*Krackhardt, David
1993 "Organizational Aspects of Turkey's Mass Media Family Planning
Campaign." In T. E. Becker & E. M. Rogers (eds.), Organizational Aspect of
Health Communication Campaigns: What Works. Newbury Park, CA: Sage
Publications, Inc. 93-100.

Organizational Aspects of Turkey's Mass Media Family Planning Campaign

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One of the perplexing problems in the study of organizations is the definition of what an organization is—more specifically, what the boundaries of an organization are (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Scott, 1981). For example, are members of the board of directors of a publicly held company members of the organization? Are volunteer workers at a hospital members of the hospital? If a large conglomerate buys 51% of a smaller firm, are the small firm's employees members of the large conglomerate? What if the conglomerate buys 49% of the firm? Some theorists have argued that an organization is an inherently open system, interacting with, and an integral part of, a bounded environment (Scott, 1987, pp. 161-163). Membership in such a system is not limited to the list of remunerated employees but rather should be extended to include the field of individuals who transact business with the firm, including suppliers and customers.

This problem has been exacerbated with the recent advance of two forms of organization, the industrial cooperative, such as the powerful *kigyo shudan* in Japan (Biggart & Hamilton, 1990), and international conglomerates. Both of these forms are present in the Turkish case study that I comment on here. The case study is an account of a cooperative effort by five distinct organizations, each with a different mission and constituency, to educate and influence the general public of Turkey about contraceptive practices. The five organizations

represent a spectrum of interests and organizational forms. One is a
U.S. educational institution; the other four are Turkish. Three are pub-
licly financed; two are privately funded. One is a for-profit firm; four
are nonprofit organizations. Although actual sizes are not given, I
infer from the descriptions that they range in size from a very large
bureaucracy (the Turkish Ministry of Health and Social Assistance) to
a relatively small group of academics (Johns Hopkins University's
Population Communication Services). Despite these pronounced dif-
ferences, the five organizations managed to put together an appar-
ently highly successful campaign.

The boundaries of organizations are often ambiguous. This vague-
ness is particularly evident in the present study. Organizational the-
ory most often speaks at one of two levels: Either the theory relates
the attributes of the individual organization to a set of outcomes, or
it looks at a market of organizations and predicts a set of outcomes for
this larger set of entities. What we face in the Turkish case is a single
outcome for a set of five organizations acting in concert, almost as if
they were part of the same entity. Such collaboration is becoming
more common, as consortia, cooperatives, and international firms
emerge in a global political and economic community.

I will proceed by treating the five organizations as if they were one
organization, loosely speaking. The campaign that brought them to-
gether makes them a temporary organization at best, but nonetheless
for our purposes here the five organizations act together in ways con-
sistent with many types of organizations. Although this assumption
of unity may be shaky, it permits connections to organization theory
that are useful to the present analysis.

Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) proposed the first systematic theory
relating differentiated parts of an organization to a diverse environ-
ment. Their theory is particularly illustrative here. According to Law-
rence and Lorsch, organizations are made up of subunits that are
often quite different in structure, makeup of personnel, and orienta-
tion of managers. For example, a production department might be
composed mainly of blue-collar workers. Their primary orientation is
toward the short term (how do we meet today's production sched-
ule?). In contrast, the R&D group of the same firm may be composed
of professional engineers or scientists who have very different orien-
tations. Their primary concern might be to develop a new product
that would not be ready for the market for many years. Production
units are often bureaucratic in their structure; the R&D group is often

very "organic," where rules and lines of authority are much less stable and clear. The environment that the R&D people respond to is often highly technical and fast-changing. By contrast, the production unit is relatively isolated from this volatile environment, responding to less technical demands from internal management about how many products to produce.

As Lawrence and Lorsch point out, these differences often are fertile ground for conflict in an organization. Rules that motivate and govern the behavior of the production group are not likely to work very well with people in an R&D lab. The goals of each group are so different that conflicts about the priorities of the organization and the budget allocation decisions are difficult to resolve. Yet it is important to the organization to maintain these differences. It is in the organization's interest to have an R&D group that is composed of future-oriented thinkers, whose primary concern is what the company's new products might look like in future years. It is also in the organization's interest to foster a cost-reduction-oriented production group, whose primary concern is to make sure that production schedules are met.

Lawrence and Lorsch suggest that organizations that face volatile, technically complex environments are better off with differentiated units within the organization to deal with the different parts of the complex environment. To deal with conflicts and other costs of such a differentiated organization, Lawrence and Lorsch suggest that more resources also have to be spent on integrating these differentiated units. A moderate amount of integration can be performed by individual liaisons, whose task is to communicate with and between the differentiated groups. Such individuals keep others informed about problems they are having, mediate conflicts that arise, and offer suggestions about how one group might facilitate the goals of another.

When the differentiation among groups is very high, then stronger integration measures are called for than a single liaison individual can provide, claim Lawrence and Lorsch. In such cases, the integration role may fall to an entire department. Lawrence and Lorsch found that marketing departments often can fill this role, since their orientation and structure tends to be intermediate between that of the production and the R&D units.

In the case of the Turkish family planning campaign, we have highly differentiated groups with great promise of conflict, as noted by Kincaid and his co-authors. Each of the groups brought a different expertise to the problem at hand, that of effectively delivering a powerful message

to the populace at large. The Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) organization had expertise in producing the various media spots and programs. ZET had experience in market research to evaluate the effectiveness of the national program. The Ministry of Health and Social Assistance had the infrastructure to put the family planning message into practice with its thousands of health and family planning centers. The Johns Hopkins University group had technical and design expertise in communication. And the TFHPF (Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation) had the motivation and legitimation expertise to coordinate the other groups into an effective effort. As Kincaid and others stated, the campaign probably would not have been successful without the full commitment of each of the various groups.

A first question, given the difficulty of coordinating across different groups, is whether it was necessary for all five organizations to be involved? The Lawrence and Lorsch answer to this question lies in another question: Was the environment diverse enough, or dynamic enough, to require this level of differentiation? Kincaid demonstrates the diversity of the population that the messages were to reach. Add to that the necessity of acquiring substantial monetary resources, attracting a variety of human resource skills, and achieving political backing by a diverse group for a sensitive and controversial topic, and the unequivocal answer to the Lawrence and Lorsch question is "Yes." Consequently, according to the differentiation/integration model, the environment dictated that a diverse set of units be mustered together to deal with the problem.

A second question involves how to integrate these five organizations. Given that the diversity in the groups was required, what integrating mechanism can facilitate coordination among these members? According to the case study, the primary coordination function was accomplished though the private foundation, the Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation (TFHPF). The authors note that this organization was well-positioned to take on this responsibility, since the director had ties to the Ministry of Health and another specialized director had worked for Turkish Radio and Television.

However, Kincaid and his colleagues hypothesized that this coordinating role could have been táken by the Johns Hopkins University group: "External assistance agencies [such as the Johns Hopkins group] very often assume the central role, sometimes setting up local offices for closer coordination. In other words, the position of the

TFHPF and the JHU/PCS [the Johns Hopkins group] could have been reversed. It is impossible to know whether or not this alternative structure would have produced as successful a project in Turkey or not. JHU/PCS program staff are convinced that the excellent personal relationships that TFHPF established with TRT, MOHSA, Zet, and JHU/PCS made a significant difference in the outcome of the project."

The differentiation/integration model would argue that JHU/PCS would have been far less effective as an integrator than was TFHPF. And their effectiveness was not simply because TFHPF had better ties with the other organizations, although these relationships are an important consideration. According to Lawrence and Lorsch, the integrator role must be in between the extremes represented by the various groups on several dimensions, including beliefs, values, and cultural assumptions (Schein, 1985). Johns Hopkins University's PCS is a set of outsiders (mostly North Americans). TFHPF was Turkish in name and constitution. The Americans are steeped in a different religious and cultural heritage than the Turks. They are exposed to different moral and political pressures surrounding the use of family planning. TFHPF understood local problems, local customs, and the politics much better than JHU/PCS could. The other Turkish organizations understood this point and thus were more likely to trust advice and coordination activities coming from one of their own organizations than from a complete outsider.

In my mind, one of the strengths of the Lawrence and Lorsch model is that they specifically recognize the importance of similarity in orientations of the key actors in an integrator role. Such similarity induces attraction (Byrne, 1969) and reduces uncertainty between the parties (Kanter, 1977; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), which in turn produces trust (Krackhardt, 1992), a key ingredient in the coordination role.

Since the days of Lawrence and Lorsch, the field of organization theory has developed new models for how the structure of an organization relates to its functioning within a particular context. One of those models is specific to informal organizations, an issue particularly relevant to the present case. Granovetter (1973, 1982) proposed that "weak ties" are often more effective at promoting innovation and change than are strong ties. The argument lies in the empirical fact that strong ties tend to occur between people who are similar to each other. Consequently, such ties provide little in the way of new information or innovative ideas. Weak network ties, however, act as bridges between different groups and people with different ideas.

The weak ties depicted in the case study among the four noncentral organizations are not discussed at length, but Granovetter would predict that such ties would greatly facilitate the communication of controversial ideas. Such communication is essential to keep the groups together, since each effectively had veto power in the implementation of the campaign. Since weak ties are relatively low-cost (they take much less time to maintain than do strong ties); an effective coordinator of this system could seek to maximize bridging weak ties with the various groups on an occasional basis. In part, I suggest that the central coordinating committee (which met only about once every four months), made up of people representing each organization, served this function.

An interesting question also arises about the social and cultural environment in which the Turkish campaign was carried out. The claim is made that "religious and ethical views are not major obstacles to women's practice of family planning. Generally, women who want to use family planning methods overlook religious concerns." This claim is based on results from a set of 30 focus-group interviews.

This claim is particularly curious, given what we know about the power of cultural and religious institutions on individual preferences and behavior. The grandfathers of organizational sociology, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, both demonstrated how religious identity greatly constrains an individual's set of options. Both scholars would allow that individuals enmeshed in religious and cultural institutions are not always aware of these constraints, since they just accept them as a natural part of life. I imagine that religious barriers to the practice of contraception have to be taken into account before understanding the relative effectiveness of a media campaign for family planning. This is likely to be particularly true of the eastern part of Turkey, where religious beliefs are strongest and, coincidentally, where the effect of the national campaign was least.

A recent group of organizational scholars, whom I will call the "ideational organizational theorists," would continue with this theme of understanding the social and cultural environment in which the Turkish campaign was conducted. Weich (1979, p. 42) argued: "An organization is a body of thought by thinking thinkers." As such, the primary task of managers of organizations is to lead the thoughts of others. The key tools, according to Pondy (1978), for a manager are language, symbols, myths, and, in particular, emotions (Collins,

1981). Clearly, the designers of the Turkish family planning campaign, by employing humor in their messages about a delicate subject, were aware of this function of organizing. This use of humor may have been the single most powerful part of their organizational success.

Aside from what light organizational theory can provide to understanding the process and outcomes in the Turkish campaign, I would like to add one additional observation. The field of organizational theory could benefit from paying attention to empirical studies such as the present one. As I said at the top of my commentary, organizational forms such as the one described by Kincaid and his colleagues are becoming more commonplace. The theory behind organizational studies is only beginning to realize these collaborative forms (for example, Biggart & Hamilton, 1990; Perrow, 1990). We need to know more about cross-cultural endeavors, about networks of organizations with unclear boundaries, and about the conditions under which such collaborative forms are effective or ineffective.

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