.

Anonymity constrains individuals attempting to build trust (Nissenbaum, 1999; Sztompka, 1999). Reviewing articles related to anonymity across social science contexts, Scott, Rains, and Haseki (2011) claim that anonymity generally weakens trust. Especially, trust issues are especially salient in consumer-to-consumer (C2C) transactions. When identifiable information of sellers or buyers is relatively limited or not available, trust becomes challenged (Flanagin, 2007). Accordingly, anonymous C2C users are more likely to be suspected as malicious users (Wu, Li, & Kuo, 2011).

In many situations, there are increasing concerns regarding anonymity in society. Especially, anonymity is less likely to be acceptable or desired when an individual's interactions are likely to be related to health and financial concerns. Also, online anonymity creates societal problems that are often connected to legal consequences. Accordingly, these problematic uses of anonymity may draw negative attention in a society that is already prone to suspicion about anyone not identifying themselves in most contexts.

Anonymous Communication

Anonymous communication has been the focus of several theory-building efforts. As a fundamental theoretical framework of anonymity, Anonymous (1998) introduces anonymity as a communicative construct defined as “the degree to which a communicator perceives the message source is unknown and unspecified” (p. 387). Based on one's subjective evaluation of the message source, the degree of source identifiability can vary. According to this model of communicator anonymity, there are two dimensions that a communicator uses in order to assess source anonymity: source specification and source knowledge. Source specification is defined as “the extent to which a message source is

distinguished from other possible sources” (p. 389). Also, source knowledge is “the degree of familiarity between the source and the receiver” (p. 390). Accordingly, based on different combination of two dimensions, the source of message can be anonymous, partially anonymous, or nonanonymous.

Under this basic notion of anonymity, Anonymous (1998) provides several key constructs related to anonymity. For example, physical anonymity is primarily defined as the degree to which one's physical presence is visible. In FtF communication, it is relatively rare for message senders to hide their physical identity since a sender needs to be simultaneously co-located with a receiver. However, physical anonymity may be achieved in interaction with a crowd of strangers or through the use of a mask. Discursive anonymity, another key construct, is the degree to which one's social information (e.g., legal name, address, any information that reveal one's social identity) is connected to a message itself. Regardless of whether a sender of a message is physically anonymous, revealed personal information of a message sender begins to discursively identify that sender. When a message is signed, for example, a receiver can identify the source of message; but an unsigned note may have at least some discursive anonymity. In addition, the conceptual model of anonymous communication strongly argues that anonymity as a communicative construct depends on both the sender and receiver. Although a sender aims to communicate anonymously, that communication may not be anonymous if a receiver identifies that message. On the other hand, a receiver may perceive a message as anonymous even when a sender does not intend for anonymous communication.

As another theoretical framework on anonymity, Marx (1999) defines anonymity as “one polar value of a broad dimension of identifiability versus nonidentifiability” (p.

100). According to Marx, anonymity can be achieved only when a receiver recognizes the existence of a sender. This social nature of interaction can be directly and indirectly linked to interactions that include multiple audiences. Also, Marx categorizes social contexts that particularly value anonymity: encouraging communication on socially sensitive topics, facilitating information seeking, protecting individuals from potentially negative harms, etc. However, Marx argues that anonymity has competing values in many social contexts. For example, if individuals use anonymity to protect their privacy, it is difficult for individuals to be held accountable. Therefore, he argues that the need of anonymity and identifiability cannot have an absolute answer since these concepts are fundamentally value-laden in different social contexts. Accordingly, rather than choosing anonymity or identifiability for a specific social context, the degrees and the type of anonymity should be carefully considered in order to maximize the positive effect of anonymity as well as minimize the negative effect of anonymity.

Taken together, these two key frameworks of anonymity both emphasize that anonymity is constructed between a sender and a receiver. Anonymous (1998) describes how the reaction of a receiver to anonymous communication is related to the future interaction of communicators in anonymous communication. This interactive notion from a receiver's perspective has not received much attention from communication scholars. Similarly, Marx (1999) mentions about the potential role of receivers in terms of accomplishing anonymous communication. Based on the receiver's attitude, anonymous communication may not be perceived as an acceptable form of communication. Also, if a receiver looks for accountability more than anonymity during interaction, anonymous

communication will not be valued. Clearly, a receiver's response to anonymous communication must be considered.

Extending previous studies on anonymity that they argue tend to privilege a sender's perspective, Rains and Scott (2007) focus on receiver responses to anonymous communication. Their conceptual model identifies the factors that impact a receiver's intention toward identifying the source of a message: perceived anonymity of the sender, potential ability to identify, and desire to identify. Assessing these factors, a receiver may identify the source of anonymous message or may not. For example, if a receiver demands accountability or needs to evaluate messages, a receiver may have high desirability to identify the source of message. Additionally, a receiver assesses whether he or she has enough skill and knowledge to identify the source of message. If lacking that ability, a receiver is not likely to identify an anonymous message source. This theoretical framework attempts to provide a better understanding of the communicative process of anonymity.

In short, these three theoretical contributions on anonymity all points out that anonymity is a communicative construct that is enacted and negotiated between the sender and the receiver. Similar to Anonymous' (1998)'s notion of anonymity, Marx's (1999) work also suggests anonymity is a social, communicative construct. These theoretical frameworks describe, explain, and predict the process of anonymous communication. Thus, they serve as a useful foundation for studies of anonymous support and organizing as well.

Anonymity in Organizational Communication

The key theoretical frameworks of anonymity also suggest that the contextual and motivational factors of anonymity need to be carefully examined. Fundamentally, the need for contextual and motivational factors is primarily based on the fact that anonymity does not mean the absolute opaqueness of communication in every social context (Marx, 2004). Since individuals accept and practice various degrees of anonymity in different social contexts, researchers must study anonymity with contextual factors as well as motivations in mind (Marx). Therefore, consideration of the context in which anonymity is used is vital for understanding the appropriateness and the effectiveness of anonymous communication. To that end, this dissertation specifically aims to discuss anonymity in the context of organizing.

Anonymous communication has been used in a wide variety of organizational settings (Scott & Rains, 2005). However, not all organizations and their members appreciate anonymous communication. In other words, anonymity's value varies based on its specific use even within an organization. To provide a better understanding of anonymity in organizational settings, Scott and Rains examine the appropriateness and the utility of anonymous organizational communication. The empirical findings from their study show that complaints about management or organization or peer evaluations, and whistle-blowing are the most frequently used forms of anonymous communication. As a possible outcome of anonymous communication, their study also uncovers that employees perceive increased openness through anonymous communication options. People can avoid getting instant criticism so that employees openly talk about the complaints and give honest feedback to others.

Also, anonymity encourages employees to actively participate in organizational activities. Perceiving power imbalance in the workplace, employees are less likely to express their opinions to organizational members of higher status. In that case, anonymity may diminish perceived power differences. Since an anonymous employee's organizational rank is not identified during decision-making, these employees are more likely to participate in organizational practices.

Despite the need for anonymous communication in some organizational contexts, there are significant social and ethical concerns with anonymity in organizational settings. Society expects organizations to have "transparency, accountability, and visibility" (Albu & Wehmeir, 2014, p. 117). Although the target of transparency could be varied, organizations are expected to provide their information to others in order to create and sustain reputation. To that end, anonymity is negatively perceived in organizations concerning accountability and credibility. Christensen and Cheney (2015) argue that an organization needs to provide transparency of information in order to increase its democratic practices as well as accountability. Also, the lack of transparency of organizations is relatively linked to decreased organizational trust and negative reputation (Auger, 2004). Anonymity may even be linked to illegal aspects of organizations. For example, Anonymous as a well-known hacktivist organization remains hidden to avoid legal and ethical consequences of their social activities (Goode, 2015).

Because there are opposing views of anonymity, it is crucial to uncover the situations where anonymity is, and is not, valued. Similarly, Flyverbom (2015) argues that the contextual factors of organization have to be evaluated first to assess the need and purpose of organizational transparency—suggesting that not all of organizational

communication should be transparent. Related to all this, it is necessary to explore how anonymity enables and constrains communicative practices in various organizational contexts. Although there are possible positive outcomes of protecting member's anonymity, anonymity may negatively influence outcomes for the organization and/or its members. For example, groups and organizations that facilitate anonymous communication principles may experience a potential breach of trust. If some members do not follow anonymity principles, the source of anonymous messages and the personal information of anonymous senders can be identified. Breaching anonymity itself can be related to breaching trust among members involved in anonymous interactions. Thus, it is crucial to identify how organizations and their members practice anonymity in a particular organizational context.

Feedback

One of the reasons organizations employ anonymous communication is in order to encourage giving feedback to others. Because giving and receiving feedback serves a vital role in improving individual performance as well as facilitating organizational success, organizations generally value the process of sharing honest and accurate feedback. However, giving feedback is quite challenging because of negative consequences such as embarrassment, firing, and invisible discrimination. Anonymity may help alleviate the fear and worry when giving feedback on others' performance in organization (Romano, 1993). When the source of feedback and evaluation is known, identified raters might deal with visible and invisible consequences from those who were evaluated. Since traditional performance appraisal is not conducted confidentially or anonymously, employees are likely to be afraid of providing honest and accurate

information (London & Beatty, 1993). Employees are less likely to use these chances to share their opinions because of fear of judgment and future negative interaction with supervisors (Waldron & Sanderson, 2011). Thus, organizations provide anonymous communication in order to encourage sharing upward feedback. Sharing upward feedback can be improved with anonymity so that people feel more open about upward communication as well as reducing communication distortion (Housel & Davis, 1977). When employees who disagree or give negative evaluation toward their superiors or peers are identified, there can be problems for them in organizations.

However, similar to previous criticism about anonymous messages and lack of accountability, some managers do not perceive anonymous upward feedback as legitimate. When the source of feedback is not specified, the receivers of anonymous feedback may be suspicious as they consider that feedback from their subordinates (Antonioni, 1994). In other words, the credibility of feedback might be questioned when the source of feedback is anonymous.

Also, anonymous communication within organization is crucial in terms of encouraging open communication without any social consequences. For upward feedback, employees feel less pressured in terms of providing thoughtful feedback to others. Since anonymity protects the identity of feedback providers, anonymity encourages members to share positive as well as negative feedback on their managers' performances without any fear of judgment and financial or social consequences (Romano, 1993). Thus, it is important to provide an option of anonymity to organizational members since it gives room for privacy and a secure communication environment that is often neglected in organization.

ICTs and Anonymity

ICTs provide a wide range of anonymous communication options via email, electronic meeting systems, caller ID, and other tools in organizational contexts (Scott & Rains, 2005). For example, caller ID becomes a tool to identify a number/name of a caller in organization. This identifiable communication system becomes a huge concern for employee's privacy since individuals lose their right to be anonymous during phone conversation (Ferguson, 2001). Accordingly, organizations provide employees options to be anonymous allowing them to use caller ID blocking system.

Among older ICTs that afford anonymity, group decision support systems (GDSS) have been extensively studied. GDSS enables organizational members to participate in the decision-making process anonymously (Scott, 1999). Perceived anonymity afforded by GDSS stimulates active participation. GDSS's anonymity positively facilitates group decision-making processes in a productive manner because individuals are likely to express their opinions without social pressure or status distinctions (Hayne & Rice, 1997; Postmes & Lea, 2000). Moreover, anonymity is particularly beneficial in terms of participating in a discussion of sensitive topics. Accordingly, organizational members can more readily share critical comments in anonymous situations than when they are identified (Sosik, 1997). However, anonymous communication via GDSS is not always positively considered among organizational members. Those who need recognition from others are less likely to be motivated to participate actively in anonymous discussion. Since certain people exert less effort, which is called social loafing in groups, the anonymous nature of GDSS relatively increases social loafing (Gavish & Gerdes, 1998; Jessup, Connolly, & Tansik, 1990). Although

anonymous rewards are still available to motivate participants in anonymous discussion, individuals are more likely to increase task effort when a visible reward is given in the anonymous discussion (McLeod, 2011). Those who need recognition from others are less likely to be motivated to participate actively in anonymous discussions.

Also, organizations may facilitate anonymous communication from not only employees but also consumers through social media platforms. For example, employees with a lower hierarchical status frequently use an anonymous social media platform to seek informational and emotional support without getting judged (Kim & Scott, 2018). Not only are employees able to raise issues using internal corporate blogs and enterprise social media, but also consumers provide information regarding organizational products and services through external corporate blogs (Wood, Behling, & Haugen, 2006) and various social media. However, there are concerns related to anonymity on these platforms. Anonymous consumers may damage organizational images by posting false and/or negative information (see Cox, Martinez, & Quinlan, 2008).

Hidden Organizations

Existing studies on anonymous organizational communication extensively focus on uncovering the role of anonymity at the individual level as well as at the group level in organizational settings. However, the organization itself also can be a source of anonymous communication (Anonymous, 1998). Certain organizations are also motivated to be anonymous for various reasons. To describe anonymous organizations as well as identify their motivations, Scott (2013) introduces theoretical work on hidden collectives (also see related work on clandestine organizations from Stohl & Stohl, 2011). This conceptual work highlights that a variety of organizations choose to conceal

themselves and/or their members partially or completely. Some organizations do not aim to be recognized by the public, which is relatively opposite from organizations that constantly try to increase their organizational visibility. Rather than promoting themselves, these hidden organizations remain concealed from the public in order to protect themselves and/or their members from social judgment or other threats. In Scott's model, the organizational visibility of these hidden organizations can vary from highly recognized to completely anonymous.

From an impression management perspective, Scott (2013) claims that most organizations aim to maintain their public image or reputation in a positive manner. However, this goal of general transparency is not always applicable to every organization. As one example, high public visibility can be problematic for the organization because they are more likely to have their malpractice disclosed than organizations with low public visibility (Oliveira, Rodrigues, & Craig, 2013). Even more relevant, anonymity is particularly beneficial when organizations need to manage a stigma or negative reputation properly. There are anonymous communication strategies that organization use in order to cope with negative organizational stigma in various contexts where the organization is core-stigmatized (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009) and/or when members are engaged in dirty work (Ashforth & Kleiner, 1999). According to studies in these areas, organizations and individuals use certain tactics as a way to overcome tainted organization identity. Due to the fact that organizational members are more likely to identify with an organization that has a positive reputation (Dutton et al., 1994), hiding strategies of stigmatized organizations might be beneficial to maintain organizational attachment. In the context of dirty work, organizational members help

secure their organizational identities in part by hiding from the public. This hiding strategy enables avoiding judgments from others (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014). In other words, physically distancing their stigmatized work group from outsiders, existing group members can increase favoritism toward an in-group.

There are many hidden organizations that involve interactions with socially marginalized populations. For example, due to the stigma related to homelessness, homeless shelter are more likely to be at least somewhat hidden from the public (Jensen & Meisenbach, 2015). When community members reject facilities such as homeless shelters as a part of the phenomena called NIMBY (not in my back yard), persons who are homeless and thus stigmatized are likely to use hiding strategies (Harter, Berquist, Titsworth, Novak, & Brokaw, 2005). Also, community-based domestic violence and sexual assault service agencies remain secretive to the public since their primary goal is to provide safe places for victims (Macy, Giattina, Sangster, Crosby, & Montijo, 2009). As an example of a support organization's hiding strategy, North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence programs (2006) recommend that a shelter's location should remain secretive to manage safe places for victims as well as staff members.

Also, some hidden organizations maintain a relatively low organizational visibility as a way to shield members from any identity challenges. For example, employees suffering from moral stigma (e.g., exotic dancers, gun store owners, paparazzi, etc.) are likely to use organizational-level strategies as a way to protect themselves from social judgment (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2014). Even within the informal economy, female entrepreneurs hide their gendered organization as a way to avoid the societal judgment on women's entrepreneurship (Lewis, 2006). Since the male-gendered

nature becomes so legitimate in the informal economy, some female entrepreneurs do not want to identify their gender as part of the business.

Organizations may also aim to hide as a way to avoid any ethical challenges as well as protect related stakeholders. To justify the need for these types of organizations, Hudson (2008) starts defining these types of organizations as core-stigmatized organizations—collectives that are mostly evaluated by social audiences of organization as tainted and discredited because of the core or the nature of organization. As a way to maintain their organizational value and shield organization stakeholders from social stigma, core-stigmatized organizations strategically manage their images to others (e.g., remain relatively small, selectively present themselves to the public, careful selection of location, etc.). One of Hudson's key examples is men's bathhouses, where the more they perceive core-stigma, the less they present themselves to the public. Hudson and Okhuysen (2009) further investigated how men's bathhouses manage core-stigma. Customers, suppliers, and social regulators who interact with the men's bathhouse directly or indirectly perceive the possible threat of social stigma. To protect these various types of external stakeholders, owners and employees secretively locate the men's bathhouse in places where they could avoid possible interaction with stigmatized audiences.

12-Step Social Support Groups

A large number of support groups strongly value and practice anonymous communication and these may even be considered partially hidden organizations (Scott, 2013). Among many social support groups, support groups for stigmatized conditions such as alcoholism, drug addictions, or socially deviant behaviors particularly prefer

anonymous communication. Since anonymity shields stigmatized individuals from social judgment, many social support groups significantly apply anonymous communication to attract new members. Understanding the importance of anonymity, AA has even established anonymity as a primary organizational goal. In order to encourage membership, a number of self-help groups make their group structure facilitate anonymity (Kingree & Ruback, 1994). In particular, 12-step support groups that model AA's anonymity practices adopt and practice anonymity at the group level. When a number of people share their problematic situations anonymously, increased interaction is perceived as a benefit (Barak, Boniel-Nissim, & Suler, 2008).

However, to attract new members, AA cannot completely hide from the public. There are also growing criticisms about anonymous communication principles in 12-step support groups. Some people argue that stigma of alcoholism and other socially deviant behavior does not exist in this society to the extent it once did; as a result, AA and other 12-step support groups need to get rid of anonymity principles in order to change negative attitudes toward alcoholism (Colman, 2011). Also, some people suggest that anonymity principles do not reflect the reality of their daily interaction. Anonymity may not make sense since the rule of anonymity is broken in many cases. Rather than hiding its members, disclosing their recovery via AA might be a more efficient way of attracting new addicts to the program (Cheever, 2015). In order to engage in this process, people must provide personal information, which is not as fully done under conditions of anonymity.

Besides 12-step social support groups, other social support organizations recognize the fundamental value of anonymity that facilitates supportive interactions and

appropriate use of anonymity. Hence, anonymity likely plays a key role in the (de)constituting process of social support organizations. The organizing role of anonymity may vary depending on its use within different parts of support organizations. To that extent, it is apparent that the (de)constituting force of anonymity can be better understood in the context of social support organizations.

To investigate anonymous organizational communication that plays a key role on organizing, this dissertation aims to utilize multiple theoretical frameworks that possibly describe and explain organizing processes related to anonymous communication. First of all, Anonymous (1998), Marx (1999), and Rains and Scott (2007) need to be incorporated as a way to integrate different perspectives of understanding anonymity during communicative interactions. From a sender's perspective, Anonymous highlights the important factors of anonymous senders during communication. Since anonymity is a social interaction that requires receivers, their perspective is unique in terms of understanding this communication process. Taken together, anonymous organizational communication can be interpreted differently based on sender and receiver roles in the interaction. Accordingly, anonymous organizational communication may become a challenge due to the possible tensions between different roles/stakeholders. Anonymous communication that is beneficial to one party may be perceived as problematic for another party. Therefore, anonymous communication in collective contexts needs more scholarly attention.

Thus, this dissertation aims to uncover how anonymous communication constitutes or (de)constitutes depending on its use in various aspects of the organizing processes. Especially, using the four flows model, the current study will capture how

each organizing flow is enabled and constrained by anonymous communication. Studying a partially hidden mutual support organization like AA will provide better descriptions and explanations of anonymity in the organizing process.

Social Support Organizations

Social Support through Collectives

When individuals need to deal with stressful events in their lives, support from others becomes an essential part of one's successful coping process (Albrecht & Adelman, 1984; Laudet et al., 2000). In fact, having a strong social network is a key to deal with one's stress successfully. However, individuals' strong ties based on family and friends are not always sufficient because of family disapproval, stigma, and limited information (see Dakof & Taylor, 1990). Accordingly, it is sometimes difficult for individuals to acquire the desired type and amount of informational and emotional support from close others. Sometimes, strangers with similar problems can be a great resource in many respects. Therefore, mutual-help support groups help individuals overcome these limited social network issues.

Katz and Bender (1976) claim, "self-help groups are voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment of a special purpose" (p. 9). These mutual-help groups/organizations are based on the grass-roots tradition of Americans' social movement (Wright & Frey, 2007). Individuals support each other to achieve their own benefits (Katz, 1993). To that end, these support organizations function as a voluntary organization (Humphreys, 2004). Without any involvements from health care professionals, the support organization's own members run mutual-help organizations. As they do not provide professional help, mutual-help organizations mostly provide

services for free (Humphreys). In particular, these organizations purposely provide these services without any costs in terms of attracting more people (Humphreys & Tucker, 2002). Since they do not require a membership fee, people in need may easily join these mutual-help organizations (and perhaps also easily leave given the lack of financial commitment). These support organizations play a significantly positive role among patients that require long-term care and support (Kaskutas & Subbaraman, 2010).

Stigmatized individuals perceive benefits of being in contact with others in similar conditions (Goffman, 1963). Especially when feeling consistently rejected by family and friends, stigmatized individuals are likely to find support from people with similar problems (see Crabtree, Haslam, Postmes, & Haslam, 2010). In the context of Narcotics Anonymous (NA), women who suffer from stigma related to their drug addiction problems are able to manage their stigma with members from these NA local groups (Sanders, 2012). Therefore, stigmatized people that seek support from others may easily find various types of social support by interacting with others like them.

The literature on social support consistently suggests that a high quality of relationship among support group members perpetuates successful supportive interactions (Cline, 1999; Katz, 1993). Building trust among support group members plays a key role in facilitating successful supportive interactions (see Cline). Trust must be a concept that is applicable to describe the relations among collectives (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). Trust as a relational aspect of collectives has a positive influence on actual outcome of many collectives. In fact, support group members share a common problem in their lives that creates some solidarity among them. However, building trust amid limited interactions with strangers in support groups can be difficult for many of members who desperately

look for help. Thus, building trust would be a critical factor that ultimately influences a future support interaction.

Group cohesion significantly influences successful supportive interaction in social support groups (Kurtz, 1997). Successful support groups need to have solidarity that bonds members together (Katz, 1993). Having shared emotions and experiences with others, individual members are likely to create oneness and establish commonality that binds them together. Often, perceived cooperative and supportive communication among members creates strong group identification as well (Cline, 1999). When members are strongly identified with support groups, they are likely to experience positive support outcomes.

Contextual factors of support groups are crucial in terms of exchanging social support among members. Putnam and Stohl (1990) suggest a bona fide group perspective that envisions a group's "stable yet permeable boundaries and interdependence with context" (p. 248). For groups interacting in their natural environment, the group's boundary conditions and contexts must be carefully considered. Space, time, and activity may play a significant role in terms of defining group boundary (Lammers & Krikorian, 1997). Similarly, Burleson (2009) strongly suggests the importance of examining "interactional" contexts of supportive interactions such as location, privacy, the medium of communication and the problem situation (p. 26). Accordingly, physical contexts of groups must be examined to understand supportive interactions. From the level of street, city, and state, physical space in different locations may be a critical factor in social support groups. When members feel protected and secured because of their space, this may stimulate supportive interactions among members by sharing their personal stories

with others. In the context of AA, although nearly every group's location is listed in public newspapers and their websites, its physical space (large hospital vs. small church) may be perceived differently among members.

Support groups also may be influenced based on an individual's perceived attitude toward a certain illness or experience. For example, rural areas' perceived conservatism may make social support groups choose to be less visible in public. Groups in these areas may also be more exclusive in order to protect themselves from outsiders of a group. Perceived anonymity in a more populated area makes it easy for members to look for others in a similar condition. Taken together, social or cultural contexts of social support groups should be carefully considered to understand group processes better.

The Benefits of Anonymity in Support Groups/Organizations

First, anonymity enables stigmatized individuals in their interaction with others without social interruptions (Goffman, 1963). When people are obligated or required to reveal their stigmatized social identities, it becomes a communication barrier that limits social interactions with others. When stigmatized individuals interact with others, stigmatized information negatively impacts on their perceived communication competency and related communication outcomes.

Secondly, anonymity facilitates self-disclosure among support group members (Tanis, 2008). Once anonymity is granted in support group interactions, it is not necessary for support group members to identify themselves to others. This perceived protection via anonymous communication in support groups may encourage group members to share their problems with other members. Also, this increased self-disclosure through anonymous communication encourages others to share their narratives without

concern for their stigmatized identity. This type of storytelling through increased self-disclosure is not only helpful for each individual's psychological well-being but it also encourages others' participation. Many 12-step support groups function through self-disclosure.

Anonymity encourages people to participate without fear. When the source of a message is anonymous, individuals are more likely to speak up (Scott et al., 2011). Since anonymity norms require people not to share their social identities and any status or authority linked to the individual, anonymous communication diminishes individual differences in support groups. In support groups, anonymous communication highlights the sameness rather than being different with their own social status (Kurtz, 1979). Therefore, individual members perceive that group members are similar in terms of dealing with similar problems. This minimized difference might strengthen group/organizational identity and identification.

To respect one's anonymity, these mutual-support organizations do not require full membership in terms of providing all sorts of personal information of members. As long as individual members have a desire to stop their addictive behaviors, anyone can come to the meeting without a membership. This easy entry might be a perceived benefit. If people are obligated to provide their personal information, they may be less inclined to join these support groups. Therefore, these mutual-help organizations regularly provide relatively easy access.

The Drawbacks of Anonymity in Support Groups/Organizations

Although anonymous communication can play a positive role in support groups/organizations, anonymity negatively influences source credibility during support

interactions. Receiving credible information is a crucial factor of one's successful coping. However, when the source of the information is largely unknown, accountability might be questioned. Although building trust is a key for successful supportive interaction, anonymity critically challenges trust building. In order to build trust, people need to reveal their identity. However, when a receiver does not know general information of a communicator, it is difficult to build a trust among communicators.

Also, when an organization encourages its members to be invisible in public, this particular goal of being anonymous may negatively influence organizational identification. Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail (1994) argue that when individuals are visibly affiliated with an organization, they are aware of their role in terms of attracting new members as well as being aligned with other members. As a way to enhance their self-identity, individuals are likely to identify themselves as an organizational member in public. However, when organizational membership is hidden, it is potentially more difficult for members to build organizational identification and for the organization to maintain its members. Accordingly, when this hidden membership is required, it may negative influence their commitment to remain with this organization—making long-term sobriety potentially less likely.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

AA was founded in 1935 at Akron, OH, and is widely-regarded as the most successful mutual-support organization for alcoholics (Groh, Jason, & Keys, 2008). Since its beginning with two founders, Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob, the effectiveness and the success of AA has been widely investigated by scholars in many disciplines because this organizational model has heuristic values that help people who suffer from addiction

problems. Furthermore, health care professionals officially recommend AA's coping model to their patients.

AA members basically practice 12-steps and tenets. However, these steps and tenets are not completely fixed and are thus open to each local group's interpretation based on its group characteristic and environment. Also, each member is able to interpret and adopt these steps and tenets based on their situations. This open interpretation becomes a significant factor in AA's success because individual members relate their own addiction stories to other AA members (Mitroff, 1998). In other words, members with different stories of addiction find some common ground as well as shape group/organizational identity through communication (Alexander & Rollins, 1984; Weegmann, 2004). Thus, communicating the 12-steps and tenets play a critical role in terms of sustaining AA's organizational value and goals.

Organizational Structure

Despite extant research on the effectiveness of AA, relatively little work has examined the organizational structure as well as communication that make AA effective. Although its successful program of 12 steps and clinical effective has been documented by health-care professionals as well as researchers, the role of AA's organizational structure and its use of anonymous communication as they relate to other processes and outcomes in this organization are not clearly understood. There are a couple of factors that contribute to its organizing process.

Voluntary organization. AA is a mutual-help organization that is run by individuals who are in need (Kelly & White, 2012; Zafiridis & Lainas, 2012). Sober members need to become an agent for new members. This is not a unique structure in

various voluntary organizations. When members come and go, this organization constantly changes its dynamics because members run this organization. Because of the nature of self-help, this is a bottom-up organization (Zafiridis & Lainas). Also, AA completely maintains its organizational independence as well as group's autonomy by being financially independent from external stakeholders. Of course, not all voluntary organizations depend on anonymity—and the role of anonymity for AA when it comes to volunteering and independence is not clear.

Networked organization. AA has a networked organizational form. Initially, Bill Wilson as a charismatic leader envisioned the organizational structure as well as the goals of AA clearly (Trice & Beyer, 1986). Originally, AA's foundation was connected to the Oxford Group, which criticized the corruption of existing religious doctrines interested in growing their power and extending their influence to other areas. Accordingly, AA aims to overcome structural barriers and organizational problems such as centralized power and elite members that frequently are observed in a bureaucratic organizational structure (Seabright & Delacroix, 1996). Rather than emphasizing the growth of the organization, AA remains anarchistic in a way that denies the dominant organizational structure (Bufe, 1991; Trice & Beyer, 1984).

This new form of organizational structure led by Bill Wilson became a foundation of AA and its success (Brafman & Beckstrom, 2006; Trice & Beyer, 1984). Basically, anyone can start a local chapter without the permission of the main office. In addition, AA gives autonomy to local groups as well as promotes consensus during decision making (Borkman, 2006). Although G.S.O. of AA is therefore not strong in this decentralized arrangement, all groups are expected to be similar in terms of employing

the principles of support organizations (Montgomery, Miller, & Tonigan, 1993).

Although these traditions are still practiced within the AA structure, practices are best thought of as open-interpretations based on groups and individuals.

However, the network form of AA also can be a challenge in terms of delivering organizational values and goals—in part because AA has an oral tradition of delivering and practicing organizational values and norms. When members come to a meeting, veteran members reach out to these new members and educate them to adopt certain anonymity-related tenets (Wright, 1997). However, this oral tradition can be risky when local groups may deviate from AA's principles and mislead members in a wrong direction. To that end, the role of the group and sponsor may be key for members to interpret and practice anonymity principles. Also, this networked structure of AA is limited in terms of controlling alleged local groups that are against the organizational principles (Valcik, Benavides, & Scruton, 2015). When a local group violated AA's principles and discredited AA's reputation, AA's advisory board was at risk in managing the external image of AA (Summers, 2007). The network structure helps facilitate some of this construction of the organization—but the lack of centrality may make unified practices of AA less likely.

Anonymous Organization

AA is what Scott (2013) calls a moderately shaded organization. Regarding organizational visibility, AA is fairly visible in terms of its size, name recognition, and public presence. Also, its organizational audience is relatively public and global considering the large number of local groups found on nearly every city. However, its members remain relatively silent about their affiliation and belonging to AA (at least to

outsiders). This visibility management rule has not been changed since AA was established. Thus, the role of anonymity especially as it pertains to member concealment may be linked to AA's (de)constitution. In given context where alcoholism is still stigmatized, anonymity is necessary for the survival of AA and likely a key part of its organizing process.

Anonymous Organizational Communication in AA

The 12 tenets of AA play a key role for organizational success that is based on “noncoercive, anarchist principles” (Bufe, 1991, p. 73). The 12 tenets contain fundamental organizational principles including organizational rules as well as communication principles. Among the 12 tenets, anonymity as core communication principles of AA is prioritized for basic reasons. Tradition 11 and 12 specifically talk about the fundamental communication principles of anonymity:

Tenet 11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.

Tenet 12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2015).

These two tenets are different, but still similar in terms of emphasizing anonymity as a core value of the organization. Primarily, these tenets reflect social and ethical stigma toward alcoholism as well as AA and its members. Also, these anonymity tenets seem highly relevant to organizational structure and the entire organizing process.

Benefits of Anonymous Communication in AA

Anonymity reduces stigma toward alcoholism. Individuals who do not want to reveal any relations with AA can be protected because of anonymity principles (Gellman, 1964). Being a member of AA itself is stigmatized because of its organizational culture

and organizational value that are negatively evaluated by outsiders (Kurtz, 1979, p. 196). Additionally, this rule of anonymity is similar to confidentiality rules mostly practiced in health care settings. It allows members to maintain their personal information in secure ways (see Mäkelä, 1996).

Anonymity “protects the unity and strength of the organization” when individual members may relapse or violate AA’s rules (Gellman, 1964, p.45). Since members should not disclose their AA membership, AA prevents members from misusing organizational values and harming the reputation of AA in public. As author of *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous*, Ernest Kurtz (1979) describes that at the earlier stage of AA’s growth, members who maintained sobriety become more confident about themselves in public. However, this confidence interferes with the organization’s ideology of being “hopeless” as an alcoholic. Moreover, this pride that comes from sobriety might let members lose control and return to drinking. If empowered AA members lose their control as AA members in public, this not only fails one’s sobriety, but also discredit the organization’s reputation—as well as others members’ dedication to AA (E. Kurtz). Also, AA finds that people who publically identify themselves as part of AA are likely to drink again (A. A. World Services, 1971). This advice from the past still reinforces anonymous communication norm in AA today.

Challenges of Anonymity in AA

Although AA encourages organization members to follow anonymity principles as one of the tenets, the practice of anonymity seems potentially problematic for a couple of reasons. Primarily, anonymity is a norm rather than a rule. Even though anonymity as a communication principle is expected among members, there is no punishment or

policing of breaching anonymity. In fact, Coleman (2005) argues that one of the primary concerns of joining mutual-support groups like AA is the lack of assurance of confidentiality about their addiction problems. Due to the fact that self-disclosure is one of the primary activities in these support groups, one's shared information could potentially be leaked. However, revealed others cannot get protected because of the lack of formal consequences for breaching anonymity. This potential danger of being identified with their stigmatized conditions might be a barrier for those who aim to join these mutual-support programs (Valverde & White-Mair, 1999).

Second, the membership boundary of AA becomes significantly challenged by the tradition of anonymity. The membership cannot be defined or counted because of its blurry rule of anonymity so it is relatively difficult to have a list of members (Tournier, 1979). Also, when members do not show up at the meeting, it is almost impossible to give more help or follow-up with these people. When the membership is permeable because of anonymity, this might be a challenge to build trust among members as well.

Also, except for the two tenets related to anonymity and general guidelines of anonymous communication, it is relatively challenging to educate members and facilitate anonymous communication that can be uniquely contextualized and interpreted in AA. As a case study of AA's culture, Alexander and Rollins (1984) radically argue that AA's way of educating its unique norms is like brainwashing people in a certain direction so that their members adopt its organizational culture—giving up their own freedom like a cult.

Anonymity constrains members to boost or to create their organizational identity as a successful member. AA's anonymity notion is completely opposite compared to

most volunteer organizations' policies that promote a positive organizational visibility as well as public reputation (Gellman, 1964). Individual members may want to create a positive social identity to enhance their image or get fame. Maybe they could do that as a way to enhance their own egos. However, when these positive social activities must remain invisible to the public, this might be a big challenge for those who need to achieve success or gain recognition for their efforts outside of AA's organizational boundary.

Anonymity principles limit opportunity to reach out to more alcoholics as well as to create positive organizational image by banning social media. In fact, AA has expressed concerns about possible problems with social media due to the fact that members may breach others' anonymity. Similarly, members or others may easily misuse and misinterpret messages communicated via social media platforms (see Albu & Etter, 2016). However, the organization's social media use has been increasing since it facilitates public relation (Lovejoy, Waters & Saxton, 2012) and positive external communication. In particular, social media allows organizational members to make sense of their organizations, which positively facilitates sharing organizational knowledge (Treem & Leonardi, 2012) and creating organizational identity (Albu & Etter). Also, AA members are highly interconnected in terms of staying sober when they do not have a meeting in person (Campbell & Kelley, 2006, 2008). Therefore, social media adoption among members can contribute to organizing. Notably, social media is not officially used for AA to interact with internal and external organizational audience.

The Four Flows Model

The communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) is emerging as an influential paradigm in the area of organizational communication because CCO sees

communication as a primary force of organizations and their organizing processes (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). Among many streams of CCO (see Bisel, 2010; Schoeneborn, Blaschke, Cooren, McPhee, Seidl, & Taylor, 2014), McPhee and Zaugg's (2000) four flows model has provided thorough descriptions of the organization's constitution based partly on a structurational approach (see Giddens, 1984). Not surprisingly, the four flows model has been widely acknowledged in the area of organizational studies (Bisel; Putnam & Nicotera; Schoeneborn et al., 2014), in the context of non-profit organizations (Koschmann, 2012), terrorist organizations (Bean & Buikema, 2015), employee-abusive organizations (Lutgen-Sandvik & McDermott, 2008), the Air Force (Browning, Greene, Sitkin, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2009), and private communities (McPhee & Iverson, 2009).

Rationale

First, applying the four flows model in the current study will help provide better understanding of how anonymous communication helps to construct the organization. Existing research on anonymous communication heavily focuses on particular uses of anonymous communication in a wide range of organizational contexts (see Scott & Rains, 2005). For example, anonymous communication is considered as one particular strategy to increase participation (see Scott et al., 2013). However, anonymous communication can play a major (de)constituting force for certain organizations. The notion of (de)constitution refers to constraining organizing or even disorganizing (see Bean & Buikema, 2015; Taylor & Van Every, 2014); however, this perspective has not yet been fully developed. Such efforts may benefit from a CCO perspective like the four flows.

Second, when the source of anonymous communication concerns the organization, various groups, and their members, multiple communication levels need to be examined (Anonymous, 1998, p. 404). The four flows model is capable of describing how members, groups, and organizations co-construct and enact anonymity principles across multiple communication flows in organizations. Anonymity as a construct is perceived and communicated differently based on the communicators involved in a certain part of organizing (Scott & Rains, 2007). Accordingly, the multiple audiences of anonymous communication in AA need to be understood separately (and together) based on the unique communicative nature of each communication flow in AA. These four flows provide a useful description of how anonymous communication constitutes, and potentially even deconstitutes, AA at multiple levels.

Similarly, adopting the four flows model overcomes the structural barriers of studying somewhat anonymous organizations like AA. McPhee and Zaug (2000) argue that the four flows model would encompass communications from the micro-level to the macro-level in an organization. Since AA manages anonymous communication in various ways corresponding to relevant organizational audiences, describing only a few members, or groups, or the main office of AA is limited in terms of capturing the complexity of AA's anonymity. For example, members of AA are not generally visible in public because their personal identities must be hidden. On the other hand, AA as an institution publicizes organizational events in newspapers and magazines. Since stigmatized organizations like AA strategically manage their visibility to various degrees, researchers are likely to experience limitations if examining only one level or aspect of the organization. To better understand AA's complex visibility management, the four flows

model provides a useful framework that covers communication flows across multiple-levels.

Finally, the four flows model is a useful framework that captures the constitution of complex organizations like AA. The organizational structure of AA and other 12-step support organizations is somewhat different from more hierarchical arrangements. Due to the decentralized and networked structure of the organization, AA's organizing must be understood with a complex theoretical framework. To better understand how each organizational interaction is connected in AA in a complex manner, an appropriately sophisticated theoretical framework is required.

Theoretical Foundation of the Four Flows Model

McPhee and Zaug (2000) claim that organization is constituted through four flows of communication: member negotiation, self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning. Each flow has its own unique contribution to organizing and organizations since each flow reflects interactions with various internal (i.e. self-structuring, member-negotiation, and activity coordination) and external (i.e. institutional positioning) audiences of organization. Although the four flows work together to constitute an organization, examining the distinguishable feature of each communication flow is particularly beneficial in terms of understanding a complex (de)constituting process of anonymous organizations like AA (see Bean & Buikema, 2015). To describe and explain the extent to which anonymous communication shapes the organizing processes of AA, adopting the four flows model is promising.

Membership Negotiation

McPhee and Zaug (2000) describe that organizations purposely communicate with new members to help them become a part of the organization during member negotiation. Accordingly, any interaction with new members has a constituting force for organizations. All members involved in an organization continuously negotiate membership (McPhee, 2015, p. 489). For example, this communication flow includes any type of messages exchanged during socialization and identification. To attract new members, organizations advertise organizational values, reputation, and principles to recruit new members. Then, these new members are likely to access whether they wish to formally join an organization. For example, organizations select or recruit new members that are suitable for organizations and train them to adopt organizational values and principles. To constitute organization through this communication flow, messages should clarify membership boundaries so that organizations can avoid any potential problems and confusion (McPhee & Zaug, 2001). To that point, member negotiation may be challenged when organizational boundaries are overly permeable.

Clearly, there are multiple communicative messages during member negotiation in AA. Through member negotiation, members directly and indirectly build initial relationships with the organization. In AA, Alcoholics may get information about AA and the 12-step program from various sources including healthcare professionals, mass media, and friends and family members. Prospective members may check AA's organizational culture and principles. Once individual members become a part of AA based on their choice of participating in a form of AA's local group, they are taught to practice AA's 12 tenets and 12 steps. Although these tenets and steps are described in a

written format, new members also learn how to practice these principles from existing members of their local groups.

As a part of the 12 tenets, members initially learn why and how they follow anonymous communication principles. However, new members may encounter different views about anonymity and its importance as they continue the socialization involved in member negotiation. In fact, individuals may have different perception of stigma toward alcoholism or AA, various perceptions of anonymity, and diverse motivations for using a form of anonymous communication. Whereas some members may be able to use anonymity for concealing their personal identities in a flexible manner, other members may not know how to enact anonymity properly. This discrepancy on the perceived need of anonymity may make it harder for members to coordinate anonymity practices in local groups. Also, members may even choose different AA groups or types of meetings—or choose not to join based on those characteristics—that practice anonymity in various ways (i.e., open/closed group, discussion, speaker group, etc.).

Anonymity principles of AA may constrain the constituting of AA through member negotiation in several ways. First, anonymity interferes with an individual's desire to create positive social identity through visible organizational identity and membership. AA's anonymity surrounding membership precludes visibility that may be desired by some members (and facilitates a level of invisibility sought by others). Second, AA has a somewhat permeable organizational boundary and the membership of AA is also very loosely defined due in part to anonymity principles. The membership cannot be defined or counted because anonymity may discourage having lists of members, for example (Tournier, 1979). Also, when members do not show up at a

meeting, it may be difficult to provide more help or follow-up. Actually, only 10% of new members choose to stay within a year (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2013). The high turnover during member negotiation may be related to anonymity principles, which allows for a lack of formal membership and no mandatory rule to keep new members in place. Finally, anonymity may make it difficult for AA to recruit members. In fact, some members want to breach anonymity in order to attract more members (Colman, 2011). Although organizations actively adopt social media and other communication platforms to increase their visibilities, AA's anonymity principle discourage members from aggressively using these platforms to reach out to potential members. Since AA only relies on more traditional ways to recruit members (e.g., doctor's referral, legal order, and suggestions from family and friends) these limited recruiting methods may not be effective to attract more members to AA. However, it is also true that increasing visibilities of AA may be harmful to protect individual member's anonymity.

The role of the local AA groups is quite significant during member negotiation even though the original model of the four flows does not address local/group level issues in much detail. Because AA members join local groups to be a part of AA, the local group's unique diversity may influence a member's initial socialization and identification. Whether local groups align to AA or not in terms of socialization and identification, member negotiation can be challenged. The literature on organizational identification shows that leaders of groups may be gatekeepers by telling members what to do or not in terms of adopting organizational principles (Scott & Lane, 2000). Furthermore, group leaders may not always align with organizational principles during

socialization efforts, which can lead to discrepancy of norms and rules between the group and the organization the member is joining.

Given the complex nature of anonymous communication during member negotiation, it seems clear that the (de)constituting force of anonymous communication may enable and constrain organizing processes of AA to a certain extent. These variations across local groups may positively or negatively influence AA. Accordingly, the following research question is addressed:

RQ1. To what extent does anonymous communication during member negotiation (de)constitute AA?

Reflexive Self-Structuring

McPhee and Zaug (2000) argue “organizations are the objects not merely of reflexive attention but of reflexive control and design of self-structuring” (p. 16). Although members and groups still influence an organization’s existence, an organization comes up with its goals and structure to perpetuate the organization. Since individuals and groups’ collective involvement during organizing does not occur without organizational effort, organizations need to share required organizing processes and principles with individuals and groups during self-structuring. Particularly, using hierarchical control during reflexive self-structuring (Browning et al., 2009), organizations aim to influence potential organizational activities that happen at the group level and the individual level. To preserve the organizational goal, organizations strategically assign all the official organizational activities aligned with the organizational goals and rules (McPhee & Zaug, 2001). In this flow of reflexive self-structuring, organizations create the official mission statements, rules, and policies. Also,

organizations choose a governing structure to achieve organizational missions. These created goals and rules may be subject to change under certain circumstances where organizations need to adopt some feedback from members or accommodate to inevitable internal and external changes.

During self-structuring, AA informally and formally sets organizational principles and places an organizational structure corresponding to the ultimate goal of AA. In terms of reflexive self-structuring (McPhee & Zaug, 2000), AA may follow organizational principles to maintain their existing structure. For example, AA's managerial boards voluntarily rotate their positions to maintain the non-authoritative structure and maintain democratic decision-making processes for making or changing organizational rules and policies in order to maintain AA's core value (Vaillant, 2005, p. 435). As another example, AA instructs the 12 steps and the 12 tenets via multiple communication channels. Encouraging members to follow the 12 steps is especially crucial since these steps are linked to an individual's sobriety, which is particularly important to AA's unique program.

With a better understanding of what self-structuring is, it is useful to consider how anonymous communication operates in this flow. To instruct organizational principles to members of local groups clearly, AA uses various forms of written documents. For example, AA specifically includes the role of anonymity and its relevant details in the 12 tenets AA members follow. Tenet 11 and 12 specifically address the expected anonymous communication rule. Although these tenets and circulations are not necessarily formal policy, these rules are recommended and practiced as a part of organizational activities. Since anonymous communication is a type of guiding structure

that presumably underlies so much of what an organization like AA does, communication about anonymity is crucial during self-structuring.

However, there are some challenges AA faces because of anonymous communication as it relates to self-structuring. Since anonymity does not allow leaders to have as much power over others, the lack of authority may make it difficult for AA to guide organizational members as desired. To preserve anonymity, AA generally follows a decentralized structure using local groups as a primary agency of AA. However, this networked format of AA may negatively impact self-structuring because AA does not control or monitor the general practices of local groups. According to Browning et al. (2009), self-structuring should be more securely done through control in hierarchical organizational structures. However, AA gives autonomy to local groups and anonymity seems to help facilitate that in part. Additionally, in a given context where each local group interprets anonymous communication principles corresponding to the situated environment of local groups, diverse perceptions of anonymity in each group may challenge members in terms of adopting anonymity as an organizational tenet (see Tonigan, Ashroft, & Miller, 1995). Even when groups do not follow organizational principles or keep organizational culture, there are no ways to discipline or correct these groups. In the long term, this may negatively impact not only AA's self-structuring, but its sustainability.

Self-structuring of AA occurs at both organizational and more local group levels; thus, both should be considered. In fact, a group-level focus is essential because groups play a significant role as a buffer between individual and organizations in general (Silva & Sias, 2010). Each local group in AA has strong positional power in the organization

because of its autonomy (Zohar & Borkman, 1997). Since each local group runs meetings and organizes activities corresponding to their specific social environment, independently developed group characteristics may empower these groups in various ways. Due to the lack of hierarchical control, self-structuring of AA can be moderated by norms and rules of local groups. Ultimately, the local group's power over AA may lead to organization-wide change (Zohar & Borkman). Accordingly, the constituting force during self-structuring may occur to various degrees at group and organizational levels and that self-structuring may influence each level in potentially distinct ways.

Local group characteristics may influence the role of anonymous communication during self-structuring. When members perceive secure group boundaries from the structure of a closed group meeting that highly respects anonymity, members seem likely to appreciate and follow anonymous communication. Additionally, local leadership may structure their groups in ways that the practice of anonymous communication varies: sometimes aligned with and sometimes rather distinct from AA's anonymous communication principles. Since preserving anonymity in the group requires collective efforts and agreements, local groups may develop unique ways of interpreting and practicing anonymous communication during self-structuring.

In summary, the organizing processes of AA may be enabled or constrained by anonymous communication during self-structuring. If self-structuring cannot be fully completed because of the nature of anonymous communication, this constrained flow may cause problems during the overall constituting processes of AA. In other words, constrained communicative talk during self-structuring may critically limit or even potentially serve to partially deconstitute AA. Taylor and Van Every (2014) argue that

the lack of authority in organization can lead to organizational failure. If a lack of authority makes employees' interpretations and understandings of organizational knowledge relatively difficult, self-structuring may be problematic for AA's constitution. In fact, detected problems in a certain communication flow can serve to deconstitute an organization based on existing empirical research (Bean & Buikema, 2015). To investigate the (de)constituting force of anonymous communication during self-structuring, the following research question is proposed:

RQ2. To what extent does anonymous communication during self-structuring (de)constitute AA?

Activity Coordination

McPhee and Zaug (2000) define activity coordination as a required communication flow that occurs during "adjusting the work process and solving immediate practical problems" (p. 10). Although reflexive self-structuring designates individuals and groups and explains related duties to members and groups, those messages are not enough to provide complete understandings or practices of those roles and duties among members and subgroups. Instead, members must engage in communication with other members in subgroups. To address practical and emergent problems and to get task goals met, members engage in activity coordination. During this activity coordination, members in subgroups mutually collaborate to deal with problems, to innovate, etc. Since members may experience conflicts in terms of following a certain rule or a procedure, members may need to manage these disagreements effectively.

During activity coordination, AA members in local groups practice the 12 steps to achieve sobriety in various ways (see Emrick, 1987). For example, members take a turn

to share their stories of alcoholism and to exchange support. Following the 12 steps, members try to maintain sobriety. Also, when member experience relapse and any drinking-related problems, other group members help to resolve those issues together. If members experience any conflicts or respond to any changes, groups make their own decisions based on group norms and rules. This process depends on each group's characteristics. Some groups may use majority rule and other groups may follow the opinions of leaders or more veteran members.

AA members literally try to practice anonymity principles that are taught during member negotiation and self-structuring. Additionally, part of the coordination is about a collective sense of anonymity and how it should and should not be incorporated into other activities. Although AA members have a sort of prior knowledge of anonymity as a principle, practicing anonymity is challenging for several reasons. Collectively practicing anonymity principles is relatively more difficult than individually practicing them—and yet anonymity in this context may well depend to some degree on the collective. Most AA members figure out how to perform anonymity in their local groups. Based on the group's location, time, format, perceived stigma, historical background, or perceived importance of anonymity, practicing anonymous communication is likely diverse. Since the 12 tenets of AA do not provide specific case-by-case instructions regarding anonymity practices, members communicatively coordinate anonymity practices with other members. Long-term members or other sponsors may help members construct and practice anonymity in a way that is suitable to members' situational factors. Conversely, some group members may strictly practice anonymity. In this case, collectively practicing the desired level of anonymous communication requires cooperation among members.

Although AA's local groups may generally engage in similar activities and follow the 12 steps and 12 tenets as a unitary organization, there are differences across groups because of the autonomy of each local group and the different structure and content of meetings (McCrady & Irvine, 1989). Montgomery et al. (1993) argue that locality of each local group influences the enactment of AA's organizational principles—including anonymity. Similarly, Witmer (1997) considers each local group as a primary agency that practices and reconstructs AA's tenets in the organization. Her empirical finding shows that local group's unique understanding and practicing of AA's 12 tenets critically influence members in terms of making sense of the organization's basic concepts.

However, anonymous communication during activity coordination may deconstruct AA. For example, since anonymity may make it difficult for members to reach out to other members in a daily basis, anonymous members may not receive or give social support when they cannot meet others physically. Moreover, AA group members cannot coordinate social activities and provide tangible resources if some members still remain anonymous outside of a meeting. Anonymity may even make coordination within meetings more challenging. In addition to that, building trust may be relatively difficult when members do not share their personal information. In fact, members perceive that unidentified others may seem irresponsible, suspicious, or dishonest. In that case, anonymity may frustrate members. Similarly, although self-disclosing is a key part of exchanging social support within AA, anonymity may not motivate people to share their personal stories with others. This type of mistrust related to anonymity may be harmful for a group's long-term success.

In summary, anonymous communication during activity coordination may enable or constrain the organizational processes of AA. Due to the fact that local groups autonomously run their groups corresponding to internal and external factors somewhat differently from AA in general, anonymous communication during activity coordination may enable or constrain the organizing of AA as a unified single organization. To uncover the (de)constituting role of anonymous communication specifically during activity coordination, the following research question is proposed:

RQ3. To what extent does anonymous communication during activity coordination (de)constitute AA?

Institutional Positioning

According to McPhee and Zaug (2001), institutional positioning refers to “mostly external communication to gain recognition and inclusion in the web of social transactions” (p. 588). The audiences of the communication during this flow include any external agencies that provide resources or bring potential cooperation or competitions (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Positioning an organization’s status positively is important in terms of interacting with potential members as well as external stakeholders. For example, organizations may use various communication channels such as television, newspaper, magazine, and social media platforms to reach out to potential customers. Also, creating a partnership with a similar type of organization may increase the visibility of organizations. Public relations and marketing communication are integral parts of organizations and organizing that would be part of this flow.

During institutional positioning, AA concretely follows the traditions 11 and 12 that provide directions for AA’s communication with key stakeholders in public. AA’s

external communication does not aim to promote its organization. This basic notion is completely opposite to most organizations' policy that promotes a positive organizational visibility as well as public reputation (Gellman, 1964). Rather than creating a positive image of AA in public, the goal of external communication in AA is attracting alcoholics. To that extent, AA aims to help alcoholics have information about alcoholism and recovery. To reach out to people who suffer from alcoholism and related issues, AA attends health-related local events and promotes various programs of AA in public.

AA's external communication as a single organization has a mixed mode of anonymous communication for several reasons. Due to the negative social perception of alcoholism, creating a positive image of AA is crucial in terms of interacting with outsiders. AA aims to be publically visible in terms of giving help to those who are in need (Scott, 2013). The public relations office of AA provides various outlets to promote its organization and programs publically. AA interacts with mass media outlets (but requires them to respect the anonymity of members). Since AA promotes anonymity as a positive construct that embraces the social and ethical stigma of alcoholism, anonymity is also preserved when AA members appear in the media. AA is open to collaborating with health care professionals (Kurtz & Kurtz, 1985). In that sense, the institutional positioning of AA happens in rather public and visible ways. However, each member's identity still remains largely anonymous.

Despite the necessity of anonymous communication to maintain AA's overarching goals during institutional positioning, anonymity may constrain AA's external communication. For example, anonymity may create a negative image of AA. In fact, hidden organizations are easily linked to a lack of accountability and authenticity.

This negative perception can jeopardize AA's reputation. Also, the effectiveness of AA's program may not be shared or understood accurately because of the anonymity AA preserve in public. Furthermore, a negative image surrounding anonymity may make it difficult for AA to recruit new members as well as to partner with other healthcare organizations.

Although AA as an organization is a primary agency of external communication, local groups are also constituted through institutional positioning. In fact, McPhee and Iverson (2009) describe that communication during institutional positioning responds to the physical and social environment of the organization. For example, local groups of AA function as a primary agency suitable to the local community, which may be relatively different from other groups. For example, groups in a socially conservative area may need to deal with stigma or criticism related to alcoholism and to present themselves carefully in public. On the other hand, groups in a liberal area may not restrict their presence in public since individuals may be more tolerant to AA. In a given context, audiences of institutional positioning may be extremely localized through specific local communication channels such as local radio, newspapers, and small businesses. Localized institutional positioning could be aligned to AA or different from AA as an organization. Since any interaction with other stakeholders influences member's identity and organization identity, an autonomous group's external communication may constitute the local groups to a certain extent. This institutional positioning may positively influence certain groups. On the other hand, institutional positioning may empower the role of local groups by enhancing or creating their own group identity rather than organization identity.

In sum, the nature of anonymous communication may positively or negatively influence the (de)constitution of AA as it occurs through external communication. Also, since local groups strongly function as AA's representative in terms of making decisions and promoting themselves, anonymous communication during institutional positioning may diverge from AA's official communication norms and rules. Accordingly, depending on its use, anonymity may positively or negatively constitute AA regarding the communication with various external stakeholders. To examine the role of institutional positioning through anonymous communication, the following research question is addressed:

RQ4. To what extent does anonymous communication during institutional positioning (de)constitute AA?

Complex Relationships Among the Four Flows

McPhee and Zaug (2000) claim, "a constituted organization is not just a set of flows, but a complex relationship of them" (p.12). In other words, describing the four flows separately is not sufficient enough to provide the complete narrative of organization and organizing. It is also important to uncover the complex relationships among these four communication flows while an organization is constituted. Despite the importance of those relationships among the flows, concrete statements of associations among flows were not proposed in the original four flows model. Since complex organizations have communication flows corresponding to organizational structure, particular associations among flows may vary.

Empirical studies of the four flows provide some potential pairings of the four flows. For example, Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott (2008) uncover the relationships of

each flow in their case study of an employee-abusive organizations. In this case study, reflexive organizational self-structuring and activity coordination have a procedural connection, because official documents created through self-structuring are communicated for interpretation among organizational members during their activity coordination. Accordingly, self-structuring may be positively or negatively influential for other flows. The paired flows jointly constitute organizations and organizing. More specifically, multiple pairs of flows emerged in an empirical analysis of military technician interviews (Browning et al., 2009): activity coordination and institutional positioning, membership negotiation and activity coordination, and self-structuring and activity coordination. Also, these pairings of flows are all connected in terms of constituting this military organization as a whole.

Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015) examine how two flows jointly constitute an organization. They claim that member negotiation is particularly problematic when the hacktivist group “Anonymous” does not have hierarchical control during self-structuring. In that respect, when organizations do not have a formalized internal membership negotiation process such as recruitment or a member contract, organizations only achieve permeable organizational boundaries that cause problems during member negotiation. Interestingly, the study argues that being quite dysfunctional in terms of having a constituting force, member negotiation is strengthened by the organization’s external communication with others through identification. Although the study does not pinpoint the potential relationship between member negotiation and institutional positioning, it shows the potential pairing between member negotiation and institutional positioning through identification.

AA may experience similar issues related to constituting because of the structural and the practical issues related to the anonymity principles. However, AA has been growing rapidly for the past 50 years. That means that other communication flows may positively support or supplement problematic communication flows because all flows influence organization and organizing. For instance, anonymity may constrain allocating organizational resources since AA does not allow members to have authority and does not provide detailed organizational knowledge. When self-structuring is not adequately constituted, members may not know the specific directions of how to follow 12-steps and 12 tenets and practice AA's culture. However, activity coordination which happens in a local group may clarify organizational principles and distribute duties and organizational resources clearly. Also, where anonymity constrains identification during member negotiation, self-structuring may strengthen identification in several ways. While concealing one's membership constrains organizational identification, providing a clear organizational goal, educating, and using resources may positively influence members' identification. Although a communication flow may not constitute an organization as predicted, other communication flows may compensate for this problematic flow because of the interconnectivity of these flows. Thus, the following research question is proposed to uncover how these flows strategically relate to one other:

RQ5. To what extent are the four flows of anonymous communication related in the (de)constitution of AA?

The Four Flows and Constituted Outcomes

The four flows of communication not only constitute an organization, but also contribute to various outcomes in the multiple levels of an organization. However,

existing studies that adopted the four flows model have not typically examined outcomes of these organizing processes. To expand the utility of the four flows in this context, this dissertation proposes to examine the multiple relationships between the four flows of anonymous communication and key outcomes at the multiple levels of AA.

Key Organizational Outcomes

Since key organizational outcomes of AA are the consequence of organizing, these organizational outcomes are likely linked to the four flows of anonymous communication. Even though the four flows is focused on processes of organizing, it is not inconsistent with that model to also examine potentially-related outcomes. In fact, key organizational outcomes of nonprofit-organizations like AA are indicators of organizational success and effectiveness (see Herman & Renz, 1998; Plantz, Greenway, & Hendricks, 1997). Also, measuring outcomes in the non-profit sector is a useful way to understand whether an organization's mission and goal is appropriately achieved (Sawhill & Williamson, 2001). These outcomes may be predicted in part by (de)constituting forces of anonymous communication. Accordingly, key organizational outcomes are drawn from the literature of management and substance abuse studies.

AA's key outcome measurable at the organizational level is organizational identification. For example, the (de)constituting force of anonymous communication in AA can be captured by organizational identification, "the perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104.). In particular, Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) argue that organizational identification is an on-going process since identity is constantly created and enacted through individual's interactions with others across multiple levels of organization. To that extent, AA's (de)constitution

through the four flows directly and indirectly influences organizational identification. Accordingly, organizational identification may manifest the overall (de)constituting forces of anonymous communication in AA.

In addition to organizational identification, organizational satisfaction may indicate the (de)constituting forces of anonymous communication in AA. When AA members have a positive experience during the organizing processes of AA, organizational members perceive high organizational satisfaction. Also, satisfied members are less likely to quit AA. Although there is no concrete evidence that indicates the relationship between the four flows of anonymous communication and key organizational outcomes in AA, the literature points out some potential outcomes related to anonymous communication. If communication constructs organizations, benefits and challenges of organizing through anonymous communication may influence other key organizational outcomes. Accordingly, the following research question is included:

RQ6a. To what extent are the four flows of anonymous communication related to key organizational outcomes (i.e., organizational identification, organizational satisfaction)?

Key Group Outcomes

Uncovering the four flows of AA may provide an opportunity to understand organizing processes of local groups. Similar to organizations, group interactions are dynamic, on-going processes that are related to a group's overall performances and key outcomes (see Levi, 2015). In AA, the constituting forces of the four flows may

positively or negatively influence key group outcomes. Because AA's organizational practices mostly happen in local groups, AA's organizational (de)constitution heavily influences local groups. Accordingly, AA's (de)constitution is related to each local group's outcomes—such as group cohesion, group identification, and group satisfaction.

Successfully organized groups are likely to have high group cohesion, which indicates the positive and supportive relationship within groups (see Mullen & Copper, 1994). For example, high group cohesion may be an indicator of groups that successfully organized in AA. (see Rice & Tonigan, 2012). However, anonymous communication may make members difficult to coordinate. Because of anonymity, members may not share contact information. Not revealing members' identities may make building trustworthy relationships among group members relatively difficult. In that case, it is challenging to create group cohesion. Similarly, since anonymous communication may influence one's sense of belonging, this may positively or negatively impact group identification. Anonymity may highlight group identification rather than members' personal identification. However, anonymity may make group boundaries more permeable. This may negatively impact group identification.

Group satisfaction may also be related to constituting processes of AA. If members do not experience serious drawbacks and challenges while they participate in their group, they are likely to be satisfied with the overall organizing processes of AA. Although anonymity constrains group activities, members may not perceive any dissatisfaction overall. Therefore, the (de)constituting force of anonymity can be manifest through measuring group satisfaction. Accordingly, the following research question is generated:

RQ6b. To what extent are the four flows of anonymous communication related to key group outcomes (i.e., group cohesion, group identification, group satisfaction)?

Key Individual Outcomes

Although the four flows model was not originally intended to predict key outcomes of individuals in organizations, organizing processes through the four flows can be linked to key individual outcomes (e.g., sobriety and participation) within constituted organizations. In fact, there are studies that address the potential role of the four flows on key individual outcomes.

Despite the lack of empirical studies, there are multiple outcomes individual members have because of their communicative interactions during organizing processes. Anonymous communication may be positively or negatively related to an individual's sobriety. The organizational goal of AA is to sustain each member's sobriety and to help others achieve sobriety (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2016). Accordingly, constituting AA through the four flows of AA may be related to member sobriety. AA members need to achieve their own sobriety as a measure of success in AA (Gabhainn, 2009).

Also, the anonymity flows can be related to member involvement and active participation. Since constituting AA aims to establish a stable membership (Boscarino, 1980), successfully organized AA may encourage members' active participation in organizational activities and regular meeting attendance. However, anonymous communication may discourage members from building a strong membership; thus, in that case, member's participation and involvement may not be active. Taken together, the following research question is addressed:

RQ6c. To what extent are the four flows of anonymous communication related to key individual outcomes (i.e., AA attendance, the length of sobriety, sobriety efficacy)?

Chapter 3: Method

To examine how anonymous communication (de)constitutes AA across multiple levels, the current dissertation aims to conduct a mixed-methods multiple case study, in which each participating local group of AA is considered as a case. This particular research design implements quantitative and qualitative data collection in a larger multiple case study (see Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). Specifically, this dissertation adopts the convergent parallel design in a multiple case study, which equally values quantitative and qualitative methods in order to describe and explain a phenomenon (Creswell & Clark, 2011). For this dissertation, direct observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted for the qualitative inquiry. Also, survey questionnaires were distributed and collected for the quantitative inquiry. Conducting mixed-methods research in a multiple case study offers more complex understanding of the organizing processes and AA's key outcomes.

Multiple Case Study

As the primary method for empirical inquiry for this study, a multiple case study was purposively chosen for several reasons. According to Yin (1994), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Rather than selecting a single case that provides a specific description and explanation of a particular phenomenon, conducting a multiple case study is relatively beneficial in terms of capturing a single phenomenon or program that similarly or differently emerges across multiple cases (Yin, 2014). Stake (2006) argues that the goal of a multiple case study is to figure out an overarching theme within

multiple cases across diverse contexts. To that end, this ultimate goal of multi-case research corresponds to the research questions of the current dissertation. Since the dissertation aims to comprehend the anonymous organizing processes of AA, examining a variety of local groups that commonly practice AA's principles will eventually give a better understanding of the collection of groups that constitutes AA.

Also, a multiple case study is helpful for uncovering and extending the heuristic value of the two main theoretical works in the current research. To overcome the theoretical and methodological limitations of the literature across anonymous communication and the four flows model, adopting a multiple case study is warranted. In fact, a multiple case study is primarily used since it “predicts contrasting results but for anticipatable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (Yin, 2014, p. 57). Although the four flows model as one of the CCO perspective has been frequently cited across organizational communication and management disciplines (Putnam & Nicotera, 2008), only few studies have used the four flows model with an empirical approach (Koschmann, 2012). Since those limited studies do not describe the active role of communication during organizing that must be reflected by the four flows, it is necessary for scholars to empirically examine the four flows model. To overcome limitations of existing studies on the four flows, McPhee suggests that interpretive or critical methods would capture the structural process of the four flows model (see Schoeneborn et al., 2014)—further suggesting the value of multiple methods. Empirical research based on the four flows model expands our understanding of that theory and provides a theoretically-informed view of the communicative constitution of AA.

Similarly, only a few empirical studies adopting theories of anonymous communication have been conducted. Also, those limited studies have mostly described and explored a particular usage of anonymity in a wide range of communication contexts. Accordingly, the role of anonymous communication has not been considered as a key organizational communication principle. These prior findings do not give a concrete understanding of anonymity during organizing processes. A more sophisticated methodological approach to capture this alternative organizing through anonymous communication is needed. To that end, a multiple case study is particularly responsive to the increasing calls for field research in the discipline of organizational communication (see Doerfel & Gibbs, 2014).

Also, exploiting a multiple case study of diverse AA groups would be beneficial in terms of exploring many different parts of AA. Rather than employing a single case study, a multiple case study offers a better understanding of the role of anonymous communication. In a given context where each local group of AA is influenced by locality to a certain extent (Zohar & Borkman, 1997), a multiple case study is particularly suitable for research that aims to capture the emerging themes across cases situated in different contexts (Stake, 2005; Yin, 2003). In fact, studying groups from either a member's perspective or a researcher's perspective limits the ability to grasp organizing processes. Reviewing the existing studies in the context of AA, Tonigan, Toscova, and Miller (1996) claim that empirical studies of AA are mostly cross-sectional. Similarly, communication scholars have examined the organizational culture and identification in AA through a longitudinal single group case study (e.g., Witmer, 1997; Wright, 1997). Although in-depth understanding of a particular group is provided in a single group case

study, those studies do not provide as much insight as studies examining multiple case sites (at multiple levels of analysis). Accordingly, selecting multiple cases across contexts for the qualitative inquiry including semi-structured interviews and direct observation extends existing understandings of AA by providing an in-depth look at the organizing processes of AA. Also, a survey questionnaire was included as part of the quantitative inquiry. This will allow for the measurement of enabling and constraining forces of anonymity, how they relate within and across the flows, and how they might predict key outcomes at multiple levels. Such an approach has not been used previously with the four flows model. In sum, quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and analyzed to understand the core mechanism of anonymous organizing across multiple cases of AA.

Taken together, adopting a multiple case study in this dissertation will describe and explain multiple facets of anonymous organizing from the communicative constitution of organizations perspective. Also, this methodological foundation overcomes limitations of existing research on AA across multiple disciplines and shed light on anonymous organizing in the context of social support organizations.

The Convergent Parallel Design

The current dissertation adopts the convergent parallel design as a mixed method design in a multiple case study. Within the convergent parallel design, qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently, but analyzed separately. Then, researchers combine these results to explore a more complete understanding of a phenomenon by finding similarities and differences across the two results (Creswell & Clark, 2011). This particular design is selected for two primary reasons. Highlighting the importance of gaining valid data collected from a multiple case research effort, Stake (2006)

recommends “triangulating” multiple methods. To avoid any potential misinterpretation of cases, employing a mixed-methods design in a multiple case study may resolve validity issue of data collected within multiple cases (see Creswell & Clark). Also, due to the exploratory nature of the dissertation, the convergent parallel design is well-suited. In this design, the qualitative and the quantitative data collection are employed together since these two approaches are valued equally (Creswell & Clark). However, the data analysis of each part will be separately done and merged later for comparison and contrast.

Also, this convergent parallel design can overcome the structural barriers of studying anonymous organizations like AA. Triangulation through mixed-methods design will help overcome concerns of studying somewhat anonymous organizations. Studying core-stigmatized organizations as one example of anonymous organizations (see Scott, 2013), Hudson and Okyuson (2014) suggest that these relatively invisible organizations must be examined with multiple methods because of the limited visibility of these organizations. In a given context where these organizations are likely to be less visible because of stigma, a single point of data access and single method often fail to provide researchers with an adequate understanding of these types of somewhat hidden organizations.

Also, this mixed method design is beneficial in terms of dealing with one of the primary methodological concerns in studying group communication—specifically that studies with a single method cannot adequately capture group dynamics (Poole, Keyton, & Frey, 1999). Since the dissertation primarily captures (de)constituting processes of AA within multiple AA groups, employing multiple methods helps to better describe

multidimensional aspects of local AA groups. For example, to capture group-level and individual-level constructs in local groups of AA, survey questionnaires, direct observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted as a way to describe individual, group, and organizational outcomes as well as explain the relationship between the four flows and various outcomes. Overall, the methodological attempt to conduct a mixed-method multiple case study provides a more concrete understanding of constitution of organization through anonymous communication.

Convergent Parallel Design in Multiple Case Study

Selecting Cases

Selection of cases is a particularly crucial part of a multiple case study approach that aims to replicate or expand existing theoretical works (Eisenhardt, 1989). This case selection should ideally match the categories relevant to existing theoretical work (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Stake, 2006). This type of purposeful sampling is one of the techniques that has been widely used in case study research since choosing a case is intended for understanding a specific part of the context. Among many strategies within this purposive sampling, maximum variation sampling is most suited for researchers that aim to look “for information that elucidates programmatic variation and significant common patterns within that variation” (Patton, 1990, p. 172). Also, this particular technique is useful in terms of choosing participants that “represent wide variations of the phenomena under study” (Tracy, 2013, p. 135).

The current dissertation benefits from this maximum variation sampling strategy since the strategy draws complex understandings of local groups that link to multiple-level of AA. As mentioned in Chapter 2, AA’ anonymity principle as a core

communication principle practiced in local groups of AA. However, each local group implements the principle of AA in various ways and has relatively unique group dynamics (Tonigan, Ashcroft, & Miller, 1995). Accordingly, each local group may vary in terms of practicing anonymity principles. This dissertation anticipated that these practices of anonymity vary in part because of the location and the meeting format of each local group. Accordingly, these are the two dimensions that can be used for selecting cases. To draw more specific sampling variation, the current dissertation will choose four-groups, filling each combination of the urban-suburban and open-closed dimensions.

Urban-suburban.

The geographical location of each group influences the enactment of AA's organizational principles including anonymity (Montgomery et al., 1993). Anonymity is particularly linked to urban space although perceived anonymity is a fairly subjective notion (Tittle, 1989). Due to the heterogeneous nature of a metropolitan city, individuals living there are likely to perceive higher anonymity than individuals in a homogeneous city (Sadalla, 1978). The size and the population of the city really distinguish urban places from suburban places. Following the sampling technique described, this dissertation aims to vary cases based in part on suburban and urban settings.

Multiple factors should be considered in order to divide the suburban and the urban spaces for the case selection. In particular, the public information offered by the U.S. Census Bureau is utilized. The U.S. Census Bureau (2010) categorizes counties in three ways using the percentage of the population in rural areas: "mostly urban," "mostly rural," and "completely rural". Based on this rurality report, counties in three states (New

Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) were selected. Then, AA groups in these selected counties were identified based on meeting format and contacted for research. Since each group meeting's format, meeting time, and location is officially available on the website of each AA's local chapter, this online list will be primarily used for case selection.

In AA, local groups may perceive and practice anonymity principles somewhat differently since geographical location plays a part to understand the importance of anonymity. For example, AA groups in urban areas are less likely to be concerned about anonymity. In fact, individuals in metropolitan areas are less likely to meet other group members outside of their group meetings because members are in such concentrated populations. Accordingly, group members are able to hide many of their social identities to their group members. Conversely, AA groups in suburban areas may have higher concern for anonymity since these suburban areas are more likely to be family-oriented and conservative toward alcoholism. Due to the more noticeable social network in suburbia, it is really difficult for AA members to hide any activities related to AA.

Open-closed.

There are limited understandings of how a certain group character may be related to identifiability or anonymity. In the context of AA, each group's character and its related meeting format is categorized as either open or closed. Also, each district of AA provides a list of meeting groups that is clearly marked as open or closed. According to Alcoholics Anonymous (2014), open meetings welcome anyone interested in AA. These audiences can be family, friends, and anyone considering joining AA. Thus, these open groups are open to alcoholics and non-alcoholics. The meeting formats of these open groups are open speaker meetings and open discussion meetings. Closed group meetings are

generally restricted to alcoholics and prospective members although the meeting formats are kind of similar to open group meetings. There are closed discussion meetings and closed step meetings.

Although there are no specific descriptions of how these two formats are related to overall communication and organizing, open groups may welcome newcomers and not require a strong commitment. Also, existing group members in open groups may be willing to exchange support with strangers. On the other hand, closed groups may adopt members with strong commitment or filter members that are suitable to their existing group members. Accordingly, closed groups may be more exclusive and restricted in terms of disclosing themselves to only members in their own groups.

Open and closed group formats may be related to anonymity practices as well. Many open groups are likely to have a public meeting with a large audience in a public space such as a hospital, church, or community center. In fact, the anonymous communication model argues that communicating with a larger audience provides more anonymity than communicating in a smaller group meeting or a dyadic format. Given the fact that the size of group will impact anonymity, members in a larger open group feel more anonymous than in a smaller group (Latané, 1981; Prentice-Dunn & Rogers, 1989). Additionally, open groups are more likely to have a speaker during their regular meetings. In that case, new members may perceive anonymity because they do not need to disclose their social identities to others or to get to know others. On the other hand, most closed groups are likely to follow the 12 steps, which require a significant amount of self-disclosure and exclusive connections among members even outside of the

meetings. Therefore, smaller and exclusive closed group meetings that require self-disclosure may provide less anonymity.

Due to the lack of evidence that clearly describe and explain various formats of AA and their links to anonymity, predictions prior to more in depth knowledge of each AA group are highly tentative. Rather than specifying the relationship between open and closed group meeting format and anonymity, these variations were considered for the current investigation. The goal of was to select an urban open, urban closed, suburban open, and suburban closed to maximize these potential differences.

Four Groups

Due to anonymity principles, no AA member can giving out an official permission to study each local group. Following that organizational rule, the researcher was told to reach out to local AA groups individually and to convince each group for permission to study them. The researcher initially provided a flyer to each group explaining the nature of the study. Among AA meetings listed in a directory of meetings in a mid-Atlantic U.S. state, four AA groups were eventually chosen: two open groups and two closed groups. Closed Group 1 had a meeting once per week at a church basement in an urban area. This closed group was listed for young adult AA members, but there were still older members who were actively involved in AA meetings as a sponsor, speaker, and volunteer for making coffee and setting up chairs before the meeting. In this group, the researcher regularly attended meetings. Because this group was located close to an area with above average crime rates, AA group members frequently talked about the legal consequences of alcoholism and drug use. From this group, 15 survey questionnaires and 4 interview participants were recruited.

Closed Group 2 met once per week in a church auditorium in a suburban area. This group's meetings were centered on a speaker's confession of how an alcoholic could achieve sobriety through AA. After each speech, other AA members shared their feelings and struggles. Many of those who attended were patients from a rehabilitation center for youth. Although these patients were not considered to be AA members, they seriously followed the meeting formats and respected how AA members organized a meeting. Several group members from Open Group 2 served as influential AA members of Closed Group 2. Only 5 group members participated in the survey.

Open Group 1 met daily at a specific time slot in an AA club house (a place where AA congregates and has social events). The meeting format rotated every day from a speaker's meeting to big book meeting. Because this group met at 4:30 PM, there were more female AA members whose primary work was in their home. There were several key members who managed the financial status (e.g., collected donations) at the meeting and led meetings. Although anyone could volunteer to lead a meeting and there were a few veteran members who greeted people, answered questions, and led discussions. From this group, 30 participants completed the survey and 4 participants were interviewed.

Open Group 2 met three times per week in the same AA club house where Open Group 1 met. Open Group 1 and 2 had different meeting names and formats. Also, Open Group 2 held a meeting in a local rehabilitation center so that they could serve alcoholics there using the 12-steps. Because of the time differences, some members from Open Group 1 showed up at night for Open Group 2 meetings. Open Group 2 included people from a local rehabilitation center and a half-way house. Otherwise, many members of

Open Group 2 were middle-aged males. From this group, 43 AA members completed the survey questionnaire and 8 interviews were conducted.

To uncover any differences among the four groups, One-Way ANOVA was performed. The finding showed that there were some dimensions of homogeneity across four AA groups. For example, there were no group differences among the four groups in terms of the perceived organizing force of anonymous communication of the four flows: membership negotiation, $F(3, 88) = .42, p = .74$, self-structuring, $F(3, 84) = .70, p = .56$, activity coordination, $F(3, 85) = .39, p = .76$, and institutional positioning, $F(3, 83) = .22, p = .88$. Also, the four groups were rated as equivalent in organizational identification, $F(3, 86) = 1.13, p = .34$ and group identification, $F(3, 87) = .28, p = .84$. Given the similarities, the researcher combined these four groups for statistical analysis. Similarly, the similarities and the differences of the four groups were not systematically investigated in the qualitative analysis. Rather than treating each case as a unique context, having various types of AA groups in a single analysis was beneficial to describe the overall organizing of AA at multiple levels. However, each interview participant's membership information (e.g., closed or open group) was indicated to provide contextual information to the narrative. Further discussion of choosing various AA groups is included in Chapter 5.

Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-structured interview.

It is crucial to include interviews in case study research since these interviews give in-depth knowledge directly related to research questions and provide explanations of relevant constructs (Yin, 2014). After the four groups were recruited, all members in

these local groups were asked to participate in semi-structured interviews. This resulted in 16 semi-structured interviews conducted in a face-to-face meeting. The average length of the interview was 41.25 minutes. Eleven participants were male and five participants were female. The interviews were transcribed, producing 195 single-spaced pages. During these interviews, questions related to the general use of anonymity and the four flows were asked in order to examine how anonymity enables and constrains constitution of AA in each of the four flows. Prior to the interview, a senior AA member in a local district of AA confirmed that the interview questions were valid and realistic. A copy of the interview questions that were used can be found in Appendix A.

Direct observation.

Yin (2014) argues that direct observation is a fundamental source of targeted and contextual evidence in case study research. Accordingly, observation of group meetings was necessary in this dissertation in order to capture how anonymity influences the interactions among members during the meetings. The researcher made a total of 121 site visits and spent 264 hours in the field over 6 months of data collection. Some of this time was spent in actual AA group meetings, which usually lasted an hour. Prior to attending meetings, the location of a building and the physical space where groups hold meeting were observed. Also, group members' overall interaction before, during, and after each weekly meeting were observed to better understand the characteristics of groups and their members. Collected information through direct observation were typed and used in order to enhance the understanding of AA and its characteristics. However, for purposes here, this data is treated as background information and not formally presented as separate data.

Quantitative Data Collection

Survey.

Although the four flows model has not been regularly utilized in quantitative inquiry, it is based on a deductive approach that aims to hypothesize the relationship among variables and test hypotheses (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). In other words, the four flows model can be used to better understand how anonymity enables and constrains various organizing processes and ultimately how that relates to various outcomes. This suggests that the four flows can be quantifiably assessed—and that anonymous communication in those flows can be measured (which is what was done here). Also, a few AA studies highlight that unique and diverse dynamics in local groups can be linked to key individual and group outcomes (Montgomery, Miller, & Tonigan, 1993). Accordingly, capturing both anonymity in the four flows of AA and key outcomes of AA through a survey questionnaire is not only possible, but potentially valuable. Communication that constitutes organization in each flow can be linked to key outcomes in AA. A copy of the questionnaire that was used can be found in Appendix B.

A total of 93 questionnaires were completed, representing those who attending the meetings in the four groups. 52 participants (56.5%) were male and 40 participants (43.5%) were female. One participant did not report his/her sex. Of the surveyed, 88 participants reported their age ($M = 45.75$, $SD = 14.36$). The average membership length in AA (reported by 87 survey participants) was 8.05 years ($SD = 9.66$). The average membership length in one's current AA group was 4.24 years ($SD = 7.07$). Reported sobriety length (89 participants) was 7.63 years ($SD = 9.69$). Also, the Alcoholics Anonymous Involvement (AAI) scale created by Tonigan, Connors, and Miller (1996)

was adopted to describe the characteristics of participants. All participants reported their 12 step completion status ($M = 8.80$ steps, $SD = 4.34$). The average participant of the study attended 3.71 meetings per week. Among participants, 80 (86%) had a sponsor and 31 (33.33%) served as a sponsor.

Respondent demographics are usefully understood in comparison to AA's membership survey randomly collected from 6000 AA members in 2014. The national data showed that 62% of AA members were men and 38% of AA members were women. Meanwhile, the current dissertation included more female AA members (43.5%). The average age of AA members was 50 in the national survey, making the participants in the current research younger by 5 years. Also, the participants from the present study attend an average of 3.71 meetings per week, which is slightly higher than the national survey's average of 2.5 meetings per week. However, the average length of sobriety from the current study was 2.4 years shorter than the average length of member's sobriety from the national data. It is possible that the recruited groups have more young AA members because of its group characteristics (e.g., young adult group, treatment center for young adults). Due to that, those less experienced AA members with a short sobriety length may attend more meetings until they maintain sobriety in a stable manner. Although overall the sample here is similar to national AA statistics, the current data must be understood based on its group characteristics.

Measuring general positive and negative perception of anonymity.

The survey items were generated from the core concepts of Scott (2004). Three statements to measure the benefits and the drawbacks of anonymity were created. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for general positive perception of anonymity

(alpha = .73) and general negative perception of anonymity (alpha = .68) are moderate, but acceptable for this exploratory work.

Measuring four flows model.

The questionnaire items were modified from the core questions of the four flows from Browning et al. (2008) and McPhee and Zaug (2001). Three statements to measure each flow were created based on how each flow is explained in both works above. Those items were then further elaborated to measure each flow's enabling and constraining force as different constructs. Again, these items are found in Appendix B.

Enabling force of anonymous communication.

Initially, the 12 items for the enabling force of anonymous communication across the four flows were examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is .79, above the commonly recommended value of .6. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant, $\chi^2(66) = 462.39, p < .05$. Finally, the communalities are all above .3, further confirming that each item shared some common variance with other items. Given these overall indicators, factor analysis is deemed to be suitable for these 12 items.

Principal axis factoring analysis, using varimax rotation, was conducted—producing four factors explaining 70.46 % of the variance. Internal consistency for each of the scales was examined using the Cronbach's alpha. The alphas are moderate, but acceptable for an initial effort using brief 3-item measures for each enabling flow: .86 for membership negotiation, .69 for self-structuring, .58 for activity coordination, and .64 for institutional positioning.

The analyses indicate that four distinct factors are underlying AA members' perceptions of the enabling force of the four flows and that these factors are moderately

reliable. An approximately normal distribution is evident in the current study, thus the data is well suited for parametric statistical analyses.

Constraining force of anonymous communication.

Similarly, the 12 items for the constraining force among the four flows were examined. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy is .86, above the commonly recommended value of .6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(66) = 475.63, p < .05$. Finally, the communalities are all above .3, further confirming that each item shared some common variance with other items. Given these overall indicators, factor analysis is deemed to be suitable with all 12 constraining items.

Principal axis factoring analysis, using varimax rotation, was conducted—producing four factors explaining 74.51 % of the variance. Internal consistency for each of the scales was examined using the Cronbach's alpha. The alphas are moderate, but acceptable for an initial effort using brief 3-item measures for each constraining flow: .77 for membership negotiation, .85 for self-structuring, .82 for activity coordination, and .73 for institutional positioning.

Overall, these analyses indicate that four distinct factors are underlying AA members' perceptions of the constraining force of the four flows and that these factors are moderately reliable. An approximately normal distribution is evident in the study, thus the data is well suited for parametric statistical analyses.

Key Organizational Outcomes

The process of organizing can be linked to several key outcomes. Since AA is a non-profit organization, using alternative factors such as mission achievement and impact is an appropriate way to measure the AA's overall constitution (see Sawhill &

Williamson, 2001; Weinzimmer, Nystrom, & Freeman, 1998). Accordingly, questionnaires were used to measure these. Two key organizationally-focused outcomes were assessed: organizational satisfaction and organizational identification. To capture organizational identification, which refers to a sense of oneness or belonging to the larger collective (add cite), three items from the Mael and Ashforth (1992) scale were used. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for organizational identification were low (.41), but were retained for this exploratory analysis. To measure organizational satisfaction, two items from Hackman and Oldham's (1975) work were initially adopted; however, there were problems with the reverse coded item, which had to be removed. This resulted in a single item used to assess organizational satisfaction.

Key Group Outcomes

Uncovering group-level constructs related to organizing processes of AA is essential in the current dissertation. For example, group cohesion is crucial in terms of bringing positive behavior changes among members in groups. Group cohesion among group members is a critical group factor that indicates "the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its goals and objectives" (Carron, 1982, p. 124). Since the current dissertation targets a social support group, it is critical to use a scale that particularly measures group cohesion in the context of mutual support groups. In fact, perceived high cohesion motivate people to change their negative behavior to positive behavior in support groups. Since high group conformity may encourage mutual help and non-compulsive behavior among members, related peer-pressure toward helping others and positive behavioral correction eventually influence members constructively (see Katz & Bender, 1976). To that end, group cohesion was measured with six items

from the Physical Activity Group Environment Questionnaire (Estabrooks & Carroon, 2000). This particular scale contains two dimensions: task and social aspect of group; thus, 3 items for each were used. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for group task cohesion ($\alpha = .68$) and group social cohesion ($\alpha = .73$) are moderate, but acceptable for this exploratory work.

In addition to group cohesion, other group outcomes such as group identification and group satisfaction may be useful to examine given the potential influences of anonymous organizing on both of them. Group identification (Karasawa, 1991; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Phinney, 1992) was measured with parallel items from Mael and Ashforth (1992), but targeted toward one's local AA group. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was much better at this level ($\alpha = .78$). Group satisfaction was assessed with items adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1975). Again, the reverse coded item was problematic and had to be deleted, resulting in a single item measure for group satisfaction.

Key Individual Outcomes

To measure key individual outcomes, the current dissertation examines the most frequently used key individual factors regarding AA. In the literature, AA members' active participation is negatively related to relapse. For example, AA members' regular attendance to a local group meeting is a positive individual outcome of AA (Hoffmann, Harrison, & Belille, 1983; Sheeren, 1988). In order to measure key individual outcomes, participants were asked to report the length of sobriety and the number of AA meeting a participant attended in the last year. Also, sobriety efficacy as an individual outcome was asked. To assess perceived sobriety efficacy, three items were originally included.

However, one item was deleted because of the statement about the completeness of the sobriety is against AA's understanding of achieving sobriety. For the two remaining items, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is .82.

Analysis

The current dissertation employs several analysis strategies responding to the proposed research questions. Broadly, the convergent parallel design of the current dissertation requires separate data analysis for the qualitative and the quantitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Accordingly, these data sets will be analyzed independently in this proposed study. Then, these data will be merged and interpreted together. Caracelli and Greene (1993) suggest that this type of data consolidation/merging technique is "suitable" to "uncover fresh insights or new perspectives" (p. 200). For the qualitative inquiry (semi-structured interviews supplemented with background information from direct observation), thematic analysis was primarily used in order to categorize findings from transcribed interviews and field notes. In addition to this particular analysis, the quantitative data (survey questionnaire) were tested for the statistical findings. The next paragraph describes the multiple data analysis corresponding to the overall research questions.

The analysis of multiple cases is guided by an iterative approach. Yin (2003) argues that since the foundation of case study is based on the interactive approach, it is critical for researchers to keep checking the research questions and the scope of research. Since the goal of a multiple case study is to uncover the similarities and the differences across multiple cases, systematic data collection and analysis is essential. Moreover, Baxter and Jack (2008) strongly recommend, "the data are converged in an attempt to

understand the overall case, not the various parts of the case, or the contributing factors that influence the case” (p. 555). Adopting these suggestions, and recalling earlier observations that suggested limited actual differences across the cases (despite their theoretical differences), the four groups were largely collapsed for analysis. Also, the overarching themes and other findings that emerge across the four cases are identified to have a broader understanding of organizing processes of AA through anonymous communication at all levels.

First, all of the data were separated into qualitative and quantitative groups. Descriptive statistics including correlations were performed for all scales. To assess the relationships among the four flows of anonymous communication and with individual/group/organizational outcomes, multiple regressions were used. T-tests allowed for additional analytic comparisons between different demographic groups on key variables.

Second, the qualitative parts of the data, especially the interview transcripts, were separated based on each communication flow (member negotiation self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning). Then, the enabling and the constraining force of were defined. When participants illustrated anonymous communication in a constructive way for each flow, it was defined as the enabling force. Meanwhile, anonymous communication that was destructively explained in the interview was considered as the constraining force. Next, data were manually coded. Based on reading the data, primary-cycle coding was used. Once first-level codes were identified, secondary-cycle coding was used to grasp more the analytical nature of data (Tracy, 2013). While creating these code books, comparisons between data and theoretical

foundations were done. Once the codebook was created, the qualitative data were coded in each group. By doing that, the qualitative data can be used to compare these four groups.

Third, the qualitative part and the quantitative part were then merged to see any similarities and differences. Since the qualitative data gave more in-depth explanation of the qualitative data, the statistical finding must be compared with the qualitative findings. Additionally, because the quantitative efforts are somewhat novel in this area, it is important to connect the quantitative part of each flow to the qualitative findings for each flow. Having both types of data may also be especially valuable for exploring constitution and deconstitution—which may be more easily assessed on a questionnaire but can be more fully elaborated on during the interviews. As a result the different data sources can clearly supplement one another. Overall, combining the qualitative data and the quantitative data gives a better understanding of the (de)constituting processes of AA through anonymous communication.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

Chapter 4 includes the quantitative and qualitative findings that indicate the enabling and the constraining aspects of anonymous organizational communication in the four flows of organizing within the context of AA. Next, organizational, group, and individual outcomes of anonymous organizing are described, explained, and predicted. The chapter concludes by summarizing the overall organizing force of anonymous communication.

The current study aims to set alpha at $p < .05$. However, this study also describes outcomes with $p \leq .10$ as approaching significance. Due to the exploratory nature of the study and the relatively small sample size ($N = 93$), it is important not to overlook potentially important findings that may not reach a traditional level of statistical significance.

Membership Negotiation

McPhee and Zaug (2000) argued that the communication related to new members becoming part of the organization is vital for constituting an organization. To that end, membership negotiation includes communications that “constitute identities, positions, membership boundaries, and status gradations” (McPhee, Poole, & Iverson, p. 81). Especially, McPhee and Zaug claimed that developing a strong organizational boundary and providing structured membership training are pivotal to successfully orient and integrate new members.

Given that anonymity was structurally and functionally manifested in several forms of membership negotiation in AA, the qualitative and the quantitative data identified how anonymity both enabled and constrained membership negotiation. The

quantitative data described that people generally perceived anonymity as an enabling force of membership negotiation, but not much of a constraining force of membership negotiation. The positive perception of anonymity in general was a significant predictor of the enabling force and the constraining force of anonymity for this flow.

However, the qualitative data showed that anonymity might be an enabling as well as a constraining force of membership negotiation. Mostly, anonymity enables protection for newcomers so that they could join AA without fear of being judged. Since anonymity helps to create an open organizational boundary and voluntary membership in AA, newcomers are not obligated to disclose their personal information to be a part of AA. It also helps newcomers come back to AA when needed. However, anonymity made new members learning about organizational culture relatively difficult. Also, anonymity constrains newcomers when trying to build trust with more-established members. Finally, more established members could not help newcomers because anonymity constrains more established members in following up with newcomers. Using analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, the benefits and the challenges of anonymous organizing are described and explained for this first organizing flow.

Enabling Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The enabling force ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.12$) of anonymity for membership negotiation suggested that the anonymity of AA was moderately important in attracting people join in AA. An independent t -test showed no difference existed between males ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.16$, $n = 52$) and females ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.08$, $n = 40$) in terms of the perceived enabling aspects of anonymity during membership negotiation, $t(90) = -.96$, p

= .34. An independent t-test also showed that the mean enabling force of anonymity did not differ between members of open ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.10$, $n = 73$) and closed ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.23$, $n = 20$) groups, $t(91) = -.36$, $p = .72$. There was no statistically significant difference in the mean enabling force of anonymity between members who have a sponsor ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.10$, $n = 80$) and do not have a sponsor ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 1.27$, $n = 13$), $t(91) = .74$, $p = .46$; as well as no statistically significant difference between having a sponsee ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.12$, $n = 31$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.14$, $n = 62$), $t(91) = .303$, $p = .76$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 key factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive perception of anonymity, and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the enabling aspects of anonymity for membership negotiation. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.25, which was much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model was not a statistically significant predictor of the enabling force of anonymity during membership negotiation, $F(7, 70) = 1.75$, $p = .11$. However, the perception of anonymity in general was statistically significant, individual predictor ($B = .27$, $p < .05$). People who value anonymity generally are more likely to see the benefits of practicing anonymity during membership negotiation. Also, it is possible

that once people experience practicing anonymity as part of this flow, they may see the positive function of anonymity more generally.

Interview comments.

Protection.

Anonymity enables people to join AA without revealing their identities so that new members feel protected in AA. Most respondents mentioned that they had prior knowledge about the anonymous nature of AA before joining the organization. Although AA's name highlights the anonymous aspects of this organization, some respondents were previously exposed to AA's program to a certain extent while trying to be in recovery. Although anonymity may not have been the main factor that made people choose AA over other types of recovery groups and treatment programs, anonymity was certainly perceived as a protection that might buffer social stigma surrounding alcoholism. When respondents joined AA, they perceived that anonymity was highly respected. All of the 16 interview participants claimed that except for their first names, no personal information was requested when they joined AA. Rather than making new members identifiable to existing AA group members, more established AA members of each group provided the local meeting list and shared their phone number at the back of the meeting list. Before new members could develop intimacy with existing members, established members did provide some information to help make AA a welcoming place with protection for newcomers. The interviewees who had been members for a while understood why the protection of anonymity was especially beneficial for newcomers. When respondents joined AA, they worried about getting identified. Once they joined AA and built enough trust with other AA members, they transformed their tainted

identity as a positive identity. Since they had been in a similar situation, more established members realized that newcomers needed the protection.

I think that it's important for the newcomer. I think it's important to get here to know that you're protected and you're not going to lose everything because you're saying you're an alcoholic. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 1 year in AA)

Worth noticing is that respondents who mostly described their local AA group as “a small community” understood anonymity as an extension of protected privacy or confidentiality. Since newcomers were still connected with their social circle through community (e.g., personal, professional network), new members perceived that they were only partially anonymous. However, these new members at least perceived that other AA members would keep their membership quiet or pretend like they have never seen each other. It helped newcomers to feel safe.

It's very positive in the rooms of AA for people [newcomers], because people come in that already have very bad reputations for the things that they did. And sometimes this helps them recover because they're scared that either somebody's going to find out what they are or what they're doing. And people are scared, also. Anonymity helps, because if they admit that they have a problem, that they're going to lose their job or be judged for it. That's the biggest thing. (Male, 30s, Open Group, 9 years in AA)

Open and voluntary membership.

Anonymity potentially enables AA to function as a shelter where anybody could come and go when needed through open and voluntary membership. Some respondents mentioned that anonymity gave them freedom in AA. To commit to a healthcare organization (e.g., rehab, addiction recovery clinic), people need to disclose substantial information about themselves. However, anonymity of AA does not require newcomers to disclose their personal information or share their stories during AA meeting. When a

respondent talked about the benefits of anonymity for newcomers, he briefly mentioned that AA did not force newcomers to do anything.

No, there's no [membership] limit. No, you don't have to share your name in the meeting. Like you, when you come into the meeting, you could just say, "Listen, I'm here visiting." Nobody's going to say-- no, [...]. The new person that comes in doesn't have to say, "Hey, man. I'm an alcoholic." You don't have to say anything if you don't want to. (Male, 30s, Closed Group, 9 years in AA)

One of the participants mentioned that the lack of formal membership is not a problem in the context of alcoholism. Since people who suffer from alcoholism relapse multiple times, they need a place to come back when necessary. AA's permeable membership boundary actually allowed people to attend AA anytime. In fact, it lowered the entry. Some respondents recalling their earlier AA membership described themselves as first time winners. It means that the respondents actually failed several times to stop drinking. Some mentioned that they did not really take AA membership seriously and act according to AA's traditions. Others said that it was just too difficult for them to completely change their lifestyle as an AA member due to the fact that their addiction problems were severe. They just kept coming back to AA again and again because AA provided an open membership. These respondents mentioned that they could attend any AA meetings, which allowed them to stick with AA and keep working on their recovery when they decided to do so.

Another participant explained how open membership would help new AA members. He said that new members could try to attend multiple AA groups and different group cultures within AA. Sobriety requires willingness and commitment, but they could not really force newcomers to commit to AA. Because newcomers were not obligated to sign up for one particular AA group, they were able to find an AA group that would be

suitable for them in terms of meeting format, culture, and group dynamics. This permeable nature of organizational membership provided a freedom to new members. Since existing members were aware of the benefits of open membership in the context of alcoholism and AA, they did not get bothered by the open membership boundary of AA. A respondent claimed that anonymous membership of AA made people come back if they needed.

That people feel safe that you can walk in and you don't have to come back. There aren't any rules. You're not signing any papers-- you're not-- you don't have to come back, we want you to come back. [...] And that was important to me. Maybe even more value like you said because they [newcomers] know, they [newcomers] don't need to share anything about themselves in the meeting. The other thing you just made me think about too is the importance of anonymity. It makes easier for people to come back if they went out which is what I did. They don't need to share anything. It's not on my insurance. It's not on my record. (Male, 60s, Open Group, 20 years in AA)

Constraining Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The constraining force ($M = 1.77$, $SD = .90$) of anonymity for membership negotiation was somewhat less important in convincing people to join AA. An independent t -test showed no difference existed between males ($M = 1.69$, $SD = .83$, $n = 51$) and females ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .99$, $n = 40$) in terms of the perceived constraining aspects of anonymity during membership negotiation, $t(89) = -1.00$, $p = .54$. Results also showed no statistically significant difference between members in open ($M = 1.73$, $SD = .87$, $n = 73$) and closed ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.02$, $n = 19$) groups, $t(90) = -.78$, $p = .44$. Additionally there were no statistically significant differences between having a sponsor ($M = 1.72$, $SD = .83$, $n = 79$) and not having a sponsor ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.25$, $n = 13$), t

(90) = -1.34, $p = .19$; or between having a sponsee ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .81$, $n = 31$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 1.85$, $SD = .94$, $n = 61$), $t(90) = -1.26$, $p = .21$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 key factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive perception of anonymity, and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the constraining aspects of anonymity for membership negotiation. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.41, which was much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 20.6% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of the constraining force of anonymity during membership negotiation, $F(7, 74) = 2.74$, $p = .014$. However, the only statistically significant individual predictor was the negative perception of anonymity in general ($B = .44$, $p < .05$). People who do not value anonymity generally are more likely to see anonymity as a constraining force during membership negotiation. Also, because we don't know the exact direction of influence, it is possible that once people negatively experience anonymity in this flow, they may see the negative function of anonymity more generally.

Interview comments.

Difficult to build trust.

Anonymity makes it difficult for new members to build trust with existing members. Respondents indicated that existing group members saw membership

negotiation as difficult and tricky because new members' commitments were shallow. In a given condition when new members were not stable, anonymous new members were often perceived as less responsible or disciplined compared to existing members. Due to that, existing members were very skeptical about new members who were especially anonymous to them. Especially, anonymous new members came to AA with various backgrounds. Although existing members had history of interactions in and out of AA, which provided some clues to their identity, new members who did not share things were perceived as suspicious and more difficult to trust. As one respondent said about newcomers:

Because you could have people that are not well, you could have people that are still active in very destructive ways, in very predatory ways, or criminal ways. That's a big risk. It happens. (Female, 40s, Open Group, 17 years in AA)

A respondent mentioned that he was very cautious about making friends with new members who hide themselves using anonymity. Until he would know enough about newcomers, he would hold off sharing much about himself or directly helping newcomers stay sober.

In the beginning, so if I get a new-- if some new guy comes in and he only has like four days or something and he's a crackhead or something, [...] if it's some guy coming off the street, I'm not going to do that. [...] because I don't know what that person is, I don't know, capable of. I don't know them like that. (Male, 20s, Open Group, 8 years)

Restricted learning.

Anonymity restricts new AA members' understanding of AA's culture and principles and their ability to navigate network in AA. Respondents described that they learned about AA's culture and getting to know others by "being in the room." Although tradition meetings were offered in each month to educate newcomers, these one-hour

sessions were relatively limited in terms of teaching specific things about AA. In a given situation where AA members only spent one hour and a little bit before and after each meeting, new members' opportunities for organizational learning varied depending on individual skills and one's previous knowledge of AA. For example, respondents mentioned that they did not see why anonymity was so important in AA because anonymity was so complicated. Based on the sponsor's perception of anonymity and other AA traditions, new members sometimes ended up having different ideas about the importance of anonymity and AA in general. Actually performing and enacting AA's culture including anonymity were very time-consuming. For example, although people may get to know about the importance of the anonymity principles, grasping how to enact anonymity principles was a very vague process for newcomers.

I didn't really understand the full aspect of it [anonymity] in the very beginning and even for a few years. In the beginning, it was like-- you learn by mistakes and I made my mistakes, so I learned by them. (Male, 70s, Open Group, 43 years in AA)

A respondent who committed to AA a year ago showed that she thought anonymity was confusing and difficult. Also, because people practiced anonymity differently inside and outside of AA, she still struggled in terms of learning and practicing AA's culture. For example, she often perceived it difficult to negotiate the organizational boundary that has been formed formally and informally in and out of AA. When new members are unaware of how AA's membership impacts on other members, managing organizational boundaries can be a difficult process. Especially when one's AA membership must be hidden or invisible outside of AA, constantly making choices to be in or out of AA must be a confusing process. All of the interview participants mentioned that this ambiguous organizational boundary became apparent when they got to know AA

members and gained experienced with different people in groups. From a newcomer's perspective, negotiating this ambiguous organizational boundary with existing members was relatively difficult part of understanding AA.

I think it can be negative just because I feel like there's a grey area with AA as far as when speaking about it publicly. Are you even allowed to mention AA and do you talk about the steps publicly even-- I mean, I'm new to AA so these are things that I'm learning as I go, but I've seen some people get a little bit whirled up with just the thought of even mentioning AA steps and it's like, well, they're not-- yes, they're wonderful, they're secret in that sense, but they're not secret. [...] so that's where I struggle with the anonymity aspect. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 1 year in AA)

No membership record.

Due to the anonymous nature of AA, there are no written documents that keep a record of new members. Anonymity restricts existing members to stay in touch with new members, who are mostly anonymous within AA. Interviews show that existing AA members cannot help new members unless those newcomers decide to commit to AA. Unless anonymous new members physically show up at meetings, ask for help, or call existing AA members personally, membership cannot be created. Although AA strongly sees a member's voluntary decision to follow AA's steps as a core factor that makes the 12-steps successful, the lack of formal membership may at least subtly discourage organizational identification/socialization. However, the biggest problem of no membership record happens when new members are in trouble. Several participants mentioned that they worried about those people who showed up and seemed sick. Once these new members walked away from the meeting, existing members could not help them at all. When considering the serious physical and psychological issues associated with addiction, new members with less commitment may never really affiliate with existing AA members. When a respondent mentioned the negative aspects of anonymity,

he briefly talked about someone who looked sick at a meeting. Because he was previously in law enforcement, he said that he could figure out if someone was under the influence of alcohol and drugs. However, he could not acknowledge her because he barely knew her identity.

So I may want to bring that to someone's attention when I should be respecting the privacy, the anonymity. When it comes to certain things, where it's life-threatening-- Something illegal, something's not appropriate, anonymity is bad because there's no way you can report her or you can like take her to a hospital. (Male, 40s, Closed Group, 5 months in AA)

Another respondent also mentioned about the negative aspect of newcomers who are anonymous to them. Since newcomers' contact information is not required to be identified because of anonymity, more established AA members were able to help newcomers only if newcomers would contact them.

[I] show them desire to help. Also, you [a newcomer] no longer be forced. [...] And I have to tell you I don't get called that often when I put my name on the list. Maybe 1 out of 10 women will call. I could tell because some people they just walked away from it. And [...] if you really want to get the help you want to, drop your own anonymity. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 20 years)

Reflexive Self-Structuring

McPhee and Zaug (2000) claim that constituting organization requires communication determined by key organizational members and groups, which is called “reflexive self-structuring.” It covers “the internal relations, norms, and social entities that are the skeleton for connection, flexing, and shaping of work processes” (McPhee & Zaug, 2009, p. 37). As this communication flow includes the role of structure, policy, and the organizational chart, organizational communication of self-structuring is often pre-arranged. However, communication of self-structuring is reflexive enough to correspond to rapidly changing environments or practices that occur while organizing—thus

reflecting the informal structure and organizing as well. McPhee and Zaug (2000) also insist that self-structuring can be strengthened through the hierarchical organizational structure since organizational control from the top down may encourage organizational units and their members to adopt organizational routines, policies, and rules that match organizational goals and missions.

In the context of AA, anonymous communication related to self-structuring is manifested in several forms. AA is a leaderless network organization in which local groups/chapters have substantial autonomy. Even though the GSO, the head office of AA, manages to publish the literature on AA that is used to guide local chapters to various degrees, AA members generally perceive the GSO as advisory. Although there are active AA members serving in the GSO (and on district committees and the general service board for certain topics), these members do not have authoritative power in AA, but provide suggestions and guidelines for members based on local group requests.

For each local group, the monthly business meeting is a crucial part of the group's culture and functionality. This business meeting is separated from a support meeting. During this business meeting, AA members discuss organizing issues that should not be addressed during a support meeting. Based on this collective practice, each group finds agreements on group-related issues that cannot be resolved by the 12 traditions. Because each group is managed by a group consensus, none of the group members are more influential than others. To that end, AA encourages AA members' democratic participation.

However, respondents also saw some constraining aspects of anonymity for self-structuring. For example, the lack of authority may be problematic when a conflict in a

local group should be taken to higher levels of management. Since those AA members at the top of the organizational structure in the GSO are relatively anonymous and without much authority, AA members may find it difficult to determine who is responsible. To that end, AA members should be individually responsible for any consequences associated with their membership and involvement in AA. Not surprisingly, the enabling aspects and constraining aspects of self-structuring are negatively correlated. This means that respondents see anonymity in this flow as generally positive or negative but rarely as both. The qualitative and quantitative analysis and results of self-structuring are further discussed below.

Enabling Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The enabling force of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring was strong ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .68$). An independent t -test showed no difference existed between males ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .74$, $n = 51$) and females ($M = 4.42$, $SD = .61$, $n = 40$) in terms of the perceived enabling aspects of anonymity of reflexive self-structuring, $t(89) = -.76$, $p = .45$. To check for a difference between open and closed group regarding the enabling force of anonymity, an independent t -test was performed. This result showed that the mean enabling force of anonymity was very similar between open ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .66$, $n = 73$) and closed ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .80$, $n = 19$) groups, $t(90) = .21$, $p = .84$.

To investigate any difference between having a sponsor and not having a sponsor, an independent t -test was performed. There was no statistically significant difference between having a sponsor ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .65$, $n = 79$) and not having a sponsor ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .86$, $n = 13$), $t(90) = 1.04$, $p = .30$. Additionally, there was no statistically

significant difference between having a sponsee ($M = 4.40$, $SD = .74$, $n = 31$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .66$, $n = 61$), $t(90) = .35$, $p = .73$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 demographic factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive perception of anonymity and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the enabling aspects of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.26, which is much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 23.2% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of the enabling force of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring, $F(7, 69) = 2.97$, $p = .01$. The negative perception of anonymity in general was a statistically significant individual predictor ($B = -.36$, $p < .05$). Also, 12 step progress was a predictor approaching significance ($B = -.21$, $p < .10$). Based on people's negative perception toward anonymity, people are likely to perceive the enabling force of anonymity in reflexive self-structuring. Potentially, people's experience of anonymity in this flow may impact their general perception of anonymity. Also, the further along one is in the 12 steps, the more enabling they see anonymous communication in this flow (or the more enabling they view anonymity for self-structuring, the further they advance along the 12 steps).

Interview comments.

Distributing power for elite members not to self-structure

Anonymity enables AA to distribute power by limiting the ability of elite members to control or influence AA's constitution. Having that decentralized authority might allow AA to more consistently practice the 12 steps and 12 traditions in a unified way. Since anonymity removes power associated with organizational titles of leaders in AA, those leaders cannot control other AA members and instead they collect and distribute information in order to serve other AA members across the globe. Although some AA members have a title, still their last names and pictures are not available, which makes them anonymous like other AA members. Except for a handful of paid employees in the GSO, the elected board members in the GSO is voluntary and with relatively limited authoritative power. AA leaders' power is relatively low when it comes to regulating other AA members' behaviors. When every member is anonymous, it is impossible to collect opinions and manage organizational-level issues. In order to make AA's administrative process relatively convenient, AA leaders function to deal with broad organizational issues as a representative of local AA groups and AA members. By removing positional power of each AA leader using anonymity, AA could be free from any threats regarding someone who possesses great power. It is possible that AA leaders' names may be somewhat identified because of their active organizational involvement, but these AA leaders are still powerless so that all AA members remain anonymous ultimately. As one member put it:

We don't have any leaders actually. I mean one of our traditions is our leaders are but trusted servants. They do not govern. Nobody makes our rules. We don't want to [...] get organized. (Male, 70s, Open Group, 27 years in AA)

Also, a respondent mentioned that anonymity must be a foundation of other traditions they needed to follow. Other rules must be based on anonymity principles. A respondent mentioned that anonymity eliminates any opportunity for elite members to structure for themselves. Under anonymity, one cannot have followers. When an AA member acts in a certain way, anonymity reminds people to give up their individual value over organizational value. Accordingly, anonymity discourages individual members from seeking positions of authority in AA.

It's really kind of reflective in that 12th tradition that says anonymity's a spiritual foundation for all traditions. Remembering that principles are a lot more important than personalities. Alcoholics tend to struggle with egos. Yeah, and we really should be searching for humility rather than thinking we're big shots. So you see that tension in AA. So, anonymity's a reminder [of] that—. (Male, 70s, Open Group, 27 years in AA).

Adopting locality.

Anonymity enables AA to be flexible enough to be adopted by the local needs of each group. Although some respondents clearly claimed that anonymity made AA fragmented and disperses—suggesting a potentially constraining aspect—this anarchistic structure of AA was translated into empowering each group that is suitable to the surrounding community. Making the GSO relatively invisible, AA's local group can function as a representative of AA. To that extent, the GSO does not interfere with the way local AA groups sustain, unless groups are completely deviant. For example, it is relatively rare that the GSO would step into group-level issues. One participant who claimed himself as an old-timer mentioned that he observed only a single case where the GSO sent out a letter to a local AA group. Since each group is situated in its unique situation, the GSO gives them the freedom to run their groups based on the locality of each group. Each local group's unique characteristic was also respected by the GSO. By

diminishing the GSO as a representative of AA, local AA groups could be formed based on their needs.

As long as you don't do something that's really contrary to the fundamental principle, that affects AA as a whole or negatively affects other groups, you can pretty much do what you want. We have men's groups, women's groups, gay groups. As long as you don't have any other affiliation other than the fact that you're an AA group, you can make up your own rules and regulations. (Male, 70s, Open Group, 27 years in AA)

The most noteworthy feature of the anarchistic governing structure in AA is the value of the group conscience in the monthly business meeting of each group. The group conscience is a unique aspect of the organizational culture of AA which encourages local AA members to unanimously agree on emerging issues before making a certain decision. AA members perceive that this group agreement is perceived much stronger and more authoritative than the decision of the GSO since each member participated in the decision making process equally. This is aligned with local AA group's autonomy and their unique names. It was apparent that AA did not rely on one individual to make decisions and provide directions for AA. For example, several interview respondents highlighted the power of the group's agreement regarding practicing 12 traditions. Although each group follows the 12 traditions similarly, each group is able to make changes and add specific directions. A member mentioned that besides the AA's unified statement, practicing a certain action or adding a specific value to a group was all determined by group members' agreement. This self-structuring process does not need to be approved by the GSO.

The meeting format - that's read at the beginning of every meeting - has usually been created as a result of what's called the group conscience. And people take the group conscience very seriously. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 22 years in AA)

Constraining Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The constraining force of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring was relatively low ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 1.06$). An independent t -test showed that the mean constraining force of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring did not differ between males ($M = 1.79$, $SD = .98$, $n = 50$) and females ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.18$, $n = 38$), $t(86) = -.58$, $p = .56$. Additionally, there was no statistically significant difference between open groups ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 1.10$, $n = 71$) and closed groups ($M = 1.89$, $SD = .96$, $n = 18$) for the constraining force of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring, $t(87) = -.24$, $p = .81$.

To check for difference between having or not having a sponsor and having or not having a sponsee, independent t -tests were performed. Results showed that the mean constraining force of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring did not differ between having a sponsor ($M = 1.77$, $SD = .99$, $n = 77$) and not having a sponsor ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.42$, $n = 12$), $t(87) = -1.36$, $p = .18$. There was no statistically significant difference for the mean constraining force of anonymity between members having a sponsee ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .86$, $n = 30$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.14$, $n = 59$), $t(87) = -1.50$, $p = .14$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 demographic factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive perception of anonymity and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the constraining aspects of anonymity for reflexive self-structuring. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the

predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.26, which is much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 16.7% of the variance and that the model approached statistical significance for explaining the constraining force of anonymity during reflexive self-structuring, $F(7, 67) = 1.92, p = .08$. Also, the general negative perception of anonymity was a statistically significant individual predictor, $B = .22, p < .01$).

These questionnaire results suggested that anonymity as a constraining force of reflexive self-structuring was not strongly perceived by AA members. The qualitative data provided a somewhat different picture about the constraining force of anonymity for this organizing flow.

Interview comments.

Lack of organizational control for problematic organizational members and groups.

Anonymity constrains the GSO's ability to control local AA groups and organizational members who would disrupt organizational structure and principles. Anonymity removes at least some of the hierarchical power of the GSO and AA's leaders at that level. Also, the nature of AA's managerial board is too weak to structure organizational principles because anonymity helps removes authority of managerial boards. Several respondents clarified that the perceived constraint of anonymity during reflexive self-structuring was tied to the egalitarian nature of AA and its lack of defined leaders or managers. AA members felt that anonymity made AA less responsive or

indecisive to deal with problems. People did not know where to find appropriate people or resources because of the anarchistic nature of AA. For example, violation of compliance of AA's steps and traditions does not result in organizational or legal punishment (e.g., terminating a membership, fines). Even when the GSO or senior members of AA were aware of incidents that might destructively occur in a local AA group, most of the respondents mentioned that there was no such AA “police” to control or deal with problems to resolve any organizational or group issues. When AA members were asked about how AA dealt with conflicts or problems in local AA groups, several members talked about the broader structural issues associated with anonymity. For example, one participant mentioned that AA’s decentralized structure might not prevent local AA groups from turning into a troubled group like a cult. Other respondents also distanced themselves from those extreme or off-the-grid AA groups. When a responder asked how AA handled a problematic situation in a local group, he answered;

Rarely. And probably not enough. There have been situations—there was one group in Washington, DC, in particular that became a kind of cult [...]. There were a lot of accusations [...]. There were complaints to the police. And AA in New York was informed about it. I don’t think they really did anything, and my personal opinion is they should have done something because it wasn’t really AA. It was just an individual cult. (Male, 70s, Open Group, 27 years in AA)

Since there is no regulation to address matters within local AA groups and AA as a whole, AA members need to deal with conflicts personally. Respondents described that AA members take a risk. Sometimes, people do not take any actions in a risky situation. Without visible authority figures with clear answers to deal with conflicts in AA, it seems difficult to make AA members accountable in a problematic situation and interpretation of AA’s traditions regarding an issue can be ambiguous. Thus, respondents justified that confronting others may cause internal problems in the group. Although AA members are

aware of problematic others in a group, they may not confront other AA members because they may not know how to deal with the problems properly in an ambiguous organizational structure due to anonymity of self-structuring. However, the lack of authority clearly had a cost for AA members and its groups. When problems were not addressed formally and informally, it eventually impacted other group members' attendance and their sobriety. In fact, several the respondents experienced problems (e.g., outing by others, gossip, dominant members) in a local group. However, AA members were reluctant to accuse other AA members of violating 12 traditions since there were no AA members like managers who potentially hold administrative duties and responsibilities in this more anonymous structure. To that end, several interview respondents mentioned that AA members were not encouraged to question other AA members who may not have been following rules because no one could enforce the 12 traditions. Respondents even observed that frustrated AA members ended up not attending meetings or moving their home groups. In these ways, anonymity constrains reflexive self-structuring.

A big problem is that there's no real authority figures in AA. They're just people that have more time in the program that you're doing. There's no AA police. There's not. There's nowhere to call. You could call the council but they can't do shit. They're just some guy that's been sober for 20 years. They're nobody. They're just a regular guy like me and other regular people. That's it. (Male, 30s, Closed Group, 11 years in AA)

Difficult to adopt spontaneous responses.

Anonymity constrains AA by making it difficult to adopt instant changes and opinions for emergent issues. In order to self-structure the organization, AA as a whole must deal with and negotiate issues associated with the existence of the organization. Since anonymity of reflexive self-structuring gives voices to AA members and local

groups by removing the authoritative power from the GSO and the leaders of AA, the decision-making process of AA can be relatively slow and long. Although autonomous local groups can respond to group issues spontaneously, it takes a while for the GSO and advisory boards to consider those issues at the organizational level. Overall, AA may become stagnant while getting feedback and providing suggestions and solutions. Therefore, feedback from local groups regarding organizational-level issues may not be used during actual decision-making processes. A participant claimed that it took too long for the GSO to adopt changes and make appropriate decisions for immediate and urgent issues because the lack of organized structure in local AA groups. Because of the scattered anarchistic organizational structure, the communication process is inefficient for gathering opinions from local AA groups. Also, if the local AA group is not well connected with the GSO or relatively invisible in community, their voices may not be heard.

They [GSO] go around and they have these questions, talk about them in your business meetings, give your answers, and then each group sends back one answer. This is what the group has voted on. And then they get feedback and they say, "This is what happened to those questions." And it takes months. It's a very slow. It's like government [...]. For instance, getting rid of the grapevine bulk and only having it online. "What do you guys think of that?" And then they survey the groups and one of the groups decides [...]. So, people, it's even the AA just trying to know what's going on in the--They're the ones that are sending the information down. And say, "This is what's come to us from other groups." And then the people have written in so we've decided as a group we're going to say, "Okay, maybe we'll try to pass this resolution." "So what do groups think?" And then they feed back up and then the next year this is the-- it's just kind of one of those. It takes a long time. (Male, 50s, Open Group, 9 years in AA)

Also, it seems that not every group's opinions are counted in decision-making processes at the organizational level. A couple of respondents mentioned that they definitely knew more about the GSO and administrative decisions than other group

members because some AA members in their groups were actively involved in the GSO so that they knew relatively more about the decision-making processes. It seems that highly involved AA members whose roles are relatively identified may be active decision makers even though the leader's role is very limited at an administrative level. To that end, anonymous individual members or groups may not be accounted for in organizational-level decision making, which runs contrary to AA's traditions.

Activity Coordination

McPhee and Zaug (2009) described that organizing requires communication for “adjusting the work process and solving immediate practical problems” when self-structured directions are not applicable (p. 38). The assumption of this particular flow is that organizational members perceive themselves as a part of a unit of the organization so that they feel interdependent. In addition to work on their given tasks, organizational members collectively work together to figure out problems and provide solutions that are suitable to contexts where actual organizing happens.

The results and the analyses of the qualitative and the quantitative data showed that activity coordination of AA was enabled as well as constrained by anonymity. The positive attitude toward anonymity in general was a significant predictor of the perceived enabling force of anonymity. The qualitative analysis suggested that anonymity made their coordination flexible by providing various degrees and type of communication. In addition to the flexibility of anonymity, AA members thought that anonymity diminished differences of AA members by removing any indicators that make people perceive relational and social distances related to their social status. Lastly, anonymity helped build trust among AA members by making each other's personal story confidential.

Somewhat different from the enabling force of anonymity, the constraining force of anonymity was more related to several organizational factors. Having a sponsor and/or a sponsee were statistically significant predictors of the constraining force of anonymity. Those who had either of them perceived anonymity as less constraining than did those who did not have a sponsor or sponsee. Similarly, people who had a negative perception of anonymity in general also had a higher perception of anonymity as a constraining force during activity coordination. The qualitative data analysis described that anonymity constrained coordination in social media because of the potential risk of identifying other AA members in public without agreement. Also, anonymity made it difficult for AA members to accuse certain AA members who broke traditions, which eventually damaged a group. Further explanations and examples of the enabling and the constraining aspects of anonymity are articulated in the following paragraphs.

Enabling Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The enabling force ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .82$) of anonymity for activity coordination was similar for both males ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .12$, $n = 51$) and females ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .78$, $n = 39$), $t(88) = -.99$, $p = .33$. The mean enabling force of anonymity was not different between open ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .81$, $n = 72$) and closed ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .90$, $n = 19$) groups, $t(89) = -.67$, $p = .51$). There were no statistically significant differences in perceived enabling aspects of anonymity during activity coordination between members having a sponsor ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .83$, $n = 78$) and not having a sponsor ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .73$, $n = 13$), $t(89) = -1.22$, $p = .23$, or between members having a sponsee ($M = 3.78$, $SD =$

= .81, $n = 30$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .83$, $n = 61$), $t(89) = -1.18$, $p = .24$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 key factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive perception of anonymity and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the enabling aspects of anonymity for activity coordination. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.25, which is much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 20.8% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of the enabling force of anonymity during activity coordination, $F(7, 69) = 2.60$, $p = .02$. Again, the only statistically significant individual predictor was the positive perception of anonymity in general ($B = .34$, $p < .05$). People who value anonymity generally are more likely to see the benefits of practicing anonymity during activity coordination. Because we cannot know the exact direction of influence here, it is possible that once people experience practicing anonymity for activity coordination, they may see the positive function of anonymity more generally.

Interview comments.

Communication flexibility.

Activity coordination benefits from communication flexibility. Anonymity enables AA members to adjust organizational interactions appropriately so that AA

members who need anonymity can still interact. When the AA members were asked about how they perceived anonymity, every single one of them admitted that group members did not have the same understanding of anonymity. In accordance with those differences, some people shared their full names at meetings but others did not; some discussed personal issues but others did not share much about their personal lives. As long as one does not break other's anonymity, AA members allowed their members to share freely about their identities.

I think people have different views on their own. If somebody chooses to say their last name at a meeting...that happens. I don't think people care if somebody discloses their occupation at a meeting, people don't care. And if somebody is quite open about their involvement in AA outside of the rooms, members don't care. When they do care [is] if somebody breaks their [someone else's] anonymity. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 30 years in AA)

Respondents also mentioned that anonymity could be translated and practiced in various social contexts beyond AA meetings. Rather than pointing out differences, respondents talked about various communication strategies that anonymity allowed. The social interactions among AA members outside of a meeting room occurred in places such as a local gym, a workplace, and a school. Various degrees and types of anonymity contributed to people's communication inside and outside of AA's organizational boundaries. While preserving anonymity principles, AA members were still able to greet and communicate outside of a meeting room without breaking other AA members' anonymity or mentioning AA. Since AA members were aware of the sensitivity of AA membership in public, they tended to be careful about acknowledging each other.

I don't publicize them in AA because it might hurt the people who are all connected with. And it's funny, too, because I will walk down [anonymous] street with another teacher and, well, I know half the teenagers in [anonymous]. But all these AA people, "Hey, how you doing? How you doing? How you doing?" "Where do you know him from?" In [anonymous], everybody's worried about

how do you know who. "How do you know him?" (Male, 60s, Open Group, 20 years in AA)

In other words, anonymity affords flexible communication strategies depending on one's perceived comfort level of expressing their organizational membership and their addictions. Since anonymity is defined for self and other in AA, members can manage those boundaries depending on the specific social context of activity coordination. That flexibility of anonymity helped people coordinate blurred organizational practices outside of AA. A respondent talked about the ground rules of anonymous communication.

Yeah. I think to a large extent there's pretty much flexibility there on how you treat anonymity in your personal life. I mean, as I say, some people are very protective. Others don't really care too much. As long as you're not violating someone else's anonymity. [...] I bump into people all the time at a grocery store or something. And I'll just acknowledge them by their name. That's all. I wouldn't ever say anything about AA. [if AA members mentioned about AA in public] Then you're really kind of crossing the line. (Male, 60s, Open Group, 27 years in AA).

Another respondent also mentioned that anonymity allowed flexibility while they coordinate to help each other and practice the 12 steps. She mentioned;

And the fact that we do have this flexibility I think is what makes AA successful. Because we are a bunch of rigid people. We are a bunch of people who like things our way, and if we were told constantly that-- if we were given a map-- like we get the book, but everybody interprets it the way they need to. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 21 years in AA)

Trust.

Ironically, anonymity allowed AA members to build trust. Respondents mentioned that other members who followed anonymity made them feel safe, close, and respected. Although most of the respondents were not so serious about anonymity, they learned that actually practicing anonymity itself made people start to trust others. Even if members knew some of each other's secrets and identifiable information, respondents felt

that people were generally careful and cautious about protecting others and respecting their situation, which depended in part on anonymity. Therefore, anonymity helped AA members to build trust, which enables coordination.

I think that anonymity just really helps to encourage real trust. And also, a belief if you want to use that word I guess, that there is something that is working here. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 21 years in AA)

Several respondents mentioned that people built trust with other AA members by practicing anonymity. Here, anonymity is considered as a promise not to talk about other's stories outside of a meeting. When people observed other AA members keep other's identity anonymous in many cases where their AA identities could be easily revealed in public, they began to trust other members, which helped them coordinate in AA groups. People could tell that AA members were trustworthy since anonymity encouraged people not to talk about other people's stories outside of a meeting. These secured relationships through practicing anonymity made people open to each other. Even if they do not know about other's identity, keeping each other anonymous ultimately strengthened their relationships over time. A respondent mentioned the power of anonymity during activity coordination,

A whole fellowship is built on trust. Every time you speak, you're trusting them. Someone else won't say, "Oh, I heard [anonymous] say this." You see? (Male, 60s, Closed Group, 25 years in AA)

Diminishing differences.

Activity coordination is facilitated by anonymity in part because anonymity diminishes differences between members. Anonymity helps AA members to highlight their common organizational identity. Therefore, AA members collectively support each other focusing on their common goal: achieving and maintaining sobriety. AA's meetings

are basically based on each member's story-telling about alcoholism. Disclosing their struggles with alcoholism usually involves sensitive personal information (e.g., sexual relationship, criminal records, family issues). The self-disclosure can include information that would differentiate AA members from each other. But, with anonymity, the owner of the story and their story are at least partially separated, providing a safer place with less judgement. They are just alcoholics only with their first names. When the role of anonymity in the group was asked about, one respondent mentioned that many people who attend AA used to have a negative reputation due to alcohol-related issues (e.g., violence, drug, crime, driving under the influence), which made them embarrassed to share their past as a part of recovery in AA. For example, when people got involved in alcoholism and related legal issues, their reputations were damaged because they had been in a series of illegal activities in their residence. Even though attending AA may show one's positive efforts to embrace sobriety, their previous reputation can still makes other AA members judge them within AA. AA members make amends for recovery, but their past reputation as an alcoholic may still interfere with sharing their changed identity as a recovering alcoholic. Members may even more harshly judge those from certain occupations/professions that require high social and moral standards. Anonymity may help diminish those differences. For example, when AA members interact with other AA members in high-status professions (e.g., doctors, lawyers), those distinctions in profession status may make people find more differences rather than finding that they are all alcoholics in AA. Also, a certain member that makes their high-status profession identifiable may create a social boundary, which may impede AA members from coordinating activities in local groups. By making everybody's social identities

anonymous, group members can more easily organize within local AA groups. One respondent mentioned that,

I guess [anonymity] lessons, [anonymity] principles are to try to keep your ego out. And I do have a high-status occupation and I don't want to be seen as boasting, I don't want to be interpreted differently because I'm a professor. So I never, I may mention things about work, like how I do public speaking, I'll say that, or I travel for my job but I never use the word "professor". I might make a reference to teaching or my students but I never say I'm a university professor, people know it because it's on my Facebook but I don't talk about it. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 30 years in AA)

Especially, anonymity plays a role when AA members provide a service as a speaker for a meeting. Since anonymity is a part of AA's 12 traditions, each group holds a meeting, called a "tradition meeting" in order to have in-depth discussions about anonymity specifically. During this tradition meeting for anonymity, AA members discussed that their stories were not judged by others because of anonymity. By not connecting the story to the owner of the story, AA members could be more connected with any stories related to alcoholism. Since anonymity helped remove other aspects of one's identity except for alcoholism, everyone at the meetings was largely similar. Regardless of how great the speaker is or the story was, anonymity made every story relevant and useful since it highlighted the story, not the story-teller. When emphasizing their stories as alcoholics, AA members could relate to one other much more easily so that they felt normalized and learned lessons from the stories. Anonymity helped people to have an affinity with each other—which enables greater activity coordination at meetings.

Sometimes my pride gets in the way where I want people to know who's saying this. You know what I mean? I want them to know how wonderful I am, but I know that that's not what this program's about. (Male, 50s, Open Group, 8 years in AA)

Constraining Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The constraining force of anonymity for activity coordination was relatively low ($M = 1.66$, $SD = .87$). An independent t -test showed that the mean constraining force of anonymity for activity coordination did not differ between males ($M = 1.55$, $SD = .74$, $n = 50$) and females ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 1.00$, $n = 38$), $t(86) = -1.36$, $p = .18$ or between members of open ($M = 1.66$, $SD = .87$, $n = 71$) and closed ($M = 1.63$, $SD = .88$, $n = 18$) groups, $t(87) = .14$, $p = .89$. However, results showed that the mean constraining force of anonymity for activity coordination differed between those with a sponsor ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .76$, $n = 76$) and those without a sponsor ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 1.27$, $n = 13$), $t(87) = -2.68$, $p = .01$. There was also a statistically significant difference for the mean constraining force of anonymity between members having a sponsee ($M = 1.34$, $SD = .63$, $n = 29$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 1.81$, $SD = .93$, $n = 60$), $t(87) = -2.41$, $p = .02$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 key factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive perception of anonymity, and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the constraining aspects of anonymity for activity coordination. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.22, which is much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 29.7% of the variance and that the model was a

significant predictor of the constraining force of anonymity during activity coordination, $F(7, 67) = 4.05, p < .001$. However, the only statistically significant individual predictor was the negative perception of anonymity in general ($B = .46, p < .05$). People who do not value anonymity generally are more likely to see the challenges of practicing anonymity during activity coordination (and conversely, it is also possible that once people negatively experience anonymity during activity coordination, they may see the negative function of anonymity more generally).

Interview comments.

Creating ambiguous boundaries in social media.

Anonymity restricts coordination of AA members on social media by creating an ambiguous boundary. When being asked about how they experienced any conflicts and incidents regarding anonymity, most of the respondents mentioned that anonymity caused a problem in regard to interacting with other AA members on Facebook. In addition to having a closed Facebook group that encouraged members to exchange local information and arrange a ride, AA members are friends with others via Facebook. Although Facebook allows AA members to stay in touch with each other to help sobriety, most of the respondents mentioned that anonymity confused people—especially in social media—by blurring organizational and personal boundaries. Coordination between members becomes complicated when people have different opinions about the importance of anonymity in AA and in their daily lives outside of AA. It is very difficult to practice anonymity in social media where everything (e.g., comments, the list of friends, occupation, etc.) is visible to others via social media. Since content on social media is easily distributed and archived, anonymity can be difficult—and thus

maintaining anonymity may mean limiting social media use that is so vital for coordination. Moreover, if one breaches another's anonymity by identifying them without caution, that incident may jeopardize their relationship in meetings. Thus, conflicts regarding social media use and protection of anonymity may damage AA members' ability to coordinate.

When I came back this time, I remember somebody saying something about-- oh, she was posting stuff on Facebook about this person or whatever. And I literally called my sponsor and I was like, "Do people actually post stuff about other people in AA on Facebook?" And she was like, well, yeah, to some-- she goes, "That sounds crazy and it is crazy." And she said, "I haven't heard of it a lot. I've heard a tiny bit of it, but yeah, it's awful." And I was absolutely horrified because I thought-- I know it's young people, a lot of young people, and that's their life. But yeah. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 15 years in AA)

Some respondents mentioned that several AA members would like to celebrate their sobriety anniversary and share their proud membership of AA in social media because it was a milestone for alcoholics. According to respondents, it was understandable to post an anniversary and talking about AA in social media since alcoholics disappointed their family and friends previously. By showing the recovery in social media, alcoholics may feel better about their changed lives. However, social media has a potential to reveal other AA members' identities by tagging, liking, and commenting because AA members are linked to a broader social network of people who may not know about this aspect of the person's life. A respondent mentioned that when a sponsee publically thanked her by tagging her on Facebook, she was a little surprised by that. She knew that Facebook posting may direct others to AA, which could damage her reputation.

I think one or two young people on the program who celebrated an anniversary thanked me as their sponsor on their Facebook pages. So I had to protect my—I adjust my own privacy settings and I had to ask them to please take my name off the post. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 30 years in AA)

It is worth noting that all of the respondents who discussed anonymity in social media mentioned that the generational gap of understanding the value of anonymity made coordination relatively difficult. Sometimes, this gap created a tension between concealment and revelation regarding AA organizational membership and member's private information in social media platforms and even caused relational conflicts in local groups. Those who had young sponsees talked about the difficulties of interacting with them in social media and concerns about careless interactions regarding AA. It is constraining because members could not use social media as they wanted. Or, some members ended up identifying other AA members in social media, which can negatively impact activity coordination in a meeting.

I think that it is a very successful program because of the anonymity. I think it's very helpful to people because of that aspect. But in this age that we're in right now with everyone putting their business out there and everything being so transparent, I don't know if that's going to be antiquated in the long run. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 1 years in AA)

A young participant specifically mentioned that older adults did not understand the value of connecting with others via social media. Whereas younger people mentioned that anonymity may not be so necessary, older people mentioned that anonymity should be protected first for the entire AA because anonymity is the core foundation of AA.

It's changing. I think as younger people come into this group. You notice—[...], There's not many people in the middle. Like 40s. 30s, 40s. I mean, I'm in my early 30s. So there are younger people and very older people. [...] if that-- but as we started to build that, hopefully, I think anonymity, at least in terms of social media, might start changing as well. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 9 years in AA)

No coordination of responding problems.

Anonymity can make it difficult for people handle problematic situations. In some ways, that in and of itself may lead to coordination challenges. Despite each group alternatively using the group conscience to deal with group-level issues by making each member's opinions count, many respondents mentioned that no one had authority in terms of punishing other AA members. For example, people specifically talked about situations when anonymity was broken because of gossiping. Although several respondents directly or indirectly observed cases regarding anonymity especially, they did not observe any cases that involve asking those people to leave. Additionally, when everybody is anonymous without a title, it is very difficult to deal with problems and properly punish others. Although there are active AA members with long-term sobriety who lead meetings and mentor other AA members, those AA members do not have positional power and responsibility to resolve issues. Even those AA members with many followers in local meetings still cannot control others. When a respondent talked about the constraining force of anonymity of activity coordination, he talked about how the lack of authoritative figure made a situation relatively difficult when people violate anonymity principles and/or break a member's anonymity—which can hurt coordination.

Yeah. So that is one of the things-. [...] Yeah. That's how people get angry at each other. Yeah. A lot of fights break out but yeah. There's nothing you can do if somebody does break your anonymity. There's nothing you can do. (Male, 30s, Closed Group, 11 years in AA)

Also, anonymity made people unaccountable for what they have done. A respondent mentioned that it was very difficult to confront those who damaged relationships among AA members because people just walked away from the group and went to other groups without being held responsible. Since anonymous membership

allows people to abandon the problematic situation without being accountable, coordination around solving a problem became relatively difficult. Although any conflicts may occur in local groups, being unable to address those issues with an anonymous individual member make AA members frustrated and unsatisfied. Broadly, without demonstrating or facing any conflicts among AA members, the rest of the group members can be emotionally damaged by feeling betrayed as well. When an anonymous individual member does not leave any traceable evidence of wrongdoing, AA groups members are not even able to accuse an anonymous individual member. Eventually, anonymity constrains AA groups even to collectively respond to irresponsible members who run away from problematic situations. For example, when people got to know each other longer, they may be involved in a relationship. When those relations were broken, rumors go around by revealing certain AA members' personal and professional identities without their permissions. Rather than dealing with those issues, people leave their home groups and abandon their existing support network, which could constrain one's recovery. One respondent put it this way:

That's why a lot of the young people that went to [a specific meeting name] now go to [another specific meeting name] because they got so tired of the drama of everyone having [...] relations with one another and they got sick of the drama. People talking smack, badmouthing people and then they went to other meetings. (Male, 20s, Open Group, 6 years in AA)

A respondent critically mentioned that this lack of coordination for dealing with problems made people eventually leave AA, which could make them go back to drinking. He said that since AA members could not terminate one's AA membership because of what they have done to other AA members, people who got emotionally hurt by other AA members ended up relapsing. Gossiping significantly includes talking about one's social

identity that should be protected in AA. Since AA members' social boundaries are potentially overlapping in a local community, negatively using one's shared story and information outside of meeting seriously impacts future interactions.

They're [certain AA members] talking about that person, [then] I can't share with this— I don't trust them, you see? So it has repercussions. Absolutely. It's actually dangerous. It hurts everybody that hears the gossip. Gossip is like poison. It just infects everybody that partakes of it. [...] They might not come back to AA because of people gossiped about them. Especially in this meeting. They need to come, but if they don't come, that means they're going to go street. They're going to relapse. It's a lot of problems. (Male, 60s, Closed Group, 25 years in AA.)

Institutional Positioning

McPhee and Zaug (2009) argued that an organization's external communication at the "macro level" is required for constituting an organization since organizations portray their values in public and build relationships with other entities. For instance, this communication flow may include formal communication with other stakeholders outside of organizations including governmental agencies, suppliers, and the community where an organization is situated. Institutional positioning also contains individual organization members' communication as they build various relationships with others outside the organization that help to constitute the organization's position in society.

The data from this research suggested that anonymity enabled as well as constrained the institutional positioning while constituting AA. The perceived benefit of anonymity in general was a significant predictor of the enabling force of anonymity in this flow. The enabling force of anonymity was described in two themes from the interview data. First, anonymity enabled AA and its members to enhance attractions of AA while shielding them from the stigma associated with alcoholism. In addition to that,

anonymity helped AA to preserve its core values and principles by minimizing contacts outside the organization.

The qualitative analysis also revealed that anonymity sometimes created a negative reputation for AA since this organization did not remove threats or correct inaccurate information about AA. Also, anonymity did not help AA receive credit for what they have contributed to the recovery community. Lastly, AA may lose an opportunity to break stigma associated with alcoholism because anonymity constrains AA to openly talk about the nature of the organization.

Enabling Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The enabling force ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .95$) of anonymity for institutional positioning showed no difference between males ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.05$, $n = 52$) and females ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .82$, $n = 38$) in terms of the perceived enabling aspects of anonymity during institutional positioning, $t(88) = .11$, $p = .92$. Also, the mean enabling force of anonymity did not differ between members of open ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .93$, $n = 71$) and members of closed ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.04$, $n = 20$) groups, $t(89) = -.51$, $p = .61$. There was no statistically significant difference between members who have a sponsor ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .91$, $n = 79$) and do not have a sponsor ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.25$, $n = 13$), $t(89) = -.20$, $p = .84$; as well as no statistically significant difference between having a sponsee ($M = 3.69$, $SD = .92$, $n = 31$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .98$, $n = 60$), $t(89) = .13$, $p = .90$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 other key factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current

home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive perception of anonymity, and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the enabling aspects of anonymity for institutional positioning. Table 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.24, which is much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model explained 20.7% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of the enabling force of anonymity during institutional positioning, $F(7, 69) = 2.57, p = .02$. The only statistically significant individual predictor was the positive perception of anonymity in general ($B = .28, p < .05$). Also, the negative perception of anonymity in general approached statistical significance as a predictor ($B = -.22, p < .10$). People who value anonymity generally are more likely to see the benefits of practicing anonymity during institutional positioning. Also, it is possible that once people experience the positive aspects of practicing anonymity related to institutional positioning, they may see the positive function of anonymity more generally. In addition, the more negative one's perception of anonymity in general, the less enabling they view anonymity during institutional positioning.

Interview comments.

Managing external communication with partial anonymity.

Anonymity enables AA to manage external communication without jeopardizing AA members' reputation since partial anonymity still protects AA members' social identities. When respondents were asked about how anonymity impacted the publicizing

of AA, most of the respondents firmly stated that AA did not *promote*, but worked to *attract*. Although AA does not heavily advertise its program, the external communication of AA is still necessary in order to achieve collaboration with various stakeholders (e.g., healthcare professionals, law enforcement, family members, other self-help groups, community members, etc.) during recovery. Therefore, while externally communicating with others outside of the organization, AA members' anonymity could be compromised. One respondent mentioned that anonymity of AA members could be broken when it was necessary for AA members to break their own anonymity or use partial anonymity to introduce AA. Also, AA does not force its members to break their anonymity to help others. AA allows members to decide because it is evident that volunteering at local rehabilitation centers, hospitals, and correctional facilities would break their anonymity.

There is room that people still can, not promoting, but share about this group, and then the advantage of being a part of it. So there is room to break. Like, when I attended a tradition meeting about, like December, it was about the 12th tradition, which is anonymity. And people talked about, there is a case, if breaking anonymity, breaking my own anonymity, may help others who suffer, there is a case that I can break my anonymity. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 27 years in AA)

Especially, partial anonymity has a strong enabling power since it enables local AA members to collaborate with others in the community. When respondents were asked about the nature of anonymity, the boundary of collaborating with external stakeholders does not mean that AA members advertise the organization by completely breaking their anonymity. In fact, AA members may not completely maintain their anonymity if they decide to engage with community-based health-care facilities as a member of AA. Despite any potential risks of identifying their AA membership through this external role, AA members can use partial anonymity by selectively hiding and revealing certain aspects of their social identity. Another respondent specifically differentiated attraction

from promotion by mentioning that AA did not create a fantasy or overstate AA. With that goal, AA members mostly shared their personal stories associated with AA. Also, stakeholders who needed to work with AA respected the value of anonymity in AA.

I was in [a local mental health center] last night. I had to sign in. But I don't have to use my last [name]--I do, but I don't have to. (Male, 40s, Open Group, 7 years in AA)

Also, while still maintaining other AA members' low-profile, still having some active public AA advocates is an example of how AA members who voluntarily break their partial anonymity could support them. Although AA members' faces may reveal their identity, many other indicators remain hidden even when they work with others. One respondent mentioned that some people were very comfortable with promoting AA outside of the group without worrying about revealing their identities in public. Since meeting organizational outsiders is crucial to reach out to those who are in need of addiction treatment, certain AA members seek out opportunities to interact with outsiders even if it means breaking their identities. For the purpose of helping others, the use of anonymity in AA is flexible.

Well, I mean, there are educational groups that go out to the schools and things like that. And I don't think there's any problem with that. (Male, 60s, Open Group, 27 years in AA)

Protecting AA's organizational mission.

Anonymity enables AA to protect its mission and principles by encouraging AA and its members not to talk about AA in public. Indeed, one of the anonymity principles specifically states that AA does not get involved in any events that may positively or negatively impact on AA's reputation. According to respondents, AA did not encourage their AA members to mention their AA memberships and AA in public, especially to the

news media. Although respondents were aware that AA would benefit from receiving acknowledgement for its effectiveness of the program in public, several respondents mentioned that publicity was strongly discouraged in AA because it may risk AA in public. Ultimately, respondents briefly answered that anonymity principles of AA literally saved AA from getting damaged by individual members. Although celebrities who successfully achieve sobriety may publicly announce that and enhance AA's reputation, many respondents mentioned that if someone truly understands the severity of alcoholism and the nature of sobriety, he/she would never guarantee that they were done with alcoholism. There's no graduation. It is life-time management. A respondent mentioned that maintaining anonymity in the media is critical to preserve organizational value.

Early on in AA, we had some situations where high profile people, celebrities, people like that, would identify themselves publicly as alcoholics and members of AA. [...] People like that and then they go out and get drunk and it reflects kind of badly on the organization. So at the public level of media, press, radio, tv... one of our principles, and it sounds so simple, but it's very, very important and very powerful, is that we stay sober one day at a time. (Male, 70s, Open Group, 20 years in AA)

Even if there are threats to AA's reputation, AA as a whole organization does not comment regarding any issues but instead opts to remain silent. Anonymity helps AA not become involved with controversial issues that would potentially damage the organization. A respondent who knew about AA's history mentioned that anonymity actually saved AA from collaborating with other healthcare professionals in ways that could have been problematic for AA.

That way, I think it's [anonymity] good. Back in the day, they [healthcare professionals] wanted AA to own rehabs. Before, we couldn't place our traditions. And that [owning rehabs] would have been a hot mess. So, in some ways, it [anonymity] is good. (Male, 70s, Open Group, 27 years in AA)

It is also effective for AA to remain silent under anonymity principles when there are critical incidents that may jeopardize AA. For example, anonymity principles helped AA survive a crisis. When AA never commented on a tragic incident that occurred in a local AA group, the media and the public eventually would move beyond this tragedy. Another respondent claimed,

Well, in that example in New York, where that guy murdered that girl that he met in AA, and yet he had a-- the GSO never came out ever. And they were outside of the office. They served him papers. Never said one statement at all about anything. (Female, 40s, Open Group, 17 years in AA)

Constraining Aspects of Anonymous Organizational Communication

Questionnaire ratings.

The constraining force ($M = 2.05$, $SD = .97$) of anonymity for institutional positioning showed no difference existed between males ($M = 1.95$, $SD = .91$, $n = 50$) and females ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.04$, $n = 37$) in terms of the perceived constraining aspects of anonymity during institutional positioning, $t(85) = -1.28$, $p = .20$. Additionally, the data showed that the mean constraining force of anonymity did not differ between members of open ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.01$, $n = 68$) and closed ($M = 1.95$, $SD = .85$, $n = 20$) groups, $t(86) = .52$, $p = .61$; as well as no statistically significant difference between having a sponsor ($M = 1.99$, $SD = .95$, $n = 76$) and not having a sponsor ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 1.07$, $n = 12$), $t(86) = -1.41$, $p = .16$. Similarly, the mean constraining force of anonymity was not different between members having a sponsee ($M = 2.03$, $SD = 1.03$, $n = 31$) and not having a sponsee ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .95$, $n = 57$), $t(86) = -.12$, $p = .91$.

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether 7 other key factors (age, 12 step progress, membership duration of AA, membership duration of the current home group, the number of the meeting attended in past 12 months, general positive

perception of anonymity, and general negative perception of anonymity) were related to the constraining aspects of anonymity for institutional positioning. Table 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.07 to 2.41, which is much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. The results of the regression indicated that the model was not a significant predictor of the constraining force of anonymity during activity coordination, $F(7, 69) = 1.69, p = .13$. However, the number of meetings attended in 12 months was a statistically significant individual predictor ($B = .23, p < .01$). These results suggested that the set of individual and organizational factors of AA members did really not predict anonymity as a constraining force of institutional positioning. The role of meetings attended as a predictor needs to be further investigated. The qualitative data will provide more detailed insights related to the constraining force of anonymity during institutional positioning.

Interview comments.

Misperceptions of AA.

Anonymity does not help AA handle potential threats that may damage AA's reputation and create a negative image of AA; additionally, it may even constrain correcting any negative images. When being asked if anonymity impacted the external image of AA, several respondents claimed that anonymity negatively influenced AA. Especially, anonymity did not help others understand AA correctly. When discussing the constraining aspects of anonymity while AA communicates with non-AA others, a respondent said,

That's a great question [...] because AA is not well understood. And I think people who don't understand AA, they stigmatize people who go, but really, what should be stigmatized, or frowned upon or discouraged, is the behavior that causes people to go to AA [laughter], that AA itself is highly successful, that it works. So I think in that way, anonymity may hurt AA because people outside of AA don't understand it, and they form negative perceptions of it. (Female, 50s, Open Group, 25 years in AA)

Also, some interviewees argued that anonymity made AA seem like a cult since AA hides its natures and practices. Because of those mysterious organizing practices under the anonymity principles, people who did not know anyone associated with AA sometimes had a negative attitude toward AA. Especially concerning is that sometimes those who need recovery do not even consider AA because of this negative perception created by anonymity.

Another misunderstanding is that it's a cult. And that might prevent people from coming in, if they worry that AA is a cult. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 11 years in AA)

Similarly, a new member mentioned that she even hesitated to go to AA because of the negative public image of AA. When she heard about this organization, she also found out that her close others negatively evaluated AA. She believed that those misunderstandings about AA came from anonymity, which constrained AA to correct those negative images. For the long term, those who do not know much about AA may turn down AA based on this aspect of its public reputation.

And then also as far as what I mentioned before as far as the public's perception of AA. I've heard people describe it as this crazy Christian organization or a cult, or whatever it is, [...] I think if there are people out there that think that about AA then there might be people out there that need help that won't come because they have these false notions about it. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 1 year in AA)

Since anonymity principles do not enable AA to respond to any controversial cases, AA may lose the opportunity to clarify perceptions or correct inaccurate

information about AA. For instance, a respondent described that negative comments about AA online could not be reported or officially corrected because of anonymity principles, which did not allow for AA to engage with the public because of the organization's policies. While admitting that AA could be experienced and perceived differently, respondents felt unpleasant when people posted just negative things about AA. Especially when alcoholics encounter critically skewed messages regarding AA, they may be pessimistic about even attending AA--which may end up not helping their recovery. When being asked about the negative aspect of anonymity while AA interacts with others outside of AA, a respondent talked specifically about how anonymity may falsify the nature of AA:

I think it does because I think people don't understand. I think with the Internet people can read more [about AA]. But again, you don't really need to have a factual basis to write something [about AA] on the Internet and it's a factual basis. I mean, you can update Wikipedia or somewhere. So, I think it does have a negative impact. (Male, 50s, Open Group, 7 years in AA)

Difficult for alcoholics to reach out.

Anonymity constrains AA's ability to help alcoholics who physically and psychologically suffer from their addiction problems because many alcoholics may not know the existence of AA. Respondents who did not previously know about the existence of AA particularly mentioned that they absolutely had no idea about the organization because AA did not promote itself because of its anonymity principles. Due to that, when they later discovered AA, they said that they wished they knew about AA sooner. Because they did not know anyone associated with AA and did not get professional help due to social stigma, AA's anonymity was perceived as a constraining force of institutional positioning. Also, a respondent mentioned that based on her

recovery experience, people should know more about the effectiveness of AA. However, anonymity limited people to reach out to AA because many people did not know exactly about AA due to the lack of promotion.

Yeah. I think it's a hindrance. Because especially now, the way the world's changed with all these rehabs coming up and they're mostly for profit and they're mostly—they integrate AA, but they're like, “this is the whole picture, we're going to give you therapy, we're going to give you this [help?] and then we'll do a little AA, too.” And for me-- and I'm speaking for me-- the truth was, it's all AA. All that other stuff was good, but-- and I wouldn't have got-- I've probably been through 20 detoxes. And so, I wish we had a voice out there, being like, “there's a solution and people have recovered and people have found peace and happiness through this program.” (Female, Open Group, 30s, 11 years in AA)

However, several respondents mentioned that anonymity did not constrain AA because everybody was aware of AA. However, this could be related to one's personal network. Those who did not see anonymity as a constraining force of AA's institutional positioning claimed that they got to know AA through their family members. Their close others were alcoholics and AA members who successfully achieved sobriety so they already knew the place they could get help. One participant whose family member was an active AA member mentioned;

Absolutely. [...] to be honest with you, I can't really imagine anybody who doesn't know about Alcoholics' Anonymous. Really, in some way, shape, or form, unless you live on another planet. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 17 years in AA)

Some interviewees who already established a strong support network in AA and observed the positive impact of AA on other alcoholics prior to joining AA did not perceive the constraining force of anonymity for institutional positioning. Also, many participants were already exposed to AA while they got treatment via local rehabilitation centers. AA's positive reputation for its successes and social impact on the addiction community did not make AA difficult to reach for these alcoholics. However, people who did not get

proper treatment until they found AA worried about promoting AA and had huge concerns regarding AA's falsely created image due to anonymity.

Not taking credit for what AA does in community.

Lastly, anonymity constrains AA's ability to receive credit for what it has done in the community. As one respondent mentioned, it seemed like the public did not see the role of AA as a recovery community. In fact, addiction recovery problems and local rehabilitation centers mostly take their patients to attend AA meetings or invite AA people to share their stories with those recovery facilities. Due to the fact that those facilities only provide short-term programs, patients need to look for a long-term support network. Moreover, many AA members work for those recovery centers. Despite AA's active service role in the recovery community, those positive contributions are rarely publicized by AA because AA maintains a low-key organizational profile. When being asked about the negative role of anonymity related to the need for AA to interact with others outside of AA, a respondent mentioned that anonymity did not help AA get credit for what it has done as a community service compared to other recovery centers. If society does not know how addiction-related centers and programs use AA's 12 steps, AA cannot claim its own contribution to society. If institutional positioning were not constrained by anonymity, AA could create a positive organizational image. But, anonymity does not allow AA to speak about its effectiveness and contribution in public.

I think it [anonymity] hurts in the sense that there's all these for-profit rehabs out there, saying, "Oh, the addictions and disease which clearly"-- and we in AA, we don't have a voice in that conversation because we're anonymous. But this is where most people find the solution. So that's going to be a frustrating place. We want to promote it, but we really can't. That's our traditions. (Female, 30s, Open Group, 11years in AA)

RQ5 The Relationships Among the Four Flows of Anonymous Communication

McPhee and Zaug (2000) claimed that the four flows were conceptually distinguished, but potentially associated in practice. As noted previously, several studies using qualitative inquiry reported that these flows were associated. Table 5A and Table 5B summarize the descriptive statistics and analysis results. The quantitative analysis of the four flows is necessary to have a better understanding of the relationships among the four flows. Results of the Pearson correlation indicated that there were statistically significant positive associations among the four flows of anonymous communication. More specifically, the enabling force of one flow was likely to be positively associated with the enabling force of the other flows. Similarly, the constraining force of one flow was likely to be positively associated with the constraining force of the other flows.

First, the difference between the enabling force and the constraining force of each flow was calculated to measure the overall organizing force of each flow. The result indicated that the overall organizing force of self-structuring ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.42$) was the highest score among the flows and significantly higher than the overall organizing force of activity coordination ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.22$), $t = 2.71$, $p = .01$. The overall organizing force of activity coordination was statistically higher than both the overall organizing force for member negotiation ($M = 1.59$, $SD = 1.39$), $t = 5.10$, $p < .000$ and the overall organizing force for institutional positioning ($M = 1.62$, $SD = 1.47$), $t = 4.62$, $p < .000$. There was no statistical difference between the overall organizing forces of membership negotiation and institutional positioning, $t = -.38$, $p = .71$.

All of four flows (based on the overall organizing force for each) were positively associated with each other. Membership negotiation was positively associated with self-

structuring, $r(88) = .58, p < .001$, activity coordination, $r(88) = .59, p < .001$, and institutional positioning, $r(86) = .51, p < .001$. Also, self-structuring was positively associated with activity coordination, $r(86) = .69, p < .001$, and institutional positioning, $r(83) = .55, p < .001$. Lastly, activity coordination was positively related to institutional positioning, $r(84) = .58, p < .001$.

Specifically, the data showed that the enabling force of each flow was positively related to the enabling force of most other flows. The enabling force of membership negotiation was positively associated with the enabling force of institutional positioning, $r(91) = .52, p < .001$, the enabling force of activity coordination, $r(91) = .49, p < .001$, and the enabling force of structural positioning, $r(92) = .54, p < .001$. Also, the enabling force of self-structuring was positively associated with the enabling force of institutional positioning, $r(90) = .49, p < .001$, and the enabling force of activity coordination, $r(90) = .53, p < .001$. The enabling force of activity coordination was positively associated with the enabling force of institutional positioning, $r(90) = .52, p < .001$.

Additionally, the constraining force of one flow was likely to be related to the constraining force of another flow. The constraining force of membership negotiation was positively associated with the constraining force of institutional positioning, $r(87) = .39, p < .001$, the constraining force of activity coordination, $r(88) = .53, p < .001$, and the constraining force of self-structuring, $r(89) = .47, p < .001$. The constraining force of self-structuring was positively related to the constraining force of institutional positioning, $r(85) = .47, p < .001$, and the constraining force of activity coordination, $r(86) = .65, p < .001$. The constraining force of activity coordination was positively associated with the constraining force of institutional positioning, $r(85) = .49, p < .001$.

Within each flow, the relationship between the enabling force and the constraining force was examined. There was not a relationship between the enabling force and the constraining force of membership negotiation, $r(92) = .07, p = .50$. The enabling force of self-structuring was negatively associated with the constraining force of self-structuring, $r(88) = -.29, p = .01$. For activity coordination, the enabling force was not related to the constraining force, $r(89) = -.04, p = .75$. Lastly, the enabling force of institutional positioning was not associated with the constraining force of institutional positioning, $r(87) = -.16, p = .14$.

RQ 6a Key Organizational Outcomes

A set of multiple regressions was conducted to analyze whether the four flows of anonymous communication in AA were related to key organizational outcomes (e.g., organizational identification, organizational satisfaction). First, the overall scores of the four flows were included as predictor variables in each instance. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.71 to 2.29, which was much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. Second, the enabling and constraining scores for each of the four flows were included as predictor variables. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.45 to 2.36, which was much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here.

Table 6A summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results.

Organizational Identification

Organizational identification was relatively high ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .78$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 9.4% of the variance but was not a statistically significant predictor of organizational identification, $F(4, 76) = 1.97$, $p = .11$. There were no statistically significant predictors. The results of the second regression indicated that 15.3% of the variance was explained, but again, this was not a statistically significant predictor of organizational identification, $F(8, 72) = 1.62$, $p = .13$. However, there was a statistically significant individual predictor, the constraining force of self-structuring ($B = .34$, $p < .05$).

Organizational Satisfaction

Organizational satisfaction was high ($M = 4.70$, $SD = .70$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 15.9% of the variance and was a statistically significant predictor of organizational satisfaction, $F(4, 76) = 3.59$, $p = .01$. Overall activity coordination was a statistically significant predictor, $B = .35$, $p < .05$. The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained 17.7% of the variance and approached statistical significance in predicting organizational satisfaction, $F(8, 72) = 1.94$, $p = .07$. However, there were no statistically significant individual predictors.

RQ6b Key Group Outcomes

A multiple regression was carried out to investigate whether the enabling and the constraining force of four flows were related to key group outcomes (group identification, group task cohesion, group social cohesion, and group satisfaction). First, the overall scores of the four flows were included as predictor variables in each instance.

Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.71 to 2.29, which was much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. Second, the enabling and constraining scores for each flow were included as predictor variables. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.45 to 2.36, which was much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. Table 6B-1 and Table 6B-2 summarize the descriptive statistics and analysis results.

Group Identification

Group identification was high ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .75$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 24.1% of the variance and was a statistically significant predictor of group identification, $F(4, 77) = 6.11$, $p < .001$. Overall activity coordination was a statistically significant predictor, $B = .56$, $p < .05$. The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained 26.7% of the variance and that the model was a statistically significant predictor of group identification, $F(8, 73) = 3.33$, $p < .001$. The statistically significant individual predictors were the enabling force of activity coordination ($B = 2.61$, $p < .05$) and the constraining force of activity coordination ($B = -2.03$, $p < .05$).

Group Task Cohesion

Group task cohesion was high ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .63$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 23.9% of the variance and was a significant predictor of group's task cohesion, $F(4, 77) = 6.06$, $p < .001$. Activity coordination was

a significant predictor, $B = .57, p < .05$. The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained 34.9% of the variance and that the model was a significant predictor of group's task cohesion, $F(8, 73) = 4.90, p < .001$. The statistically significant individual predictors were the enabling force of activity coordination ($B = .39, p < .05$) and the constraining force of institutional positioning ($B = .25, p < .05$).

Group Social Cohesion

Group social cohesion was high ($M = 4.44, SD = .72$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 9.9% of the variance and approached statistical significance, $F(4, 77) = 2.12, p = .09$. Activity coordination approached statistical significance as an individual predictor ($B = .30, p < .10$). The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained 19.9% of the variance and that the model was a statistically significant predictor of group's social cohesion, $F(8, 73) = 2.27, p = .03$. The statistically significant predictors were the constraining force of membership negotiation ($B = -.39, p < .05$) and the constraining force of institutional positioning ($B = .25, p < .05$).

Group Satisfaction

Group satisfaction was high ($M = 4.46, SD = .80$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 15.5% of the variance and was a statistically significant predictor of group satisfaction, $F(4, 76) = 3.59, p = .01$. Overall activity coordination was a statistically significant predictor, $B = .35, p < .05$. The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained 21.2% of the variance and that the model was a statistically significant predictor of group satisfaction, $F(8, 73) =$

2.46, $p = .02$. However, there were no statistically significant individual predictors among the four flows.

RQ6c Key Individual Outcomes

A multiple regression was carried out to analyze whether the four flows of anonymous communication in AA were related to key individual outcomes (e.g., the length of sobriety, AA attendance, perceived sobriety efficacy). In each instance, the enabling and constraining scores for each of the four flows were included as predictor variables. Regarding multicollinearity, the predictors had variance inflation factor (VIF) ranging from 1.45 to 2.36, which was much lower than 6 as the stringent rule of the thumb threshold value (Cohen et al., 2003); thus, the data showed that multicollinearity did not pose a serious concern here. Table 6C summarizes the descriptive statistics and analysis results.

The Length of Sobriety

Participants' average length of sobriety was identified as 7.61 years ($SD = 9.98$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 3.9% of the variance and was not a statistically significant predictor of the length of sobriety, $F(4, 74) = .76$, $p = .59$. Overall, there were no statistically significant individual predictors. The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained only 7.3% of the variance and that the model was not a statistically significant predictor of the length of sobriety, $F(8, 70) = .69$, $p = .70$. Also, there were no statistically significant individual predictors.

AA Attendance

The average participant of the study attended 203.56 meetings in the last year. The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 7.9% of the variance

and was not a statistically significant predictor of AA attendance, $F(4, 75) = 1.61, p = .18$. However, overall institutional positioning was a significant predictor, $B = -.32, p < .05$. The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained 8.4% of the variance and that the model was not a statistically significant predictor of AA attendance, $F(8, 71) = .82, p = .59$. Also, there were no statistically significant individual predictors.

The Perceived Sobriety Efficacy

The perceived sobriety efficacy was high ($M = 4.67, SD = .72$). The results of the first regression indicated that the model explained 13.2% of the variance and was a statistically significant predictor of perceived sobriety efficacy, $F(4, 77) = 2.92, p = .03$. However, there were no statistically significant individual predictors. The results of the second regression indicated that the model explained 21.5% of the variance and that the model was a statistically significant predictor of sobriety, $F(8, 73) = 2.50, p = .02$. Although there were no statistically significant individual predictors, the constraining force of anonymity in membership negotiation clearly approached statistical significance ($B = -.28, p = .05$).

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 of this dissertation primarily discusses key findings, implications, and directions for future research. The key quantitative and qualitative data from the study reported in Chapter 4 will be reviewed. From this data, key findings are drawn. The theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the present study will then be discussed. Limitations of the current research and an agenda for future scholarship on the four flows model and anonymous organizational communication will be established.

Key Findings

The primary goal of this dissertation is to expand the current understandings of hidden organizations using the four flows model to specify the organizing role of anonymity at the multiple levels of an organization. Despite increasing scholarly interest in both the four flows model and hidden organizing in the field of organizational communication, the existing literature on these topics has been primarily either conceptual or more general empirical studies that do not examine the distinct role of anonymous communication in the organizing process. Empirically uncovering the enabling and the constraining roles of anonymous communication during AA organizing, this dissertation captured how anonymous communication was perceived and practiced and anonymous communication's influence on organizational, group, and individual outcomes. The key findings of the current study help to address several calls by many scholars in the area.

Anonymous Communication as a Constituting Force

The foremost goal of this dissertation was to investigate to what extent anonymous communication enables and potentially constrains the organizing of AA.

Overall, it was observed that AA members perceived a much greater enabling force than a constraining force for organizing of AA relative to anonymous communication. As suggested in the relevant literature, several enabling and constraining forces of anonymity were discovered and answered in RQ1 to RQ4 of the current study. For example, anonymity as an enabling force made people feel safe to practice the 12-steps in their local groups. Also, anonymity made AA self-structure in a decentralized way so that AA would be able to prevent key AA members from misusing AA's organizational reputation for individual purposes. As a constraining force, anonymity constrained identification and made new member orientation difficult so that new AA members did not learn properly how to interact as AA members. Additionally, due to restriction on their external communication resulting from the anonymity principle, AA was sometimes negatively perceived by the public.

The organizing force of anonymity was sometimes contradictory to previous studies in organizational communication. For example, existing research traditionally suggests permeable organizational boundaries can result in losing new organizational members during membership negotiation (see Schreyögg & Sydow, 2010). Although there was some evidence of that in the current study, the lack of formal membership allowed AA members to have freedom in their membership and have a voluntary commitment to come back even after they relapsed or left a group several times. Several participants mentioned that they did not commit to AA and did not achieve recovery on their very first attempt, but the permeable boundary helped them to come back to AA.

Also, the average score of anonymity as a constraining force across the four flows showed that participants did not perceive anonymity as a highly constraining force. In

other words, AA members did not experience anonymity as a destructive force to their organizing. Even to the extent they did, the average scores showed that the constraining force was not as high as the enabling force. The finding may be due to the relatively high flexibility of practicing anonymity in AA. For instance, AA members could break their own anonymity to deeply develop relationships with other AA members as long as they feel comfortable. In that case, activity coordination may not be disrupted by anonymity or only impacted minimally. People feel relatively responsible for their actions and keep others' anonymity safely, because they are bounded in a local community via their family and friends.

The qualitative findings show that people perceives both the enabling and constraining force of anonymity at least to a certain extent. AA members perceived the enabling force of anonymity when explaining their general perceptions of anonymity in society and anonymity in multiple organizational flows of AA. But, in general, the value of anonymity was perceived quite diversely among AA members, because participants talked about the value of anonymity associated with their local groups and its social contexts. None of the participants indicated that they ignored anonymity principles—perhaps because they would follow any principles that possibly helped them to achieve sobriety. Yet, in many ways, members did not always take anonymity seriously or even think much about it until they directly or indirectly experienced critical incidents (e.g., gossip, outing other AA members in public) associated with anonymity. AA members tended to perceive the organizational value of anonymity principles with regards to their potential impact on their sobriety as well as the sobriety of other AA members. To that end, AA members tried to accommodate the local group's ground rules for practicing

anonymity by observing others and asking sponsors. Thus, it is possible that the value of anonymity may be more seriously adopted and practiced when organizational members experience the consequences of practicing anonymity principles. Since anonymity principles were not legally enforced in AA, participants shared that many AA members did not become conscious of the importance of anonymity principles or that they overlooked some of the critical consequences of anonymity. Although anonymity was not always perceived as a core of the organization, learning the 12 traditions and following the 12 steps made AA members realize how anonymity principles are at the foundation of AA and play a critical role in AA's sustainability.

Associations among the Four Flows

The current dissertation also investigated whether associations among the four flows existed and the data answered RQ5 showing that there were statistically significant positive correlations among the four flows. This result suggests that the anonymous communication flows were interdependent with one another. The finding extended the current understanding of the four flows model with statistical evidence. According to the initial framework of the four flows model, the four flows are conceptually distinguishable but empirically associated with each other. The literature from a handful of prior studies speculated that these flows were associated using qualitative data (see Browning et al., 2008; Iverson, McPhee, & Spaulding, 2018) and a recent study using textual analysis specified that these flows overlapped because constitution happened across the multiple-levels of organizations (Bruscella & Bisel, 2018).

Although the four flows were all positively associated with one another, it is possible that each flow's communication may constructively or destructively impact

other flows. For example, when new organizational members fail to build a positive organizational identity or to learn the organizational culture for membership negotiation, it might negatively impact the ability to practice organizational principles or policies for activity coordination. Conversely, if an organization positively enhances its reputation by communicating with the community as part of institutional positioning, the positive organizing force of institutional positioning may help membership negotiation since people could more easily create a sense of organizational attachment due to the positive public organizational image.

Similarly, the significant impact of self-structuring was observed in other flows. For example, the importance of the written format of AA meetings regarding self-structuring was strongly associated with other flows. Since each AA meeting varied because of its group dynamics, time, place, and the meeting format, it is possible that self-structuring may be constrained. Often, depending on who leads a meeting or what the key topic is, the dynamics of a meeting varied. However, AA's self-structuring for following specific directions from written documents was quite simple, but impactful. AA's statements about anonymity and relevant communication principles are publicly available, and as an AA member, reading those statements helped them value anonymity. Since every group has the same statement that was initially written by the founders of AA, the historical value of statements like these has had a strong impact on AA member's understanding of anonymity principles as a fundamental element of organizing. The written structure and statement of anonymity always remind AA members of the importance of protecting a speaker's anonymity as well as the anonymity of AA members who share their stories during the meeting. When this written anonymity

statement is spoken by AA's members at the beginning of each meeting, anonymity principles were emphasized as a core practice. Several participants mentioned that they knew how important anonymity principles were among other AA traditions and principles, because the statement was repeated at every meeting. Also, reading these anonymity statements is rotated among participants in each meeting. When AA has its meeting, the written form of the 12 steps and the 12 traditions is presented. Through these written-documents, AA's self-structuring occurs at every meeting, and these documents may help other flows like membership negotiation and activity coordination. New members can grasp the anonymity principles through reading these statements. Meanwhile, new and existing members of AA can coordinate their anonymity practices guided by AA's organizational doctrine. The simple act of reading the anonymity statement concretely delivered the value of anonymity to its members who meet in local groups.

Institutional positioning and membership negotiation were also significantly associated. Participants described that there were different orientations toward anonymity depending on one's anticipatory socialization, which was associated with institutional positioning. For example, some of the participants negatively perceived the image of AA because of the social stigma associated with alcoholism and AA's limited visibility in public. Due to anonymity as a constraining force of institutional positioning for AA (in terms of its reputation), prospective members may negatively perceive the nature of AA when healthcare professionals recommend that they join AA. Eventually, it constrained new AA members not to invest in identification and socialization. However, the negative view of AA was normalized for those who have been directly or indirectly exposed to

AA via family members. Several participants described that they knew the positive value of anonymity in AA and seriously followed anonymity principles because their friends and family members were AA members. Because of that, they were less judgmental about AA's 12 steps and anonymity principles. These individuals with prior exposure even knew about how to practice anonymity and the nature of interaction through anonymity. Also, they understood that anonymity must be practiced seriously, because they have seen or observed the situations where non-AA members negatively talked about alcoholism and AA. Because they were aware of the value of AA in society, they tried to protect AA and other AA members by following anonymity principles. Thus, it is apparent that institutional positioning relates to membership negotiation.

Anonymous Communication and Recovery

The overall findings in the quantitative data from RQ1 to RQ6 suggest that an individual's general perception toward anonymity was positively associated with perceptions of anonymous communication in the four flows. When people grasp the value of anonymity principles and communicate anonymity principles, they are likely to stay in their AA groups. Especially, when people understood the ultimate value of performing anonymity as a core communication principle, they perceived that anonymity meant more than protecting its members from social stigma associated with substance abuse and addiction to alcohol. Even individuals who negatively perceived the value of anonymity principles still followed anonymity principles for recovery. Thus, it is crucial for AA members to grasp anonymity principles to achieve sobriety.

Also, the four flows model was useful for linking anonymity to a wide range of organizational, group, and individual outcomes. It is apparent that the overall organizing

force of anonymous communication of each flow was positively associated with organizational identification, group identification, group cohesion, and sobriety efficacy. The entire four flows model was a significant model for predicting a variety of outcomes in AA. In particular, the four flows model was a strong predictor for one's perceived sobriety efficacy. It also explains that overall organizing force of anonymous communication among four flows may positively influence on AA member's recovery.

Interview participants clearly claimed that individual AA members had different views of the anonymity principles in AA and that those differences may cause some problems. However, several participants claimed that their group members generally practiced anonymity in an organized manner and understood the value of anonymity without much official training in AA. There seemed to be general agreement that anonymity principles must be practiced to sustain AA. Thus, by agreeing on the value of anonymity in an organization prior to performing it, organizational members are better able to collectively organize anonymity principles in ways that help with their own recovery. In the current literature, Rains (2007) mentioned that the positive outcomes of anonymity may be better achieved when organizational members have a consensus around the value of anonymity and how they are educated to practice anonymity. This collective understanding of anonymity and its communicative practices is confirmed by the current study, which notes a connection between the four flows and certain organization/group/individual outcomes that can influence an individual's health and recovery.

Sponsor Agency and the Four Flows Model

The current study specifically suggests that AA sponsors have agency in making anonymous communication suitable and flexible to local AA groups' contexts. Extending the four flows model within Structuration Theory, McPhee (2015) highlighted that agency specifies communicative interactions with constituting power. The current dissertation shows that sponsors deliberately communicate to coordinate interactions among AA members. In terms of organizational involvement, being a sponsor means a high-level of organizational commitment. A sponsor's role becomes extensive since organizing one-on-one meeting and informal social gathering in AA happens mostly outside of the AA meeting place. Although AA does not have a fixed or physical space where people informally meet outside of the meeting, their informal gathering happens in their home, coffee shops, restaurants, parks, and so on. Several participants shared that their sponsors and a subgroup of their AA group members frequently got together to socialize and share their personal lives outside of their group meeting. These are noteworthy interactions that likely constitute the organization.

AA sponsors play a buffer when anonymity in AA constrains any of the four flows. Due to the anonymous nature of AA, there is no formal training or orientation session where new members would potentially grasp organizational culture and rules as an AA member. Several participants mentioned that their AA sponsors were very helpful and specific about practicing organizational norms and rules including anonymity principles. Mentioning about how they responded to other AA members who broke another's anonymity, several interview participants described that the member personally did not confront those AA members who created problems associated with breaking

anonymity in AA. Or, they directly asked sponsors to deal with the problem. Although AA sponsors mostly do not have control over other AA members, AA sponsors often have greater respect from other AA members because of their commitment and voluntary service to AA. Sponsorship is based on the trust a sponsor and a sponsee have built walking through the 12 steps. When AA members worry about their privacy and limit their information sharing with their sponsors, recovery seems less likely. Sponsors constitute AA by moderating the negative impact of anonymity that occurs in the four flows of AA.

Control

Organizing through anonymous communication needs to be better understood considering the role of various types of control across the four flows. Although there were formal leaders who exercised power in AA, it was obvious that AA members' organizational practices were directly or indirectly controlled by other AA members across multiple levels of AA. Using traditional control, there were veteran members that verbally instructed people not to break anonymity principles. Also, more contemporary control tactics were exercised. For example, Barker (1993) introduced "concertive control" to describe a voluntary team-based control that is stronger than bureaucratic control based on the organizational policy regulated by managerial boards. Similarly, Costas (2012) talked about the power of normative control in an organization based on friendship. Since anonymity of AA has removed much of the bureaucracy of AA including rule-based control, AA has encouraged members to follow the consensus of a local group. Several participants mentioned that a monthly group business meeting had a strong impact on their organizational practices. A group's consensus was very effective

in terms of controlling other AA members to give up their personal opinions. For example, a group member mentioned that their groups were very serious about practicing anonymity, because the entire group understood that the network of their community consisted of people with professions that required high morality, credibility, and reliability in public. Even AA members who did not have those professions still strictly followed the group's strong formal and informal communicative interactions toward anonymity. Another example of control appears in the ways that the meeting format and timeline were so strict that one member cannot change or dictate a meeting. In a group, a three-minute rule was created by a group's consensus and was applied to control an individual member's dominant speak. Regardless of the meeting format and dynamics, each meeting was only for one hour. When the time was up, everybody stood up and held their hands to finish the meeting. Since everyone followed this grounded rule together, each meeting of a group was controlled in a somewhat similar way. The researcher was told that these meeting rules were all negotiated in a group meeting and enforced by the members who attended the group's business meeting. As an individual, AA members felt obligated to follow the group's norm and culture. Thus, it was apparent that AA members perceived their home group's own rules and disciplines more rigidly than AA's.

Generational Differences and Social Media

Future scholars must consider the generational understanding of stigma, alcoholism, and anonymous communication in mediated contexts. Similarly, AA's social stigma associated with alcoholism has been differently perceived by various generations, and AA's alternative form of organizing is controversial. The data showed that young AA members were liberal enough to disclose their AA membership and their addiction

without hesitations in social media. However, relatively older AA members still believed that the social stigma of AA and alcoholism was still prevalent in society. Being open about their organizational membership in social media seems unacceptable to older AA members. Those debates have been intensified by the generational differences among AA members regarding the organizational value of using social media. Existing studies in AA mention that AA members were highly connected using mobile phones so that AA members constantly communicate with others AA members exchanging informational, emotional, and instrumental support. To that end, social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) has been widely adopted. However, AA members may be accidentally or purposefully outed by other AA members in their social media posts. Their connection with other AA members may fail to conceal their own and others' membership in AA, which would seem to violate anonymity. Social media becomes a place where contexts collapse. In AA, it becomes apparent that when AA members physically attend meetings that are not far from their residence, AA members could end up meeting their neighbors or someone close to their personal and social networks. In a situation where online and offline blur, the practice of anonymity may well become more complicated. The interview data shows that the tension between young and old generations seems palpable in regard to preserving anonymity in social media platforms. For instance, several participants mentioned that they directly or indirectly experienced uncomfortable situations when AA members breached other AA members' anonymity. Although most of the participants genuinely accepted AA members' social media use, they mentioned some generational gaps in terms of using social media and practicing anonymity. Those who claimed themselves old mentioned that young AA members were

not cautious or aware of the impact of using social media, since one's post or tagging may jeopardize those who hide their membership other than to family. In situations where AA members' professional and private lives get easily mixed, social media platforms are especially important. Moreover, some participants even talked about being uncomfortable with any social interactions that could possibly weaken AA's anonymity principles.

Anonymous Communication Competence

It is noteworthy to discuss how AA member have learned to communicate anonymity principles appropriately and effectively from observation and training. Both qualitative and quantitative data showed that AA members knew relatively little about anonymous communication when they first joined AA. They discovered how to use different anonymous communication tactics depending on the situation through observation and training. People with seemingly high communication competence mentioned that they could selectively choose how to communicate anonymously by reading the context of an interaction with other AA members. However, it took a while for them to exercise anonymity suitable to a specific social context.

Theoretical Contribution

The current study suggests several theoretical contributions relevant to the four flows model as well as anonymity and hidden organizations. Since the CCO scholarship is better shaped and expanded when it is combined with existing organizational research (Schoeneborn, Kuhn, & Karreman, 2019), the synergistic impact of anonymous communication and the four flows model is noteworthy. First, the current dissertation extends the four flows model by identifying the impact of anonymous communication as an organizing force for AA. Different from other CCO streams, McPhee and Zaug's four

flows model initially argued that with the fulfillment of the required communication in the four flows, the organization would be constituted. Accounting for the four flows' deductive nature, if the required communication suggested by the four flows does not occur, the organization will be less than fully constituted and perhaps even deconstituted. In fact, the limited literature on anonymity and organizational communication has generally suggested that the necessary communication may not happen because of the constraining force of anonymity. Indeed, the current study showed that the anonymous communication of each flow still helped to constitute AA. Despite the fact that anonymous communication was sometimes manifested as an enabling force and sometimes as a constraining force across the four flows, anonymous communication's organizing force in each flow was strong enough to constitute AA. Thus, this study suggests that anonymous communication has contributed positively to the organizing of AA. Although anonymous communication did not constitute AA in a traditional manner, anonymous communication across the four flows was enacted in ways that allowed AA and its members to thrive. The four flows model was useful for assessing the constituting force of anonymous communication.

This study also provides evidence that the four flows in McPhee and Zaug's (2000) model were different from each other—both conceptually and empirically. Although these flows were all positively associated with each other--suggesting that they do indeed work together as part of the organizing process--the current findings illustrate that each of the four flows has its unique and necessary aspects for constituting organization. With the high correlation among the four flows, a flow with less constituting force may be supported by other flows. Some may argue that each flow is

likely to represent a certain organizational level (see Bisel, 2013). However, the current study suggests that all four flows were required to complete the constitution of organization that occurs across the multiple-levels of the organization. Rather than assuming the match between each flow and a specific level of organization, understanding each flow as a complex process that describes the communicative constitution at multiple potential levels is valuable to maximize the utility of the four flows model. In particular, the constitution of a hidden organization could be evaluated by focusing on the anonymous communication of each flow, which potentially captures the complex interplay of multiple-levels of organizational practices.

Uncovering the constraining role of anonymous communication in each flow, the current study expands the four flow model's utility to understand the deconstitutive role of communication. The existing literature on CCO has sometimes discussed a disorganizing process which may disrupt organization (see Bean & Buikema, 2015). However, the notion of deconstitution in CCO has been largely unexamined, especially in the literature on the four flows model. Although the required communication proposed by the four flows model must occur in each flow for constitution of organization, existing studies say less about deconstitution. Even though the current study found that anonymous communication in each flow of AA provided enough enabling force to constitute AA, it also provides evidence of the deconstitutive role of communication in the four flows. The complexity of the deconstitution of each flow was partially validated in the current study. For example, the literature suspects that anonymity constrains the public relations of AA, because AA does not correct an organizational image of AA. It was true to a certain extent that new members may not consider AA because of its

negative image due to invisible nature of AA. However, the lack of public relations of AA enables it to avoid any controversies regarding AA and its 12 steps. When AA is involved in an allegation, it could be free from legal responsibilities, but AA is not able to correct any falsified information related to any allegations. Even though the enabling force is greater than the constraining force in each flow of AA, the constraining force of anonymity is still important to investigate as a disorganizing force. Therefore, the current finding can be used to talk about the applicability of the four flows model for talking about both the constitution and the deconstitution of organizations via communication.

Centering anonymous communication as a constituting force, the current study expands Scott's hidden organizational framework to a mutual support organization. Most studies in the domain of hidden organizations have been commonly grounded on identity management and communication strategies as key research foci (see Scott, 2015). Whereas the existing studies treat anonymity principles as a strategy, the current study warrants the value of anonymity as a center of alternative organizing in a mutual support organization like AA. However, the current dissertation suggests that various types and degrees of anonymous communication in AA are deliberately enacted in a complex manner corresponding to organizational visibility, member identification, and relevant audience, which are the criteria of hidden organization by Scott (2013). AA's anonymous communication enables it to manage its principles in a flexible manner. For example, to protect its members from social stigma, anonymity principles are strictly enforced in AA. Meanwhile, AA publically communicated in healthcare clinics so that AA could reach out to more alcoholics seeking help. Also, a certain group member is more visible than other groups members to help others in a group. AA's flexible anonymous

communication strategies are great examples of how a hidden organization can achieve multiple goals regarding its visibility/invisibility. Despite the constraining force of anonymity, the nature of addiction and a mutual support organization are ascribed to AA's unique hidden organizing. Thus, the constituting force of anonymous communication is shown to be a fundamental attribute of hidden organizations.

The current study also reveals the role of the group in helping to conceal the visibility of an organization and/or its members. As a smaller and more local aspect of the hidden organization, the groups and their meetings formally and informally play a significant role in terms of managing organizational visibility. As an example, anonymous communication is practiced to maintain a decentralized organizational structure that empowers local AA groups, which is a fundamental attribute to equalize AA members' opportunity to participate in organizational and group decision making processes.

Methodological Contributions

In addition to theoretical contributions, the current dissertation offers some methodological insights relevant to studying the four flows model as well as hidden organizations. Methodological limitations characterizing much of the existing research on four flows (e.g., qualitative data) and AA (e.g., a single case) were overcome in this mixed-methods, multiple case study. In addition, several useful strategies to recruit and interact with participants who are sometimes difficult to access were used in the current study.

The quantitative results represent a response to the limitations of prior efforts to use the four flows model for understanding organizing processes. Reviewing the CCO

scholarship and the four flows model, Boivin, Brummans, and Barker (2017) suggest that the heavy use of qualitative approaches might limit the ability to fully uncover the utility of the four flows model; specifically, this refers to identifying the relationships among the four flows. Consistent with the four flows model's basic, deductive assumptions, the current study quantitatively measures the organizing force of anonymous communication in each flow, the relationships among the four flows, and relationships to key outcomes. Although CCO scholarship is primarily based on textual analysis and interviews, utilizing quantitative work may be beneficial to capture the organizing force of communication and its measurable impacts on various outcomes at multiple levels (e.g., identification, satisfaction). Also, the quantitative approach helps to overcome existing criticisms of the four flows model. The redundancy of the four flows and the model's low analytical accuracy have been frequently criticized, but the effort to quantify and measure the flows is promising in terms of analyzing each flow's constituting force. Although the current study focused on anonymous communication flows, similar approaches could be used to assess other types of communication or communication flows more generally.

The current study empirically describes how key aspects of the hidden organizations framework (Scott, 2013: organizational visibility, member identification, and relevant audience) are highly related with in-depth illustrations of AA's organizing. In fact, the existing studies of hidden organizations have been mostly text-based analysis, which limits the understanding of organizational members' perspectives toward hidden organizing and anonymous communication principles, as well as enactments of those anonymous communication principles. Furthermore, the triangulated data from the

current study shows the complex on-going negotiations among the organization, organizational members, and the general public while constituting organizations.

The present study targets local AA groups as an optimal unit to investigate the organizing processes of hidden organizations like AA through anonymous communication. As an effort to propose the appropriate strategies to study relatively hidden organization, Scott and Kang (2017) suggest researchers adopt a multi-level view of hidden organizations, since a group within a hidden organization might be a great starting point when only a very limited part of a hidden organization is visible and accessible to the public. In this current study, AA members were all recruited from four local, but diverse, AA groups on the US East Coast. These participants provide insights not only about their own meeting groups, but also about AA and its organizing practices more broadly. In addition, the researcher could extensively observe AA while attending AA meetings so that each group's complex social and cultural contexts are able to be captured.

The current study broadens the existing studies of AA considering the meeting formats and the geographical locations of AA groups. Although the literature has speculated about the role of population and locality of each group, existing research about AA is mostly conducted without careful consideration of those factors, which could significantly change organizing process. As a researcher, communicating about a sensitive/stigmatized topic with potentially suspicious participants requires careful consideration prior to research design and strategic management during data collection. Rather than using scientific language or professional terms at a research site, understanding the native discourse of the chosen research topic and its impact on

participants is crucial. For example, the current study includes anonymity and alcoholism specifically within AA, each of which comes with certain assumptions. To debrief the goal of the study and recruit people without judgment to the research, it is important to have a conversation with key organizational members. As part of that effort, a delegate of the regional chapter of AA helped me to understand how the researcher should approach AA members and autonomous local groups. In each site, the researcher tried to use the terminology AA members use so that the researcher can eventually express a solid understanding of the complexity of their anonymity practices. When contacting local AA groups, several AA meeting leaders expressed concern about having a researcher contact their group's members due to the issue of privacy and any potential interruptions that might negatively impact the members or the meetings. Toning down the scientific language helped participants not feel like they were just research subjects. It is the researcher's responsibility to persuade participants that the proposed study will not be harmful to them or AA. Members with a strong organizational identification may perceive that sharing their own opinion as a research participant would be a betrayal to the organization—and this may be especially true in organizations like AA where members are not supposed to talk to outsiders.

Helping people to be comfortable enough to make evaluative comments about their group/organization was critical. Building trust with participants is especially crucial for encouraging participants to openly share their various experiences in an organization. This may be especially true in hidden organizations where there is already greater suspicion of outsiders. Being sincere can be interpreted in different ways. During the time the researcher was initially recruiting participants, there was an incident that devastated

two AA groups, because a member passed away. This suicide made AA members anxious about alcoholism and mental illness. AA members wanted to share their feelings and grieve together in a group meeting. So, in an effort to respect their grief and to not make people uncomfortable, the researcher skipped several meetings. Later, AA members shared their appreciation for the researcher's consideration. There were other situations where there were verbal aggressions among AA members. The researcher tried not to comment or ask people about those unexpected situations in a meeting. More significantly, when a group member requested the researcher not to ask AA members to complete the survey or interview, the researcher respected the member's wishes so that people knew that the researcher cared for their psychological well-being and respected the entire community of AA.

One of the successful strategies for gaining that trust and ultimately participation was showing up 30 minutes before the meeting started, which provided an opportunity to speak to AA members and to discuss with participants the goals of the study. In fact, the researcher grasped that AA members have been the subject of many studies regarding AA's effect on sobriety. To that end, AA members were afraid that AA was only going to be evaluated based on its health outcome without much understanding of how AA has improved AA members' physical and psychological well-being. When the researcher initially talked to veteran members about anonymity, people did not realize how anonymity principles could be studied. Once the researcher talked through how anonymity was communicated, AA members began describing what they have done in terms of anonymity principles. Being around with them, AA members shared various experiences of anonymity and valued the researcher's goal for the study. Then, those who

understood the goal of the study helped the researcher to recruit more members and convinced other AA members who were initially concerned about participating. AA members do not appreciate it when a researcher's goal is to criticize AA or when they felt like their opinions or experiences were fabricated by researchers, which has sometimes occurred in prior studies focused on outcome success without substantial understanding of the process. Letting participants know the primary goal of the study and its data collection was important for recruiting participants. While initially contacting local AA groups, toning down the language without distorting those goals was fundamental to get permission to contact AA group members. Rather than saying "investigating anonymity," researchers must show that their goal was not to evaluate, but to understand what happens in AA.

Obtaining permission to access members of closed AA groups is difficult, but crucial to grasp the organizing process of the relatively hidden part of AA. Prior to contacting each group, a senior AA member in a regional AA office was contacted to obtain information of local AA groups and the nature of their autonomy in regard to participating the study. Each AA group decides whether a group allows the researcher in a site based on the agreement among group members. The researcher was informed to ask AA group members to discuss this topic during a monthly business meeting. Unless the group rejects the researcher, the closed group can be open to the researcher. Visiting each closed group listed in a certain region, the researcher respected the rules of the closed AA groups—which was crucial since the group was not typically observed by outsiders. Although AA's closed groups are usually filled only by self-proclaimed alcoholics, they can be still open to an outsider if group members agree. When I initially contacted closed

groups, a key elderly member reached out to me and typically indicated that I would be able to stay if I introduced myself as an outsider.

When AA members introduce themselves in closed group, the researcher goes by “I don’t have a desire to drink today.” The researcher tries not to interrupt any small talk before the meeting started, to show respect. Once people got to know the researcher after several weeks, they would talk to the researcher about what the research is doing. Eventually, one closed group member participates and introduces the researcher to other AA members. There are unclear boundaries between open and closed group in terms of membership boundary. There are several AA members who do not care much about the closed membership. A group member from an open group reached out to the researcher and mentioned that the researcher may be able to ask people before the meeting starts. By getting to know them, the researcher is able to identify key members. Having such advocates and following these procedures greatly facilitates access to these groups and their members.

Practical Implications

The current dissertation presents several practical implications for AA members/leaders, healthcare professionals and even individuals who seek help from 12-step support organizations. First, the dissertation offers advice about the importance of AA’s socialization and identification process. Because of the lack of formal membership training and societal judgment toward alcoholism and AA, AA members may feel awkward and uncertain about being a part of AA and its programs. However, when people attend AA meetings and become actively involved in AA by building relationships via sponsorship as well as creating an informal support network, they are

more likely to achieve sobriety as well as the confidence to cope with their addictions. When people first join AA, they are exposed to AA's 12 steps as well as AA's 12 traditions without much understanding of how AA works. Due to the anonymity principles, AA's organizational structure, culture, traditions, and practices are not easily understandable without proactively seeking help in AA. Because of the lack of the formally visible membership in AA, new members may not easily grasp the nature of the 12-steps. To that end, the health care professional should suggest new members be patient and directly communicate with existing AA group members. Then, several resources should be given to new AA members. The current finding shows that membership negotiation was positively associated with self-structuring, activity coordination, and institutional positioning. If AA's socialization and identification are well done as part of membership negotiation, those AA members are more likely to commit to AA and help other alcoholics navigate other communication flows. Because of the hidden nature of AA, it may be somewhat more difficult for people to create a strong organizational identification, but getting to know other AA members may help AA members to maintain a positive group identification and create group cohesion.

Second, the current study illustrates the importance of both learning and teaching anonymous communication principles in AA and other 12-step support organizations. In fact, individuals are likely to join AA without knowing much about the nature of anonymous communication principles, which are a foundation of organizing in AA. This study describes how anonymity constitutes an organization, but anonymity is not discussed much until people realize the value of anonymity as an organizational foundation. There is the 12th tradition of AA, which states that anonymity is a spiritual

foundation of the other 11 traditions. In other words, the embedded structure of AA is based on the various manifestation of anonymity. If AA members know the value of anonymity rather than just saying their first name only, these individuals may more fully embrace the core values of AA and anonymity so that they could practice anonymity more faithfully. For instance, several AA publications that primarily are used in AA meetings include various stories of how breaking anonymity ruined AA members and groups—providing some tangible ideas of how important anonymity principles often are used. Discussing those stories during a meeting helps AA members to comprehend the value of following anonymity principles. Also, AA members could publically share their experiences of anonymity principles in a speaker meeting format so that AA members can freely discuss the benefits and the challenges of practicing anonymity. Providing open discussion is a great starting point both to teach and learn anonymity principles. Several participants mentioned that these meetings were helpful for them to understand anonymity principles.

Additionally, having a sponsor or a network within a network will help people overcome obstacles from anonymous communication across multiple aspects of organizing processes in AA. Because of the partially hidden nature of the organization, the organizational chart is not available. However, there are key members who greet members before the meeting, make coffee for other members, and lead meetings. Getting to know them before and after the meeting will be a great opportunity for new members to stay in a group without some of the obstacles from anonymous communication. Since people with addiction understand each other's physical and psychological struggles even with demographic differences, having a committed relationship with a sponsor will be a

useful way to achieve sobriety as well as to socialize in AA. Although the quantitative findings did not highlight the value of having a sponsor or a sponsee, several interview participants described that having a social network through sponsorship was critical for AA members to maintain their sobriety. Therefore, families of AA members are encouraged to understand that AA members must socialize with other AA members and their family members after they feel comfortable disclosing their social identity. Showing support for being a part of a 12-step organization like AA can help AA members to create positive organizational identification. Since many AA groups are open to the public when they celebrate sobriety once a month, attending a meeting for AA member is a good way to show emotional support.

Also, there are so many AA meetings that happen in public spaces (e.g., church, school, hospital). Rather than looking at AA members as sick or strange, making AA meeting rooms comfortable and private is helpful for AA members to interact naturally in a group meeting.

Future Research Directions

Despite several key contributions, future research needs to address a few key limitations of the current study. The findings of the dissertation might be limited in terms of providing understanding of other local AA groups. Although these recruited four AA groups were somewhat different in terms of meeting format and open/closed group boundaries, these groups had similar geographical characteristics (all East Coast and mostly suburban). Since three groups in this study held meetings within a few miles of one another, it is possible that participants were relatively homogeneous. The statistical results showed that there were no group differences in terms of the perceived value of

anonymity. Furthermore, there were no group difference in terms of practicing anonymous communication principles during various group interactions. Similarly, open and closed groups were rated as equivalent in group identification. All the four case sites were rated equally by members as a strong support group as well as a high-functioning group who practice anonymous communication principles followed by the 12 traditions. In the additional analysis, groups were also rated equivalent in group satisfaction and social cohesion. Even though AA categorizes open and closed group format (each group has somewhat different meeting formats such as a speaker meeting, a big book meeting, a step meeting and so on), each group follows a sort of similar meeting structure in an hour. Although non AA members were not typically allowed in a closed group, there was no concrete rule or membership requirement for a closed group. Several people who lived in different areas specified that AA's meeting format was similar, but the public discourse of AA was somewhat different from place to place. Choosing AA groups in different states may provide somewhat different data. Additionally, several people mentioned that there were hidden groups for certain professions (e.g., judges, doctors) not publically listed. To have a better understanding of diverse group dynamics, the sampling and the research design should be expanded in future research.

The current study also may be limited in terms of generalizing the statistical results since only ninety-three participants were included in this study. Although the researcher tried to recruit AA members who regularly attended meetings, the lack of an AA membership roster did not allow the researcher to cross-check the portion of participants in each group. Also, there were situations when AA members showed and disappeared in a short time period. In those cases, it may be difficult for the researcher to

include their responses. It is also not clear that even those who participate were a representative sample of each group since there were visiting AA members from different AA groups who sometimes attended. To have statistically rigorous results and accurately generalize the findings, future study needs to include more AA members by getting the access to several AA groups and have an insider who could confirm one's regular membership in AA.

Future researchers are encouraged to choose a measurement that is suitable to AA. For example, although three items to assess organizational identification were used from the existing literature, those items did not translate well to the organization of AA. Also, items to measure satisfactions of organization and group were not successful. Then, only single item was used for statistical analysis. Also, several items to measure the four flows need to be improved to achieve high reliabilities. Low scale reliabilities in several places must be a limitation of the study.

Future scholars need to investigate other AA groups that exist virtually. The recruited groups were solely based on a traditional face-to-face AA meeting. There were so many AA groups that had meetings via conference call, online chat rooms, and so on. If an individual is concerned about being physically present in a local meeting, being a part of alternative AA groups may be crucial. By studying those AA members who participate in AA virtually, the role of technology in hidden organization and anonymity can be better understood. Whereas a virtual AA group may practice anonymity using encrypted private chatrooms or anonymized telephone numbers, there are still cases where AA member's anonymity can still be broken because of technology. Future scholars should identify how one's perception toward anonymity may impact their choice

to be a part of a certain AA meeting format. Also, including those participants who do not participate in AA at all, because they do not trust anonymity both virtually and physically would greatly add to our understanding, despite the obvious challenges in identifying such participants.

Furthermore, future scholars are encouraged to expand the current findings to increase the interactivity and sustainability of various online social support groups. There are many online social support groups that are not able to grow due in part to the anonymous nature of the online environment. As a constraining force of anonymity, anonymous individuals may experience difficulties to build trust and seek relevant information from anonymous others. Also, inactive or passive anonymous members cannot be controlled and may constrain the overall organizing of online social support groups. Anonymity as a deconstituting force should be more examined to understand why online support groups could be disorganized.

Although AA is the model of other 12-step support groups, future scholars must consider the stigma associated with alcoholism and other types of addictions. The current study's finding is relatively limited in regard to illustrating the organizing of a stigmatized social support organization. Although the relationship between anonymity principles and stigma was somewhat presented in the study, the current findings were still limited because the social stigma associated with alcoholics may not be as strong compared to stigma associated with narcotics or sexual addictions. Several participants mentioned that they had dual addictions to alcohol and drugs, but they preferred to attend AA because of the group dynamics and social acceptance to alcoholism. It is possible that compared to alcoholics, the 12-step support groups for narcotics or sexual addictions may

be more cautious with anonymity principles because of strong social and ethical stigma and legal consequences of their addictions.

Future scholars who are interested in the four flows should further explore the role of human agency in the informal organizational structure. Several participants mentioned that their sponsors played a significant role in terms of educating organizational principles, socializing, and providing relevant informational and emotional support. When the social network among AA members is hidden because of anonymity, sponsors visibly and invisibly manage the social network to provide support for other AA members. Considering the level of complexity in the information network in AA, studying sponsors may uncover the role of agency that enables invisible network functions. The role of agency in less formalized roles beyond sponsors may be worth exploring as well. Thus, it is promising for future scholars to investigate the role of human agency that provides a specific constituting force of communication.

Since the current study took a single stakeholder perspective, adopting the perspectives of multiple stakeholders may better clarify the organizing process of AA. Koschmann, Kuhn, and Pfarrer (2012) suggest that the complexity of meaning-making processes and its interpretation related to complex organizing could be better examined by focusing on communicative processes across multiple organizations. Specifically, Taylor and Canary (2017) also propose that the complexity of hidden organizing could be better understood by accounting for discourses from the multiple-levels of the organization. Notably, the membership and the institutional positioning were significantly influenced by other organizations like health care professionals and law enforcement. Future research should explore how anonymity principles were constructed

among a wider range of stakeholder organizations. In fact, because of the concealed organizational structure, it seems relatively difficult for individual organizational members to comprehend the entire organizing process. Since only a few participants spoke about their limited experience with the GSO, self-structuring and institutional positioning could be clarified interviewing other stakeholders within AA. It was speculated that AA's board members or paid employees in the GSO may perceive the organizational structure and anonymity principles from a different perspective, because self-structuring and institutional positioning were predominantly enforced and practiced by the GSO. GSO-affiliated members' inputs may advance the understanding of this hidden organization and its organizing processes. Also, health care professionals and law enforcements as stakeholders of AA may provide anonymous organizing in a broader society. Because of the hiddenness and alcoholism, the public discourse of AA is still somewhat inaccurate and may limit the opportunity to help alcoholics in a collaborative way. The organizing process outside of the organization and its non-organizational members are all part of organizing. To clarify this organizing process, it is important to have a better understanding of what several stakeholders of AA perceive—especially as those views link to issues of anonymity.

The current study is likely based on active groups that more closely followed AA's principles. However, reflecting on their past experience in other AA groups, participants disclosed that some AA groups were much better than other groups in terms of practicing anonymity principles. While conducting interviews and observing meetings, many participants disclosed that these groups where they currently belonged must be an

example of excellent AA groups—suggesting a limitation in not being able to describe the general organizing force of anonymity in other types of AA groups.

Also, the current study only recruited those who regularly attended AA meetings. In other words, the researcher's findings may not represent the entire group, since the researcher was only able to identify a limited number of participants who showed up when the researcher was collecting data. Due to the nature of the hidden organization and anonymity, the official membership of each observed group was not available. Similarly, participants for interviews were relatively active group members based on observation. There were extremely anonymous AA members who had never shared their stories in the meetings or engaged casual conversations with other AA members by showing up late before each meeting started and leaving early even before the meeting ended. They were too anonymous to be accounted for in the current study. An AA member admitted that actively engaging in the AA may potentially reveal one's social identity. Those people who had concerns about being identified in AA meeting were less likely to actively engage in interactions with other AA members. Those participants and their views were not captured in this research. It is possible for future researchers to recruit former or anonymous AA members outside of AA so that they could speak about the enabling and the constraining force of anonymity principles and its impact on their membership to AA.

Future scholars should examine and specify the constituting force of the written documents in the four flows. Among the four flows, self-structuring includes a constituting force of organizational policies, charts, and written documents, since these resources were useful to control and maintain organizational structure using a hierarchical power. It may be possible that the written documents published from AA

may carry a strong organizing force that eventually maintains the structure among local AA members in a specific direction that the AA founders desired. These written documents play a key role because all of the AA groups examined started the meeting with reading a preamble, AA traditions, and anonymity rules. Regardless of a topic of the meeting or the meeting format, there are written scripts each meeting leader follows in an hour. The 12-steps and the 12-traditions are all physically visible in the meeting room and the written script of each meeting is almost the same across AA groups. These material documents may also help constitute the organization in important ways—though the four flows model has been criticized for not including materiality (see Bruscella & Bisel, 2018). Future research should analyze these documents and other materials that help constitute organizations such as AA.

Future research in this area should also examine the perception of community among participants. Although there was no statistical difference among the four groups' in regard to its locality, the qualitative findings warranted the potential impact of AA member's perceived value of the community where they lived and attended meetings. When the author attended each group meeting in these four AA groups, there were visible group differences in terms of demographics and meeting dynamics. Specifically, participants mentioned the unique nature of their community. AA group members from groups located in a community with a very high-income and educational level mentioned that anonymity was highly respected because of member's high social status and their reputation in the tight community. Tapping into different areas where status issues might be less central could influence the importance of anonymity in those organizations.

Using social network analysis in future research will be beneficial in terms of uncovering the informal networks and subgroups in local AA groups. Costas and Grey (2014) argued that to maintain a certain level of organizational secrecy, informal and formal organization matters. Uncovering the role of the informal network, which invisibly functions to sustain organizations, is crucial to understanding the complexity of hidden organizing. The qualitative findings showed strategies to overcome constraints from anonymous communication and its practice in local AA groups. Due to the voluntary nature of practicing anonymity in AA, AA members worried about those who did not respect others' anonymity. To avoid negative consequences associated with breached anonymity, AA members have informally secured their stories associated with addiction and AA by creating secure boundaries within a group. Rather than trusting their group members, AA members filter their disclosure and decide to only share with a small number of people in a local group. These small groups naturally occur through frequent interactions outside of AA formal meetings. Having that secured sub-group in AA, AA participants felt that anonymity did not constrain them because their unsatisfied needs were fulfilled by this small network. This hidden sub-group prevents people from noticing fundamental issues associated with anonymity. However, due to the nature of anonymous membership, the concrete role of social network was not fully captured in the current study. Employing social network analysis may help future scholars to make invisible network visible for a better understanding of the organizing process (see Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002).

Furthermore, the data showed that AA member's group identification was higher than AA member's organizational identification. Emphasizing their strong group

identification, the interview participants frequently stated the name of their groups, not AA. To prevent leaders from misusing their entitlements to other AA members, AA does not grant any powers to leaders. Rather than focusing on making leaders hold control, “old-timers” who have maintained long-term sobriety serve as gatekeepers for AA groups. When the researcher tried to get permission from each group for this research, there was no formal leadership that could grant access (although AA members who led a meeting or greeted AA members before the meeting would often talk to the researcher and discuss any concerns they had). Although the role of the group conscience was relatively strong, multiple emergent leaders in each group were observed. These veteran members had high organizational involvement (e.g., sponsoring others, service role), attendance, and behaviors that distinguished them among AA members. Better understanding of these groups, their informal leaders, and what facilitates strong identification with them is warranted.

Uncovering the role of social media in constituting hidden organizations and mutual support organizations is crucial. Social media enables as well as constrains how hidden collectives organize. Especially, the disagreement among AA members regarding social media use in and out of AA meeting room is increasing, but AA has not provided concrete directions for social media use. Officially, AA does not communicate with the public via social media platforms. In a situation where AA members highly connect in a context-collapsed platform like social media, AA members may also experience conflicts about breaking other’s anonymity. However, many AA members see the value of constantly connecting with other AA members via social media platforms since having a sober network in one’s personal life is critical to maintain sobriety. To reach out to a

conclusive idea of using social media, it seems important for AA and AA members to discuss the direction of anonymity principles in an era which technology enables and constrains anonymity principles of AA. Future study may examine the strategic use of social media for hidden organizations to manage its and members' visibilities.

Future scholars are encouraged to investigate beyond the four specific flows of AA to have a better understanding of anonymous organizing. Categorizing four distinct organizing flows was unclear in the data since these flows were extensively interrelated. Zeroing in on each flow in the current data with emerging themes may describe a unique constitution of AA through anonymous communication principles.

In Closing

Overall, the mixed-methods research findings in the current study shed light on anonymous organizational communication and the four flows model to illustrate how anonymity enabled as well as constrained organizing processes of AA. As a constituting and deconstituting force, anonymous communication plays a pivotal role in this social support organization. This dissertation aims to be a stepping stone for understanding the role of anonymous communication in social support and other hidden organizations in contemporary society.

Appendix A

Measures for Interview

General Perceptions and Usages of Anonymity

1. How long have you been in AA and in this local group?
2. In general, what does “anonymity” mean to you?
3. When is anonymity positive? When is anonymity negative?
4. How do you feel when you are anonymous to others? when others are anonymous to you?
5. How do you regularly use “anonymity”? Why?

Membership Negotiation

1. How much did you know about the “anonymity” aspect of AA before you joined AA?
2. Did you consider the “anonymity” aspect of AA when you chose your current group?
3. How did you learn about anonymity principle of AA once you started attending your group?
4. How did you perceive the importance of “anonymity” principle once you started attending your group?
5. Have you ever been requested or required to disclose your personal information to others in AA?

Self-Structuring

1. How has AA educated you and others about the anonymity principle?
2. How has AA promoted anonymity to its members?
3. How does anonymity potentially hurt AA or make things more difficult?

4. If there is a problem in a local group related to anonymity, how does AA seem to address the situation?

Activity Coordination

1. How much information do share with your group members?
2. How much does your group value anonymity?
3. What do you think of group members whose values are different regarding anonymity?
4. How do you practice anonymity principle with your group members?
5. Have you ever experienced any incidents or conflict related to anonymity?

Institutional Positioning

1. How does anonymity influence the ability to promote AA?
2. How does anonymity influence the reputation of AA?
3. How does anonymity impact collaborating with external stakeholders?
4. How does anonymity limit AA when recruiting new members?
5. How does anonymity influence the external image of AA?

Additional Questions

1. What else should I know about the role of anonymity in AA (as a whole)?
2. What else should I know about the role of anonymity in this AA group?

Appendix B

Measures for Survey [Strongly disagree – Strongly agree]

Anonymity Perception

Instructions: Please think about how you perceive anonymity in general.

1. Anonymity encourages free expression.
2. Anonymity increases honesty.
3. Anonymity enables individuals to avoid social judgement.
4. Anonymity harms relationships.
5. Anonymity reduces accountability.
6. Anonymity decreases trust.

Member Negotiation

Instructions: Please think about the time when you first joined AA.

1. I feel that the anonymity of AA made me more eager to join.
2. I believe that anonymity made me less afraid of getting to know others in AA.
3. I perceive that anonymity made it easy to situate myself in AA.
4. I feel that anonymity made it difficult to embrace the organizational culture of AA.
5. I believe that anonymity made it harder to develop a sense of belonging.
6. I perceive that the anonymity made it difficult to learn about the norms or values of AA.

Self-Structuring

Instructions: Please think about how AA (as a whole organization) works.

1. I believe that anonymity helps AA maintain its core values.
2. I perceive that anonymity helps AA establish ground rules.

3. I feel that anonymity makes AA flexible.
4. I believe that anonymity constrains AA.
5. I perceive that anonymity is impractical at AA.
6. I feel that anonymity makes it harder for AA to serve its members.

Activity Coordination

Instructions: Please think about how your AA group works.

1. I perceive that anonymity encourages mutual sharing in our group.
2. I believe that anonymity enables us to support other group members.
3. I perceive that anonymity makes us maintain sobriety.
4. I believe that anonymity make us less responsible as a group.
5. I feel that anonymity makes it difficult to follow the 12 steps.
6. I perceive that anonymity makes it harder for us to coordinate.

Institutional Positioning

Instructions: Please think about how AA (as a whole organization) interacts with the public and other organizations.

1. I perceive that anonymity helps AA communicate with the public.
2. I feel that anonymity helps AA reach out to any alcoholics.
3. I believe that anonymity enables AA to avoid unwanted attention from outsiders.
4. I feel that anonymity hurts AA's image.
5. I perceive anonymity makes it harder for AA to recruit new members.
6. I believe that anonymity makes it difficult for AA to partner with other organizations.

Organizational Identification

Instructions: Please think about your overall perception of AA in general.

1. AA's successes are my successes.
2. When someone criticizes AA, it feels like a personal insult.
3. When I talk about AA, I usually say "we" rather than "they".

Organizational Satisfaction

Instructions: Please think about your overall perception of AA in general.

1. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with AA.
2. I frequently think of quitting AA.

Group Identification

Instructions: Please think about your overall perception of this particular AA group.

1. In general, I am glad to be a member of my current group.
2. I have a strong sense of belonging to my group.
3. In general, being associated with my group is an important part of my self-image.

Group Satisfaction

Instructions: Please think about your overall perception of this particular AA group.

1. Generally speaking, I am really satisfied with my group.
2. I frequently consider leaving my group.

Group Cohesion

Instructions: Please think about your overall perception of other group members in this particular AA group.

1. Members of our group enjoy sharing information.
2. Members of our group are satisfied with the intensity of AA steps we are taking.
3. We encourage each other in order to maintain sobriety.
4. Members of our group sometimes socialize together outside of AA meeting.

5. A valuable aspect of our AA group is our social interaction.
6. We are good friends in this AA group.

Length of Sobriety

1. When is your sobriety date? (list date): _____

AA Attendance

1. How many AA meetings have you attended in the past 12 months? ____

Sobriety Efficacy

Instructions: Please think about your sobriety.

2. I believe that I am completely sober.
3. I perceive that I have gained confidence in my ability to remain sober.
4. I feel that I have reduced my need for alcohol after joining AA.

Participation & Involvement

2. How long have you been a part of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)? ____
3. Do you have an AA sponsor?
 - a. If Yes, how long have you had an AA sponsor? ____
4. Are you an AA sponsor?
 - a. If Yes, how long have you been an AA sponsor? ____
5. Which of the 12 steps of AA have you “worked”? ____

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Table 1

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for 7 Key Factors Predicting Organizing Force of Anonymity for Membership Negotiation

Variable	Enabling Force			Constraining Force		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Age	.00	0.1	-.03	.00	.01	-.05
12 Steps Progress	-.02	.04	-.06	-.02	.2	-.10
Membership of AA	.03	.02	.21	.00	.01	.05
Membership of Current Group	.00	.03	-.01	.01	.02	.10
Attendance	.00	.00	-.06	.00	.00	.05
Positive Anonymity Perception	.39	.16	.27	-.11	.11	-.12
Negative Anonymity Perception	-.17	.17	-.11	.24	.12	.25
R^2			.15			.21
F			1.75			2.74*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for 7 Key Factors Predicting Organizing Force of Anonymity for Self-Structuring

Variable	Enabling Force			Constraining Force		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Age	-.01	.01	-.10	-.01	.01	-.12
12 Steps Progress	-.04	.02	-.21	.03	.03	.11
Membership of AA	.01	.01	.17	-.02	.02	-.19
Membership of Current Group	.01	.02	.10	.02	.02	.12
Attendance	.00	.00	.05	.00	.00	-.09
Positive Anonymity Perception	.15	.09	.18	-.19	.14	-.16
Negative Anonymity Perception	-.31	.01	-.36	.26	.14	.22
R^2			.23			.17
F			2.97**			1.92

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 3

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for 7 Key Factors Predicting Organizing Force of Anonymity for Activity Coordination

Variable	Enabling Force			Constraining Force		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Age	.00	.01	-.16	-.01	.01	-.09
12 Steps Progress	-.04	.02	-.21	.00	.02	.02
Membership of AA	.01	.01	.15	-.01	.01	-.16
Membership of Current Group	.00	.02	-.01	.01	.02	.12
Attendance	.00	.00	.10	.00	.00	-.05
Positive Anonymity Perception	.34	.11	.34	-.02	.10	-.02
Negative Anonymity Perception	-.18	.12	-.18	.45	.11	.46
R^2			.21			.30
F			2.60*			4.05**

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for 7 Key Factors Predicting Organizing Force of Anonymity for Institutional Positioning

Variable	Enabling Force			Constraining Force		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Age	.01	.01	.14	.00	.01	-.02
12 Steps Progress	-.04	.03	-.20	.03	.03	.14
Membership of AA	.00	.02	.03	-.03	.02	-.28
Membership of Current Group	.00	.02	-.01	.00	.02	.02
Attendance	.00	.00	-.08	.00	.00	.23
Positive Anonymity Perception	.33	.12	.28	.20	.13	.18
Negative Anonymity Perception	-.26	.14	-.22	.23	.14	.19
R^2			.21			.15
F			2.57*			1.69

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5A

Correlation for Four Flows

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Membership Negotiation		.58**	.59**	.51**
2. Self-Structuring	.58**		.69**	.55*
3. Activity Coordination	.59**	.69**		.58**
4. Institutional Positioning	.51**	.55**	.58**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 5B

Correlation for Enabling and Constraining Forces of Four Flows

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1.Membership Negotiation(E)		.07	.54**	-.18	.49**	-.13	.52**	-.14
2. Membership Negotiation(C)	.07		-.15	.47**	.02	.53**	-.02	.39*
3.Self-Structuring(E)	.54**	-.15		-.29**	.53**	-.46**	.49**	-.34*
4. Self-Structuring(C)	-.18	.47**	-.29**		-.05	.65**	-.15	.47*
5. Activity Coordination(E)	.49**	.02	.53**	-.05		-.04	.52**	-.11
6. Activity Coordination(C)	-.13	.53**	-.46**	.65**	-.04		-.19	.49*
7. Institutional Positioning(E)	.52**	-.02	.49**	-.15	.52**	-.19		-.16
8. Institutional Positioning(C)	-.14	.39**	-.34**	.47**	-.11	.49**	-.16	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6A

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Four Flows Predicting Organizational Outcomes

Variable	Organizational Identification			Organizational Satisfaction		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
1 st Model						
Membership Negotiation	.09	.08	.16	.09	.07	.17
Self-Structuring	-.15	.09	-.27	.00	.08	.01
Activity Coordination	.16	.10	.25	.20	.09	.35
Institutional Positioning	.07	.08	.12	-.07	.06	-.15
R^2			.09			.16
F			1.97			3.59*
2 nd Model						
Membership Negotiation(E)	.08	.10	.12	.02	.09	.04
Membership Negotiation(C)	-.10	.13	-.12	-.18	.11	-.23
Self-Structuring(E)	.19	.19	.17	.00	.16	.00
Self-Structuring(C)	.27	.12	.35	-.02	.11	-.03
Activity Coordination(E)	.09	.14	.10	.22	.12	.26
Activity Coordination(C)	-.08	.15	-.09	-.14	.14	-.17
Institutional Positioning(E)	.03	.12	.03	-.02	.10	-.03
Institutional Positioning(C)	-.07	.11	-.08	.10	.09	.12
R^2			.15			.18
F			1.62			1.94

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6B-1

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Four Flows Predicting Group Outcomes

Variable	Group Identification			Group Satisfaction		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
1 st Model						
Membership Negotiation	.08	.07	.15	.07	.08	.12
Self-Structuring	-.13	.08	-.24	-.01	.09	-.01
Activity Coordination	.35	.09	.56	.24	.11	.35
Institutional Positioning	-.02	.06	-.05	-.03	.07	-.05
R^2			.24			.16
F			6.11**			3.59*
2 nd Model						
Membership Negotiation(E)	.00	.09	-.01	-.03	.10	-.04
Membership Negotiation(C)	-.18	.11	-.22	-.23	.13	-.25
Self-Structuring(E)	.00	.17	-.02	.29	.19	.25
Self-Structuring(C)	.14	.11	.19	.14	.12	.17
Activity Coordination(E)	.31	.12	.35	.10	.14	.11
Activity Coordination(C)	-.27	.14	-.31	-.20	.15	-.21
Institutional Positioning(E)	.08	.10	.10	.06	.12	.07
Institutional Positioning(C)	.11	.10	.14	.10	.18	.12
R^2			.27			.21
F			3.33**			2.46*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6B-2

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Four Flows Predicting Group Outcomes

Variable	Group Task Cohesion			Group Social Cohesion		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>
1 st Model						
Membership Negotiation	.05	.06	.11	.12	.08	.23
Self-Structuring	-.10	.07	-.22	-.10	.08	-.20
Activity Coordination	.29	.08	.57	.18	.10	.30
Institutional Positioning	-.01	.05	-.03	-.05	.07	-.11
R^2			.24			.10
F			6.06**			2.12
2 nd Model						
Membership Negotiation(E)	-.08	.07	-.13	-.04	.09	-.06
Membership Negotiation(C)	-.17	.09	-.24	-.31	.11	-.39
Self-Structuring(E)	.07	.13	.08	.10	.17	.10
Self-Structuring(C)	.07	.08	.11	.10	.11	.15
Activity Coordination(E)	.29	.10	.39	.17	.12	.20
Activity Coordination(C)	-.12	.11	-.16	.01	.14	.01
Institutional Positioning(E)	.16	.08	.24	.12	.10	.16
Institutional Positioning(C)	.16	.08	.25	.19	.09	.25
R^2			.35			.20
F			4.90**			2.27*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 6C

Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Four Flows Predicting Individual Outcomes

Variable	Sobriety			Attendance			Sobriety		
	Length						Efficacy		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
1 st Model									
Membership Negotiation	.07	1.10	.01	-.11	17.52	-.01	.12	.07	.24
Self-Structuring	1.01	1.26	.15	22.95	18.55	.13	-.13	.08	-.25
Activity Coordination	-.39	1.38	-.05	15.65	21.00	.12	.14	0.09	.24
Institutional Positioning	.68	.97	.10	-32.73	14.83	-.32	.06	0.07	.12
R^2			.16			.08			.13
F			3.59*			1.61			2.92*
2 nd Model									
Membership Negotiation(E)	-.53	1.39	-.06	-17.02	21.49	-.12	.02	.10	.03
Membership Negotiation(C)	-.50	1.74	-.05	-3.64	30.10	-.02	-.22	.11	-.28
Self-Structuring(E)	2.2	2.56	.16	27.36	38.55	.12	.14	.16	.13
Self-Structuring(C)	-.82	1.62	-.08	-19.32	25.37	-.13	.13	.11	.18

Activity Coordination(E)	-	1.8	-.16	15.55	28.69		.14	.12	.16
	1.88	8		.08					
Activity Coordination(C)	-.10	2.0	.00	-8.82	32.10	-	.06	.14	.07
		5		.05					
Institutional Positioning(E)	2.4	1.6	.24	-31.35	24.47	-	.17	.10	.24
	2	0		.20					
Institutional Positioning(C)	.79	1.4	.08	33.32	22.13		.06	.09	.08
		2		.21					
R^2		.07			.08				.22
F		.69			.82				2.50*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.