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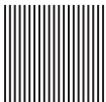


What *B* Would Otherwise Do: A Critique of Conceptualizations of ‘Power’ in Organizational Theory

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Abstract. *The paper presents a critique of organizational theories that is based upon Robert Dahl’s famous definition: ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’. This definition highlights the fact that appreciating ‘power’ often demands knowledge not only about what B does but also about what B would otherwise do. Organizational theorists, it is argued, lacked such knowledge. Instead, they relied upon untested and ideologically biased assumptions concerning what B would otherwise do. Reviewing major conceptualizations of power in organizational theory, the paper unravels and categorizes six underlying assumptions of this sort. Then it goes on to promote an alternative, empirically-grounded and emically-oriented strategy for dealing with this issue. This strategy, it is argued, offers a new and less problematic research path with which to pursue the different theoretical interests in the field. Key words.* organizational theory; power; resistance



In 1957 Robert A. Dahl offered the following definition of power (pp. 202–3): ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’. His commonsensical definition was widely embraced within the field of organizational studies. As Hardy and Clegg (1999: 369) claimed, ‘this seemingly simple definition, which presents the negative rather than the positive aspects of power, has been challenged, amended, critiqued, extended, and rebuffed over the



years but, nonetheless, remains the starting point for a remarkably diverse body of literature’.

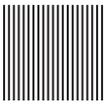
Beyond this common starting point, organization theory is characterized by a tremendous variety of attempts to handle the origins, expressions, and implications of ‘power’ in organizational life. It seems, however, that Dahl’s definition not only constitutes the common starting point for these attempts but also provides a basis for a common critique. Namely, by conceptualizing power as the capacity to alter the behavior of others—of the proverbial *B*—Dahl’s definition implies that appreciating power demands not only awareness of what *B* does but assurance that it is something that *B* would not otherwise do. In most cases, such assurance entails knowing what *B would* otherwise do.¹ Focusing upon uncomplicated political matters over which there was an observable conflict between *A* and *B*, Dahl and his followers often deduced what *B* would otherwise do from *B*’s articulated preferences (Benton, 1981). As organizational theorists tended to focus on much more complex and elusive plays of power, they usually did not even have this proxy available. Consequently, it is argued here, their writings were often based upon untested assumptions about what *B* would otherwise do which reflected their own ideological beliefs and normative preferences.

Reviewing a wide range of organizational theories, the first section of the paper offers a typology of power-perspectives that is based upon assumptions pertaining to ‘what *B* would otherwise do’. The typology exposes the ideological and normative basis of the assumptions and indicates how they lie at the heart of various conceptualizations of power in organizations. It is argued, that while all of the reviewed theories have undoubtedly made substantial contributions to the field, in order to proceed there might now be a need to suspend the underlying normative assumptions and seek a new strategy for dealing with the question of ‘what *B* would otherwise do’.

The strategy that this paper promotes is an emic one. In the second section, it argues that instead of imposing their own version of ‘what *B* would otherwise do’ and even of testing it, researchers of all streams and normative agendas would have much to gain by examining what meanings organizational members attribute to it. In other words, researchers should explore the emic ‘otherwise’: the alternatives that the *B*s themselves envision and experience in face of relationships of power. Replacing the theorists’ untested assumptions with examinations of the emic ‘otherwise’ would open up a variety of new research paths for furthering the understanding of power and its consequences in organizations.

Six Assumptions Concerning What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Six assumptions concerning the question of what *B* would otherwise do are characteristic of some of the most well-known conceptualizations of power in organizations.² These assumptions differ on a range of criteria such as who *B* is and from what level of analysis is *B*’s relationship with



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Galit Ailon

A examined, yet the categorization that seems to underlie most of this variety concerns evaluation rather than description. The different assumptions of organizational theorists are characterized by three distinctive normative tones: those that postulated that *B* would otherwise do 'negative' things, those that postulated that *B* would otherwise do 'positive' things, and those that postulated that *B* would otherwise do more or less the same things that are already being done. These three categories of assumptions are discussed in the consecutive sub-sections.

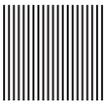
***B* Would Otherwise Do 'Negative' Things**

The assumption that *B* would otherwise do negative things was characteristic of managerially oriented theories of organizations. Sanctioning existing power structures of organizations and seeking ways to serve them, these theories generally posed *B* as an employed member and that which *B* would otherwise do as a normative and even moral evil; a threat that must not be allowed to materialize. This common assumption had several versions that are grouped here into two sub-types. The first is that of economically based theories of management and organizations and the second is that of social and psychological theories of organizational behaviour.

***B* Would Otherwise Cheat: Economically Based Theories of Management and Organization**

Frederick W. Taylor, the father of 'Scientific Management', is probably the most influential writer in the history of management thought. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries he refined and developed the ideas of an engineering movement that sought to systematize management (Barley and Kunda, 1992; Jenks, 1961; Litterer, 1963; Nelson, 1974; Shenhav, 1999), and promoted a discipline of efficiency premised on notions of science and rationality. His conception of what *B* would otherwise do was explicit (1967:13): 'underworking, that is, deliberately working slowly so as to avoid doing a full day's work, "soldiering", as it is called in this country . . .'. This tendency to loaf instead of do the work that one is hired to do, he claimed, emanates both from 'natural' laziness and, more importantly, from systematic deception (see pp. 19–20). In relation to what Taylor considered to be the objective and universal rationale of economic maximization, it was rendered practicably immoral, indeed an 'evil' (p.14) that afflicts the working-people who have not been subjected to his prescribed scientific regime of work.

During the 1970s and 1980s Taylor's notion of what *B* would otherwise do was echoed by two major economic theories of organizations: Agency Theory and Transaction Costs Economics (TCE). According to Agency Theory, the firm is nothing but a nexus of contracts (Jensen, 1983; Jensen and Meckling, 1976) and thus 'has no power of fiat, no authority, no disciplinary action any different in the slightest degree from ordinary market contracting between any two people' (Alchian and Demetz, 1972: 777). The contract, in other words, is not merely a metaphor but the crux



Organization 13(6)

Articles

of organizational power. Focusing exclusively on the interests of one side of the contract—those who delegate work, the ‘principals’—theorists viewed it as a means for regulating the activities of ‘agents’, who, it was assumed, would otherwise violate the contract by ‘shirking’ or evading their work obligations (for reviews see Eisenhardt, 1989; Perrow, 1986). This belief that *B* would otherwise shirk was so profound, that some writers found the mere survival of organizations a puzzle (see Fama, 1980; Fama and Jensen, 1983; Jensen, 1983).

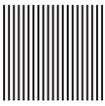
Oliver Williamson’s Transaction Costs Economics (TCE) was based upon a similar assumption, although here it was titled ‘opportunism’ and defined as ‘self-interest seeking with guile’ (Williamson, 1975: 26). Following Coase’s (1937) insight that firms are governing structures capable of reducing market contracting costs, Williamson claimed that under conditions of bounded rationality, uncertainty, and small-number bargaining, hierarchies prevail because of their ability to transform potentially costly, opportunistic behavioural patterns into cooperation. Thus constituting ‘a rediscovery of Hobbesian analysis’ in the economic sphere (Granovetter, 1985: 494), TCE assumed that actors strategically pursue individualistic self-interests with every means at their disposal. A partial list of such strategies included ‘disguise attributes or preferences, distort data, obfuscate issues . . . cut corners for undisclosed personal advantage, cover up tracks, and the like’ (Williamson, 1981: 554).

In sum, economically based theories of management and organization promulgated a common assumption concerning what *B* would otherwise do. Whether titled ‘soldiering’, ‘shirking’, or ‘self-interest seeking with guile’, all of them postulated *B*’s behaviour in terms of the egocentric pursuit of personal utility on account of *A* and in violation of the employment contract between them. Though the next theories that are reviewed were more worker-oriented than the economic ones, their assumptions of what *B* would otherwise do were also characterized by a condemning moral tone.

***B* Would Otherwise Go Astray: Social and Psychological Theories of Organizational Behaviour**

Three streams of organizational theorizing shared an underlying assumption concerning what *B* would otherwise do that was premised upon an image of *B* as having an easily blinded or misguided nature: the Human Relations Approach (HR), Decision Making Models, and the managerially oriented version of the Cultural Perspective. These streams spoke of one right way, the organizational way, and many obstacles that speak directly to *B*’s weaknesses and limitations, threatening to lead *B* astray into error. Each, however, focused upon a different set of obstacles.

For HR writers, the obstacles of concern were those that speak to *B*’s affections. Following the Hawthorne studies’ ‘startling’ discovery (Pennock, 1930: 296) that workers are group-oriented social beings, many HR theorists posed *B* as a nonlogical or nonrational person who seeks



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Galit Ailon

sentimental contentment and finds it by conforming to the norms of social groups (e.g. Homans, 1950; Mayo, 1946; Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). Examples include 'quota restriction' and 'goldbricking' (Whyte, 1955) and the general expectation that workers would frustrate 'a managerial rational and moral order' through 'illegal practices' (Roy, 1954: 258). According to such theorists, organizations can harness members' social tendency by nurturing a logical but socially sensitive style of managerial leadership that bolsters morale and guides workers beyond 'their more restricted wisdoms' (Whitehead, 1937:247), as well as through other practices that secure cooperation by tying it to personal motivations and satisfactions (e.g. McGregor, 1960; Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). Yet the possibility that workers would be lured away from the 'right' way of the organization was seen as omnipresent, for 'Human individuals *cannot do otherwise* than establish and reestablish social forms or patterns of living' (Mayo, 1946: 141, emphasis added).

During the 1950s another obstacle began drawing the attention of researchers. This was a cognitive obstacle, namely the fact that organizational members 'are limited in their knowledge and in their capacities to learn and to solve problems' (March and Simon, 1958: 136). This insight proved to be very influential in the field, inspiring various models of decision making in organizations (for a review see March, 1978), and thus institutionalizing a powerful version of the assumption of what *B* would otherwise do. Namely, *B* was conceptualized as an 'intendedly rational' organism (March and Simon, 1958), but one 'that can do only one or a few things at a time, and that can attend to only a small part of the information recorded in its memory and presented by the environment' (p.11). The structures, procedures, or 'programs' of the formal organization were claimed to help *B* overcome this problem of limited intellectual capacities, ensuring 'that the individual will approach as close as practicable to rationality' (Simon, 1957: 241), or, in other words, will act in ways that are consistent with organizational goals. Without these formal programs of control, *B* was claimed to be potentially led into error due to 'bounded human rationality and its accompanying frailties of motive and reason' (Simon, 1985: 303).

Organizational-culture theorists, especially those of the managerially-oriented Integration Perspective (Martin, 1992),³ created yet another slightly different version of the assumption that *B* would otherwise go astray. Awakened during the late 1970s by the successes of Japanese management (see in this regard Martin and Frost, 1999: 347), these theorists spoke of the cultural obstacles that stand in the way of the American *B*. According to Schein (1992: 23), one of the most well-known proponents of this point of view, 'the human mind needs cognitive stability' and creates it by forcing congruity between culture—defined as a set of taken-for-granted basic assumption that are created and sustained in groups—and the world that is perceived. Thus, he claimed, people



Organization 13(6)

Articles

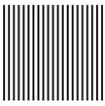
stick to culture even if it means ‘distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying to ourselves what may be going on around us’ (1992: 22). Moreover, people stick to culture even if it leads them to act in ways which are ‘unreasonable’, ‘irrational’, and ‘ineffective’ (p. 4). Along with other writers (e.g. Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Ouchi, 1981; Schwartz and Davis, 1981; Silverzweig and Allen, 1976), Schein offered a set of managerial practices that were designed to create strong cultures that are harnessed to the ‘right’ way of the organization.

In sum, organizational theories presented at least three versions— affective, cognitive, and cultural—of the assumptions that *B* would otherwise go astray. Common to all of these versions was the claim that organizational members have needs for social belonging or cognitive coherence, and that they are consequently susceptible to the influences of informal groups, decision making complexity, or group-cultures. All of these factors threaten to lead them away from the organization and its goals (both of which were treated as taken-for-granted and unproblematic) into a way that is normatively and logically flawed.

Discussion

The two negative versions of what *B* would otherwise do were characterized by a tension. According to economically based theories of management and organization, *B* would otherwise act as a rational, economically shrewd actor who seeks to maximize utility. According to social and psychological theories of organizational behavior, *B* would otherwise act as a nonrational, rationally-bounded,⁴ or irrational person who is easily swayed from the path of economic logic. Juxtaposing these assumptions of what *B* would otherwise do renders them both problematic.⁵ It is indeed possible that some people may sometimes cheat and some may sometimes blindly follow the herd or rules of the thumb into an illogical or immoral path of action. Yet to turn these possibilities into underlying assumptions of generalizable theories of power seems to stretch them too far. To a great extent, the two assumptions bear evidence of each others’ restricted validity and of the way that each sets limits on the knowledge that could consequently be produced.

The descriptive tension between these two versions of ‘what *B* would otherwise do’ becomes even more problematic when the evaluative commonality is taken into consideration. The normative tone that both groups of theorists attached to the assumptions was generally the same. Both claimed that *B* would otherwise take a different road than that of the profit seeking organization and, furthermore, both painted this different road in gloomy colours. Largely for this reason, critical organizational writers posed such managerially inspired images of organizational members as ideological fictions that were designed to justify the power of the powerful. Yet, as will be discussed next, the assumptions of critical writers were themselves suspect of an ideological bias of a similar weight.



***B* Would Otherwise Do 'Positive' Things**

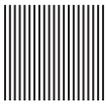
Aligning themselves with the organizationally powerless rather than with the organizationally powerful, many critical theorists posed power's alternative almost in utopian terms. Often conceptualizing *B* in terms of a collective rather than as an individual employee and treating power more as an entire structure of relationships rather than a relationship per se, their assumptions concerning what *B* would otherwise do included themes of a revolutionary awakening into action, a replacement of evil by good, and an enforcement of social justice. Two well-known versions of positive assumptions were those of Labour Process and Feminist Theories. They are discussed next.

***B* Would Otherwise Join His Fellowmen and Rebel: Labour Process Theory**

Labour process theory applied a Marxist perspective to work relations. Its popularity peaked in the 1970s and early 1980s. The major claim of this theory was that the organization is a site where the underlying logic of class relations in the context of capitalist accumulation is both manifested and intensified. In pursuit of the interest of profit maximization, it is here that capitalists seek to ensure that the commodity of 'labour power' transforms into 'labour' (Braverman, 1974). They do so by imposing structures of control which divorce workers from the conditions and fruits of their own labour, alienate them from the labour process and make them objects of exploitation (Friedman, 1977; see also Edwards, 1979). Workers' gained consciousness of all this and their consequent collective resistance to and replacement of capitalist control, was the assumption that labour process theorists shared concerning what *B* would otherwise do.

To a great extent, history had proved this assumption problematic. Inherent in Marxist thought is the belief that capitalist power is not nor could be complete, for it continually produces not only surplus value but also its own internal contradictions (e.g. Friedman, 1977; Gartman, 1983). Many labour process theorists were thus preoccupied with the question of why *B* had not done what *B* was supposed to otherwise do. The two most famous answers were probably Braverman's (1974) analysis of the deskilling and degrading effects entailed in the development of Scientific Management and associated changes at the workplace, and Buroway's (1979) study of the paradoxical consent-generating dynamics of workers' informal game of 'making out'.

Other labour process theorists often adopted a more forgiving and patient attitude toward the hindered rebellion. Appreciating even the most limited, fleeting, and isolated expressions of resistance as events of a class struggle, they criticized Braverman and Buroway for their failure to take into account the dialectical and gradual interplay between structure and struggle in the capitalist labour process (e.g. Clawson and Fantasia, 1983; Friedman, 1977; Gartman, 1983; Littler, 1982; Littler and Salaman, 1982; Storey, 1985; Wood, 1982). Their own view of the

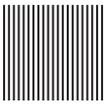


workplace was one of an indeterminate 'contested terrain' (Edwards, 1979), in which capitalists are forced to continually revolutionize production methods in order to overcome the chronic resistance that develops at the interstices of their forever contradictory control (see also Friedman, 1977). Workers' rebellion was thus presented as an existent albeit somewhat hesitant motor of change that would ultimately reveal itself in the full working out of capitalism's demise. While this more patient version of what *B* would otherwise do may still demand time to be proven valid, the past two decades have not shown significant signs in this direction. It seems more probable that 'History... dealt the Marxist project a death-blow from which it would never recover' (Clegg and Hardy, 1999: 430), depriving Labour Process Theory's assumption about what *B* would otherwise do any substantial supporting evidence.

***B* Would Otherwise Fulfill Herself: Feminist Theories of Organization**

Interlaced with the Feminist conviction that organizations are dominated by male power is the assumption that women would otherwise fulfill themselves. The history of Feminist writing on organizations has seen the upsurge of two distinct versions of this assumption, both of which have, to some extent, been put to actual tests. The first version was promulgated by Liberal Feminists who believed that once structural barriers were lifted, women would advance and fulfill themselves as men do. Arguing that women are basically similar to men (see Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974), they undertook a 'women-in-management' strategy (Calás and Smircich, 1999) and fought for equal opportunities at work. Their struggle was only partially successful. While there have been significant advances in the realm of opportunities, the statistics continued to document sex inequality (for a review see Calás and Smircich, 1999: 213–20). Thus some Feminists began arguing that the strategy itself was counter-productive. Encouraging women to succeed in existing power structures, they argued, actually strengthened men by sanctifying male-defined norms which both disregard the difficulties that work organizations pose for women (Acker, 1990; Ferguson, 1984; Marshall, 1984) and prompt the experience of femininity as a problem (Sheppard, 1989). Inherent in many such critiques was the notion that women are different from men, and, accordingly, that they would otherwise advance and fulfill themselves not as men do, but as women.

This second version of the Feminist assumption was adopted and pursued by various groups of theorists. First, Radical Feminists embarked upon a project of inventing alternative, separate organizations which were to constitute optimal contexts for women to fulfill themselves in ways that are concurrent with their gender identity (see in this regard Baker, 1982; Farrell, 1994; Ferree and Martin, 1995; P. Y. Martin, 1990). Such organizations were indeed established but they had to compromise Feminist ideals in their daily practices (e.g. Farrell, 1994) and face internal fissures and conflicts, at times on the basis of racial and class



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

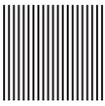
Galit Ailon

differences within women groups (e.g. Morgen, 1994; Sealander and Smith, 1986; Tom, 1995). While Feminists rarely acknowledged them as a failure, apparently 'the reality was embarrassing; women failing to cooperate with each other, taking power and using it in oppressive ways, creating their own structures of status and reward (which) were at odds with other images of women as nurturing and supportive' (Acker, 1990: 141). Radical feminists, in other words, were perhaps successful in creating alternative power structures, but *B*'s behaviour within them hardly measured up to Feminist ideals.

In addition, the assumption that *B* would otherwise fulfill herself as a woman was also adopted and pursued by relatively recent interpretive and postmodern/poststructuralist Feminist writers. Acknowledging the difference between male and female, men and women, it was argued that 'There is nothing the matter with difference, the problem is that one of the two categories in each dichotomy is devalued' (J. Martin, 1994: 406). Thus, instead of constructing separate, gender-specific organizations, these Feminist writers sought to deconstruct the joint but 'gendered' (Acker, 1990) organization as a means for unravelling the practices and subtle assumptions that devalue or suppress the feminine side within it (see e.g. Collinson and Collinson, 1989; Hall, 1993; Kerfoot and Knights, 1993; J. Martin, 1990; Mills, 1995; Pringle, 1989; Rantalaiho and Heiskanen, 1997). Furthermore, writers also launched an attack against one of the most powerful sites from which the subtle assumptions were claimed to emanate: the academia (J. Martin, 1994). Set on 'breaking the taboos of mainstream organizational theory' (J. Martin, 1990: 356), they began re-reading and deconstructing famous texts as a means for unravelling their gender and sexual subtext (e.g. Acker and Van Houten, 1992; Calás and Smircich, 1991; Hearn and Parkin, 1992; Mumby and Putnam, 1992). Despite the vigour of criticism, at least some of these relatively recent Feminist writers were characterized by a poststructuralist suspicion that the feminine alternative that they had in mind 'also emanates from male dominated cultures' and is in this sense not a 'real alternative' to begin with (Calás and Smircich, 1991: 594, 597). To an extent, these writers thus constituted an in-between category, sharing this crucial doubt with a group of writers who wondered if 'otherwise' is at all possible and who will be discussed later on.

Discussion

Labour process and many Feminist theorists shared a common optimistic orientation toward the issue of what *B* would otherwise do. Seeming to believe in the poetics of social justice, it was their view that *B* would otherwise re-claim that which, in the theorists' eyes, was unjustly seized or denied from them by the organizationally powerful. In both cases, however, history proved this assumption problematic. Facing the reality of a hindered rebellion, Labour Process theorists devoted a significant portion of their work to exploring why what was supposed to have



Organization 13(6)

Articles

happened had not. Liberal and Radical Feminists experienced some disappointments when relative successes in eradicating oppressive power still did not lead *B* to do what *B* was supposed to otherwise do, and some poststructuralist feminists seemed ambivalent about 'otherwise' to begin with.

All this should not be taken to imply that these theorists did not make a difference. Their critiques of power were, no doubt, valuable. But as long as their assumptions were utopian, overly optimistic, or otherwise improbable they ran the risk of being rendered naive. For the final group of theorists the problem seems to have been the opposite: not that of being overly naive but that of being overly sober.

B Would Otherwise Do More or Less the Same Things that are Being Done

Two streams of theorizing treated power and 'otherwise' as more or less the same: Political and Foucaultian theories of organizations. To a large extent, each of these streams were characterized by a distinct normative orientation: political theorists were managerially oriented while Foucaultian theorists were critical of organizations. Nonetheless, theorists from both streams generally gave up the belief that what *B* would otherwise do is, by definition, significantly better or worse than what already exists. Having given up this belief, their assumptions about what *B* would otherwise do no longer reflected their own preferences in a simple, unilateral, and direct manner. Rather, both streams of theorizing allowed for variety in their conceptualization of what *B* would otherwise do. Their assumptions are discussed next.

B Would Otherwise Make A Do Things That A Would Not Otherwise Do: From Weber to Political Theories of Organization

Political theories of organization are generally traced back to Parsons's interpretation of Weber (Clegg, 1989). Namely, Weber's (1947) bureaucratic listing of the attributes of the ideal-type bureaucracy was interpreted by Parsons in a way which expressed the latter's pre-existing distinction between legitimate configurations of power as authority and bare, illegitimate uses of it (Clegg and Dunkerely, 1980: 433–434). Sanctioning bureaucracy as an epitome of that which is legitimate and valued in the modern world, namely rationality and efficiency, this interpretation rendered all activities outside the realm of the formal authority structure degenerated acts of power in pursuit of illegitimate ends.⁶

Throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, however, evidence piled up that such informal and thus 'illegitimate' power use is hardly a peripheral phenomenon in bureaucratic organizations. In fact, it was increasingly realized as quite a dominant aspect of organizational life (e.g. Bennis et al., 1958; Child, 1972; Cybert and March, 1963; Dalton, 1959; Mechanic, 1962; Pettigrew, 1973; Thompson, 1956). Consequently, a large amount of theoretical effort was now directed at disentangling the power-play unfolding beyond formal organizational structures. In these realms



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Galit Ailon

of organizational life ‘power’ became ‘politics’: a term that, despite the attempts of some to annul the negative tinge attached to it (e.g. Pfeffer, 1981), generally connotes unethical, immoral, and at times harmful plays of power. Furthermore, ‘power’ became accessible to everyone. In the upside-down world of Weber’s formal, bureaucratic hierarchy—a world where even ‘secretaries, hospital attendants, prison inmates, and other lower participants’ (Mechanic, 1962: 349) could influence their superiors—*B* became a matching opponent for *A*. Accordingly, an image of a political jungle seemed to inspire and take hold of theorists’ imagination, and in this jungle *A* was not the only one able to exert power. *B* too had access to various ‘bases of power’ (French and Raven, 1960); *B* too could make *A* do things that *A* would not otherwise do. To a large extent, then, *A* and *B* became analytically interchangeable. Untamed by formal authority and often heedless of its rational-legal legitimacy, both were now perceived as political, interest-seeking animals lurking in the spacious cracks of the formal structure, quietly awaiting the chance to impose their will upon organizational others.

Once the image of a political jungle took hold, theorists began seeking new ways of making sense of it, finding order within it, and mapping it out (e.g. Mintzberg, 1983; 1984). Assuming that *B* too could make *A* do things that *A* would not otherwise do, many of them became preoccupied with the question of what tilts the balance toward one or the other. The first systematic and apparently most influential answer to this question was offered by Emerson (1962) who equated power with dependence and conceptualized the latter in terms of control over valued things or resources. This notion of resource-dependence was later developed to include more specific articulations of various issues such as the conditions and strategies necessary to translate resource-control into influence-evoking dependence (e.g. Bachrach and Lawler, 1980; Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1974; 1978; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974). A second answer was originally inspired by Crozier’s celebrated study of the French state-owned tobacco monopoly in 1964 and specifically by his claim that power in organizations is related to the control of critical sources of uncertainty. Known as the ‘Strategic Contingencies’ Theory of Intraorganizational Power’ (Hickson et al., 1971; see also Enz, 1988; Hambrick, 1981; Hinings et al., 1974), this second answer proposed that functional interdependencies empower those sub-units that lack substitutes in coping with the central uncertainties that the activities of other sub-units are contingent upon.

To recapitulate, political theories of organizations generally speculated that *B* would otherwise mirror what *A* is doing: use dependence-evoking means to impose *B*’s will upon *A* and thus make *A* do things that *A* would not otherwise do. The interchangeability of *A* and *B* implied the interchangeability of ‘power’ and ‘otherwise’. Both insular and interest-bearing, lacking the social significance of the legitimate structure and goals, political theorists did not focus on their actual content as much as



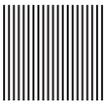
on mapping out what constellations of resource dependencies or strategic contingencies render one 'power' and the other 'otherwise'. In contrast, Foucaultian theorists claimed that power and 'otherwise' are basically the same not because both are linked to transient, narrow-minded preferences, but because the former is an all-encompassing disposition that subsumes and determines the latter. It is to this perspective that we now turn.

If Only There Could Be An Otherwise! The Foucaultian Contribution

The contribution of the writing of Michel Foucault to the assumption of what *B* would otherwise do is to a large extent subject to interpretation. The more extreme but seemingly common reading of his writing originated from his claim that 'power is everywhere'. Pervasive and subtle, it 'is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared. . . (but) is exercised from innumerable points' (Foucault, 1980a: 94) by the dominated as well as by the dominating. Thus, he claimed, nothing is outside it—not people, not knowledge, not truth (Foucault, 1980b). Not only are alternatives difficult to formulate but they often serve to reinforce power's existing configuration (Hardy and Clegg, 1999). According to some interpretations of Foucault, power thus implicates anything that *B* would otherwise do, denying the existence of any true alternative (see in this regard, Said, 1986; Walzer, 1986; White, 1986).⁷

Many of Foucault's followers refused to come to terms with such extreme disillusionment (see in this regard Hoy, 1986; Smart, 1986). Within the organizational field, theorists (it seems plausible to title many of them Post-Labour Process theorists) offered a reading of his work that rejected the dualistic notion that resistance must always reside outside mechanisms of power. Stressing his notions of the multiplicity of power-relations and of power as productive or enabling, they argued that resistance may operate 'from within' as particular, and at times competing and incoherent, exercises of power generate opposing or resistant subjectivities (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994). Thus, while coming to terms with the implausibility of a dramatic anti-capitalist revolution, these theorists nonetheless claimed that even within the 'everywhere' of power some space is nonetheless left for resistance. In their view, 'people can and do take greater control over their own lives, even in large-scale bureaucratic organizations' (Jermier et al., 1994: 22).

Nevertheless, the examples they found for what those who can 'take greater control' actually do were often extremely minute. These included whistleblowing (Rothchild and Miethe, 1994), mental distancing (Collinson, 1994), indifference and cynicism (Knights and Morgan, 1991: 260), insistence on work-to-rule, subtle changes in appearance, and even taking extra time in the bathroom (Gottfried, 1994). These were occasions of what was often titled 'micro-resistance', opposition that is local in scope and also, it generally seems, local in impact. Focusing on the specific circumstances of these micro-struggles, showing how opposition



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Galit Ailon

is implicated by the very regime it mounts up against and how its consequences are perilous and unpredictable, Foucaultian writers of this sort seemed somewhat skeptical about the possibility that resistances could lead to a 'true' and better alternative. Consequently, their writing was characterized by inherent tension: committed to critical ideals, writers continued to celebrate resistance, now applying the term to occasions on which members merely manage to exert willfulness and maintain, however momentarily, resistant subjectivities (see Clegg, 1994; Knights and Willmott, 1989). But, acknowledging it as such, their attempts to justify it were characterized by admitted theoretical and normative hardships (see Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994: 186–191). These Foucaultian writers, in other words, gave up the notion of universal progress but not the desire to change the world, settling as they may for partial and piecemeal emancipation through 'resistance at particular points to local exercises of power' (Hoy, 1986: 145).

Discussion

The differences between political and Foucaultian theorists were tremendous. Political theorists saw power and 'otherwise' as based upon independent, interest-bearing preferences. Foucaultians claimed that the two are characterized by an all-encompassing inseparability. Political theorists claimed that *politics* are everywhere: people always seek ways to fulfill their parochial interests, always want to impose upon others that which they would otherwise do despite legitimate power structures and at times in contrast to them. Foucaultians claimed that *power* is everywhere: what people see as their interests as well as the strategies they devise for achieving these interests are determined by existing power structures or discursive practices and to a considerable extent serve to reinforce them.⁸ Ironically, the bottom-line of both lines of thought was similar in the sense that both pointed out the resemblance of and proximity between power and otherwise.

This common view seems to originate from one tendency that both groups of theorists shared. Both failed to take into account the possibility that outcomes which may seem remarkably the same to researchers may be experienced as remarkably distinct by organizational members. Even if, in the researchers' eyes, power and 'otherwise' are both petty and narrow-minded, even if they are inseparable, what distinguishes them are the meanings and feelings that are attached to them, not merely some absolute and external measure of them as an outcome. The theorists who have been discussed in the previous subsections inadvertently acknowledged this for they themselves distinguished the two by attributing a distinct normative content to each of them, rendering one positive and the other negative. The next section, however, argues that it is not the beliefs and normative preferences of the researchers that should be of interest but rather those of the people who are studied. Following Table 1 which summarizes the review of this section, the next section will

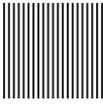
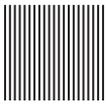


Table 1. Assumptions posed by organizational theories concerning 'what B would otherwise do'

	B would otherwise do 'negative' things	B would otherwise do 'positive' things	B would otherwise do more or less the same things
<i>Economically Based Theories of Management and Organization</i> (Taylorism, Agency Theory, TCE)	B would otherwise cheat Taylorism: B would otherwise soldier Agency Theory: B would otherwise shirk TCE: B would otherwise opportunistically seek self interest with guile		
<i>Social and Psychological Theories of Organizational Behaviour</i> (HR, Decision Making, Cultural Integration)	B would otherwise go astray HR: B would otherwise go emotively astray Decision Making: B would otherwise go cognitively astray Cultural Integration: B would otherwise go culturally astray		
<i>Labour Process Theory</i>		B would otherwise join his fellowmen and rebel	
<i>Feminist Theories of Organization</i> (Liberal, Radical, Postmodernist/ Poststructuralist)		B would otherwise fulfill herself Liberal: B would otherwise fulfill herself as men do Other: B would otherwise fulfill herself as a woman	
<i>Political Theories of Organization</i> (Resource Dependence, Strategic Contingencies)			B would otherwise make A do things that A would not otherwise do
<i>Faucaultian Oriented Theories</i> (Mostly post-Labour Process Theory)			B has no 'true' otherwise outside power



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Galit Ailon

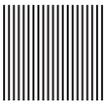
discuss the potential contributions of the emic 'otherwise' to the study of power in organizations.

On the Virtues of Treating 'What B Would Otherwise Do' As An Emic Assumption

Now that different assumptions about 'what *B* would otherwise do' have been mapped out, the most evident way to proceed may seem to be finding out what *B* would, in fact, otherwise do. After all, this assumption *is* examinable. There are, as Pfeffer (1981) noted, a number of pitfalls involved in examining it (see pp. 44–47), yet 'the problem is subtle but not intractable' (p. 44). Apparently, it is possible to try and verify or disconfirm the various versions of the assumption through experimental or comparative research designs. Undertaking such an endeavour could perhaps reveal behavioural facts about 'otherwise' which hold the potential for helping theorists overcome at least some of their wide disagreements.

Yet I would like to suggest a different path of action. The important goal, it seems, is not to declare a winner (or winners). To put such extended and complex traditions of thought to the test of a single criterion—central as it may be—is a reductionistic strategy that surely would not contribute to the study of power in organizations. While it is essential to realize the theoretical shortcomings entailed in assuming an untested 'otherwise'—to become aware and reflective of them—it is also important to realize that despite the shortcomings, each of the reviewed streams of theorizing did advance thinking about organizational power in significant ways. The goal, it thus seems, is to find a more fruitful way to promote their various projects and advance the different knowledge objectives in the field.

Having this goal in mind, I argue that researchers will have much to gain by letting go of the 'real' otherwise and devoting their efforts to unravelling the experienced, emic one instead. The 'real' otherwise—what *B* would actually otherwise do—could indeed tell us what power prevents from happening. But this, I claim, would mean knowing what generally does *not* happen in organizations. It is hard to conceive of a 'scientific' goal which is more detached from actual, everyday organizational life. In contrast, discovering the emic otherwise, namely what *B* believes that *B* would otherwise do, could help further the understanding of various things that *do* happen in organizations. Three such things seem especially evident as they correspond with existing goals and theoretical interests of researchers in the field and thus open up for each body of thought a new path for progress. As will be explained, the emic 'otherwise' could further the understanding of *B*'s actual reactions to organizational power; it could offer an empirical tool with which to pursue critical theoretical concerns regarding organizational power; and, finally, it could help writers of all streams devise new strategies for driving change and pursuing action in organizations.



The first potential contribution of the emic 'otherwise', helping researchers further the understanding of *B*'s reactions to power, corresponds to the theoretical interests of the managerially oriented researchers who were reviewed above and especially to those interested in organizational behaviour. In order to appreciate this contribution and realize the apparent relation between perceptions of alternatives and actual behaviour, it is helpful to go back to Weber's influential concept, 'social action'. By this he implied a socially meaningful behaviour that, 'by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual (or individuals), it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course.' (1947: 88) When discussing power and, more specifically, authority, Weber focused on voluntary compliance. He referred to it as a 'social action' that is determined by a certain belief and meaning system ascribing legitimacy to the persons issuing orders. To a large extent, then, Weber's theoretical edifice rests upon the subjective meanings attributed by the ruled to relationships of power.

It should nevertheless be pointed out, that compliance is a private case of social action and only one among a large variety of possible responses to power. As political theorists emphasized, a lot of what goes on in organizations transcends it. Many reactions to power are not exactly what the *As* of organizations have in mind nor, for that matter, what they seek to prevent. Reactions to power are endlessly divergent, often unanticipated, and many times mundane (see Scott, 1985). One of the earliest and most famous examples of what could be thus titled the unintended consequences of power is perhaps the Taylorist and HR accounts of how piece-rate—a practice designed to overcome soldiering—gave rise to a new phenomenon of workers' informal and collective attempts to restrict output. As this response was not compliant nor what managers originally aimed at preventing, it illustrates how power could lead to reactions that transcend these two dichotomous categories.

Still, even when reactions to power transcend the notions that power-holders had had in mind or sought to prevent, they are and should be conceived of as 'social actions'. Though transcending 'compliance'—the behavioural category that Weber focused upon—they are directed toward and oriented by social systems of meaning. This in itself is not new: HR and cultural theorists have long realized this and in their studies of organizational behaviour they treated them as such. Moreover, as claimed in the review, a large part of their contribution was in extending the focus of analysis to include not only the system of meaning pertaining to the 'legitimate' power structure of the organization, but also the so-called 'illegitimate' meanings that group members attribute to it. In order to understand organizational behaviour, researchers of these bodies of thought suggested, we should explore not only the formally sanctioned goals and values but also the informal ones, for the latter are no less influential in shaping members' perceptions of and behaviour in their organizations. This, I propose here, is not enough. It is not merely the



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

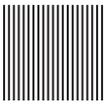
Galit Ailon

meanings pertaining to the organization that should thus be of interest (be they 'formal' or 'informal'), but also those pertaining to its alternatives; to 'otherwise'. Our behaviour within a bureaucratic order is at least partially conditioned upon our perceptions of its alternatives.

Evidence of this can be gleaned from ethnographically oriented studies of markedly diverse social and historical settings. Thus, for example, the Organization Man of the mid 20th century reportedly devoted his life to conformity at a time in which the dominant social ethic morally condemned alternatives which did not coincide with organizational ends (Whyte, 1956). Workers working in a Fortune 500 company during the late 20th century did not take advantage of managerially sponsored family-friendly policies at a time when the alternative—home—lost its traditional significance and meanings (Hochschild, 1997). And technicians entering the contingent labour force at the turn of the 21st century were motivated by an image of contingency as a more flexible, autonomous, exciting, better paying, and professionally fulfilling alternative to permanent employment (Kunda et al., 2002). These examples indicate that people's visions of their alternatives are of significance in shaping their behaviour. Even if never actualized, the emic 'otherwise'—what people believe they would otherwise do—appears to constitute an important background to their actual behaviour. The real assumptions (rather than the hypothesized behaviours) that power stands up against thus seem of value for furthering the understanding of its complex and at times unanticipated and unintended consequences.

The second major potential contribution of the emic 'otherwise' is to critical organizational theory. Writers who are characterized by a theoretical orientation that feeds upon Marxist, feminist, and postmodern origins, would, it is argued, have much to benefit by inquiring into people's notions of their alternatives. Namely, studying them could help many of these researchers with their two major (albeit somewhat contradictory) projects: first, exposing what could be called the power of power—its all-encompassing and elusive nature. Second, revealing the limits of power, the sites and spaces from which resistance could nevertheless evolve.

Regarding the first project, critical researchers interested in both the dominated class and the dominated gender have often made claims concerning power's deep, wide, intricate, and subtle reach. As mentioned in the review, some of the most recent versions of these claims were often drawn from postmodern/poststructuralist theories (most evidently from that of Foucault) that speak of power as being everywhere exercised by the ruled as well as by the rulers. According to these theories, since power is intricately interconnected with people's subjectivity (Knights and Willmott, 1989) and in many ways operates through it, people are not only its targets but also elements of its articulation. Their ideas and practices continually conform to, deploy, and reproduce the standards of their own oppression. Since the emic 'otherwise' is both subjective and marked by an attempt to create an autonomous space that is detached

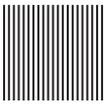


from power, it could constitute an empirical tool with which to illuminate and explore such arguments within organizations. Indeed, it holds the potential to add an interesting angle to existing research which has often confined itself to the study of actual manifestations of 'micro-resistance'. For example are workers' notions of what they would otherwise do also governed by technologies of power? Do women reproduce the devaluing assumptions that perpetuate their subordination to male power even as they conceive of alternative options? Revealing the ways that power constitutes visions of its own alternatives within people's minds and the ways that these visions serve to perpetuate and reproduce it could add a new, empirical vigour to critical claims within the context of organizations.⁹

The emic 'otherwise', it nevertheless seems, is also the site in which critical researchers should look to find that which they apparently long for: a space that refuses to submit. In a world so thoroughly consumed by power, there seems to be no better place to look for the spirit of freedom than in the field of imagined courses of alternative action; the field where hopes and longings engender a sense of what it might be like to be in control of one's life. The emic 'otherwise', in other words, seems like a critical site in which to examine questions related to resistance.

In this regard, consider, for example, Kunda's (1992) *Engineering Culture*, an ethnographic study of the practice and consequence of normative control in a high-tech corporation. According to the book, the experience of everyday life in this corporation was accompanied by images of disassociation, alternative pure and sane lives, and affluent leisure in some other times and places. In a context where power took the form of attempts to bind employees' hearts and minds to the organizationally prescribed role, 'hope and memory offer a fantasy of limits to involvement' (p. 165). 'Otherwise' thus concerned finding a way to secure a sense of personal space that is not consumed by one's commitment to the expanded formal role. As this 'otherwise' did not gravely challenge organizational power and even re-affirmed it by taking the shape of a fantasy or a dream, the Foucaultians might have been right in seeing the two as inseparable. Yet, still, this 'otherwise' was experienced as distinct from power, and thus, according to Kunda, enabled members to deal with the obtrusive normative control by securing for themselves a sense of boundary. Here, then, was a site in which alternative discourses and intentions came into play, securing a sense of freedom despite the obtrusive normative control. The space that refuses to submit may do so in ways that seem minor or trivial on the surface but that could amount to a whole lot in people's minds. It thus seems worthy of an emic exploration.

The third and final contribution of the emic 'otherwise' is a practical contribution. While the theories that were reviewed in the first section were characterized by assumptions that echoed the theorists' own ideological and practical agendas, it should be emphasized that replacing these assumptions with explorations of those of the people who are



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

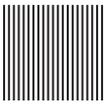
Galit Ailon

studied will not jeopardize the agendas. On the contrary, it seems that all agendas could benefit from such a research strategy. Apparently, critical theorists who wish to change existing constellations of power in organizations have much to gain by furthering the understanding of what the actual *B* wishes for or perceives as possible. Becoming aware of the gap between *B*'s wishes and their own values could help these researchers design more realistic change strategies. Similarly, it seems that managerially oriented organizational theorists also have much to gain from a more in-depth and elaborate analysis of the alternative possibilities that organizations stand up against. Maybe some of the pessimistic apprehensions that characterize their perceptions of what *B* would otherwise do would be alleviated and finally laid to rest. Both types of ideological and normative evaluation may thus benefit if suspended until understanding is developed in a systematic way. Capturing the emic 'otherwise' could help in developing new change strategies for those who have practical goals in mind.

To summarize, examining the emic 'otherwise' entails various contributions. It could help researchers make sense of *B*'s responses to power; unravel some of power's more elusive and covert manifestations as well as its limitations; and, accordingly, clarify new paths of action for divergent practical agendas. The emic 'otherwise', then, constitutes a theoretical and empirical tool for furthering understanding and action.

The question, finally, is how can people's sense of 'otherwise' be explored when so rarely taking on a clear, articulated form? The emic 'otherwise', after all, is an imagined alternative to reality. Even if it is very much alive in the hearts and minds of members, it is likely to be at least partially silenced by and in face of that which brings it to life: power. Nonetheless, though both subjective and silenced, it is and should be treated as an empirical phenomenon: 'otherwise' may never be actualized, may never come to exist, but apparently thoughts about it do. Feelings that concern it do. Dreams do. Even if these elements are not fully articulated, even if they are fleeting and fragmentary, they constitute empirical facts which, as argued, express themselves in and bear upon reality in very actual ways. It thus seems that unravelling the emic 'otherwise' is an empirical project that requires getting close to a subjective world which only elusively, covertly, or indirectly expresses itself.

As a preliminary methodological comment, it should nevertheless be noted that though constituting a great challenge, the emic 'otherwise' is no greater a challenge than those challenges that social scientists routinely deal with. On the face of it, such well researched concepts as 'culture', 'belief', 'interest', 'legitimacy', 'value', 'emotion', to name but a few, all refer to subjective phenomena which are characterized by complex expressions that rarely take on a clear, articulated form. The means of inquiry, in other words, no doubt exist. Beyond this general statement, I will not, within the scope of the paper, go on to outline a detailed methodological strategy for doing so: methodological strategy is after all



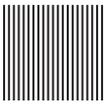
dependent upon theoretical goals and, as illustrated, the emic 'otherwise' could serve a variety of such goals. Any attempt to devise a general procedure would be neither efficient nor justifiable. This paper unravelled the untested assumptions that kept the emic 'otherwise' hidden from view and singled it out as a new site for inquiring into the dynamics of power in organizations. It is hoped that interested researchers—each armed with methodological tools that serve their diverse theoretical interests—will take it from here.

Conclusion

This paper focused on a critical element in conceptualizations of power: the question of 'what *B* would otherwise do.' Many of the differences in the ways that organizational theorists treated power, it has been argued, were linked to what they assumed was the answer to this question. Accordingly, the paper offered a typology of power-perspectives that is based upon the various versions of this assumption. Some organizational theorists, it was shown, assumed that *B* would otherwise do negative things, namely cheat or go astray, integrating these pessimistic possibilities into generalizeable theoretical claims. Other organizational theorists claimed the opposite, assuming that *B* is a revolutionary, a corrector of social justice, or someone who is unjustly held back by existing power structures. The final group of theorists was that of the painfully sober who came to realize power's 'otherwise' isn't necessarily better or worse, nor inherently different than power itself.

Mapping out these different assumptions constitutes the first contribution of this paper. As it runs through theories of organization power, the element of 'otherwise', it was shown, highlights the normative axioms of researchers in the field, introduces a new dimension for distinguishing between them, and adds a critical angle to their longstanding debate about power and resistance. While the paper illustrated all this with regard to a wide range of theories, it was impossible to include within its bounds all streams of thinking on power in organizations. An example of one such evident omission is Actor-Network Theory (ANT) [see *Organization* 6(3) special issue]: an increasingly influential perspective that has Foucaultian roots (Michael 1996: 51). Although its proponents sometimes place disparate emphases in their conceptualization of power,¹⁰ they've added to these roots a rich and quite original body of thought. The element of 'what *B* would otherwise do' could help ANT (and other) researchers both reflect upon and develop these conceptualizations. Indeed it is hoped that such a project would be undertaken in the future.

The diversity of basic assumptions may be a cause for concern for those who are interested in the 'scientific status' of the field. Consensus has been defined as a critical factor in the development of coherent traditions of scientific research and as a prerequisite for a field to mature into 'normal science' (Kuhn, 1970). Such wide disagreements, such disparate images of the subject matter, such miscellaneous points of



What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Galit Ailon

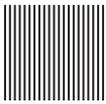
departure as those revealed here may, according to this view, impede progress. One solution to this was offered by Pfeffer (1993) who argued that the 'anything-goes attitude' (p. 616) in the field should be replaced with a commitment to consensus, perhaps one that would be developed and enforced by a comparatively small elite. As far as theories of power are concerned, this strategy seems problematic: what is there to gain by enforcing consensus about a single or even a few fundamental assumptions, if all the assumptions are to a large extent speculative? Moreover, as indicated by this review, the diversity of basic assumptions has in fact given rise to a rich body of thought which offers many insightful and multifaceted contributions to the understanding of power in organizations.

Accordingly, this paper promoted a different strategy for future research about power. Researchers of all streams, it was argued, would have much to gain by suspending their own normatively-based assumptions about what *B* would otherwise do and examining, from the various theoretical view-points, the basic assumptions of the *Bs* themselves. More specifically, some researchers could use the emic 'otherwise' to open up a new theoretical venue for furthering the understanding of power's divergent and at times unintended consequences in terms of shaping *B's* behaviour. Other researchers could use the emic 'otherwise' as an empirical tool with which to illustrate and explore claims about power's all-encompassing elusiveness, as well as a site within which to look for the counter-discourses and intentions that mark power's limits. Finally, the emic 'otherwise' may also help those researchers who wish not only to understand organizations, but also to influence and change them. In all these ways, researchers have only to gain by fine-tuning their theoretical and practical agendas to the actual manifestations of power and its 'otherwise' as lived experiences in organizational life.

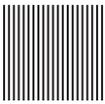
Notes

This paper greatly benefited from the comments and suggestions of Gideon Kunda, Hadas Mandel, and *Organization's* anonymous reviewers. Eyal Ben-Ari, Orly Benjamin, Dafna Izraeli, and Ronit Kark offered valuable inputs and remarks which have also been very helpful. I am thankful to all of them.

- 1 It should be noted that this is not a necessary condition. If a certain boss demands of her worker to do extra hours and the latter agrees and stays, it is unnecessary, according to Dahl's definition, to specifically know if the worker would otherwise have gone home, gone to see a movie, or began reading a new book. If, for example one had an opportunity to observe the worker's behaviour before the demand was issued, establish its transformation after the demand and eliminate alternative explanations, it is possible to be assured, with high probability, that power was at play. Yet such opportunities are rare. Not only does power take much more complex and all encompassing forms than a simple demand, but it is historically and structurally embedded in a way which usually does not give itself to such a simple causal display. Thus, quite often the only way to handle the issue of



- what *B* would not otherwise do is to somehow establish or assume what *B* would otherwise do.
- 2 It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive typology. It seems impossible to encompass all streams of organizational theorizing within a single paper, and thus the focus has been upon a group of theories which seems broad and influential enough to represent general orientations in the field to the issue of power.
 - 3 The orientation of other cultural theorists is consistent with that of this paper and will be referred to in the second section.
 - 4 Note, that while economic theories of organizations integrated the notion of 'bounded-rationality' in their theorization, they generally ascribed it to the *A* (the principal) rather than the *B* (the agent), referring to it as problematic in terms of the formers' ability to ensure that the latter isn't breaking a contract.
 - 5 It should be noted that this distinction broadly correlates with McGregor's (1960) distinction between 'Theory X' and 'Theory Y'. Moreover, while not focusing specifically on the assumption that is examined here nor encompassing all of the streams of theorizing that are discussed, McGregor realized the tension between these two types of theories, and generally sought to solve it by privileging one—the HR oriented 'Theory Y'—over the other. This solution is different from the position adopted here.
 - 6 This, by the way, is true for mainstream organizational theorists in general (Marsden and Townley, 1999: 410). In fact, the belief in the value of bureaucracy became so solid that evidence concerning various weaknesses and malfunctions of bureaucratic organizations were dismissed as 'a failure to bureaucratize properly' (Perrow, 1986) rather than realized as problematic aspects of the model itself.
 - 7 Indeed, even what appears as an alternative or as something that does not correspond to power is eventually explained as contributing to it. See Jon Elster's *Sour Grapes* (1983: Chapter 10, especially pp. 103–5) for a thorough discussion of what he thus calls a 'consequence-explanation'.
 - 8 This sentence should not be taken to imply complete nihilism. As claimed, Foucaultian writers celebrated occasions of resistance. While titling them 'micro' or 'local', they did not disregard them or render them meaningless. On the contrary, even if somewhat skeptical about the prospects of a 'true' revolution, it is precisely the notion of power's 'everywhere' that rendered these occasions so meaningful.
 - 9 Moreover, it may be added that the emic 'otherwise' may not only help researchers appreciate the way that power determines its alternatives, but also the ways that it silences them. By appreciating what organizational members believe that they would otherwise do, researchers could obtain insight into those options that members do not even conceive of, imagine, or consider possible as a consequence of power (Lukes, 1974; see also Frost, 1987 and Hardy, 1985 in this regard) and also into those options that they feel compelled to keep to themselves (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, 1963; Wolfe Morrison and Milliken, 2000).
 - 10 A preliminary exploration of ANT writing in fact revealed conceptualizations of power that are difficult to summarize in a clear-cut and unified manner. Indeed, according to Michael (1996) 'power' is one of the underdeveloped aspects within ANT (p. 59). In a relatively early essay (1986),



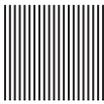
What *B* Would Otherwise Do

Galit Ailon

Bruno Latour, a central contributor to ANT, claimed that the notion of 'power' 'may be used as an effect, but never a cause' (p. 265). Temporarily enrolled through technologies of simplification, agents translate commends in accordance to their own projects, obeying for many different reasons, and, in aggregation, giving an 'illusion' (p. 268) of 'power' to those they obey. This notion marks a very extreme departure from the past: if there is one apparent commonality underlying the diverse ways that the term has been defined it is that of being a cause. Indeed, this seems to be the epistemological origin of the notion of 'otherwise'. Accordingly, Latour ended his essay with the claim that, 'The paper. . . has suggested that the notion of power should be abandoned' (p. 278). This claim has been toned down by later writing. In an edited book titled *The Sociology of Monsters* (1991), John Law reviewed a variety of conceptualizations and strategies of power and stated that 'they are *also* an effect' (p. 170, emphasis added). Indeed, in that same volume Latour wished to rephrase some of the traditional questions of 'the durability of domination of power' (p. 103). He offered the example of the European hotel keys: in order to remind customers that they should leave their room keys at the front desk instead of taking it with them, European hotel managers—disappointed by the outcomes of various means such as sign, inscription, request, etc.—attach a metal weight to them, thus leading their customers to conform to their demand simply 'because they cannot do otherwise' (p. 105). This example seems much more in line with traditional conceptualizations albeit while placing an emphasis on power as a property of a dynamic assemblage of elements involving both humans and nonhumans. Indeed, as the last citation indicates, the notion of 'otherwise' seems crucial to ANT's interest of uncovering the ways through which such heterogeneous assemblages—such sociotechnical networks—come to be stabilized (Michael, 1996: 62; see also Law's (1991) discussion of discretion and strategy). Moreover, since, as Michael Callon (1991) claims, 'technology both creates systems which close off other options and generates novel, unpredictable and indeed previously unthinkable, options,' (p. 132), ANT's unique socio-technical perspective could no doubt contribute to the study of the ways that notions of alternatives are constructed. For further reading see Law and Hassard (1999), Lee and Hassard (1999), Hansen and Mouritsen (1999), Hull (1999) and Munro (1999).

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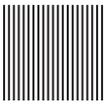
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Organization 13(6)

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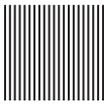
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Galit Ailon

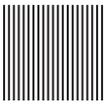
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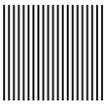
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Galit Ailon

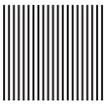
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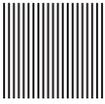
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