THE LEGITIMIZATION OF BUREAUCRATIC PERSONALITY:
AN EXEGESIS OF WEBERIAN THEORY

By
Scott M. Wallace

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Dr. Marshall Johnson, Sociology

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ABSTRACT

The work of Max Weber has increasingly been seen as irrelevant to contemporary concerns within sociological theory. Although lauded as one of the foundational thinkers within the discipline, Weber has become a figure to either be dismissed as promoting archaic theories, or a pessimistic thinker that saw no way out of the ‘iron cage’ of rationalization. The present article establishes an alternative reading of Weber that pays close attention to his materialist understanding of how bureaucratic forms of power become legitimized through their being embodied in the habits of social agents socialized in bureaucratic institutions. A sketch for a future pilot study will also be presented based off of this reading of Weber.

Introduction

When one thinks about bureaucracy today, the most common images that come to peoples’ minds are largely negative: red tape, inefficiency, and lack of human warmth or connection. Bureaucrats become an anonymous group of functionaries whose ultimate purpose is to enforce, when necessary, arbitrary rules and procedures on those who fail to sign a document correctly or who accidently include wrong information on a loan application. The gatekeeper in Franz Kafka’s parable “Before the Law” [1971] offers an illustrative example of the existential and arbitrary effects of bureaucratic administration, where a man of the country is continuously refused entrance into the Law by a gatekeeper. The tragedy of the story lies not in the protagonist’s subsequent death, but in the obedience that the protagonist has towards the gatekeeper and the Law. Is this situation not parallel in our contemporary society to the ritual complaint that people have waiting in line at the department of motor vehicles or applying for health insurance or welfare? Can the absurd amount of paperwork that is featured in Orson Welles’ adaptation of The Trial speak to the experience of filling out the endless amount of forms, waivers, licenses, and notifications that are gradually consuming most of our time?

This paper provided a reconsideration of Weber’s contribution to sociology and argues that Weber, when read closely, provides a framework for understanding how bureaucracies are legitimated in modern society through the development of a bureaucratic personality. We begin by closely examining selections from his oeuvre and show not only how Weber’s discussion of legitimation and bureaucracy highlights his concern and attention towards habits and “settled orientations,” but also how his later writings on politics produce a tension which complicates his analytical sketches of the nature of authority. From this position, we then discuss the subsequent theoretical interpretations of Weber after his death to see how his successors approached the concepts of bureaucracy and social action. By looking at how social theorists interpret previous work, it will be argued that Weber’s theories have been transformed in productive ways to emphasize and further articulate the scope of bureaucratic socialization within contemporary societies. By emphasizing the complex mixture of socialization and contradictions that establish some of the characteristics of bureaucracies, researchers can come to better appreciate the insights of Weber’s perspective. We end this paper by developing an outline of a future study.
that will explore the condition of modern bureaucracies and how they create what David Graeber
describes as “institutional practices that, in turn, define certain horizons of possibility” (Graeber
2015:99) and how they are demonstrated through habits and practices.

WEBER RECONSIDERED

Since humans are by and large the product of their times, social theories by extension are
also subject to being a historical representation of a particular time and place, carrying with its
framework a host of assumptions, prenotions, and conclusions. Though it is sometimes the case
that certain aspects of a theory fall out of favor in light of new evidence exposing its flaws or
correcting for its assumptions, theories—particularly sociological theories in this case—are still
referenced to as a basis for either developing newer conceptual frameworks out of older models
or to further consider the historical foundations of the theory itself. What makes a theory popular
or relevant not only has to do with the perceived scientific and logical rigor that the theory
provides for understanding a particular aspect of the social world, but also has to do with the
scholastic effects of academics being social agents that jostle for more prominent positions
within the university field (field in the Bourdieuan sense; see Bourdieu [1984] 1993). The
reception of social theories in this regard is colored by the scholastic effects of academic debate
and the positional power of scholars within the academic world. If Alan Sica’s article on who
can speak for Weber gives any insight into this dynamic, it at the very least serves as an example
of one of the hidden effects occurring in the creation and articulation of sociological knowledge.

This section has re-considered elements of Weber’s work that emphasized his
understanding of bureaucracies. The historical context of Weber’s work will be briefly discussed
to give an overview as to the concerns and ideas that shaped his writings. Given that he has
discussed throughout his work the importance of understanding “orientations” and “habits,”
Weber’s discussion of bureaucracies and political power will be examined with these concepts in
mind. Contrary to orthodox readings of Weber as a scholar overly concerned with idealist
interpretations, I argue that Weber offers an alternative materialist understanding of capitalism
vis-à-vis Karl Marx by focusing more upon the cultural dimensions of political and social life.
As it will be articulated in the section of social theory after his death, Weber’s writings form a
basis for understanding what Robert Merton described as bureaucratic personalities.

The Historical Context of Weber’s Social Theory

During Weber’s lifetime, Germany was starting to establish itself as a unified nation state
whilst at the same time attempting to constitute itself as an imperial power in relation to its
European neighbors. Chancellor Otto von Bismarck happened to be one of the key figures in
developing a model of the welfare state in the 19th century, a move some scholars had argued
only occurred because of considerable pressure being mounted from socialist and worker party
factions to push for reforms (see Harrington 1970). Germany, along with other European nations
in generating the growth of industrialization, undertook the development of a much respected
postal system that was praised globally for its then-revolutionary efficiency. Derived from
military courier systems, the post office became a stellar example of all the features that bureaucracies have successfully integrated into everyday life (Graeber 2015). What becomes interesting to note was that Weber was rather ambivalent about bureaucracies. Although Weber would not feel threatened by bureaucracies in any serious way, he nonetheless saw that bureaucracies would end up overtaking the social world to the point where “the bureaucracy [becomes] a cold, soulless apparatus, whose mechanical application of the law threatened to stifle life brimming with laws of its own” (Radkau [2005] 2011:323).

Whether or not his perspective of bureaucracies was amplified through mere liberal dismissal of the Prussian ruling class, Weber was more than willing to throw himself into politics. Near the end of his life and during the close of World War One, Weber became actively involved in the establishment of the Weimar Republic to reconstruct a nation after Germany’s defeat at the hands of the Triple Alliance (Radkau [2005] 2011:513). One of his ambitions was to be in charge of selecting leaders to seats in Parliament and to place a provision in the constitution that a parliamentary right of enquiry was to be established in order to keep the secretive nature of bureaucracies in check (Radkau [2005] 2011:512). The issues over the question of political power and bureaucracy will be discussed in the following sections. I argue that Weber’s understanding of bureaucracies interlocks with his analysis of politics and demonstrates that, for Weber, the state in its current form needed the apparatus of a bureaucracy in order to legitimize its power.

*Bureaucracy and Rationalization*

During Weber’s time, capitalism was undergoing increasing technological advances that affected the expansion of communication, transportation as well as increases in the production of material goods. Under the moniker of the Industrial Revolution, capitalism was not only able to drastically increase the amount of wealth being produced, but also introduced new ways to manage working populations within the factories as well as within corporate offices. Noting the expansion of telegraphs, railroads, and other technological advances, Weber was able to observe that the expansion of the state’s power had to be administered efficiently in order for the state to best be able to provide services for its citizens. Within this context, Weber argues that “in the modern state, the increasing demands for administration also rest on the increasing complexity of civilization” (Weber [1922] 1979:972). In order for the state’s power to have an effective reach, this would mean that the state would need to have an effective apparatus that would not only be efficient at managing tasks, but also to be disciplined in such a way that maximizes the efficiency of the apparatus itself. Weber suggested that the framework of bureaucracy provided the greatest means for states to expand their power and influence.

The relation between the power of the state and the establishment of bureaucratic administration can best be seen in the development of the military. Apart from the patterns of military development in older societies, the bureaucratic structure of modern armies “allows for the development of the professional standing armies which are necessary for the constant pacification of large territories as well as for warfare against distant enemies” ([1922] 1979:981).
As Weber noted in his later writings, connecting the role violence plays in the state establishing its legitimacy, it is through the bureaucratic apparatus in which this violence is dispensed in both physical and symbolic forms. The physical aspect of violence is exemplified most obviously through the military and police forces: both in and of themselves thoroughly bureaucratic institutions.

Weber considered that bureaucracies offered a variety of advantages that exhibited a strong appeal to state functionaries and politicians. Their technical superiority in which efficiency, unambiguity, and the separation between the personal and the public domains offered a means for the state to utilize its power most effectively. This assurance in the efficiency of the bureaucratic apparatus stems from the concentration of power within the apparatus itself. Weber saw that one of the characteristics of bureaucracies that could guarantee this assurance were the concentration of the means of administration. Operating outside the realm of public discourse and debate and a jealous keeper of secrets, the means of administration act as an underpinning of the bureaucratic framework where “the abstract regularity of the exercise of authority” ([1922] 1979:983) relies upon hierarchical organization, obedience to the rules and procedures of the office as well as establishing a value neutral space where the business of an office can be conducted without interference from human error.

The rational character of bureaucracies is precisely this character that nullifies everyday intimate interactions and transforms them into impersonal interactions. The establishment of an office position, for instance, is created under the assumption that the person who works in that position is to fulfill all of the required duties of that office (for instance an accountant or a social worker). At the same time, the person in that office position is to also strictly follow the rules and regulations surrounding “professional conduct” and engage in a detached, impersonal manner with the client or customer. In order for these functionaries to be able to carry out their duties in the swiftest means possible, they are obligated to rely more on the “objective” discharge of business based upon calculable and measurable rules: “bureaucracy develops the more perfectly, the more it is ‘dehumanized,’ the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation.” ([1922] 1979:975) Without being able to determine the precision or effect that a business or government agency has, the harder it becomes to determine whether or not a functionary carried out their duties.

In lieu of discussion of physical violence, bureaucracies can also be said to promote a form of symbolic violence on those who work within the apparatus. Weber has argued that bureaucracies tend to transform what he termed as social action into “rationally organized action” where “the individual bureaucrat cannot squirm out of the apparatus into which he has been harnessed […] the professional bureaucrat is chained to his activity in his entire economic and ideological existence” ([1922] 1979:987-988). Committing themselves to fulfill the duties of the office, the individual bureaucrat embodies the rules of his or her official title and the rules of the office into “an attitude set on habitual virtuosity in the mastery of single yet methodically integrated functions” ([1922] 1979:988). Without this reliance upon workers to embody the
provisions of the bureaucratic apparatus into their daily habits, chaos would ensue if the day comes when the bureaucratic apparatus collapses or is destroyed. As capitalist societies become increasingly reliant upon bureaucratic administration, Weber believed it would be difficult to uproot domination embodied in a functionaries’ behavior: it is “the settled orientation of man for observing the accustomed rules and regulations [that] will survive independently” ([1922] 1979:988) of the destroyed documents.

Although bureaucracies are relatively recent phenomena in human societies, Weber saw the potential that the bureaucratic apparatus held for future societies. The main characteristics of bureaucracies—as extension of state power, organized to hierarchical forms of authority and “dehumanization”—leave themselves to ambiguous use, where “the consequences of bureaucracy depend […] upon the direction which the powers using the apparatus give to it” ([1922] 1979:989). In this sense it is quite possible to conceive of bureaucracies as not inherently evil and monolithic social structures but as social structures that have a fluid meaning and purpose depending upon who takes control over the means of administration. Weber hints at this ambiguity within his study on the social psychology of world religions where he argues that “the ‘world images’ that have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest,” (Weber 1946:280) both ideal and material. In the case of bureaucracies, whether it is the material interests of the bureaucrat striving for a better position within the office or the amount of efficiency the bureaucratic apparatus provides political parties or armies, the ‘world images’ that people invest in are in part conditioned by societies that favor bureaucratic administration. In other words, the cultural influence on individual behavior and actions in part predisposes people to accept bureaucracies as a ‘natural’ part of society.

The political character of bureaucracies thus becomes nearly impossible to avoid in spite of the scholarly interest in their rationalizing aspects. Weber presupposed that in order for a bureaucratic apparatus to have any purpose within any society, it needed a strong group of interested parties to use those structures to their advantage. Following this, prestige became a means in which glory can be derived from exerting power over others. For political groups or ambitious functionaries, prestige became a powerful incentive within bureaucracies not only to fulfill the duties of their position more completely, but also perpetuate the social necessity of the bureaucratic apparatus itself. Thus it makes sense to see interests of the state and their functionaries to be mutually bound to one another where both “having vested interests in the political structure tend systematically to cultivate this prestige sentiment” (1946:161).

*The Nature of Political Interest and Domination*

By considering the concentration of power within bureaucracies, Weber was able to demonstrate the convergence of group and personal interests within institutional structures. Although his outline of bureaucracies focused on the structural components of actions occurring within institutions, Weber’s consideration of political interest and domination looked more at the perspective of how social agents become interested in involving themselves within political life.
In his lecture “Politics as a Vocation,” Weber explored further these themes of institutional and personal power to see the potential consequences of the increasing bureaucratization of capitalist society. Beginning with his definition of the state as that “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory,” Weber argues that “politics’ for us means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power” (1946:78). The interests that politicians have in engaging with politics appears, at least formally, no different than achieving higher ranks or positions within any other hierarchical organization.

Within this context, Weber argues that there has been three different forms of domination that have been used as a means of legitimizing powerful groups. Traditional authority has its basis in ancient laws and customs, most often seen societies based upon the rule of a patriarch or prince. What has been called authority by ‘legality’ or bureaucratization is based off of groups obeying written laws and statutes. For the theme of the lecture, Weber focuses more on charismatic authority, which helps to emphasize the notion of taking on politics as a vocation. Weber finds the notion of a charismatic leader that embodies “the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation [and] heroism” (1946:79) can be likened to a secular version of a prophet that is propelled by an inner calling. The adherence to a charismatic leader is not so much in the rational arguments that they can create about their candidacy but in a voting populace’s quasi-religious faith in the leader.

Why does Weber make this assertion that people are more inclined to follow the man of charisma as opposed to the patriarch or bureaucrat? This assertion seems to suggest that charismatic leaders have been especially good at tricking populations into making them leader by selling them the belief that they are able to do divine work within the realm of politics. However, the tendency towards charismatic authority rests in Weber’s argument of the nature of obedience to authority; people are more likely to follow the leader out of hope and fear of the leaders’ “magical powers” that operate as socially grounded powers from which a leader has the ability to persuade through their passion. In other words, legitimization to accepting the organized dominance of one group over others rests primarily upon manipulating peoples’ emotions so that “human conduct can be conditioned to obedience” (1946:80) through symbolic violence. By also playing upon the desire for personal power and material wealth, the organized forms of power within bureaucracies also became legitimized through its indirect appeals to the egotistical dimensions of careerism and personal gain.

Political power is not in the hands per se of what Weber called the plutocracy of those that live for politics, but “power actually rests in the hands of those who, within the organization, handle the work continuously.” (1946:103) Charisma is utilized in this context as a means of jostling for better positions within the political structure of a country. The political parties that engage with politics proper attempt “to woo and organize the masses, and develop the utmost direction and the strictest discipline.” (1946:102) In this sense, Weber is dismissive of career politicians whose primarily desire in achieving power—even if they take on politics as an inward calling—can be dangerous to a populace because his interest in achieving power will likely be
detrimental to his position as a politician. Only the politician who achieves power and wealth independently from their political life would be able to assume the responsibility of his or her position as a civil servant honorably, while respectfully distancing their public position from their private ambitions.

What connections can be made between Weber’s discussion of bureaucracies and of political power? The most obvious connection ought to be a question of power itself. Within modern societies, bureaucracies have become nearly pervasive to the point of our unconsciously accepting their existence. David Graeber (2015) has proposed that the condition of modern societies has transformed into one of “total bureaucratization,” where nearly all aspects of our daily lives are explicitly filled with bureaucratic intervention. Although far from embodying the infamous “iron cage” metaphor, Weber was not far off from this concept with his emphasis on how bureaucracies become widespread once they become part of daily habits and routines. One can only think of Kafka’s critique of the debilitating consequences that routine plays into the life of a functionary in “The Metamorphosis,” where Gregor Samsa awakens one morning to discover that he has turned into a giant insect [1971]. Many critics have derided bureaucracies since Weber’s time in a multitude of forms, be it because of supposed inefficiency and “red tape”, or that functionaries themselves are the representatives of repressive or domineering governments.

As the main organs in which political power functions in contemporary capitalist societies, the question of bureaucracy becomes important when there becomes an imperative to understand the dynamics of power under the guise of neoliberalism. Regardless of the criticism leveled at bureaucratic institutions, it has readily been demonstrated that the power of states and corporations rests upon bureaucratic apparatuses in order to reallocate the global distribution of wealth and power under the guise of free-market interventions and entrepreneurial ingenuity. Thus the sociological question turns into how this massive redistribution of power to the elite classes can become increasingly seen as natural and inevitable when critics of neoliberalism frequently point to the immense social consequences that this redistribution brings.

By re-reading Weber, we can begin to see the complexity of our situation. In the first instance, we now live within the age of bureaucracy. As the many films and books that have lambasted the corporate office attest to, our easy acceptance of the world of professionals shows to some extent how accepted the world of professionals has become to the average citizen. Discussion of developing a ‘professional attitude’ and demeanor have become legitimized as the primary means for aspiring applicants to gain access into potentially long-term careers. Far removed from everyday interactions, the workplace operates under elaborate rules regarding personal conduct in the name of “professionalism” in order to present the ideal image of a business or party to a customer or constituent. Everyday mishaps and slips become cardinal sins within the professional world: a sex scandal or “poorly chosen words” about marginalized groups are enough to induce public shaming and condemnation (not to mention the consequence of being fired).
Perhaps by virtue of living in a social world constantly under surveillance (be it from governments, businesses or individual persons), it comes as no surprise that the maintenance of a public image becomes greater in the face of both public ridicule and government repression. The rationalization of public selves thus becomes the second instance of the pervasiveness of what Robert Merton described as the bureaucratic personality, where “if the bureaucracy is to operate successfully, it must attain a high degree of reliability of behavior, an unusual degree of conformity with prescribed patterns of action” (Merton 1940:562). As it will become apparent in the discussion to follow, bureaucratic personality takes on a unique disciplinary characteristics particularly in contemporary capitalized society with a neoliberal framework.

The present discussion has been focused on finessing out themes within Weber’s work that have been hotly contested in scholarly debate since his time. Whether or not Weber was an apologist for the Weimer Republic or an ardent pessimist about the nature of human societies should not concern us here, but only in the attempt to tarry with Weber’s assumptions and conclusions with a newer perspective. As with any social theorist, Weber himself is as often complex as he is contradictory: some aspects of his work may contain thematic unity, other areas may be more underdeveloped. Though it is right to emphasize that aspects of Weber’s thought have become antiquated for just reasons, this is not to say that Weber is entirely lost to the sands of time. If Alan Sica’s question of “who now speaks for Weber” (Sica 1993) is to be taken seriously, one must review the subsequent academic debate to see who speaks on his behalf. In other words, examining some of the major trends within sociological theory that have been tarrying with Weber becomes paramount in order to understand how the representation of Weber within sociology has often been distorted to serve the purpose of academic politics.

SOCIAL THEORY SINCE WEBER

From the previous section, we have seen that Weber articulated how the bureaucratic institution once installed within a nation state would drastically change how the state wields its power over its subjects. No doubt serving as a starting point for future research, Weber became one of the most celebrated and controversial social scientists within the discipline. The discussion of his work in the academic fields of economics, sociology, and political theory as well as amongst the academic subfields such as the Frankfurt School and Structural Functionalists has helped to color the perception of Weber’s theory in both productive and regressive directions. Being the nature of the discipline, sociologists build upon the theoretical frameworks of past researchers and often refine key points and challenge outdated aspects that the theories addressed in their original context. At the same time though, social theory is not merely a product of deliberate, scientific procedure, but as Bourdieu has highlighted, social theory is also the product of struggles within the academic field. The current section will focus on an intellectual history of Weber’s theory and follow three areas in which there has been a productive refinement and elaboration of the framework that Weber has provided.
The first focuses on the psychological and cognitive underpinnings that bureaucracies have on society at large and addresses an aspect that Weber did not fully explore or adequately consider: if bureaucracies are all powerful institutions and have a profound effect on how people interact with each other and in society, how are people compelled to follow the rules and norms of institutions without being directly coerced? What compels social agents to become part of the system which imposes strict boundaries of etiquette and conduct? The collaborative work of Gerth and Mills (1953) and Merton (1940) will be examined to show how they have utilized Weber’s concerns about the nature of the bureaucratic personality into their respective research. There will also be a brief exploration into Bourdieu’s concept of habitus as well as insights from studies in embodied cognition to see how the social world acts upon the body.

The second section focuses upon what Erik Olin Wright has described as contradictory class locations to understand the contradictory powers of the bureaucrat. This section argues that Weber saw that although class relations exert power, he departs from a Marxist interpretation and hints that bureaucrats, being members of social structures that are hierarchical have a limited range of power to enact upon. Three different situations are presented below in which bureaucrats can be considered to occupy contradictory locations within contemporary capitalist structures.

Finally, we discuss the relevance of bureaucracy within contemporary society by concurring with David Graeber’s assertion that “bureaucratic practices, habits, and sensibilities engulf us” (Graeber 2015:44) and argue that social theorists after Weber have followed his lead in understanding the spread and prevalence of bureaucracy. I connect the studies done by Ritzer (2008) and Ventura (2012) to show how the expansion of bureaucracy has occurred in spite of criticism levied against it as the arm of sluggish government action. Further, an understanding of the current situation regarding bureaucracies can also help shed light on the continued persistence of neoliberalism-inspired public and economic policies that are gradually becoming the new normal.

*The Cognitive Grounding of Bureaucratic Personalities*

Although Weber described the structural circumstances of bureaucracy, his study did not fully explore how and why social agents not only choose to work within bureaucratic structures, but also how bureaucracies embed themselves within the psyche of social agents themselves. To some extent, Merton elaborates on Weber’s position by arguing that “the bureaucratic structure exerts a constant pressure upon the official to be ‘methodical, prudent, disciplined,’” in all of their conduct and to obey the written and spoken rules (Merton 1940:562). Discipline becomes inherent within the bureaucratic structure and is turned into “an immediate value in the life-organization of the bureaucrat” (1940:563). Affecting the very composure of the functionaries who work within a bureaucratic organization, the interests of functionaries are directed towards organizations with the incentives of guaranteed employment, promotion within the ranks and pensions enticing functionaries to continue within the organization. Merton emphasizes the structural foundations for vested interests by further arguing that because of the way bureaucratic
structures are cognitively structured within the organizations in which they are present, the structural circumstances are able to level off social differences to achieve a homogenous social experience for those who operate within the bureaucracy: “Functionaries have the sense of a common destiny for all those who work together,” (1940:564) in which vested interests become part of the bureaucratic culture.

In their study on the psychology of social institutions, Gerth and Mills (1953) continue Merton’s thread of understanding bureaucracies and establish a general theory as to how a social agent’s dispositions are developed within the context of social structures. They argue that the institutional contexts of the development of character are important to understand since “people are socially trained to enact the roles of the institution,” where “impulse and sensitivity are channeled and transformed into standard motives joined to standard goals and gratifications. Thus, institutions imprint their stamps upon the individual, modifying his external conduct as well as his inner life” (1953:173). This internalization of the social structure has an effect on how persons engage not only within institutional settings but also within their private lives.

The development of the bureaucratic personality thus becomes not only a relationship built upon by force and social pressure from outside a social agent, but it also becomes an active cognitive implementation within a social situation that the social agent finds themselves in. Although Weber seems to have left open discussion of the mechanisms as to how a bureaucratic organization compels social agents to become members, previous research appears to indicate that it is primarily due to a form of psychological and cognitive perception of organizations and institutions that offers the best indication as to how people accept the social necessity of bureaucracies. Due to their being integrated into the overall structures of nation-states, one can argue that the impetus to integrate persons into institutional frameworks shares the same concern that nation-states have in integrating subjects into their territories as citizens or subjects of a given nation-state. In other words, bureaucratic socialization is thus a political socialization in which the prevailing characteristics of a given nation-state are socialized into subjects.

This socialization is actively undertaken both actively and unconsciously (in the sense that the social world is taken for granted). Seeing bureaucracy not only as a political relationship but also as a symbolic relationship, Bourdieu argued that adherence to the existing social order is based upon a tacit agreement between the development of cognitive structures as “dispositions of the body” that have an individual and collective history, as well as the objective structures in which cognitive structures apply themselves to (Bourdieu 1994:14). The problem for understanding the embedded nature of bureaucratic personality for Bourdieu “is rooted in the immediate, pre-reflexive, agreement between objective structures and embodied structures, now turned unconscious” (1994:14), a seemingly spontaneous relationship of legitimization between a social agent and the social world. This pre-reflexive basis for accepting the social world (and to social institutions by extension) as legitimate lays doubly within the pre-existing arrangements of institutions that favor certain forms of cultural, social and economic capital over others in which it can be seen that “the primary experience of the world of common sense, is a politically produced relation” (1994:15), and the social agent adjusting their orientation to certain
institutions and lifestyles based upon what the social agent is disposed to see as within reach of their abilities and talents.

Bourdieu has explored elsewhere the tension of how socialization inhabits itself in the body through his notion of habitus, a system of cognitive and motivating structures constituted through practices and existing for all social agents (Bourdieu [1972] 1977), that seeks to position agents of a given society or group in accordance to “the socially structured situation in which the agent’s interests are defined, and with them the objective functions and subjective motivations of their practices” ([1972] 1977:76). Because of the habitual nature of dispositions—such that they are deployed reflexively without conscious insight into their origins—changes are unlikely to occur in thought and behavior, unless one becomes removed from the familiar—where the social agent “feels at home in the world because the world is also in him” (Bourdieu [1997] 2000:143)—either by consciously participating in a different social environment or is forced to experience a disruption in ones’ routines by some external occurrence such as war or eviction from a foreclosed home.

Connecting back to our discussion of bureaucratic personality, those who are most inclined to implicitly navigate the rules and boundaries of a bureaucratic institution are most likely to succeed within those institutions, especially if they develop the cognitive tools to perceive that affords them to perceive the rules and boundaries of the organizations. As Bourdieu has asserted, habitus—experienced in relation to social structures from which they are the product—“tend to produce sets of actions which, without any need for deliberate conspiracy or coordination, are roughly attuned to each other and in accordance with the interests of the agents concerned” (Bourdieu [1997] 2000:145). Alva Nöe, in reference to baseball, parallels Bourdieu’s understanding of embodiment and argues that “to learn the game is to learn, among other things, to perceive these events, to notice” the events that take place within the game and “also to learn to take interest in occurrences such as these” (Nöe 2012:141). Whether one calls the process of socialization habitus or a form of distributed cognition, social structures and institution have a powerful effect upon how social agents constitute themselves within those structures where “cultural practices shape active sensing and ways of seeing the world by highlighting what to attend to and to what to see when so attending” (Hutchins 2011:441).

Another approach would be to understand the effects of cognitive misery in relation to the durability of bureaucratic personalities. As a psychological phenomenon that favors impulsive judgment and categorization based upon existing heuristics and prenotions, cognitive misery is a way for the brain to conserve energy processing information and stimuli that would otherwise take up more cognitive real estate in order to make better judgments (Ebenbach and Keltner 1998:7). Given that the characteristics of bureaucracies favor efficiency, impersonal relationships and predictability, it would come as no surprise if a neurological desire for engaging in cognitive misery is amplified when social agents are working or living within a bureaucratic environment that actively encourages it.
Although the limitations of Weber’s time prevented a deeper understanding of psychological and neurological motivations, it is clear that Weber was at least partially aware of the underlying social effects of cognition. Given his interest in understanding the social psychological underpinnings of religious beliefs and sentiments, Weber showed that religion was an inherently cognitive response “towards something in the actual world which is experienced as specifically ‘senseless’” (Weber 1946:281). Moreover, Weber subtly indicates that institutions do not always have to violently impose themselves upon social agents (for which Weber was always critical of Marxists and ‘Bakuninism’ for asserting) but are able to orient their practices largely through symbolic identification and transforming “world images” into habits.

Contradictory Locations of Bureaucrats

Although functionaries and bureaucrats occupy more privileged positions within the class structure of capitalist societies, their positions within those structures is arguably contradictory. In this context, the contradiction lies in the relative power that the functionary or bureaucrat has over others. On the one hand, functionaries are able to act as the gatekeeper to the public in pursuit of their needs1 who can either allow or deny those needs, and on the other hand are constrained by the codes of conduct and specific policies of the organization they work for. Further, the power of the individual bureaucrat is also limited primarily since most functionaries do not own the means of production nor the means of administration. From a political perspective, this is vital for an understanding of the political power of bureaucratic structures because of, as Weber had made apparent, their continuous handling of the daily onslaught of paperwork and management of documents. This section outlines some of the ways in which bureaucrats occupy their contradictory position within capitalist structures by first addressing Erik Olin Wrights’ development of the concept of contradictory class locations and how it relates to Weber’s analysis of bureaucracies. Following this, I have offered three distinct propositions of contradictions in the position of bureaucrats within a capitalist social structure. Bureaucrats exist in contradictory class positions because 1) they do not own the means of production or administration, 2) the scope of a bureaucrats’ power is contingent on the power of the political apparatus that supports it, and 3) the more prominent a bureaucrat becomes within a bureaucratic structure, the more their private lives become subject to public scrutiny. These propositions provide an analytical sketch as a means to understand how those contradictory locations are mutually linked with the embodied aspects of bureaucratic personalities, where the development of bureaucratic dispositions is partially conditioned by the social situation from which it arises.

In his critique of Nicols Poulantzas’s work, Erik Olin Wright (1979) addressed the problem of contradictory class locations in relation to the Marxist problematic of understanding the dynamics of the class structures within capitalist societies. For Wright, it is vital to get an

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1 This is dependent upon the type of organization that an ordinary person is interacting with. There is a different context if the service that the person is trying to access is provided by the government (Department of Motor Vehicles, the courts, the post office), jobs that have both public and private interests (schools, the medical professions) and the service industry (restaurants, record stores, or coffee shops).
accurate picture of class structures because of its contribution to understanding class struggle and social change (Wright 1979:30). Wright found fault with Poulantzas’s criteria for class boundaries that relied upon a rigged categorization of particular class positions such as proletariat and bourgeoisie. For Wright, Poulantzas seemed to argue that one could not occupy a contradictory position within the class structure without being defined as either bourgeoisie or proletariat, a point that Wright distinguishes in his example of the manager (1979:59-60). Wright argued that class positions are objectively ambiguous, particularly when occupations that exist between class positions are studied. The contradictory positions that Wright identified are indicative of the contradictions within capitalist class relations themselves: occupying key spaces in between different class boundaries, certain positions within the capitalist class structure are said to be contradictory because of their ambiguous blurring of different class groups.

Wright gives the examples of the managerial classes and foreman in factories as occupying contradictory locations. Both are assigned the duties of overseeing other workers and have, to some extent, control over the production process. As bureaucratic means of organizing labor and discipline enter into the picture, the power that managers and foreman wield over lower ranking workers is institutionalized through a set of impersonal rules and regulations (1979:79). Foremen are taken off the floor away from other workers where they perform a more impersonal role. Although the managerial class has managed to amass power over their workers through the control of wages and the potential for suppressing worker unrest, the managerial classes themselves are not directly involved with the production process. Technocrats and middle managers also occupy contradictory positions due to their having limited autonomy within their own positions while at the same time having a degree of control over their subordinates (Wright argues that the middle managers have more power over subordinates to their being closer to the labor process).

Although Wright has critiqued his own concept elsewhere (1985), the concept of contradictory locations is productive for the purposes of this study for several reasons. First, the concept attempts to articulate the gap between different class groups and complicates an understanding of class structures in general. Classes are not completely homogenous groups that have their own distinct set of values and positions against other class groups but have some features that intermix and overlap one another, to the extent that they become contradictory. Wright has some parallel with Dahrendorf’s discussion of the “internal differentiation of the ruling class” where “the very nature of the bureaucratic organization makes everybody feel that although some are ‘below’ him, there are also others ‘above,’ so that he is ‘in the middle’” (Dahrendorf 1959:298). Second, by emphasizing the spatial aspect of class in the term ‘location,’ Wright is closer to Weber who asserts that classes are non-social ‘situations’ that allow for the possibility of reading the position of bureaucrats as contradictory (see Weber 1978 and Gane 2005). The positional aspect of contradictory class locations emphasizes the occupations that exist in between class groups where social agents have conflicting motivations and interests.

In order to understand how bureaucrats can be thought of occupying contradictory locations within the class structure of capitalist societies, the three propositions offered below
each focus on a particular contradiction. With each proposition, we will then tie the conversation back to Weber’s discussion of bureaucracies to highlight how his understanding of bureaucratic institutions can be relevant for contemporary studies.

**Proposition 1:** Bureaucrats and functionaries, while being part of the managerial class, do not own the means of production to become capitalists, nor do they own the means of administration.

As the work of Wright has demonstrated above, the position that bureaucrats occupy within class structures is important to understand in order to consider their relation to the reproduction of class boundaries. Occupations such as management are situated within a unique position in class structures; although they occupy a structural position that affords them more power and resources vis-à-vis their fellow workers below them, they at the same time are not the owners of corporations or are the head of governments. Although Wright is correct that bureaucrats have elements of both the ruling and working classes embodied in their actions and perceptions, it can also be argued that bureaucrats (or what is also often called the professional class) are not strictly speaking members of a middle class position.

An example of this would be workers in the social services sector, such as social workers, doctors and nurses, and teachers. Each of these occupations entails some form of administrative work in the sense of reviewing cases, administering evaluations, and conducting annual peer reviews. These occupations also have a high level of interaction with the public as part of their duties, whether that interaction is teaching or working with clients on gaining access to medical care. At the same time, many of these workers are not in charge of the businesses or government offices that they work for. Although teachers, for instance, are generally left in charge to design the structure of their courses, what sort of reading material should be considered for discussion, how the classroom is to be arranged, and so on, they are also subjected to periodical performance evaluations and assessments from both their colleagues and their students, as well as having their course material be approved by other faculty and staff. Similarly, doctors who constantly oversee patients in order to determine which medication or treatment may work best for them are also limited to what they can do for patients by medical and hospital regulations, as well as legal contracts that prohibit them from disclosing private information. From a bureaucratic perspective, this is seen to ensure accountability for workers within bureaucratic institutions while at the same time limiting the scope of what functionaries can provide.

**Proposition 2:** The reach of power that bureaucrats possess is conditional upon the stability and political orientation of the leadership structure in bureaucratic organizations.

Weber argues that bureaucrats occupy a position within capitalist class structures that affords them to be the foundational basis for the state’s power, bureaucrats are at the same time powerless in the sense that the nature of their occupation makes them a conduit for the development of policies and laws by politicians and owners. Weber is right to emphasize that the “social position of the official” is contingent upon a host of economic and political factors that “the bureaucratic structure can hardly avoid undergoing substantial internal changes, or indeed
transformation into another structure” (Weber [1922] 1979:964) when those factors are absent. In this sense, bureaucratic structures owe their existence to a particular form of objective structural arrangements that provide the basis for the establishment of financial (ex. tenure and salaries) and social incentives (as in status and job title). These factors however are primarily instigated outside of the scope of individual functionaries within bureaucracies.

What a bureaucracy is able to do is at the outset limited by federal (and sometimes international) regulations that are set in place to insure that a particular bureaucratic institution accomplishes the duties it has been designed to fulfill. This can be seen in extra-governmental organizations such as the postal service or Internal Revenue Service, to name some American examples: both organizations were created by the federal government in order to fulfill a certain set of tasks that have been deemed a necessity for the functioning of the state (whether it is the distribution of mail and packages or the collection of taxes). The scope of those organizations’ power and reach are dependent upon the scope of the state, which in turn are due to, as Weber argued, the increasing complexity of societies ([1922] 1979:972). Federal regulations and laws are set in place to give further definition to what those organizations are able to accomplish and are given a legally based form for accountability.

However, federal laws and regulations are largely dependent upon the political climate in which they are produced. Whether this involves the allocation of a national budget to different sectors of government or debating the impact of different social institutions upon the general welfare, bureaucrats can only do so much within their organizational structures to influence or change policies that may or may not be beneficial to society. There are exceptions to this rule, however. The rise of political action committees within the United States as well unions are quite often bureaucratic institutions that are designed to engage more explicitly with politics.

Proposition 3: Bureaucrats are considered public representatives of their organizations, which undermines and/or downplays the private lives of bureaucrat.

Perhaps the strongest contradiction of bureaucracies have is the contradiction that deals with their attitudes towards secrecy. Partially due to the way bureaucracies are structured as objective institutions, Weber notes that “bureaucratic administration always tend to exclude the public, to hide its knowledge and action from criticism” (Weber [1922] 1979:992) as a safeguard for a bureaucracies’ political and financial interests. As one of the methods in which bureaucracies are able to establish its legitimacy, secrecy also has an interesting effect upon the workers inside of bureaucratic institutions. Given that bureaucracies rely upon hierarchical relationships in order to maximize efficiency, bureaucracies also tend to use secrecy as a form of disciplining workers. As Merton has readily pointed out, any instance of negating the impersonal character of bureaucracies to the point where officials become embarrassed “from the introduction of inappropriate attitudes and relationships” (Merton 1940:567) becomes a cardinal sin. By necessity, the personal lives of functionaries becomes increasingly scrutinized in case of perceived offenses against an organization. Secrecy becomes a one way street where rules are
established to maintain secrecy for the office while at the same time a worker’s privacy is no longer relevant when the functioning of the office is at stake.

Closely related to a bureaucracy’s tendency towards secrecy is also its stance towards impropriety. Since “improper” relationships run afoul of the bureaucratic rules of impersonality and impartiality when conducting either business deals or providing services to the public, being singled out for an appearance of impropriety can be a bureaucrat’s greatest nightmare. In cases such as separating pension investments from political influence (see Ross 2014), stigmatizing impropriety insures to some extent fairness when handling sensitive material or highly valuable relationships (be it an important business partnership or contract, or maintaining a “business-like” atmosphere). Social service sector jobs such as teaching are especially scrutinized for improprieties, whether it involves the collusion of teacher and pupil in cheating on homework assignments, interactions outside of the classroom that could be interpreted as “improper”, or teachers and administrators trading favors.

Needless to say, the class position of bureaucrats has not always been of a middle class, bourgeois background, but has also been seen on the edge between the middle and working classes. The daily experiences of restaurant servers and gas station cashiers attest to the bureaucratization of the service industry, where there becomes in an increased emphasis on producing uniformity among co-workers and predictable results while at the same time aggressively policing workers for infractions on appearance, speech or time off the clock (see Levison 2003 for an entertaining account). Understanding the relationship between bureaucrats and the class structure becomes an important factor for understanding the contradictions in capitalism that neoliberalism amplifies. Far from destroying the pesky “red tape” that bureaucracies are said to generate, neoliberalism as an expression of the reorientation of class power to elites must by necessity rely upon the state apparatus—and by extension bureaucracies—to embed the market virtues of privatization, individualism and competition through the state’s physical intervention (see Harvey 2005).

Total Bureaucratization? The Case for Weber

David Graeber’s recent collection of essays argues that contemporary society is now thoroughly bureaucratic. Why is this so? What are the social and political consequences of contemporary societies becoming bureaucratic? Are there alternatives to bureaucratizing? To elaborate on Graeber’s work, this section emphasizes particular examples of how contemporary capitalist societies have become saturated with the bureaucratic mentality. First, we will examine Graeber’s position that argues bureaucratic arrangements are a form of structural violence initiated by state and corporate power. We will then address Foucault ([1975] 1977), Ritzer (2008), and Ventura’s (2012) work on the prison systems of European societies, fast food chains, and American culture respectively are prime examples of bureaucratic models. Finally, we will address how alternatives to bureaucratic arrangements must take into consideration the durability of dispositions and interests of both social agents and societies at large.
In his recent work, Graeber has argued that bureaucracies are rarely discussed seriously in contemporary debates due in large part to the fact that we have long been accustomed to bureaucracies themselves. In the American perspective of bureaucracies, Graeber notes that critics from the Right have consistently bashed away at bureaucrats for being “the ultimate example of good intentions run amok” (Graeber 2015:8), that is, government officials who were tasked to organize information and resources would ultimately create a power-bloc that would become increasingly difficult to dislodge and by extension establish the potential basis for fascism to occur (2015:8). Therefore, the increasing argument from the Right has been in favor of laissez faire attitudes towards governmental programs that closely mimic how the market has been constructed.

Graeber also sees that the economic transformation beginning around 1971 when the United States dollar moved off of the gold standard—the beginnings of neoliberalism—also ushered in a cultural shift “whereby the bureaucratic techniques […] developed in financial and corporate sectors came to invade the rest of society—education, science, government—and eventually pervade almost every aspect of daily life” (2015:21). Similar to the case David Harvey argued (see Harvey 2005), Graeber sees that the use of bureaucratic logic developed in the private sector have been utilized rather effectively by national governments as a way of disciplining the populace through further developing “a system of increasingly arbitrary extractions” (Graeber 2015:24) of wealth and political power. “Globalization” subsequently became the new buzzword in capitalist societies during the 1990’s, which also happened to be the time when the last bastions of the Soviet Union collapsed and a steady increase of neoliberal policies gaining their foothold in such policies as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the expansion of “the free market.” Graeber asserts that it took the 1999 protests in Seattle against the IMF/World Bank global trade meetings to make others aware that the bureaucratization of society is the incorporated structural violence of the state inhabiting itself in bodies, where “the imposition of impersonal rules and regulations” (2015:32) is legitimized through force (such as the presence of militarized police at a protest against capitalism).

Although Graeber provides a sketch of the utopian characteristics of bureaucracies, other social theorists have developed critiques that orient themselves closely to Graeber’s work yet at the same time explore different facets of bureaucracies. If one thing that can be gained from Foucault’s writings on the history of European prison systems (Foucault [1975] 1977) is that a general trend in that history is a hyper-focus on what Foucault termed both a “political technology of the body” and a “micro-physics of power” in which a new prison system born out of humanist sentiments for rehabilitating criminals through correct training helped develop “the carceral texture of society [that] assures both the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation” ([1975] 1977:304). The punishment of criminals, Foucault argued, shifted from direct retributions of sovereign powers to a more impersonal punishment that focuses more on rendering people docile. Foucault notes that the change in perceptions towards crime and punishment also reached other social areas in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially schools and the military.
Another parallel can be seen in Ritzer’s work on the global spread of the fast food industry of what he has termed “McDonaldization,” where the mechanisms of globalization are utilized by a particular form of capitalist expansion that carries with it the trappings of bureaucracies. Noting the connection between the expansionist efforts of corporations and their usage of predominant cultural and social symbols and trends, Ritzer argues that corporations like McDonalds have come to embody and shape the ethos of contemporary lifestyles that subtly promote a bureaucratic logic favoring efficacy, predictability, and control (Ritzer 2008:13). With the structural changes in economic and labor conditions, McDonaldization tends to cater to a workforce that relies more on precarious work hours, favors convenience over food quality, and subtly increases the desire for efficiency and predictability in other areas of social life outside of work. The social consequences of McDonaldization—of which Ritzer articulated as the “irrationality of rationality,”—contradictorily result in higher costs, homogenized food products, environmental and health hazards, and the dehumanization of labor despite the perceived benefits that rationalization has been said to bring to society. (2008:141).

Looking at the broader impact that neoliberalism has had on American culture, Patricia Ventura articulates that neoliberalism is a “structure of feeling” where “the omnipresence of a market rationality that makes the ideology of consumer choice to be the essence of freedom and encourages us to see ourselves as atomized individuals who alone are the source of our successes and or the blame for our failures” (Ventura 2012:14). Examining cultural products such as the Oprah Book Club and Wal-Mart, Ventura asserts that much of the cultural trends and artifacts that became popular developed coincidently with the embedding of neoliberal (and bureaucratic) logic into everyday lives. The mobilization of family values further highlights the persistent rationalization of everyday life where even the most intimate of bonds becomes the Petri dish of embedding neoliberal values. One can argue by extension that bureaucratic personalities are pre-figured within family relationships, and serve as the primary socialization that further solidifies dispositions.

What would have the Weberian insight been about today’s form of bureaucratization? From Weber’s understanding, society would become rationalized to the point where, almost like a black hole, almost no one would be able to escape its far reaching and penetrating scope. Being described elsewhere as the “Iron Cage,” society becomes “bound to the production which today determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism” (Weber [1905] 1958:181) and the lives of people become increasingly monotonous and grey. As it has been seen in his emphasis on habits and orientation, Weber does not foreclose the possibility for social change to occur within bureaucratic societies. Although some of his predictions about the expansion of bureaucratic logic into everyday life has come to pass—especially when considering the expansion of neoliberalism—Weber gave no indication as to what different social arrangements could look like except to caution researchers (especially Marxists) to not overlook the embodied nature of bureaucratic socialization.

In the context of contemporary capitalist societies, bureaucracies are not so much the relics of irrelevant political systems or oppressive state apparatuses, they are the predominant
political logic embodying and possessing the social body. As Bourdieu has described, the social agent know his situation “too well, without objectifying distance,” and takes the situation “for granted, precisely because […] he inhabits it like a garment [un habit] or a familiar habit” (Bourdieu [1997] 2000: 142-143). Current research into the social consequences of neoliberal expansion have shown that the imposition of a particular form of cultural logic has by and large served as the bludgeoning tool in which class power is restored to members of the ruling classes (see Ho 2009; Dardot and Laval 2013; Giroux 2014; Brown 2015). The cultivation of bureaucratic personalities legitimized through moral populist sentiments can be seen as the creation of homo neoliberal, an individual disposed to an era of mass inequality and precarity amplified through the privatization of the commons. Utilizing what Weber has often referred to as interpretive sociology, it must become the task of the researcher to gather a nuanced understanding of modern bureaucratic society in order to look for ways out of the iron cage.

**Sketches of the Modern Bureaucrat: Towards A Pilot Study**

Taking on Graeber’s assertion that a contemporary critique of bureaucracy is needed in order to better understand our situation within contemporary capitalist societies, I propose a future study that would further explore the role of bureaucracies today, specifically in relation to the question of how bureaucracies become legitimized through socialization processes. My interests are twofold: first, I am concerned with how social structures and cognitive structures act upon each other and how people become social agents in this regard. As the work of Bourdieu has readily shown, more attention needs to be devoted to how social agents’ practices are defined by both society at large and the dispositions and interests that agents invest in them. Secondly, the political dimensions of socialization must also be explored. Given that social agents are “citizens” and “subjects” to states and governments as well as “customers” and “consumers” to businesses, social agents are at the same time politicized subjects embedded in a web of legal, political and culturally bound spheres of influence. The implication for understanding the scope of bureaucracies in today’s society would be to understand the reach of neoliberalist philosophy itself. As a set of ideas and practices that center on the promotion of limited governments, aggressive austerity measures towards debtors and the privatization of the commons, neoliberalist policies and philosophies are dangerous to those who are the most likely to be harmed through the cutting of or privatization of public and social services to their ever increasing detriment.

This section provided the basis for a future pilot study on how bureaucratic personalities become legitimized through different social institutions. The strongest methods for assessing how bureaucratic personalities are legitimized would be through a combination of ethnography and discursive analysis in order to grasp the extent of legitimacy as well as the variety of ways in which bureaucratic personalities are put into practice. To serve this purpose, a comparative analysis of different social institutions would be needed to measure how the variability between employee assessment, the job interview process, social interaction within the workplace and other relevant phenomena. We will briefly discuss the scope of the potential research methods to be deployed as well as their possible limitations.
Ethnographies and interviews have several advantages over other methods favored by social scientists, primarily for their cataloging of lived experiences with as much proximity and accuracy as possible. By bracketing the objectivist point of view that does not take into consideration a social agent’s understanding of their situation, ethnographies offer a richer insight into seeing patterns within people’s motivations and reasoning that cannot simply be deduced from controlled lab experiments or observing statistical data. As the work of Jay McLeod ([1987] 2008), Karen Ho (2009) and Philippe Bourgois ([1996] 2003) have shown, is that ethnographies can be powerful tools to understand the nuances of physical and symbolic domination in contemporary societies as well as the complexity of social agent’s actions within different institutions and social fields. However, one runs the risk of losing the scientific objectivity that keeps both the researcher and informants in check once the personal lives of both interested parties become too intertwined with each other.

As a potential extension of Ho’s ethnography of Wall Street and financial traders, a future study of bureaucracies could include an in-depth analysis of the symbolism and cultural capital that are utilized within corporate offices, be it Google or McDonalds, or within the public domain such as universities, hospitals and city councils. Since institutions are often marked by a comparative set of cultural practices that define not only the ethos of an institution but the ethos of their workers as well, understanding what sorts of symbols are used within those workplaces can reveal to some extent what kind of bureaucratic logic is predominant. For instance, motivational posters, office and desk decorations, and spatial layouts of individual offices bely subtle forms of power, interests, motivations and knowledge of the social agents who possess them. The interaction between co-workers and bosses, human resource interviewers and potential employees could reveal what expectations and cultural capital are being rewarded and legitimized (whether a potential interviewer has a firm handshake, a clean business suit, etc.) or are excluded from an office, be it public or private.

Conclusion

Although this paper has ambitions beyond the circumstances provided here, it is hopeful that this paper would serve as the embryonic beginnings of the pilot study briefly described above. Depending upon different social contexts and shared perceptions, social theory will remain relevant to the study of the social world, whether social theory is derived from the “classics” to its post-modernist or symbolic interactionist branches. For the near foreseeable future, Weber will continue to provide substantial insight into how modern societies are shaped by its institutions and to suggest alternative forms of development that could suggest ways out of the iron cage for good.

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