

**CSES Working Paper Series**

**Paper #21**

**Michael Lounsbury and Edward Carberry**

**"From King to Court Jester:**

**Weber's Fall from Grace in Organizational Theory"**

**February 2004**

**FROM KING TO COURT JESTER?  
WEBER'S FALL FROM GRACE IN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY\***

MICHAEL LOUNSBURY  
Cornell University  
School of Industrial & Labor Relations &  
Department of Sociology  
367 Ives Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
(607) 254-8857 (p); 255-2261 (fax)  
[mdl18@cornell.edu](mailto:mdl18@cornell.edu)

EDWARD J. CARBERRY  
Cornell University  
Department of Sociology  
323 Uris Hall  
Ithaca, NY 14853  
[ejc36@cornell.edu](mailto:ejc36@cornell.edu)

February 2004

\* We would like to thank Richard Swedberg for his very astute and helpful comments about Max Weber and Weberian scholarship.

# **FROM KING TO COURT JESTER?**

## **WEBER'S FALL FROM GRACE IN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY**

### **Abstract**

While the work of Max Weber was an omnipresent guiding force in the early development of organizational theory, contemporary scholars have seemingly little connection to that heritage. In this paper, we probe the dynamics of Weberian organizational theory scholarship from mid-century to the present and examine how shifts in research orientation have facilitated Weber's fall from grace. We draw on a dataset of all articles published in the *Administrative Science Quarterly* from 1956-2002 to track shifts in Weber citation patterns and three streams of Weberian-inspired organizational research: intraorganizational, social organization and organization-environment relations. We show how the shift from the early bureaucracy and social organization studies of the 1950s and 1960s to the more instrumental, resource focus of the organization-environment tradition in the 1970s and 1980s was a key catalyst in the marginalization of Weber in organizational theory. However, we also examine contemporary research more closely to identify opportunities for a revitalization of the Weberian tradition in organizational theory.

## **FROM KING TO COURT JESTER? WEBER'S FALL FROM GRACE IN ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY**

Max Weber's corpus of writings remains a fount of inspiration for many sociologists and other scholars. In organizational theory, where the impact of his work has arguably been the greatest, engagement with Max Weber's scholarship has dwindled to a whisper, although there may be the occasional howl. This is despite the fact that Weber is widely acknowledged as the "founding father" of organizational theory. From mid-20<sup>th</sup> century pioneering research that built on Weber's theory of bureaucracy to contemporary research on organization-environment relations, it is undeniable that organizational theory is profoundly imprinted by the Weberian gaze. Yet, current researchers rarely cite Weber, and if they do, it is more often than not a mere ceremonial nod.

In this paper, we argue that a key shift in research orientation within organizational theory in the 1970s towards more instrumental and structural conceptions of organizations operating in narrowly conceived resource environments as evidenced in the organization-environment tradition played a crucial catalytic role in reducing scholarly engagement with Weber (Lounsbury & Ventresca 2002). To show this, we provide a detailed explication of the historical dynamics of Weberian inspired research on organizations through an examination of all articles that cite Weber from 1956-2002 in the *Administrative Science Quarterly (ASQ)*, the premier scholarly outlet for organizational theory research. Since ASQ was a central outlet for early research that engaged with Weber's theory of bureaucracy, it is an ideal site to develop a deeper understanding of historical shifts in the citation and use of Weber in organizational theory. Using our ASQ article data, we identify and discuss the dynamics of three main content

streams within Weberian-inspired organizational theory research: intraorganizational, social organization, and organization-environment relations.

Intraorganizational research includes many classic studies of bureaucracies and their dynamics (e.g., Janowitz & Delany 1957; Gouldner 1958; Zald 1962) as well as more contemporary ethnographic research inside organizations that builds on and extends that early work (e.g., Barker 1993; Adler & Borys 1996; Martin, Knopoff, & Beckman 1998). Research in the social organization tradition more directly examines the embeddedness of organizational phenomena in their broader societal contexts (e.g., Parsons 1956; Gusfield 1958; Stinchcombe 1959). Research on organization-environment relations includes studies rooted in paradigmatic theories of contingency (e.g., Pugh et. al. 1969), resource dependence (e.g., Pfeffer, Salancik & Leblebici 1976), organizational demography (e.g., Haveman 1993), institutional analysis (e.g., Strang 1987) and transaction cost economics (e.g., Ouchi 1980). By examining these different streams of research, we are better able to assess important historical shifts and understand what research problems have been and currently provide active focal points for engagement with Weber.

We show that there have been three main periods in the evolution of Weberian organizational theory scholarship. From 1956 to around 1970, organizational researchers drew broadly on Weber's writings, demonstrating a concern with power, conflict, authority, and domination within organizations as well as the effect of broader social structures on organizational life. However, these core Weberian issues became more peripheral to organizational theory in the 1970s and 1980s with the ascendancy of the organization-

environment tradition. Even though organization-environment articles appropriately cited Weber since that stream of work was built from the earlier work on bureaucracy and social organization, the conceptual shift ushered in by this tradition made much of Weber's writings seem less relevant. While there has been an overall secular decline in the citation of Weber since the 1970s, the 1990s provided another turning point as organization-environment articles increasingly lost their connection to their Weberian heritage. Much contemporary organizational research completely ignores Weber, and his intermittent cameo appearances suggest that his work has dramatically diminished in status. Nonetheless, there is very exciting current work on intraorganizational dynamics and social organization that shows promise for a potential revitalization of the more expansive intellectual project of Weber that was evident in mid-century organizational research.

In the following section, we provide a brief overview of Weber's approach to the study of organizations, including his historically situated understanding of the origins of bureaucracy. Next, we draw on our systematic analysis of ASQ articles to track the historical dynamics of the intraorganizational, social organization and organization-environment relations content streams. While we show that Weber's relevance has empirically declined in terms of citations and depth of engagement, we conclude with a discussion of where we see opportunities for the revitalization of Weber's work in contemporary organizational research. For instance, new research on markets and the relationship between social movements and organizational behavior provide fertile ground for a reengagement with Weber. In addition, we believe that current efforts to understand issues having to do with globalization, postindustrialism, and varieties of

capitalism make Weber's historical analyses of capitalism, domination, authority, legitimacy, and inequality as relevant today as they were during the transitions to industrialization, urbanization and rudimentary forms of market capitalism in his lifetime.

### **Weber's Approach to Organizations and Organizing**

The legacy of Max Weber looms large within sociology, particularly within economic sociology, the sociology of religion, social stratification, and organizational sociology. His corpus of scholarship includes efforts to understand the origins of Western rationalism and capitalism in works such as the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930) and his comparative studies of world religions such as ancient Judaism (1952), Confucianism and Taoism in China (1951), and Hinduism and Buddhism in India (1958). His comparative historical orientation to the study of ideas and the economy importantly shaped Weber's overall thinking about organizations, embedding his conceptualization of organizations in a broad political sociology of economic life which is especially evident in his encyclopedic masterpiece *Economy and Society* (1978).<sup>1</sup>

Weber is widely considered to be the father of organizational theory, mainly because of his insights into the functioning of bureaucracy, the dominant administrative system that emerged with capitalism. The first English translation of Weber's writings on bureaucracy did not appear until 1946 with the publication of *From Max Weber* (Gerth and Mills 1946), which included Chapter 11 from *Economy and Society*, "Bureaucracy." The following year, Talcott

---

<sup>1</sup> For more complete explications of Weber's scholarship, see Bendix (1960), Käsler (1988), and Swedberg (1998).

Parsons' translation of the first four chapters of *Economy and Society* was published (Weber 1946). This included three sections of Chapter III entitled "Legal Authority with a Bureaucratic Administrative Staff."<sup>2</sup> The publication of English translations of these two pieces was crucial to the development of scholarly interest in Weber in the United States.

Scott (1995: 17) noted that "shortly after selections from Weber's seminal writings on bureaucracy were translated into English during the late 1940s, a group of scholars at Columbia University under the leadership of Robert K. Merton revived interest in bureaucracy and bureaucratization, its sources, and consequences for behavior in organizations". This gave rise to a number of studies by students of Merton such as Selznick (1949), Gouldner (1954), Blau (1955) and Lipset, Trow and Coleman (1956) that provided a solid foundation for the emergence of organizational theory as a distinct specialty area (see Scott 1992). Much of this early research focused on empirical examinations of the existence of ideal type bureaucracy as posited by Weber (Albrow 1969). Since then, Weber's model of bureaucracy provided a baseline that organizational theorists have used, dissected, and critiqued when examining organizational life.<sup>3</sup>

Since Weber was first and foremost an historian of social, economic, and political life, however, to fully appreciate the depth of Weber's analysis of bureaucracy, it must be placed within his broader historical analysis of the development of capitalism, systems of domination and authority, and social organization. When we examine the broader context in which Weber

---

<sup>2</sup> The relevant sections on organizations in *Economy and Society* include: Part I, Chapter I, Section 12; Part 1, Chapter III, Sections 3-5; Part 2, Chapter II; Part 2, Chapter X, Section 3; and Part 2, Chapter XI.

<sup>3</sup> Weber's model of bureaucracy included administrative characteristics such as a fixed division of labor, a hierarchy of offices, a set of general rules that govern performance, the separation of personal from official property and rights, and the selection and promotion of personnel on the basis of technical considerations and merit (see Scott, 1992 for a more complete discussion).

articulated his theory of bureaucracy, it becomes obvious that the historical and continued relevance of Max Weber's work for the study of organizations reaches well beyond the study of organizations narrowly conceived. In tracking the development of capitalism in Western societies, Weber highlighted how traditional structures of power and domination in social life were replaced by new forms of domination emanating from the institutional development of bureaucracy, calculable law, and democracy that supported the genesis of capitalism. For Weber, the structure and social reality of modern economic organizations and administrative systems, including bureaucracy, emerged out of specific historical processes relating not only to markets, trade, and technology, but also to political and legal structures, religion, and socio-cultural ideas and institutions. Furthermore, he conceptualized struggles for power, authority, and domination as pervading all social life, including organizational and bureaucratic life.

The concept of domination, often rooted in authority systems, is a foundational element of Weber's analytical framework. As Roth (Weber 1978: LXXXVIII) notes in his introduction to Weber's seminal work: "the Sociology of Domination is the core of *Economy and Society*." In contrast to Weber's definition of power as the probability that one actor is in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, he defined domination as the probability that a command will be obeyed by a group of persons, typically through voluntary compliance or an interest in obedience. Domination, therefore, is not the forceful imposition of power, but relies on a shared belief system that structures interactions between and among rulers and subjects. As a result, domination cannot be understood as the mere sum of isolated occurrences of specific social

relationships, but as the outcropping of the institutionalization of values and norms that stabilize and govern a wide range of social, economic, and political behavior.

In particular, Weber's typology of administrative systems—traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal—represent three kinds of authority systems that differ primarily in the types of belief or cultural systems that legitimate the exercise of authority (Scott 1995: 11). These three ideal-typical administrative systems provided an overarching framework by which Weber tried to understand the key distinguishing aspects of modern bureaucracy, a rational-legal administrative system. In contradistinction to rational-legal authority that is rooted in a belief in legal codes that justify normative rule patterns and the right of those in authority to issue commands under those rules, charismatic authority rests on the heroism or exemplary character of a particular individual and traditional authority is supported by longstanding beliefs, customs and traditions. Since charismatic authority is more fragile and fleeting, Weber spent more time tracking the historical shift from traditional to rational-legal authority systems as a way to understand the origins of modern modes of economic and social action.<sup>4</sup>

To provide substance to the notion of the traditional form of domination, Weber devoted significant attention to studying ancient and medieval societies. The elementary forms of

---

<sup>4</sup> As part of Weber's analysis of charismatic, traditional and rational-legal authority systems, he developed the idea of rationalization that was the process by which, for example, charismatic and traditional forms changed to become more formally rational, often in accordance with rational-legal authority systems. His famous discussion of the "routinization of charisma" was a key passage that highlighted how charismatic authority becomes rationalized...

"The charismatic following of a war leader may be transformed into a state, the charismatic community of a prophet, artist, philosopher, ethical or scientific innovator may become a church, sect, academy or school, and the charismatic group which espouses certain cultural ideals may develop into a party or merely the staff of newspapers and periodicals. In every case charisma is henceforth exposed to the conditions of everyday life and to the powers dominating it, especially to the economic interests" (Weber, 1978: 1121-1122).

traditional authority were patriarchy and patrimonialism. Traditional authority obstructed the development of free markets since it could be exercised at will by the leader, rather than according to rational calculations of market-based efficiency. Over time, traditional forms of domination were gradually replaced by rational-legal domination. Instead of obeying the traditional authority of natural leaders, actors within a rational-legal system of domination obey the overall system of rules that structure modern society. To Weber, bureaucratic administrative systems represented the most sophisticated expression of rational-legal authority.

The transformation from traditional to rational forms of authority emerged out of macrohistorical changes relating to the development of capitalism. As Collins (1986) has articulated, Weber saw the development of capitalism as resulting from a complex casual chain and unique patterning of events rather than a linear progression or process of evolution. At the core of the development of capitalism was the emergence of the modern state and an economic ethic that broke down the barriers between internal and external economies. However, capitalism did not usher in the rational-legal form of domination. Instead, rational-legal ideas rooted in a number of interpenetrated social, economic, religious and political developments, including the development of bureaucracy, enabled capitalism to emerge. To wit, bureaucracy was not the natural by-product of capitalism, but rather a precondition for the latter since it developed from the presence of literate administrators, long-distance transport and communication, writing and record-keeping technology, and other factors.

In addition to this sophisticated historical analysis, Weber also assessed the operation and consequences of the bureaucratic form. In a famous passage, he argued that bureaucracy was an extremely efficient system of administration:

“The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non-mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs- these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration...” (Weber 1978)

However, as Derlien (1999) has noted, organizational theory has widely mischaracterized Weber’s view of the effectiveness of bureaucracy as a prescriptive model of how administrative systems should be structured. Actually, “Weber does not speak of ‘efficiency’ but speaks of the formally most rational mode ... of exercising political domination” (Derlien 1999: 64).

Regardless of this mischaracterization, Weber recognized that bureaucratic systems were more efficient than traditional administrative systems that often relied on overt force and coercion and charismatic systems that were less stable and enduring than either traditional or bureaucratic systems. Weber also claimed that the emergence of bureaucracy contributed to a leveling of social differences because official positions within a bureaucracy were filled according to technical qualifications rather than the personal loyalty to a master. Bureaucratic forms, therefore, opened up official positions to a broader range of social groups. Although Weber was well aware that certain social groups would create closure around access to these positions, the attainment of positions in a bureaucratic hierarchy was more open than in other kinds of authority systems.

Despite these positive consequences, Weber was deeply conflicted with concerns about deleterious consequences such as the concentration of power and the tragically dehumanizing nature of life in bureaucracies. Although bureaucracy has its own logic and power, and opens up administration to broader groups of people, it is still, like traditional authority, controlled by a master or group of masters that use it to advance their own ends (see also Perrow, 2002). As Weber (1978: 980) noted, “the bureaucratic structure goes hand in hand with the concentration of the material means of management in the hands of the master” because the rules of bureaucracy restricted officials from ownership in the organization, and the hierarchical nature of the bureaucratic structure made it ultimately obedient to the commands of the master. Another negative consequence is the emergence of what Whyte (1956) called the “organization man,” in which the orientation towards the rational technical rules of bureaucracy and obedience to its abstract norms of legal-rationality leads to the creation of the infamous “iron cage,” a dehumanizing subservience to the rational rules of administration.

While most organizational theory scholars have bracketed investigation of the positive and negative sides of the bureaucracy coin, the downside of bureaucracy has garnered some attention by intraorganizational researchers in the 1950s and 1960s that examined authority conflict (e.g., Crozier 1964; Gouldner 1954; McEwen 1956; Scott 1965) and subsequent research that has had a more critical edge to it (e.g., Barker 1993; Adler and Boris 1996; Ezzamel and Willmott 1998; Martin et. al. 1998). Most organizations analysts have favored more “neutral” empirical analyses, whether they explicitly relied on Weber’s model of bureaucracy to guide intraorganizational research, drew on his comparative historical understanding of organizing to

investigate broader questions about social organization, or ceremoniously cited his work to pay homage to the “classics” in an effort to situate empirical research in a broader tradition of thought. To probe the dialogue between organizational theorists and Weber in more depth, we now turn to an empirical examination of how Weber has actually been used to inform various strands of organizational theory research from the mid-1950s to the present.

### **The Dynamics of Weberian Scholarship in Organizational Theory**

To develop a more concrete understanding of shifts in how Weber’s scholarship has informed research in organizational theory, we analyzed all articles that cited Weber in *Administrative Science Quarterly* (ASQ), focusing attention on the evolutionary dynamics of the intraorganizational, social organization, and organization-environment content streams. To situate this more fine-grained analysis, we also tracked aggregate Weber citation patterns in other prominent U.S. management (*Academy of Management Journal* and *Academy of Management Review*) and sociology journals (*American Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review*). For the management journals, we counted all articles that cited Weber. Since Weber is a theoretical pillar for a diverse range of sociological inquiry, we only counted organization theory specific articles that cited Weber in the sociology journals.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 1 examines the historical patterns of citations in ASQ as well as the other management and sociology journals from 1958-2002, providing the yearly percentages for the

---

<sup>5</sup> The narrow search was conducted by searching for articles that cited Weber and had any of the following words in the abstract: bureaucracy, bureaucratic, organization, organizational, firm, administration, or administrative.

total number of organization theory articles citing Weber.<sup>6</sup> The most notable trend is that the percentage of articles citing Weber in ASQ has steadily declined since its peak of 36.5% in 1961 to its lowest point of 6.8% in 1991, with an increase from 1977 to 1987, a sharp decrease from 1989 to 1992, and a modest increase up to 15% by 2002. This figure also reveals that the annual percentage of Weber citations has been consistently higher in ASQ and the sociology journals than in management journals, although the gap has narrowed substantially over time. While the annual citation percentages for management publications are lower than those for ASQ (5% vs. 19%), there were peaks around ten percent in the mid-1960s, mid-1970s, and mid-1990s. For the sociology journals, articles examining organizations and citing Weber tended to be generally higher (around 24%) than in ASQ on average, but the general patterns were similar. The citation of Weber in organization articles in sociology journals peaked at around 50% in 1959, bottomed out at 10% in 1987, then increased to around 30% by the new millennium.

-----  
Insert Figure 1 about here  
-----

In order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics underlying these broad trends, we performed a more detailed content analysis of articles citing Weber in ASQ. We chose ASQ because it is the premier outlet for research in organizational theory and because the legacy of Weber within organizational scholarship is clearly most prominent there. Between 1956 and

---

<sup>6</sup> We began counts for ASQ from its inception in 1956; for the *Academy of Management Journal* from its inception in 1957; for the *Academy of Management Review* from its inception in 1976; and both sociology journals from 1956, although both were founded prior to 1956. Since there is variation in the volume of articles across our journal categories, we focus on Weber citation percentages across the total number of articles by category to gain leverage in comparability.

2002, 238 articles in ASQ cited Max Weber. These articles provide a widely ranging sample of problems that have guided organizational theory research, from comparative-historical analysis of administrative systems in the Ottoman Empire and eleventh-century China to a study of romantic relationships in the workplace. In order to make better sense of the ways in which Weber has been used in ASQ since 1956, we created a simple coding scheme based on three broad streams of Weberian-inspired research: social organization, intraorganizational, and organization-environment.

The social organization genre captured articles that take seriously the connection between organizations and society (see Stern & Barley 1996; Lounsbury & Ventresca 2002). Within this category are comparative historical analyses of bureaucracies and authority systems as well as more theoretically-oriented papers that engaged with classical sociological theory. The second category was intraorganizational. We coded an article in this category if its analytic focus was on internal organization dynamics. This category includes many articles in the 1950s and 1960s that directly engage with Weber's ideal type bureaucracy and later articles that examine various internal organizational phenomena. The third and final category was organization-environment. This category captured articles in the tradition of contingency theory, population ecology, resource dependency, institutional theory, and transaction cost economics. We coded articles as organization-environment if they were primarily concerned with the interaction between organizations and their environments. Articles in this genre conceptualize organizations primarily in instrumental terms and organizational environments as resource spaces to be navigated, whether resources are defined as forms of capital, legitimacy or labor.

Articles coded as intraorganizational represent the largest category within the articles citing Weber in ASQ. Of the 238 total ASQ articles citing Weber between 1956 and 2002, 140 (58.9%) deal primarily with internal organizational dynamics, 58 (24.4%) were classified as social organization, and 39 (16.4%) were coded as organization-environment. Only one article was coded as “other.” Figure 2 examines the historical trends for the percentage of ASQ articles citing Weber, broken down by genre. The percentage of intraorganizational articles rises steadily from 1958 to its highest point in 1968 (29.7%), declines dramatically to 6% by 1982, increases between 1982 and 1985, and then decreases again to its lowest point in 1996 and 1997 (1%) before a slight rebound to around 6% by 2002.

The annual percentage of social organization articles peaked early in 1961 at 15.8% of all ASQ articles, remained relatively stable at lower citation rates between 1970 and 1990, and experienced a slight resurgence in the 1990s—the average citation rate of the social organization tradition was around 7% up until 1970, dropped to 3% from 1970 to 1990, and has increased to 5% since then. The percentage of organization-environment articles citing Weber was low until the late 1970s, mainly because that tradition was still emerging at that time. We coded only 11 Weber-cited articles (or 1% of all ASQ articles) from 1956 to 1978 as organization-environment. However, the percentage of articles in this genre increased dramatically from 0.8% in 1977 to a peak of 11.6% in 1987 before falling sharply in the 1990s. The low levels of Weber citations in this genre by the late 1990s is not much of a surprise since the vast majority of organization-environment articles over the span of this tradition exhibited little serious engagement with Weber’s work.

-----  
Insert Figure 2 about here  
-----

If we return to the overall citation trends for Weber in ASQ (Figure 1), a more nuanced picture emerges. The peak of 36.5% in 1961 represents a large number of intraorganizational and social organization articles. The gradual decline between 1961 and 1977 primarily represents the gradual decline in intraorganizational articles between 1968 and 1982 and a sharp drop in social organization articles between 1961 and 1964. The modest increase in the percentage of articles citing Weber between 1977 and 1987 reflects the increase in the number of organization-environment articles, although the peak period of these articles was much lower than the peaks for the other two categories. The sharp drop in the percentage of articles citing Weber between 1989 and 1992 represents the nadir of Weberian influence since 1956. In this period, there is a decrease in all categories of articles. Finally, the increase in percentage of Weber citations that started in the 1990s is the result of sharp increases in social organization articles since 1995 and in intraorganizational articles since 1997.

In the next three sections, we take a closer look at the ways in which Weber has been cited by organizational theorists publishing in ASQ. We will examine articles within these three streams of research during three periods that signal important shifts in the usage of Weber. The first period begins with the founding of ASQ in 1956 and runs through 1970. This period represents the highest overall percentage of ASQ articles citing Weber. These articles also showed an engagement with Weber's broad intellectual legacy: it was dominated by

intraorganizational articles that were based in broad readings of Weber and by social organization articles. This frequent engagement with Weber in the early years of ASQ begins to shift at the end of the 1960s as Weber citations among intraorganizational articles begins to fall and more narrow readings of Weber begin to emerge in the intraorganizational articles.

This disengagement with Weber becomes more pronounced in the second period, 1971 through 1989. During this period, organization-environment perspectives became dominant. Although this leads to a modest increase in Weber citations from 1977 to 1989, including a sharp increase between 1984 and 1987, both the organization-environment and intraorganizational articles during this period engage with Weber's ideas on bureaucracy and other topics in more limited ways. This period ends with a sharp decrease in Weber citations as the use of Weber by theorists in all research streams drops sharply. By the beginning of the final period, 1990-2002, the legacy of Weber appears to be quite tenuous within the organizational scholarship published in ASQ. However, there has been modest growth in citations by authors that aim to reconnect with the intellectual legacy left by Weber in a much deeper way than the organization-environment tradition.

#### *In the Court of the King, 1956-1970*

The early years of ASQ were dominated by articles in the intraorganizational and social organization streams of research as well as by significant engagement with the broad intellectual legacy of Weber. Of the 91 articles published during this period that cite Weber, there were 64 intraorganizational, 21 social organization, and only six organization-environment.

Intraorganizational articles increased sharply from 1958 to 1967 and begin to drop in the last three years, while social organization articles reached their peak during the early 1960's.

Within the social organization category, the early articles engaged directly with Weber's broad view of bureaucracies as systems of authority that emerged within particular socio-historical contexts. For example, Stinchcombe (1959) offered a refinement of Weber's ideal type bureaucracy in his comparison of administrative systems in mass production and construction industries. In his examination of the Turkish coal industry, Presthus (1961) expanded upon Weber's ideal type bureaucracy by positing a model of "welfare bureaucracy" to assist in analyses of organizations in underdeveloped societies. Constat (1961) develops a theory of charismatic bureaucracy in her historical analysis of the rise of the Communist bureaucracy in the USSR and presents this as something very different from Western, nontotalitarian bureaucracy. These analyses offered a fundamental critique of Weber's theory of bureaucracy as not universally applicable to all situations, especially in non-Western societies (Albrow 1969).

In addition to these articles, ASQ published two special issues, "Comparative Public Administration" (June 1960) and "Organizations and Social Development" (December 1968) that featured articles in the social organization tradition (e.g., Katz & Eisenstadt, 1960; Riggs 1960; Diamant 1960; Heady 1960; Weiker 1968; Kaplan 1968). Notably, even back in the 1960s, some theorists in the social organization tradition sensed a more narrow appropriation of Weber and made calls to reclaim his broad intellectual legacy. For example, Delany (1963) claimed that although Weber did not accurately predict the decline of bureaucracy, his work still has much to offer.

Intraorganizational research was the most vibrant of all Weberian organizational theory traditions in the 1960s. The percentage of articles coded as intraorganizational increased from around ten to twenty-five percent between 1956 and the mid-1960s, but then began to drop off dramatically in the late 1960s. During this period, intraorganizational articles exhibited an engagement with broad Weberian concerns of authority and domination within organizations. Although a wide range of organizational phenomena was examined, approximately half of all articles engaged directly with Weber's theory of bureaucracy and bureaucratic authority. Many of these focused on case studies of single organizations and attempted to critique, revise, refine, or expand Weber's ideal type bureaucracy through penetrating analyses of internal organizational dynamics.

For example, Janowitz and Delany (1956) studied the impact of position in the organizational hierarchy on the knowledge that bureaucrats in government agencies have of their clients. Simpson (1959) offered a critique of Weber's view that communication within a bureaucratic organization is primarily vertical by examining the horizontal communication among first line foremen in a textile mill. Thompson (1965) theoretically explored the relationship between bureaucratic structure and innovation. Hall (1962) probed how different organizational segments differed in their degree of bureaucratization. Hage (1965) used Weber's theory of bureaucracy as a starting point in developing his own "axiomatic" theory of organizations to study organizational change, centralization, and morale.

Bureaucratic authority was also a common topic in this early period. Presthus (1958), for example, offered a psychological argument that the acceptance of authority reduces anxiety.

Janowitz (1959) examined how bureaucratic authority had become less direct, arbitrary, and authoritarian in the military establishment. Etzioni (1959) refined Weber's concept that organizations have one center of authority by arguing that in professional organizations, traditional staff and line concepts must be reversed.

Another common topic within the intraorganizational articles in this period was the tension between authority that emanates from position in a bureaucracy and that residing in the technical expertise of professionals. The observation and description of this tension during this period formed one of the core critiques of Weber's ideal type (Albrow 1969). McEwen (1956), for example, analyzed the conflicts that arose in a military medical research organization between these two sources of authority, highlighting a situation where Weber's ideal type bureaucracy did not exist in the real world (see also Bennis 1959; Peabody 1962). In a special issue, "Professionals in Organizations," Scott (1965) examined reactions of professional workers to administrative authority, while Porte (1965) analyzed the sources of conflicts between managers and scientists, finding that managerial dependence upon scientists led to a modification of traditional bureaucratic devices.

Towards the end of the 1960s, challenges to Weber's ideal type bureaucracy based on larger samples of organizations began to emerge within the intraorganizational stream. Pugh et al. (1968), for example, measured five dimensions of organizational structure in 52 organizations and concluded that the concept of the bureaucratic type is no longer useful and that organizations may be bureaucratic in any number of ways. These same authors reached a similar conclusion in an article in 1969 that offered a more sophisticated typology of bureaucratic forms. In a similar

vein, Meyer (1968) examined authority structures in 254 government finance offices and concluded that Weber's notion that bureaucratic authority consists only of authority of the office appears inadequate. Kaplan (1968) argued that Weber's ideal type was inadequate for understanding organizations that deal with social development.

In contrast to the large number of intraorganizational and social organization articles, there were only six organization-environment articles during this period. These articles viewed the environment primarily in terms of other organizations and developed a variable based approach to how organizations contingently react to environmental conditions. For instance, Pugh et al. (1963) critiqued Weber's ideal type bureaucracy and called for more detailed empirical investigations of bureaucratic structures that pay attention to contextual variables such as size, ownership and control, charter, and technology. In later articles by the same group of authors (1969, 1970), they emphasized that dependence on other organizations should be included as a key environmental variable. Other organization-environment articles in this period were primarily concerned with interorganizational exchange relationships and make only passing references to some aspect of Weber's theory of bureaucracy.

Between 1956 and 1970, the legacy of Weber loomed large in organizational theory as evidenced in the citations of Weber in ASQ, mainly by scholars working in the intraorganizational and social organization tradition. The former remained close to Weber's concepts of domination and authority within bureaucratic structures, while the latter offered analyses of bureaucracies that were rooted in the type of situated sociohistorical analysis that was so important to Weber. However, as we show in the next section, such broad readings of and

deep theoretical engagement with Weber began to diminish in the 1970s within the intraorganizational tradition, and perhaps more significantly, with the ascendancy of various theoretical strains within the organization-environment tradition.

### *Weber's Fall from Grace, 1970-1989*

During the period between 1970 and 1989, the percentage of articles citing Weber in ASQ rose incrementally but then fell—citations rates were around 20% at both end points. Of the 107 articles citing Weber in this period, 61 were intraorganizational, 25 were organization-environment and 20 were social organization. During this period, the intraorganizational articles continued to dominate, but became somewhat disconnected from broader readings of Weber on bureaucracy as compared to the 1950s and 1960s. Also, the percentage of organization-environment articles increased substantially, but represented a shift away from the more richly conceptualized environments of the social organization tradition as well as a more limited engagement with Weber. Hence, the rise of various theoretical paradigms in the organization-environment tradition and the narrowed volume and scope of intraorganizational research during this period signal a fundamental disengagement of organizational theorists with the rich intellectual heritage of Weber. However, the percentage of social organization articles, which maintained a connection with the broad Weberian gaze, remained more or less constant.

The shift in intraorganizational research in the 1970s can be characterized as one away from direct studies of Weber's theory of bureaucracy and authority to discussions of organizational structure, power, and control that tended to offer only a passing nod to Weber.

Pheysey et al. (1971), for example, examined the effect of structure on relationships among different organizational groups. Mohr (1971) studied the connection between technology and organizational structure. Tyler (1973) developed a coefficient of specialization to examine role structures. This shift away from engagement with Weber's theory of bureaucracy to discussions of organizational structure became more significant in subsequent years.

Some articles in the 1970s did examine authority, but emphasis was on variable operationalization and structural characteristics, not on the struggle and contestation inherent in organizational life. For example, Ouchi and Dowling (1974) examined authority as the span of control of supervisors and measured the closeness of contact between supervisors and subordinates. Hrebianiak (1974) studied the relationship between technology, group structure, and supervision. Bacharach and Aiken (1976) focused on organizational power as influence in decision-making within Belgian local governments. Lippitt and Mackenzie (1976) analyzed how administrators deal with "authority-conflict" in a large university. Ouchi (1977) studied the relationship between structure and control in 78 retail department stores and found that almost one-third of the variance in control could be accounted for by structural characteristics. The shift to discussions of organizational structure and away from Weber's theory of bureaucracy and deep contextualized analyses represents a significant narrowing of the Weberian gaze within organizational theory.

During the 1980s the intraorganizational stream further distanced itself from more engaged treatments of Weber. Of these articles, well over half offer a mere passing reference to Weber. Of the few that directly engaged with Weber, there were only three attempts at applying

new theoretical refinements of Weber's theory of bureaucracy. Padgett (1980) applied a garbage can model to Weberian bureaucracy to examine how ambiguity affects decision-making in such a setting and to examine the management consequences for garbage can theory. Interpreting the Weberian legacy as one stressing rationality, Masuch and LaPotin (1989) refined the garbage can model using simulation models and claimed that garbage can models have eroded the Weberian model of rational organizational-decision making. Mintzberg and McHugh (1985) offered a new ideal type, adhocracy, to conceptualize strategic decision-making in organizations, noting that Weber's ideal type bureaucracy may be a misleading way to understand strategy-making.

In addition to these critiques of Weber, other examples of topics explored during this period include how formalization actually reduced rather than increased alienation in a bureaucracy (Organ and Greene 1981) and how Weber's concept of authority could be applied to relationships between business units (Hackman 1985). Biggart and Hamilton (1984), who examined how organizational power is based on obedience to organizational roles, represented one of the few intraorganizational articles in this period to connect to some of the core Weberian concepts that were more prevalent during the first period. Other articles used Weber's theory of charismatic authority to show how the authority of school administrators was based partially on the unique characteristics of a person (Meindl et al. 1985) and to examine how the effectiveness of leaders depends more on charisma than control rooted in formal hierarchical position (House et al. 1991). By the beginning of the 1990s, Weber was still an important reference point for scholars examining intraorganizational phenomenon, but deep engagement with Weber's concepts of authority, domination and bureaucracy had greatly diminished.

During the same period in which the intraorganizational tradition became fundamentally disconnected from broad readings for Weber, the percentage of organization-environment articles citing Weber increased sharply, especially in the 1980s. The central analytic focus of these articles was the application of newly emerging organizational theories of population ecology, resource dependency, transaction cost economics, institutionalism and networks to bureaucratic structures and processes. Articles by White (1974) and Pfeffer et. al. (1976), represented early manifestations of the resource dependency perspective. Leblebici and Salancik (1982) examined how rules governing interorganizational exchange are shaped by uncertainty relating to resource dependency. Hrebiniak and Joyce (1985) directly drew on Weber to support their view that changes in organizational structure will be shaped by resource dependency and strategic choice. Ouchi (1980) used transaction cost theory to develop a theoretical framework for examining the conditions under which bureaucratic structures are likely to evolve.

The most prominent Weberian-inspired theoretical approach to the relationship between organization and environment in this period was institutionalism. Tolbert (1985) compared the effects of institutional forces and resource dependencies on administrative structures in higher education organizations. Baron et al (1986) and Baron and Bielby (1986) discussed how institutional forces effected mobility structures and the number of formal job titles. In examining the bureaucratization of local educational administrative bodies, Strang (1987) noted that this process occurred according to a classic Weberian model.

Few of the organization-environment articles that cited Weber in this period offered a deep engagement with Weber, but primarily examined how organizational structures were

influenced and shaped by resource environments. There are few discussions of authority, except for Leblebici and Salancik (1982) noting how legitimate authority is necessary for rule enforcement in exchange activity, and Peterson's (1984) examination of how the patterns of control in a sample of schools is shaped by environmental variables. By the late 1980s, Weber citations in organization-environment articles declined precipitously.

Despite the more limited engagement with Weber in intraorganizational articles and the ascendant organizational-environment tradition between 1970 and 1989, social organization articles continued to promote the broader Weberian tradition. However, the seventies saw the fewest articles in this genre, and a shift away from the examination of administrative systems writ large was evident. Of the eight social organization articles in the 1970s, five were concerned with authority relations and power, two take a broad theoretical view of the relationship between organizations and society, and one used a deep reading of Weber to build a theoretical bridge between Marxian macrosociological analysis and neoDurkheimian microsociological analysis.

In the 1980s, social organization articles that dealt directly with bureaucracy reemerged, including Langton's (1984) articulation of an ecological theory of bureaucracy. The social organization articles that appeared between 1980 and 1989 also exhibited a wider analytical lens to encompass topics beyond bureaucracy and authority. In this period, there were three articles that are primarily theoretical (Ranson et al. 1980; Clegg 1981; Fombrun 1986). In addition, ASQ published a handful of articles that critically examined the socially constructed nature of organizational studies and theory, including Morgan's (1980) radical humanist critique of

organizational theory and Astley's (1985) controversial essay on administrative science as socially constructed truth.

Overall, the period from 1970 to 1989 represented a time in which articles in ASQ became increasingly disconnected from the broad legacy of Weber that was an important part of organizational theory in the 1950s and 1960s. Through the seventies and eighties, the total percentage of articles citing Weber continued to decline, and the vast majority of articles that did cite Weber did so ceremoniously. Among intraorganizational articles, bureaucracy was discussed less directly, replaced by the concept of organizational structure. In addition, the term authority became less prominent, giving way to concepts such as power, control and structure. The increase in organization-environment articles maintained a connection with Weber, but the way in which Weber was used by scholars in this tradition was quite narrow.

#### *Jester or Rediscovered Master? 1990-2002*

The most recent period of Weberian scholarship in ASQ is characterized by a contradiction. Organization-environment articles became almost completely disconnected from broad readings of Weber with notable exceptions such as Ruef and Scott's (1998) historical study of organizational legitimacy within a community of hospitals. However, there are signs of a reconnection with Weber's broad intellectual project within the intraorganizational and social organization genres. Of the 40 ASQ articles citing Weber from 1990 to 2002, we coded seventeen as social organization, fifteen as intraorganizational, and eight as organization-environment.

This period begins with a noticeable dearth in citations of Weber. Between 1990 and 1992, only five articles cited Weber, while only one article cited Weber in both 1994 and 1995. Although this period contained the fewest articles that cite Weber, the numbers alone do not tell the entire story. The content of these articles and the way in which Weber is used suggests a fundamental shift. Three connected social organization articles in this period are particularly notable. Stern and Barley (1996) directly criticized organizational theorists for focusing narrowly on Weber's theory of bureaucracy and ignoring Weber's broad intellectual mandate of examining the connections between organizations and society (However, as we have attempted to show, Weber's legacy in organizational theory has been more complex than this). This article sparked responses from Scott (1996), who believes that outside of the top journals Weber's mandate is still being honored, and Blau (1996), who reexamined the utility of Weber's concept of rationality for contemporary organizational theory. Other social organization articles in this period such as those by Boisot and Child (1996), Simons and Ingram (1997) and Lounsbury (2001) all reflect a commitment to the situated historical analysis of organizations and society that is a hallmark of the Weberian tradition.

The intraorganizational articles in this period revealed a dramatic shift in their connection with Weber that harkened back to the golden years of the 1960s. Barker (1993) signaled this shift with his heavy reliance on Weber's concept of control in the workplace to examine how control over employees persists even when bureaucracy is replaced by self-managing teams. Barker advanced the concept of concertive control to describe this new type of authority. Broader approaches to bureaucracy and authority in the workplace were also evident in a study by Adler

and Boris (1996) who examined the enabling and coercive nature of bureaucracy as well as several articles in a special 1998 issue on “Critical Perspectives on Organizational Control” (e.g., Ezzamel and Willmott 1998; Martin et. al. 1998; Sewell, 1998).

In their analysis of the management of emotional labor the Body Shop, Martin et al. (1998) offered a feminist critique of the rational, rule-based Weberian bureaucracy and criticized Weber for ignoring the role of emotions in the workplace. Ezzamel and Willmott (1998) explored how accounting standards represent a contemporary expression of the rationalized rules of bureaucracy in justifying the implementation of and managerial control over self-managed teams. Similarly, Sewell (1998) examined how new forms of surveillance and labor process control developed in one company to maintain discipline under conditions of teamwork. These last two articles, as well as the 1993 article by Barker all provide a critique of the rational exuberance around teamwork by reconnecting with fundamental Weberian concerns of authority, domination, and the negative effects of bureaucracy, and applying them to contemporary workplaces. All five of these intraorganizational articles in 1990s signal a rediscovery of the depth of Weber’s theoretical framework for organizational analysis.

Despite the publication of these intraorganizational articles and the seventeen social organization articles in recent years, it is too early to tell whether the Weberian canon that motivated mid-century organizational theorists is back on the rise. The long secular decline in the citations of and engagement with Weber, leading to the low points of the 1990s where citations were more often than not ceremonial, suggest that the relevance of Weber has indeed been downgraded—although perhaps the suggestion that his status is now akin to a medieval

jester is somewhat exaggerated. Although intraorganizational research citing Weber is still below its historical average (6% vs. 11%), and the percentage of organization-environment articles citing Weber remains at its relatively low average of three percent, Weberian inspired social organization articles are now above that genre's historical average (6% vs. 4.7%). However, due to the short life of organizational theory as a specialty area, it is hard to know whether current revival in Weber organizational theory will be fleeting or is the beginning of a new cycle of interest.

To try to gain further insight into this issue, we examined citations patterns of Weber more closely in the top two U.S. sociology journals (*American Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review*). We focused on these journals since organizational theory tends to be closely tied to the discipline of sociology, and trends in the broader discipline may have implications for the field of organizational theory. In contrast to the recent rise of Weber citations in ASQ and in organizational theory articles in the sociology journals shown in figure 1, figure 3 highlights that Weber citations in both organizational and non-organizational articles as a percentage of total articles published overall in the top sociology journals have been dramatically declining in the late 1990s. The latest citation percentage for non-organizations articles is around 4.5% as compared with the historical average of 9.2%. Similarly, the percentage of organizational theory articles citing Weber is 0.5% compared to a historical average of approximately 3.5%.

-----

Insert Figure 3 about here

-----

To situate this trend, we examined Weber citations in relation to other popular classical theorists: Durkheim, Marx and Simmel. Figure 4 shows two complementary plots that highlight both the aggregated and disaggregated citation trends for all four classical theorists. These plots make clear that Weber is consistently the most highly cited of all classical theorists, but that there has been a general eschewing of all classical theorists, including Weber, in the discipline of sociology since the late 1990s. The aggregate citation percentage was below 9% in 2002 compared with a historical average classical theorists citation rate of 30%. This general trend is also observed for all four classical theorists individually, with the one exception of Marx whose citation percentage began to decrease, not surprisingly, much earlier—in the early 1990s.

-----

Insert Figure 4 about here

-----

It is unclear why the most prolific publications in the discipline have begun to ignore classical theorists, but this raises a larger question about the perceived relevance of all classical theory among contemporary scholars, and consequently, the extent to which U.S. trained graduate students are being adequately exposed to the classics (see Stinchcombe 1986 on the functions of the classics). It is also difficult to know how this recent trend in the discipline will affect organizational theory, but the evidence suggests a decoupling between sociology and organizational theory. The declines in Weber citations in ASQ began much earlier than in sociology journals (early 1970s versus late 1990s), and the recent upswing in Weberian cited

organizational theory articles across all journals we examined is occurring at the same time as the overall decline in citations of the classics in sociology. While this raises a number of questions that are beyond the scope of this paper, we nonetheless believe that Weberian scholarship is relevant to the kinds of questions organizational theorists are currently grappling with and that much can be learned through a deeper engagement with his work. In the next section, we highlight some areas where engagement with Weber might prove to be particularly fruitful.

## **Discussion**

Overall, we believe that Weber's writings have undeniably provided a core inspiration to the development of organizational theory, even though much of organizational research, especially since the 1970s, has drawn on a somewhat constricted reading of his scholarly corpus. This claim has been echoed by other scholars. Scott (2003: 43) noted that "although Weber's writings had a profound influence on the development of organizational theory in the United States ... because his arguments were available in disconnected fragments, they were taken out of context and incorrectly interpreted." Similarly, Swedberg (1998: 169) opined that "contemporary organizational theory and economic sociology have a restricted picture of Weber's theory of organizations". Finally, in the early 1990s, Meyer (1990: 191) observed that "Weber has all but dropped from sight because the questions addressed by organizational researchers have not been and are not now the issues raised by Weber, good intentions and multiple citations notwithstanding."

However, we believe that these claims should be qualified in two ways. First, the engagement with Weber by organizational theorists has not historically been narrow, but has

*become* narrower over time. In the 1950s and 1960s, organization theorists were deeply engaged with Weber's theory of bureaucracy and situated historical analyses of capitalism and systems of domination. Beginning in the 1970s, the social organization studies and deeply engaged Weberian intraorganizational perspectives that had dominated have been eclipsed by work in the organization-environment tradition. Since the 1970s, the primary part of Weber's body of work that has been used by organizational theorists has been his theory of bureaucracy. Furthermore, the way in which this theory has been used has often been disconnected from the broader context in which Weber developed his analysis of bureaucracy. For the most part, since 1970s, organizational theorists have gradually eschewed a deep engagement with Weber's work.

Second, we would qualify the claim that Weber has been narrowly used by organizational theorists by highlighting the resiliency of the social organization tradition as well as the recent growth of social organization and intraorganizational articles, which has more broadly drawn inspiration from Weber's socio-historical approach to organizations and economic life. In addition to the recent revival of the social organization and intraorganizational genres, we see at least three specific developments in organizational theory where a deeper engagement with Weber's work would be particularly valuable: the rise of economic sociology, interest in connecting the study of social movements and organizations, and ongoing discussions about the social changes such as those related to postindustrialism that we face today.

During the last 20 years, economic sociology has witnessed a dramatic resurgence of interest, producing what is now called the *new* economic sociology. The growing number of readers and textbooks highlight the vitality and diversity of interest in this growing domain (e.g. Biggart 2002; Carruthers & Babb 2000; Granovetter & Swedberg 1992; Smelser & Swedberg 1994, forthcoming; Swedberg 2003). While sociology journals have seen a growing number of

economic sociology articles published since the 1980s, *Administrative Science Quarterly* itself published fifteen such articles from 1994-2000. Hence, this is an area of research that has become important in organization theory proper.

As Swedberg (1998) details, in addition to the historical analysis of capitalism and systems of domination that situated his theory of bureaucracy, Weber made the first systematic attempt at formulating a distinctive economic sociology. Weber developed an original theoretical framework for examining economic phenomenon by offering a sophisticated definition of economic social action and using this as the basis for examining economic organization generally. In particular, he was attempting to bridge the divide between the rational actor of economic theory and the socially constructed nature of reality, a divide that remains relatively unexplored (Swedberg 1998). Going back to Weber may not only provide inspiration for the development of more historical comparative approaches to economic sociology (e.g., see Stinchcombe 1983), but may provide a useful starting point for dialogue among structurally-oriented network research, rational choice approaches, and more culturally-oriented institutional scholarship. In particular, Weber's attention to the interpenetration of culture and rationality is apropos to research camps that emphasize one to the exclusion of the other (see Strang & Macy, 2001).

Another emerging area of research in organizational theory involves the bridging of the literatures on social movements and organizations (e.g., Fligstein 1996; Clemens 1997; Strang & Soule 1998; Davis & McAdam 2000; Rao, Morrill & Zald 2000; Lounsbury, Ventresca & Hirsch 2003; Davis et al. 2004). Of course, these literatures have been importantly connected by observers that noted how the initial ferment of movements often becomes packaged into more bureaucratically structured social movement organizations, leading to the co-optation of

movement leaders and participants as well as the subversion of the original goals and ideals of movements (Michels, [1911] 1962; Selznick 1949; Zald & Ash 1966). While Weber is not known as a social movement theorist per se, his theoretical discussions of routinization of charisma, mentioned earlier, as well as substantive and formal rationality are extremely relevant to this nascent effort.

*Formal* rationality is "the extent of quantitative calculation or accounting which is technically possible and which is actually applied" (Weber 1978: 85). In sharp contrast to means-ends calculations, *substantive* rationality draws attention to how social action is shaped by ultimate values. This kind of social action often motivates social movement activists. The tension between substantive and formal rationality becomes especially apparent when aspects of society that are considered sacred are profaned by equating their purported value to the price that these "products" can bring in the course of commercial exchange (Espeland & Stevens 1998). Such tensions have been identified in development of money (Simmel 1978), efforts to establish commercialized blood banks (Titmuss 1971), and the pricing of children (Zelizer 1994). Beyond the study of bureaucratization and co-optation, an analysis of the intertwining of different forms of rationality should also be crucially important to those interested in how social movements penetrate organizations, leading to changes in the structures, practices and ideas that shape economic activity (e.g., Zald & Berger 1978; Lounsbury 2001).

Finally, what is the relevance of Weber's theory of bureaucracy and his larger intellectual project given emerging literatures on varieties of capitalism (e.g., Hall & Soskice 2001) and the emergence of postindustrialism (e.g., Block 1990)? Some might argue that the transformation to a post-Fordist society has rendered Weber, who was observing the emergence of the mass production economy, peripheral to today's organizations. However, it is necessary to highlight

two important points when considering such a criticism. First, the extent to which bureaucracy has in fact become less prevalent remains a very open question. Although the last two decades have ushered in a variety of organizational forms that are much different from the ideal type of bureaucracy described by Weber a century ago, bureaucratic forms remain central and important ways of organizing.

For Weber, bureaucracy is a durable social form that is very successful in maintaining itself. In this sense, Weber's theory of bureaucracy still remains relevant. Second, and more significantly, if it is in fact true that we are entering an historical period that is and will be decidedly different from the bureaucratic, mass production economy, we are in a period of transformation that is similar in scope and intensity as the period of transformation from feudalism to capitalism that was at the center of Weber's analysis. Weber's intellectual framework provides a sharp tool that may help us understand the elements of the current transformation; this tool has seldom been used by the long list of scholars declaring the emergence of a new era (for an exception, see DiMaggio 2001).

To remain honest to Weber's legacy, organizational theorists need to examine the ways in which new forms of domination and authority are emerging in the postindustrial age, how these relate to rational-legal forms of domination, and how they relate to issues of power and stratification. In doing so, organizational researchers must examine how social, political, and economic realities influence the generation of new types of administration, organizational structures, and forms of domination, and in turn, how new organizational realities influence social and political life outside of organizations. Overall, we believe that Weberian scholarship is as useful today as ever. Perhaps we will never see the more in-depth engagement with Weber as we experienced with bureaucracy research and debates in the 1950s and 1960s, but this does

not detract from the relevance of Weber to contemporary scholarship. Nonetheless, many current researchers would be wise to revisit Weber's corpus since his foundational statements and empirical efforts provide many insights into current issues and problems in addition to offering many unsolved puzzles that should fuel future theoretical research and development. To wit, organizational theorists have an opportunity to demonstrate the relevance of Weber and enable a rediscovery of the classics in the discipline of sociology as a whole.

## References

- Adler, Paul, and Bryan Borys  
1996 'Two types of bureaucracy: Enabling and coercive'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41/1: 61-89.
- Albrow, Martin.  
1969 *Bureaucracy*. London: Pall Mall Press.
- Astley, W. Graham  
1985 'Administrative science as socially constructed truth'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30/4: 497-513.
- Bacharach, Samuel, and Michael Aiken  
1976 'Structural process constraints on influence in organizations: A level-specific analysis'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21/4: 623-642.
- Barker, James  
1993 'Tightening the iron cage: Concertive control in self-managing teams'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 38/3: 408-437.
- Baron, James, Alison Davis-Blake, and William Bielby  
1986 'The structure of opportunity: How promotion ladders vary within and among organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 31/2: 248-273.
- Baron, James, and William Bielby  
1986 'The proliferation of job titles in organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 31/4: 561-586.
- Becker, Selwyn, and Gerald Gordon  
1966 'An entrepreneurial theory of formal organizations part I: Patterns of formal organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 11/3: 315-344.
- Bendix, Reinhard  
1956 *Work and authority in industry*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bendix, Reinhard  
1960 *Max Weber: An intellectual portrait*. New York: Doubleday.
- Bennis, Warren  
1959 'Leadership theory and administrative behavior: The problem of authority'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4/3: 259-301.
- Biggart, Nicole Woolsey, and Gary Hamilton  
1984 'The power of obedience'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 29/4: 540-549.

- Biggart, Nicole Woolsey (Ed.)  
2002 *Readings in economic sociology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Blau, Judith  
1996 'Organizations as overlapping jurisdictions: Restoring reason in organizational accounts'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41/1: 172-179.
- Blau, Peter  
1955 *The dynamics of bureaucracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Block, Fred  
1990 *Postindustrial possibilities: A critique of economic discourse*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Boeker, Warren  
1989 'The development of institutionalization of subunit power in organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 34/3: 388-410.
- Boisot, Max, and John Child  
1996 'From fiefs to clans and network capitalism: Explaining China's emerging economic order'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41/4: 600-628.
- Carruthers, Bruce, and Sarah Babb  
2000 *Economy/society: Markets, meanings, and social structure*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Clegg, Stewart  
1981 'Organization and control'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 26/4: 545-562.
- Clemens, E.S.  
1997 *The people's lobby: Organizational innovation and the rise of interest group politics in the United States: 1890-1925*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Collins, Randall  
1986 *Weberian sociological theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Constas, Helen  
1961 'The U.S.S.R.: From charismatic sect to bureaucratic society'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 6/3: 282-298.
- Davis, Gerald, and Doug McAdam  
2000 'Corporations, classes and social movements after managerialism'. *Research in Organizational Behavior* 22/195-238.
- Davis, Gerald, Doug McAdam, W. Richard Scott, and Mayer Zald (Eds.)  
2004 *Social movements and organization theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Delaney, William

1963 'The development and decline of patrimonial and bureaucratic administration'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 7/4: 458-501.

Delaney, William, and Alan Finegold

1970 'Wall street lawyers in the provinces'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15/2: 191-201.

Derlien, Hans-Ulrich

1999 'On the selective interpretation of Max Weber's concept of bureaucracy in organization theory and administrative science' in *Dis-Embalming Max Weber*. P. Ahonen and K. Palonen (eds), 56-70. Jyväskylä, Finland: SoPhi.

Diamant, Alfred

1960 'The relevance of comparative politics to the study of comparative administration'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 5/1: 87-112.

DiMaggio, Paul

'Introduction: Making Sense of the Contemporary Firm and Prefiguring Its Future.' in *The 21st Century Organization*. P. DiMaggio (ed), 3-30. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Engel, Gloria

1970 'Professional autonomy and bureaucratic organization'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15/1: 12-21.

Espeland, W.N., and M.L. Stevens

1998 'Commensuration as a social process'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24/313-343.

Etzioni, Amitai

1959 'Authority structure and organizational effectiveness'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4/1: 43-67.

Ezzamel, Mahmoud, and Hugh Willmott

1998 'Accounting for teamwork: A critical study of group-based systems of organizational control'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43/2: 358-396.

Fayol, Henri

1949 *General and industrial management*. London: Pittman.

Fligstein, Neil

1996 'A political-cultural approach to market institutions'. *American Sociological Review* 61/656-673.

Fombrun, Charles

1986 'Structural dynamics within and between organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 31/3: 497-513.

Gerth, Clifford, and C. Wright Mills, editors and translators. 1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gouldner, Alvin  
1954 *Patterns of industrial bureaucracy*. New York: Free Press.

Granovetter, Mark, and Richard Swedberg  
1992 *The sociology of economic life*. San Francisco: Westview Press.

Hackman, Judith Dozier  
1985 'Power and centrality in the allocation of resources in colleges and universities'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 30/1: 61-77.

Hage, Jerald  
1965 'An axiomatic theory of organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 10/3: 289-320.

Hall, Peter, and Paul Soskice (eds)  
2001 *Varieties of capitalism: The institutional foundations of comparative advantage*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.

Hall, Richard  
1962 'Intraorganizational structural variation: Application of the bureaucratic model'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 7/3: 295-308.

Hall, Richard  
1967 'Some organizational considerations in the professional-organizational relationship'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 12/3: 461-478.

Heady, Ferrel  
1960 'Recent literature on comparative public administration'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 5/1: 134-154.

Holdaway, Edward, John Newberry, David Hickson, & Peter Heron  
1975 'Dimensions of organizations in complex societies: The educational sector'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 20/1: 37-58.

House, Robert, William Spangler, and James Woycke  
1991 'Personality and charisma in the U.S. presidency: A psychological theory of leader effectiveness'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 36/3: 364-396.

Hrebiniak, Lawrence  
1974 'Job technology, supervision, work-group structure'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19/3: 395-410.

Hrebiniak, Lawrence and William Joyce

1985 'Organizational adaptation: strategic choice and environmental determinism'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 30/3: 336-349.

Inkson, J.H., D.S. Pugh, & D.J. Hickson  
1970 'Organization context and structure: An abbreviated replication'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15/3: 318-329.

Janowitz, Morris  
1959 'Changing patterns of organizational authority: The military establishment'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 3/4: 473-493.

Janowitz, Morris and William Delaney  
1956 'The bureaucrat and the public: A study of informational perspectives'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 2/2: 141-162.

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss  
1977 *Men and women of the corporation*. New York: Basic Books.

Kaplan, Berton  
1968 'Notes on a non-Weberian model of bureaucracy: The case of a development bureaucracy'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 13/3: 471-483.

Kaplan, Berton  
1968 'A commentary on organizations and social development'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 13/3: 484-490.

Käsler, Dirk.  
1988 *Max Weber: An introduction to his life and work*, translated by Philippa Hurd. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Katz, Elihu, and S.N. Eisenstadt  
1960 'Some sociological observations on the response of Israeli organizations to new immigrants'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 5/1: 113-133.

Khandwalla, Pradip  
1974 'Mass output orientation of operations technology and organizational structure'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 19/1: 74-97.

Kimberly, John  
1976 'Organizational size and the structuralist perspective: A review, critique, and proposal'.  
*Administrative Science Quarterly* 21/4: 571-597.

Langton, John  
1984 'The ecological theory of bureaucracy: The case of Josiah Wedgwood and the British pottery industry'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 29/3: 330-354.

Leblebici, Huseyin, and Gerald Salancik

1982 'Stability in interorganizational exchange: Rulemaking processes of the Chicago board of trade'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 27/2: 227-242.

Levitt, Barbara, and Clifford Nass

1989 'The lid on the garbage can: Institutional constraints on decision making in the technical core of college-text publishers'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 34/2: 190-207.

Lippitt, Mary, and Kenneth Mackenzie

1976 'Authority-task problems'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21/4: 643-660.

Lipset, Seymour Martin, Martin Trow, and James Coleman

1962 *Union democracy*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Lounsbury, Michael

2001 'Institutional sources of practice variation: Staffing college and university recycling programs'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46/1: 29-58.

Lounsbury, Michael, and Marc Ventresca

2002 'Social structure and organizations revisited'. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* 19/3-36.

Lounsbury, Michael, Marc Ventresca, and Paul Hirsch

2003 'Social movements, field frames and industry emergence: A cultural-political perspective of U.S. recycling'. *Socio-Economic Review* 1/1: 71-104.

Martin, Joanne, Kathleen Knopoff, and Christine Beckman

1996 'An alternative to bureaucratic impersonality and emotional labor: Bounded emotionality at The Body Shop'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43/2: 429-469.

Masuch, Michael, and Perry LaPotin

1989 'Beyond garbage cans: An AI model of organizational choice'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 34/1: 38-67.

McCaffery, David

1982 'Corporate resources and regulatory pressures: Toward explaining a discrepancy'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 27/3: 398-419.

McEwen, William

1956 'Position conflict and professional orientation in a research organization'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 1/2: 208-224.

Mechanic, David

1962 'Sources of power of lower participants in complex organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 7/3: 349-364.

- Meindl, James, Sanford Ehrlich, and Janet Dukerich  
1985 'The romance of leadership'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30/1: 78-102.
- Meyer, Marshall  
1968 'The two authority structures of bureaucratic organization'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 13/2: 211-228.
- Meyer, Marshall  
1990 "The Weberian tradition in organizational research" in ) *Structures of Power: Papers in Honor of Peter M. Blau*. C. Calhoun, M. Meyer, and W. R. Scott (eds), 191-215. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Michels, Robert  
1962 *Political parties*. New York: Free Press.
- Mintzberg, Henry, and Alexandra McHugh  
1985 'Strategy formation in an adhocracy'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30/2: 160-197.
- Mizruchi, Mark, and Lisa Fein  
1999 'The social construction of organizational knowledge: A study of the uses of coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44/4: 653-683.
- Mohr, Lawrence  
1971 'Organizational technology and organizational structure'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 16/4: 444-459.
- Morgan, Gareth  
1980 'Paradigms, metaphors, and puzzle solving in organization theory'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25/4: 605-622.
- Organ, Dennis, and Charles Greene  
1981 'The effects of formalization on professional involvement: A compensatory process approach'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 26/2:
- Ouchi, William, and John Dowling  
1974 'Defining the span of control'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19/3: 357-365.
- Ouchi, William  
1977 'The relationship between organizational structure and organizational control'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 22/1: 95-113.
- Ouchi, William  
1980 'Markets, bureaucracies, and clans'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25/1: 129-141.
- Padgett, John  
1980 'Managing garbage can hierarchies'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25/4: 583-604.

- Peabody, Robert  
1962 'Perceptions of organizational authority: A comparative analysis'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 6/4: 463-482.
- Perrow, Charles  
2002 *Organizing America: Wealth, power, and the origins of corporate capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Peterson, Kent  
1984 'Mechanisms of administrative control over managers in educational organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 29/4: 573-597.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey, Gerald Salancik, & Huseyin Leblebici  
1976 'The effect of uncertainty on the use of social influence in organizational decision-making'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21/2: 227-245.
- Porte, Todd  
1965 'Conditions of strain and accommodation in industrial research organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 10/1: 21-38.
- Presthus, Robert  
1958 'Toward a theory of organizational behavior'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 3/1: 48-72.
- Presthus, Robert  
1961 'Weberian v. welfare bureaucracy in traditional society'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 6/1: 1-24.
- Pugh, D.S, D.J. Hickson, C.R. Hinings, K.M. Macdonald, C. Turner, & T. Lupton  
1963 'A conceptual scheme for organizational analysis'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 8/3: 289-315.
- Pugh, D.S, D.J. Hickson, C.R. Hinings, & C. Turner  
1968 'Dimensions of organizational structure'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 13/1: 65-105.
- Pugh, D.S, D.J. Hickson, C.R. Hinings, & C. Turner  
1969 'The context of organization structures'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 14/1: 91-114.
- Ranson, Stewart, Bob Hinings, and Royston Greenwood  
1980 'The structuring of organizational structures'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 25/1: 1-17.
- Rao, Hayagreeva, Calvin Morrill, and Mayer Zald  
2000 'Power plays: Social movements, collective action, and new organizational forms'. *Research in Organizational Behavior* 22/237-282.
- Riggs, Fred

1960 'Prismatic society and financial administration'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 5/1: 1-46.

Robins, James

1987 'Organizational economics: Notes on the use of transaction-cost theory in the study of organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32/1: 68-86.

Ruef, Martin, and W. Richard Scott

1988 'A multidimensional model of organizational legitimacy: Hospital survival in changing institutional environments'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43/4: 877-904.

Scott, W. Richard

1965 'Reactions to supervision in a heteronomous professional organization'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 10/1: 65-81.

Scott, W. Richard

1995 *Institutions and organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Scott, W. Richard

1996 'The mandate is still being honored: In defense of Weber's disciples'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41/1: 163-171.

Scott, W. Richard

2003 *Organizations: Rational, natural, and open systems*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Selznick, Philip

1949 *TVA and the grass roots*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sewell, Graham

1996 'The discipline of teams: The control of team-based industrial work through electronic and peer surveillance'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 43/2: 397-428.

Simmel, Georg

1978 *The philosophy of money*. New York: Routledge.

Simons, Tal, and Paul Ingram

1997 'Organization and ideology: Kibbutzism and hired labor, 1951-1965'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 42/4: 784-813.

Simpson, Richard

1959 'Vertical and horizontal communication in formal organizations'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 4/2: 188-196.

Smelser, Neil, and Richard Swedberg (eds)

1994 *The handbook of economic sociology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Stern, Robert, and Stephen Barley  
1996 'Organizations and social systems: organization theory's neglected mandate'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41/1: 146-162.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur  
1959 'Bureaucratic and craft administration of production: A comparative study'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 3/4: 509-525.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur  
'Social structure and organizations' in Handbook of Organizations. J. G. March (ed), 142-193.  
Chicago: Rand McNally
- Stinchcombe, Arthur  
1983 *Economic sociology*. New York: Academic Press.
- Stinchcombe, Arthur  
1986 *Stratification and organization: Selected papers*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Strang, David  
1987 'The administrative transformation of American education: School district consolidation, 1938-1980'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 32/3: 352-366.
- Strang, David, and Sarah Soule  
1998 'Diffusion in organizations and social movements: From hybrid corn to poison pills'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 24/265-290.
- Strang, David, and Michael Macy  
2001 'In search of excellence: Fads, success stories, and adaptive emulation'. *American Journal of Sociology* 107/147-182.
- Swedberg, Richard  
1998 *Max Weber and the idea of economic sociology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Swedberg, Richard  
2003 *Principles of economic sociology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Thompson, Victor  
1965 'Bureaucracy and innovation'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 10/1: 1-20.
- Thornton, Russell  
1970 'Organizational involvement and commitment to organization and profession'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15/4: 417-426.
- Titmuss, R.M.  
1971 *The gift relationship*. New York: Vantage.

Tolbert, Pamela

1985 'Institutional environments and resource dependence: Sources of administrative structure in institutions of higher education'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 30/1: 1-13.

Tyler, William

1973 'Measuring organizational specialization: The concept of role variety'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 18/3: 383-392.

Weber, Max

1930 *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Weber, Max

1946 *The theory of economic and social organization*, edited and translated by A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons. New York: Oxford University Press.

Weber, Max

1951 *The religion of china: Confucianism and Taoism*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Weber, Max

1952 *Ancient Judaism*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Weber, Max

1958 *The religion of India: The sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Weber, Max

1978 *Economy and Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Weiker, Walter

1968 'The ottoman bureaucracy: Modernization and reform'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 13/3: 451-470.

White, Paul

1974 'Resources as determinants of organizational behavior'. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19/3: 366-379.

Zald, Meyer, and Roberta Ash

1966 'Social movement organizations: Growth, decay and change'. *Social Forces* 44/327-341.

Zald, Meyer and Michael Berger

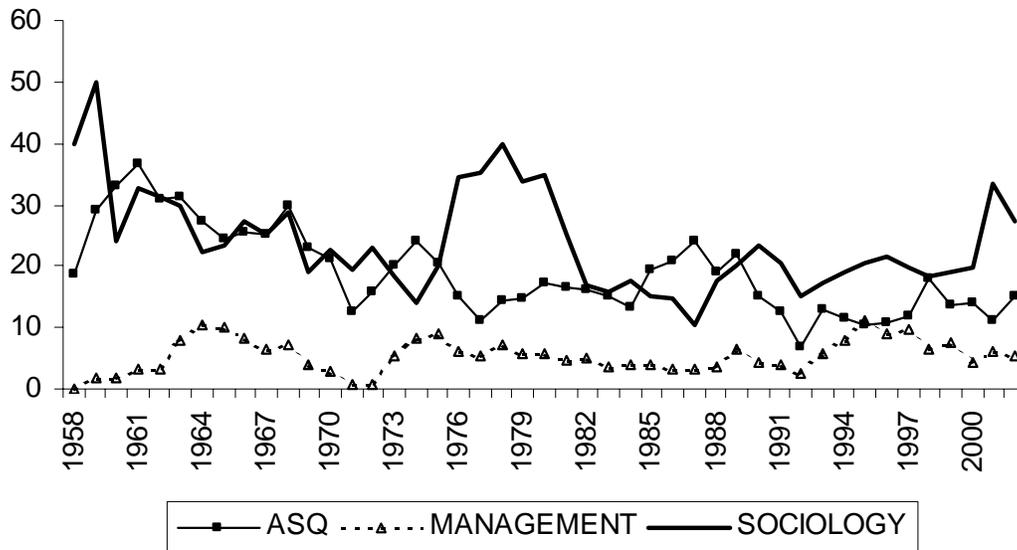
1978 'Social movements in organizations: Coup d'etat, insurgency, and mass movements'. *American Journal of Sociology* 83/4: 823-861.

Zelizer, Viviana

1994 *Pricing the priceless child*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Figure 1

The Percentage of Organizational Theory Articles that Cite Weber in the Administrative Science Quarterly, Management, and Sociology Journals<sup>y\*</sup>

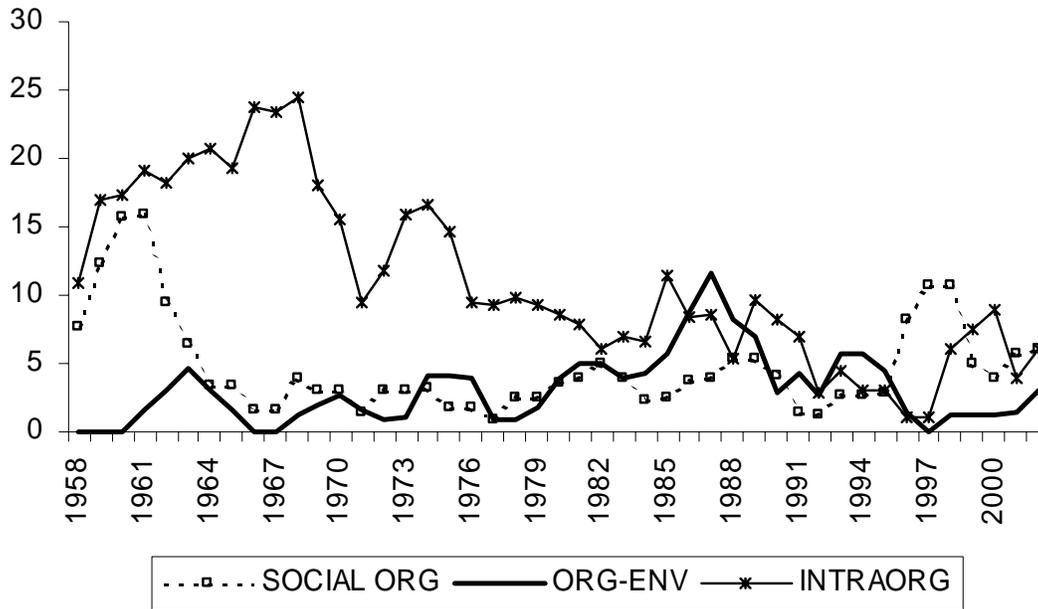


<sup>y</sup> Management journals include *Academy of Management Journal* and *Academy of Management Review*. Sociology journals include *American Sociological Review* and *American Journal of Sociology*.

\* Data are 3 year smoothed

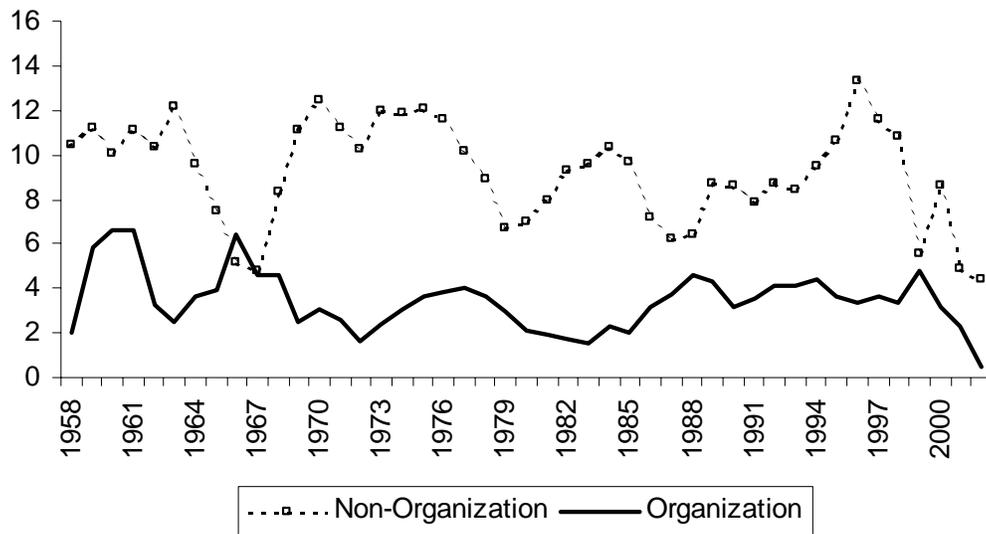
**Figure 2**

**The Percentage of Articles that Cite Weber in ASQ by Social Organization, Organization-Environment and Intraorganizational Content Streams\***



\* Data are 3 year smoothed

**Figure 3**  
**Organization and Non-Organization Articles**  
**that Cite Weber as a Percentage of Total Articles Published in**  
*American Journal of Sociology and American Sociological Review\**

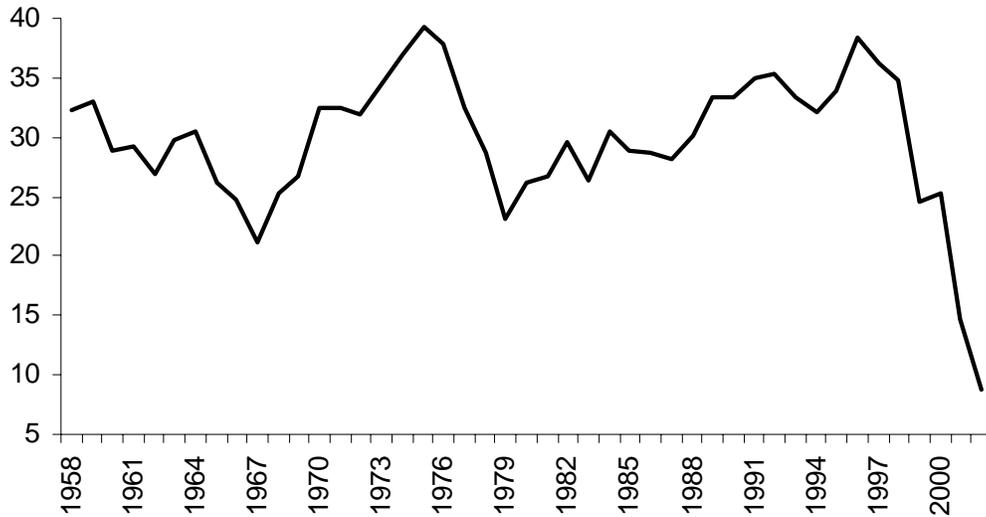


\* Data are 3 year smoothed

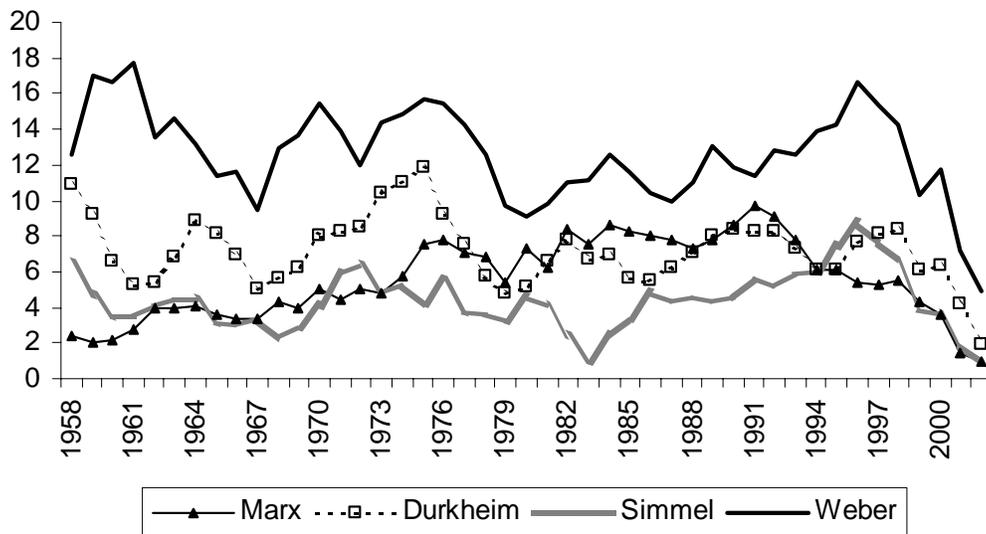
Figure 4

The Percentage of Articles that Cite Weber, Marx, Durkheim and Simmel in *American Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociological Review* \*

Aggregation of all four citation percentages



Disaggregation of all four citation percentages



\* Data are 3 year smoothed

