THE STRUCTURATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZING: IDENTITY, POWER, AND KNOWLEDGE NEGOTIATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

by

Carlos Anthony Tarin Jr.

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STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

The dissertation of Carlos Anthony Tarin Jr. has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

Heather E. Canary, Chair 02/18/2015

Leonard Hawes, Member 02/18/2015

Connie Bullis, Member 02/18/2015

Amy A. Bergerson, Member 02/18/2015

Stacey K. Sowards, Member 02/18/2015

and by Kent A. Ono, Chair/Dean of the Department/College/School of Communication

and by David B. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School.
This study is an exploration of an environmental context that is becoming increasingly prevalent: environmental nongovernmental organizations (ENGOs). The focus of this analysis is Rare, an international ENGO that sponsors conservation and sustainability initiatives in developing nations. Rare employs a unique methodology for promoting environmental awareness and engagement that involves a focus on localized strategies that are respondent to the barriers or needs of particular communities and populations. The organization’s primary initiative, known as the Pride Campaign, emphasizes a combination of local knowledge, social marketing, rhetoric, and behavior change strategies to promote community-driven environmental engagement. This analysis draws on structuration theory and structurating activity theory to make sense of how members of the organization negotiate their identity, as well as the social and structural constraints evident in organizational conflict as the organization continues to grow. Activity system contradictions emerge on several levels including the ways in which members are responding to the implementation of a new communication protocol, increasing uncertainty about program curriculum, and tensions between the organization’s mission to focus on localization and upward scaling. By focusing on the tensions that exist within and across Rare as an organization, this study extends current theoretical and praxiological approaches to environmental organizing.
Dead power is everywhere among us – in the forest, chopping down the songs; at night in
the industrial landscape, wasting and stiffening the new life; in the streets of the city,
throwing away the day. We wanted something different for our people: not to find
ourselves an old, reactionary republic, full of ghost-fears, the fears of death and the fears
of birth. We want something else.

-Muriel Rukeyser (1996), *The Life of Poetry*
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CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND
RESEARCH CONCEPTUALIZATION

Rare is an international environmental nongovernmental organization (ENGO) that works to develop conservation and sustainability-related initiatives in developing tropical and subtropical nations. The organization traces its history to the 1973 when Rare was an acronym for Rare Animal Relief Effort. In the early 1980s Paul Butler (who now serves as the organization’s Senior Vice President) began to design community outreach tools in hopes of saving the endangered Saint Lucia parrot. Butler’s model of community engagement, which was later termed a “Pride Campaign,” has become Rare’s signature outreach strategy. In 2001, Rare launched its first regional training program in Great Britain to train English-speaking conservation workers from numerous locales. Regional centers have now been established in Mexico, Indonesia, China, Brazil, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Micronesia. The organization “has now gone from launching 2-3 campaigns annually to supporting 73 in 2010 alone” (“History,” n.d.).

As focal points of Rare’s outreach efforts, Pride campaigns are an important site for interrogating the intersection of organizational communication and environmental communication. Pride campaigns are developed, implemented, and assessed over the
course of 2 years as members of the organization receive training on a variety of topics ranging from social marketing theory to qualitative and quantitative research methods to rhetoric. Rather than imposing a uniform engagement strategy, Rare’s model is predicated upon engaging local communities by partnering with local conservation organizations in each region. That is, a significant aspect of Rare’s operations exist outside of the organization entirely; pre-existing separate organizations are screened for viability before training begins and are responsible for implementing independent campaigns in consultation with Rare. After partner organizations agree to join Rare, they nominate a member of their staff to participate in a 2 year program designed to implement a Pride campaign. The curriculum for training Pride Campaign Managers (PCMs) is standardized globally, but allows for some flexibility in the development of outreach strategies that are intended to reflect the particular social and ecological context of each campaign site. Over the course of the 2 year implementation period, PCMs receive no fewer than 15 weeks of university training that provides instruction on identifying barriers for participation, advanced project management, conflict resolution, marketing and media relations (“How Rare Provides Training,” n.d.). Each phase of university instruction is punctuated by field work phases that allow PCMs to survey local community members, establish a comprehensive strategic plan for campaign implementation, and assess behavioral and attitudinal shifts (“How Rare Provides Training,” n.d.). In their study of Rare’s Pride model, Hayden and Deng (2013) found that the campaigns were successful at significantly altering baseline knowledge and attitude objectives; the campaigns, in other words, have a clearly demonstrated success record.
This type of environmental organizing is noteworthy for two reasons. First, because each campaign addresses distinct socioecological problems endemic to the partner organization’s region, variability and fluidity are inherent considerations in how projects are designed, implemented, and assessed. As a result, this approach uniquely enables grassroots organizing centered on community empowerment. Second, the lack of standardization in these campaigns encourages PCMs to use communication theory and practice strategically. In rejecting a “one size fits all” approach to community engagement, partner organizations are able to draw specific systemic, economic, and cultural resources in their region to construct adaptive persuasive appeals.

Two recent organizational changes are of particular interest to this study. First, Rare has recently implemented a rebranding effort that is meant to encapsulate the shifts in scope and practice that have been occurring within the organization for quite some time. For instance, Rare has adopted a new logo that is meant to visually demonstrate the organization’s work on people, habitats, species diversity, and freshwater and oceans. The organization has also changed its mission statement (“Rare inspires people so people and nature thrive.”). These changes to Rare’s identity are intended to align the public image with the five key values that undergird the organization’s activity. As their website explains, “They support our mission, shape our culture and reflect what Rare and our staff hold as important. It means we dream big, we hold ourselves accountable, and we stay positive even in the face of tremendous challenges. They represent a fundamental piece of Rare’s brand” (“Rare’s Values,” n.d.). This shift in organizational identity must be, I argue, an important consideration. Second, the organization has launched a major initiative called “Fish Forever” that is intended to focus on coastal
fisheries. Working in collaboration with the Environmental Defense Fund and the Sustainable Fisheries Group at the University of California, Santa Barbara, Fish Forever is a “comprehensive, locally led conservation opportunity, where people can simultaneously strengthen local economies, improve food security and protect nature” (“Fish Forever,” n.d.). The initiative is an important departure from Rare’s typical Pride model for at least two reasons. First, during the initial rollout of the initiative all Pride campaigns were focused on coastal fisheries. This type of widespread, global coordination is unprecedented for the organization (McElhinny, personal communication, November 23, 2013). Second, and perhaps more importantly, the Fish Forever initiative will attempt to create institutional reform by lobbying for changes in policy. Pride campaigns have typically focused on engaging publics, rather than attempting to sway legislative outcomes; this initiative, thus, represents an expansion of the Pride domain in a way that incorporates new systems.

This project is an instrumental case study of Rare and the organizational processes that are unfolding as the organization attempts to scale its conservation initiatives in new and unprecedented ways. As a research site, Rare provides a unique opportunity to explore the communicative dimensions of environmental organizing in several distinct ways. First, the organization’s trademark focus on localized conservation cannot be overlooked. Larger environmental organizations such as the Environmental Defense Fund and Greenpeace tend to utilize conservation approaches that are focused on creating widespread, universal appeal (Bryant, 2002; Dreiling et al., 2008) or scientifically-driven solutions. Comparatively, Rare is focused on finding community-based solutions that are driven by endemic social, political, and economic barriers to positive conservation
behavior. Thus, Rare’s strategic mission is distinct from other mid- to large-size ENGOs. Second, the organization’s rapid growth provides a unique opportunity to explore communication processes occurring in organizations in transition. Scholars such as Lewis (2011) note the importance of examining organizations that are undergoing significant change or transformation because they serve as potential new sites for expanding organizational communication theory. Thus, the tensions and contradictions that are emerging for Rare during this period of tremendous growth can potentially provide a new theoretical lens and add insight to common organizational processes that did not exist before. In short, Rare’s approach to organizing and its status as a rapidly evolving organization make it a unique and compelling site for analysis.

Research Goals

The opportunity to study an organization like Rare that utilizes an exceptionally unique approach for creating community engagement on conservation-related issues is quite uncommon. As I detail below, Rare’s organizational structure and practices serve as a site rife with analytic potential. Still, it is important to address the key goals that this project aims to accomplish.

The first major goal of this research project is to contribute to scholarly understandings of ENGOs. Although the environment is becoming an increasingly popular topic in the communication discipline, scholars have yet to seriously consider the implications of ENGOs. Organizational scholars, for instance, have tended to focus on issues such as corporate social responsibility (Hendry, 2006; Verboven, 2011) or eco-managerial practices (Brummel, Nelson & Jakes, 2012; Cerin, 2002, Danter et al., 2000;).
Similarly, environmental communication scholars have tended to focus on topics such as the rhetoric of activist groups (DeLuca, 1999; Pezzullo, 2009), stakeholder representation (Senecah, 2004), or public participation (Callister, 2013; Depoe, 2004; Norton, 2008). Although these issues may be tacitly connected to the study of ENGOs, scholars have yet to focus on ENGOs as a primary locus of interrogation. This is particularly problematic because, according to Bryant (2002), the number and popularity of ENGOs has been on the rise due to the widespread perception that they are more likely to work toward the common good, achieve tangible results, and uphold positive values such as altruism and compassion (p. 629). Whereas government-sponsored environmental interventions are widely regarded as reckless, unwieldy, or insufficient, ENGOs provide alternative avenues for environmental engagement that are tailored to the interests and values of individual constituents. I posit that ENGOs are a distinct type of organization shaped by unique circumstances (i.e., the precariousness of environmental affairs, the complexity of issues like climate change, the implications of neoliberalism, etc.) that have, to this point, yet to be thoroughly investigated by organizational and environmental communication scholars. A primary goal of this project, then, is to consider both the unique theoretical and practical dimensions of ENGOs as a site of inquiry within and across organizational and environmental communication literature(s).

Second, my goal is that this line of research might offer praxiological contributions to organizational and environmental scholars. In line with Craig (1989, 1995, 2001), I understand communication to be a practical field in which scholarship ideally works to transform the theory-practice relationship. I seek to connect communication theory and research to the broader social world in such a way that
insights derived from this study might be used to meaningfully transform organizational practice(s). In attending to the immediacy of environmental problems and the potentiality of ENGOs to instigate change, my goal is to extend theoretical considerations into practical domains to strengthen future theorizing and public engagement (Craig, 1989; Kuhn & Ashcraft, 2003). Additionally, this project responds to recent calls by environmental communication scholars for scholarship that engages practical issues through interdisciplinary, trans-theoretical lenses (Cox, 2007; Peterson, Peterson, & Peterson, 2007; Senecah, 2007). In using Rare as a site for research on environmental organizations, my goal is that key insights from this project might be used to transform practices of organizations, broadly, and ENGOs, specifically.

In this chapter, I articulate the theoretical framework that orients this study, as well as the key research areas that are germane to my analysis. Broadly, this chapter is separated into two sections. In the first section, I provide an overview of the the two major theoretical bodies – structuration theory and structurating activity theory (SAT) – which are being utilized as heuristics to guide and frame my analysis. Both of these theories demonstrate the complex ways in which discourse and interaction are used to sustain practices within and across social systems. These theories are, thus, useful because they point to a dynamic conceptualization of organizational practice(s) in which meanings are constantly negotiated by members and shaped by formal, institutional mechanisms such as policy and organizational identity. In the second section of this chapter, I review literature on the three key issues focal to this project: organizational identity and identification, power and resistance, and organizational knowledge. In
reviewing this literature, my goal is to emphasize the key contributions of this project. I conclude this chapter by articulating my primary research questions.

Theoretical Framework

In this section I outline key concepts from the two theoretical frameworks that are used to orient this study: structuration theory and structurating activity theory (SAT). These theories provide numerous analytic tools for discerning the ways in which discourses and practices can influence organizational outcomes. Rather than relying on a singular theoretical perspective to guide my analysis, I have opted to read these theories together. Although Giddens’ (1984) work provides many meaningful interpretive mechanisms, a solely structurational perspective would likely be limiting for a study that aims to examine interorganizational discourses and practices. By incorporating SAT (Canary, 2010) into my analysis, my goal is that this study will not only be able to cogently explore meanings that exist within a particular organizational context, but also how those meanings are constituted, sustained, and challenged across various systems of activity. Given that Rare’s organizational structure involves a coordination of activity on a number of levels (e.g., from campaign sites to regional offices, between affiliate organizations and Rare, between affiliate organizations and local communities), SAT is a logical and warranted move in the development of this project’s theoretical trajectory. In what follows, I highlight the key concepts of each theory in order to demonstrate the salience of these perspectives within the context of my project.
Structuration Theory

In *The Constitution of Society* Giddens (1984) outlines the key elements of structuration theory as a way of explicating the complex, interconnected relationship between human agency and social institutions. At the heart of his theory is the notion that “The social systems in which structure is recursively implicated comprise the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across time and space” (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). When viewed from this perspective, organizations are conceptualized as distinct social systems that are simultaneously produced and reproduced through communicative interaction (Poole & McPhee, 2005). A structurational analysis of organizational practices, thus, involves an examination of the symbolic activities that maintain and perpetuate (or transform) the structures that enable and constrain particular behaviors. As Scott and Myers (2010) explain, “Structures are best thought of as formal and informal rules, symbolic resources, and sets of transformation relations found in ongoing social interactions and practices” (p. 81). Within the field of organizational communication structuration theory has been taken up as a theoretical framework to explore a variety of issues such as work-life balance (Kirby & Krone, 2002), information technology in the workplace (Golden, 2013; Poole & DeSanctis, 2004), and intra-organizational groups (Silva & Sias, 2010). An explanation of the entirety of structuration theory is, obviously, outside the scope of this dissertation. However, two theoretical constructs – the duality of structure and time-space distanciation – are particularly germane to the issues explored in this study.
The Duality of Structure

Broadly, the duality of structure refers to the mutually constitutive and implicative relationship between agents and social structures. According to Giddens (1984), individual actions and agency should not be thought of as distinct from social structures. On the contrary, structures enable (resources) and constrain (rules) individual action in a process that recursively structures the organization of day-to-day life. In this way, Giddens explains, the “structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize. Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling” (1984, p. 25). Within this theoretical schema the rules and resources employed by individual agents (structures) are reproduced in routinized social practices (systems) that perpetuate and govern the continuity or transformation of the structures themselves (structuration). This process is a highly communicative one insofar as interactions occurring within the system are perpetuated or contested according to the legitimization of particular symbolic meanings. Thus, while agents will typically reproduce structures through day-to-day interaction, there remains the potential for structural transmutation. As Giddens (1984) contends,

In reproducing structural properties, agents also reproduce the conditions that make such action possible. Structure has no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity. The duality of structure is always the main grounding of the continuities in social reproduction across time-space. It in turn presupposes the reflexive monitoring of agents in, and as constituting, the durée of daily social activity. (pp. 26-27)

The duality of structure suggests that systems are being perpetually (re)negotiated and (re)produced through interaction that may eventually alter the structure itself over time.

Given that agents possess the capacity to enact some transmutation of social structures, a brief consideration of power in structuration theory is warranted. Following
Foucault, Giddens (1984) argues that power is best conceptualized as “regularized relations of autonomy and dependence between actors or collectivities in contexts of social interaction” (p. 16). In this formulation all agents are afforded some level of power that can be used to influence activities within the system, albeit in typically limited ways. Because social systems are rarely, if ever, egalitarian, the distribution of power tends to be ordered hierarchically. Those who are afforded structural resources are more readily able to influence the structure itself. That is, those who are able to garner system resources and legitimacy within the system are in possession of power and can mobilize resources to influence the social system. According to Giddens (1984), the degree to which an individual agent may be able to “penetrate” the conditions of social reproduction are contingent upon

(1) the means of access actors have to knowledge in virtue of their social location; (2) the modes of articulation of knowledge; (3) circumstances relating to the validity of the belief-claims taken as “knowledge”; (4) factors to do with the means of dissemination of available knowledge. (p. 91)

A structurational analysis of organizational practice would, thus, provide a way of understanding the ways in which agency is simultaneously constrained and enabled (across various levels) by social systems.

**Time-Space Distanciation**

Throughout his work, Giddens (1984) is careful to attend to the implications of time and space on the formation and reproduction of social systems. Routinized daily practices and discursive engagements unfold in time and space in ways that render certain trajectories or “life-cycles” meaningful within the social milieu. The symbolic meaning ascribed to particular locales disciplines actors in such a way that time and space become
taken up as a resource within a system. Thus, Giddens (1984) explains

Examined as resources (and thus, I would say, implicated in both the generation and distribution of power), such factors condition the webs of interaction formed by the trajectories of the daily, weekly, monthly and overall life paths of individuals in their interactions with one another. (p. 112).

Within an organizational context, time and space carry significant implications for the explanation of localized, face-to-face interactions insofar as actors recognize and conform to the symbolic rules established in systems. This is why, for example, clear demarcations between public and private life matters may resonate more powerfully in some organizational contexts than in others (Kirby & Krone, 2002); the symbolic power of time and space comes to function as a structurating element that reproduces a tendency toward certain interactional norms.

Increasingly, however, routinized social interactions are becoming far more complex due to the widespread proliferation of technology in recent years. Interestingly, despite writing decades ago, Giddens (1984) anticipated the complex, often fragmented, forms of social interaction that have come to dominate the contemporary epoch. He explains, “In contemporary societies individuals are positioned within a widening range of zones, in home, workplace, neighborhood, city, nation-state and worldwide system, all displaying features of a system integration which increasingly relates the minor details of daily life to social phenomena of massive time-space extension” (Giddens, 1984, p. 85). The diversity of contexts in which agents move through/within in their daily lives has, thus, created what Giddens refers to as time-space distanciation. Distanciation describes the process whereby interactions become increasingly spread across time and space in such a way that distinctive social systems become interconnected. Accordingly, this degree of complexity and fragmentation necessitates that, “Such multiple systems may be
wholly ‘internal’ to societies, or they may cross-cut the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, forming a diversity of possible modes of connection between societal totalities and intersocietal systems” (Giddens, 1984, p. 164). What this is meant to suggest is that, in the contemporary, globalized era, assessment of the spatiotemporal elements legitimized within systems must also take into consideration the extra-systemic contexts. Participating within and across these intersocietal systems is a process fraught with much conflict. As an operational theoretical construct, time-space distanciation is relevant within the context of this study precisely because it demonstrates the complexity of social interactions occurring when PCMs engage with local constituents while simultaneously cohering to communicative norms of the organization.

**Structurating Activity Theory**

Given the potential for interorganizational conflict that arises when distinct social systems attempt to coordinate and negotiate meanings and power, it is vital to examine the multilayered and sometimes conflicting discourses that circulate within organizational contexts. Although structuration theory provides a meaningful framework for assessing the influence of discourse and practice within organizational structures, the theory is limited in its ability to describe the complex, multilayered communication processes that arise when multiple social systems interact. To this end, I draw on structurating activity theory (SAT; Canary, 2010) as a way of understanding the development of practices and discourse within and across typical organizational boundaries. SAT is “an integration of structuration theory and CHAT [cultural-historical activity theory]” that explains the interconnectedness of social action and social structure within and across various systems.
of activity. Whereas “structuration theory reveals how the use of particular system
elements, as rules and resources, reproduces or transforms social features” and CHAT,
“typically reveals how ongoing activity occurs through the mediation of system
elements,” SAT provides a theoretical foundation for articulating both (Canary, 2010, p.
29). This multilayered approach for interrogating discourses and activities within social
systems provides a “framework that is both explanatory and practical for communication
research” (Canary, 2010b, p. 186). Although a full explanation of SAT is outside the
scope of this dissertation, two primary constructs are useful for explaining the utility of
SAT in the context of this study: contradictions and intersections of activity systems.

Contradictions

SAT maintains that contradictions are important sites for investigating the ways in
which structural and system properties can transform to facilitate change within an
organizational context. Although Giddens (1984) noted that structural contradictions are
inherent in all social structures (e.g., in the contradiction that exists between the public
and private sphere), structuration theory does not fully address the more nuanced ways in
which contradictions might operate within and impinge upon systems of activity. By
contrast, a primary construct of SAT is that contradictions can be understood as
generative mechanisms. That is, because contradictions often deter organizational
stability or create conditions wherein conflict might emerge, they are important sites for
understanding how an organization responds and transforms in response to emergent
tension. This is not to suggest that all contradictions are negative. On the contrary, as
Canary (2010, 2010b) suggests, contradictions can often be used generatively for
exploring the ways in which organizational practices might be improved to more fully respond to emergent contextual factors.

SAT distinguishes various types of contradiction that might exist within and across systems of activity. Primary contradictions “represent inherent oppositional tensions that exist within individual elements of activity systems” (Canary, 2010b, p. 187). This form of contradiction is, arguably, the most common and represents the type of disjuncture that exists as a result of system features. Secondary contradictions emerge “when new elements are introduced into the activity system” (Canary, 2010b, p. 187). When these new elements are introduced, they highlight latent tensions that pre-existed within the activity system and, thus, require some form of organizational transformation in order to be resolved. The implementation of a new policy or strategic vision, for instance, might create circumstances in which traditional practices are no longer legitimized and, thus, may require a change in system practices in order to reconcile organizational tension. Tertiary contradictions “occur when a more advanced object or motive is introduced into the activity” (Canary, 2010b, p. 188). Unlike secondary contradictions, tertiary contradictions cannot be reconciled with existing system resources or practices; the activity system itself must adapt in order to respond to emergent tensions. For example, an organization that undergoes change from a hierarchical structure into a more horizontal, egalitarian structure would create a tertiary contradiction because the rules and resources that previously governed the activity system would no longer be applicable. Tertiary contradictions are common when radical change efforts are made within an organization. Finally, quaternary contradictions “emerge between activity systems when tensions exist between the central activity of one system and
activities of other systems” (Canary, 2010b, p. 188). This type of contradiction occurs when a clash between two or more distinct activity systems begins to act as a hindrance on the maintenance of a system’s activity. Each of these contradictions, I argue, are important vectors for understanding how organizations are able to respond to internal and external tensions.

Intersections of Activity Systems

A second major construct of SAT concerns the complex interconnections that exist between various activity systems. According to Canary (2010), “Complex work organizations cannot be viewed adequately as single activity systems; rather, organizations should be seen as networks, of overlapping, loosely connected activity systems that create ‘activity networks’” (p. 36). Rather than understanding organizations as discrete entities in which meanings and activities are neatly bounded, SAT suggests that activities are always mediated and negotiated in the context of intra- and extra-organizational practices. For example, a typical structurational view of a university might examine the discourses and practices that shape and reproduce activity solely on the university level; that is, interaction between administrators, faculty, staff, and students would be primary considerations. On the contrary, a structurating activity approach would extend the scope of analysis to examine extra-systemic entities such as the local community, the state legislature, and state or federal policies that might effectually impinge upon the practices of the university. In this way, SAT provides an interesting framework for understanding the ways in which activity, authority, and meaning are negotiated in complex and sometimes obscure ways. As Canary (2010) notes, “By
examining collaborations across different activity systems, one can identify issues of priorities, identities, operational methods, authority and influence” (p. 36). SAT can, in this sense, be considered a logical extension of structuration theory insofar as externalized factors are viewed as influences on the activity of any social system.

Recognizing the intersection of different activity systems is an important theoretical distinction because it acknowledges the messy, complex nature of contemporary organizational life. I do not mean to suggest that organizational theory still relies on conceptualization of organizations as containers. Rather, SAT provides a supplemental framework for understanding how practices and activities of organizations shape and are shaped by a constant circulation of external and internal communicative forces. This is, perhaps, the greatest analytic strength of SAT. As Canary (2010) suggests, “Intersections between activity systems cannot adequately be theorized by relying solely on the mediation of individual activity system elements. Larger structural features come into play as members of diverse systems interact in ongoing activity” (p. 26). As an explanatory mechanism, this construct of SAT is of great importance in the context of this study. Because Rare’s Pride campaigns specifically target local communities while simultaneously coordinating activity in accordance with organizational directives, campaign managers are, at least implicitly, negotiating their role and identity at the intersection of numerous activity systems.

**Review of Literature**

Having traced the central constructs of the theoretical frameworks that will orient this research, I now address the scholarly domains that are of interest to this project.
Although an organization as complex as Rare could be used as a site for interrogating any number of issues, I focus on three key areas of contemporary organizational communication scholarship: organizational identity and identification, power and resistance, and organizational knowledge. My selection of these domains was guided, primarily, by preliminary assessment of the research site and the issues that I believed were most salient for analysis. In what follows, I trace key strands of scholarship and theorization on these issues in order to warrant their relevance in the context of this study.

Organizational Identity and Identification

According to Albert and Whetten’s seminal essay (1985), organizational identity can be defined as members’ shared understandings of what is central, enduring, and distinctive in their organization. Initial theorization of organizational identity assumed a sense of relative stability in which identity was conceived as something tangible that could be observed, experienced, and measured. Since that time, identity management has been discussed by a number of prominent scholars who have expanded our understanding of identity to include a variety of perspectives such as functionalism (He & Brown, 2013), postmodern (Coupland & Brown, 2005), and interpretivist (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). The lack of consensus regarding the definition of organizational identity has resulted in distinct, conflicting, sometimes overlapping, epistemological and ontological premises about the term and its related theoretical domains. For the purposes of this project, I borrow Sillince and Brown’s (2009) definition of organizational identity as “socially and symbolically constructed using rhetoric to achieve identity transformation and management” (p. 1832). Unlike more functionalist approaches to organizational
identity, this perspective assumes that identity and its related meanings may be “tacit or explicit, taken for granted, or more consciously worked on” (Sillince & Brown, 2009, p. 1831) in a fluctuating process that strives to maintain some degree of stability or order. In this sense, organizational identities can be conceptualized both as the product of fluid discursive interactions, or more likely, as a rhetorical construct guided by organizational leaders striving to direct what they hope the organization might become or represent.

In this regard, the central function of an organization’s identity deals with the question, “who are we?” This seemingly basic notion, however, belies a much more complex compositional reality. According to Cheney and Christensen (2001), organizational identity is simultaneously shaped by internal and external communicative forces that vie for legitimacy and meaning within and around the organization. They explain, “external organizational communication can be thought as a subset of those processes specifically concerned with meaning construction by way of an ‘external environment’” (2001, p. 234-235). This external communication, however, simultaneously reflects values and perceptions that exist for members of the organization and those outside of it. That is, organizational identity formation can be thought of as a process that occurs multidirectionally: internally as organizations strive to create a cohesive, stable identity legitimized by members (which may be articulated in documents like a mission statement), and externally, as they try to gain legitimacy and a recognition from the broad social community (Cheney & Christensen, 2001). This conceptualization of organizational identity is significant insofar as it demonstrates the fluidity of meanings associated with any organization. This problem is echoed by Putnam and Fairhurst (2001) when they explain that, “organizational identity and corporate image evolves
through the interplay of texts and the relationships that exist among multiple signs...[and] treats organizing as developing chains of signifiers that represent belief systems and characterize corporate identity and images” (2001, p. 102-103). In other words, due to the reciprocal nature of the organizational identity formation process, external communicative appeals become an issue of vital importance for shaping organizational directives and, more importantly, how an organization is able to engage external publics.

Understanding an organization's externally-oriented communication patterns is a necessary dimension in assessing identity and interactions within a larger sociopolitical environment. According to Sillince and Brown (2009), “Articulations of identity occur in conversations between insiders and between insiders and outsiders, and may be communicated in various ways – orally, through memos, letters, reports, videos, web based materials, etc.” (p. 1832). Scholars recognize the rhetorical dimension of external communication as the strategic and communicative process by which an organization engages in meaning-making practices to intervene in and modify its environment. By realizing the impact of organizations on larger social systems (i.e., publics) it is possible to “bring activities such as marketing, public relations, and some kinds of advertising within the purview of organizational communication” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 246). Additionally, the relationship between organizations, public relations, and external environments allows a critical approach to institutional practices (Finet, 2001) and the various forms of organizational communication that are explicitly oriented toward influencing larger social bodies (Ganesh et al., 2005; Zoller, 2004). An organization’s identity is, thus, inextricably linked to the larger social cultural contexts.

Moreover, efforts to develop a cohesive identity and strong identification within
an organization are becoming increasingly difficult given the diffuse nature of communication in the contemporary, globalized era. According to Stohl (2005), “there is a fundamental agreement that globalization represents (a) deep-rooted transformations in the texture and experience of everyday life, (b) changes in the relationship between time and space, and (c) modification in the relationships between self and others” (p. 247). As communicative, cultural, and economic practices become increasingly interconnected and, simultaneously, spread across vast distances, fundamental challenges are raised for organizations attempting to maintain identity coherence.

More recently, Murphy and Dixon (2012) have argued for a more complex view of identity that includes not only consideration of organizational identity, but personal (read: nonworkplace/professional) identity. Their work, which deals with their involvement in international humanitarian organizations, presents difficult contexts for exploring identity because the cultural assumptions they bring to the organization(s) are inherently connected to certain political and cultural biases. What is needed, they suggest, is a more critically oriented awareness of the ways in which personal identity (formed by culture, social status, and education) interacts with the politics of organizational life. This type of reflexivity is offered by Tracy and Trethewey (2005) who offer the concept of the “crystallized self” to explain how complex identities might be negotiated within organizations. The crystallized self, they explain, is a move away from the dichotomous view of personal and professional identities and toward an understanding of identity that is more holistic, complex, and fragmented. As perspectives such as these begin to gain traction, it is vital that we consider the ways in which basic concepts like identity and identification can be thought of differently to respond to
emergent social contexts. More specifically, this study attempts to examine how identity and identification might function in international contexts and in ways that speak within and across numerous systems of social activity.

Power and Resistance

Studies of power, control, and resistance began to gain prominence in organizational communication as a response to the “critical turn.” As Taylor (2005) suggests, many organizational scholars began to call into question the functionalist and interpretive perspectives that did not fully interrogate the ways in which power was exercised within organizations. The work of Foucault, in particular, was important for the development of this critical orientation because conceptualization of power demonstrated that power, control, and resistance operated in ways that were diffuse and not always visible. By rejecting the idea that power was something that was held solely by leaders or managers, attention began to shift to the more pernicious consequences of (c)overt control and the potential of resistance of alternative resistance strategies. Drawing on this position, Mumby (1987) explains how power is something that is socially and culturally constructed within the organization and becomes legitimized through a routinization of practice. Managers, for instance, do not have any inherent power, but are afforded authority because practices within the organization affirm and legitimize their ability to exercise control over others. This is why, he asserts, communicative mechanism such as metaphors carry significant influence in organizations; they serve as a conduit for creating and sustaining practices that legitimize internal power relations.

As noted previously, however, power and control do not always operate in a
clear-cut or visible way. Importantly, scholars like Barker (1993) have demonstrated that power and control are often used to coordinate and discipline action in ways that are not always visible. In his study of post-bureaucratic work groups, Barker found that control and power were still clearly exercised despite the lack of formal, institutional rules or policies to govern behavior. As he explains, when the organization moved away from traditional working groups (with clearly defined rules and boundaries) toward more loose forms of group work (which lacked formal rules), members of the groups began to develop and exercise power in ways that were often far more constraining than formal bureaucratic leadership. This concept, which Barker calls concertive control, demonstrates how lines of power and control will be exercised within organization, regardless of whether it is institutionalized or not. Practices of legitimization are powerful and tend to create an insular frame of knowing that is perpetually reified within the organization. David Boje’s (1995) postmodern analysis of Disneyland, for instance, demonstrates how power and authority are used to create a coherent and stable organizational narrative that must be upheld and maintained by members. By participating in a system of activity, organizational members implicitly uphold conventions of power that work to discipline behavior in an attempt to create a stable reaffirmation of power relations.

Although the scholarship mentioned above may appear, at surface value, to offer a grim outlook for organizational life, many critical organizational scholars are also interested in exploring the ways in which resistance operates in organizational contexts. As perhaps the most prominent critical organizational communication theorist, Stanley Deetz (1998; 2005) consistently argues for the need to maintain a critical apprehension of
power and domination so as to explore strategies of potential resistance. Typically, however, these resistive opportunities are not overt; members of an organization will rarely risk their own security/stability and will, instead, find ways to resist power structures through micropractices. Dick’s (2008) study of a rural police department offers an insightful way of understanding this concept in practice, as well as the complex nature of resistance. In her article, Dick examines the resistance strategies of two female police officers who, based on their position in the department, were able to exercise distinct forms of resistance. She notes, for instance, that more senior members of organizations may be less likely to resist control (because occupational security is something that many will not risk), but that they have more potential to do so because of the power relative to their position. Less experienced members of organizations, by contrast, will likely resort to micro-acts of resistance that, though arguably less effective, allow members to exercise their own agency in the face of dominating power structures. The distinction between microresistance and overt resistance is an important one insofar as it demonstrates how there is always at least *some* potential for resistance. Following this observation, Ganesh, Zoller, and Cheney (2005) call for more engaged scholarship that examines the potential of both micropractices (or “resistance from below” as they call it) and macropractices (which involve more coordinated efforts like boycotts or strikes).

My interest in power and resistance, then, is formulated upon the assumption that these forces are constantly and simultaneously acting in all social systems to reinforce and discipline particular meanings and practices. This dialectical view has become increasingly consequential in contemporary critical organizational communication.
scholarship. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004), for instance, explain that material organizational structures can work in varying ways to privilege some, while disenfranchising others. I am particularly interested in the function(s) of power within organizational contexts and the ways in which members’ discourses and practices are constrained or enabled by dominant systems of activity. My conceptualization of power and resistance acts, in many ways, as a corollary to Giddens’ (1984) structure-agency duality; just as the duality of structure reinforces and sustains systems of activity, the power-resistance dialectic serves to orient the ways in which members of an organization can (and do) act. Although this domain is highly theoretical, my interest in the power-resistance dialectic is an attempt to expand empirical works on the subject (Ashcraft, 2005; Trethewey, 2005) in a way that highlights the complex intersection(s) of structural properties, discourses, practices, knowledge, and member identities.

Organizational Knowledge

Organizational knowledge is an area of scholarship that has existed since the early days of organizational theorizing, although the term has changed according to the circumstances of its use and application. Early organizational studies, dominated by social psychological perspectives, tended to understand knowledge as a type of currency that could be utilized in employee-employer relations to maximize productivity. As Canary and McPhee (2011) explain, this trend (Taylorism) assumed that knowledge was something that could tangibly be assessed and measured. By consequence, the prevailing idea in many of these early works was that organizational knowledge was something distinct from individual knowledge and scientifically based management practices could
be used to harness knowledge for productive ends. Since that time, organizational scholars have broadened their conceptualization of knowledge processes and the complex ways in which knowledge is constituted, maintained, and transmitted to members of an organization. I understand knowledge to be a relational accomplishment that includes both individual and collective components. This view is shared by McPhee, Corman, and Dooley (1999) who note that organizational knowledge is “the symbolic and/or practical routines, resources, and affordances drawn on by organization members and social units as they maintain the institutional organization and/or coordinate their action and interaction” (p. 4). Organizational knowledge, then, can be understood as inherently communicative in nature and linked to a variety of issues such as organizational culture (Taylor, 2002) and organizational memory. Canary and McPhee’s (2011) anthology on organizational knowledge, for instance, centralizes communication as the authors invoke a “Six Cs” perspective (context, condition, cause, covariance, consequences, and constitutive subprocesses) to explain the way that knowledge emerges in organizational settings.

With the historical development of organizational knowledge scholarship in mind, there are a few dominant themes that have tended to be of central importance in the way knowledge is studied by contemporary organizational theorists. First, many organizational theorists have argued that organizational knowledge serves as a frame (Lakoff, 2010) for structuring communicative practices and organizational reality. By frame, I mean to suggest that knowledge serves as a sort of filter that shapes and influences discourses in particular ways so as to create shared meanings amongst workers. Because frames are not static, knowledge becomes something that is permeable
and often politicized in organizational contexts (if only by virtue of struggles for power and control that often take place). This type of thinking is evident in Barley, Leonardi, and Bailey’s (2012) study of automotive engineers. Based on ethnographic observations of a vehicle engineering center, the authors found that knowledge was typically deployed in one of two ways: as a process that created ambiguity (so as to support a free-flowing, dialogic type of engagement among employees) or as a process that created clarity (so as to provide specificity when there was potential opposition to ideas). The authors argue that organizational knowledge is something that is often contested in workplaces and, thus, should be understood as something that is inherently contingent. One implication of their study is that it demonstrates the ways that knowledge can be used for either potentially productive or destructive ends; that is, the “frame” of knowledge use (or production/acquisition) is something that can always be contested. Echoing this point, Murphy and Eisenberg (2011) argue that a dominant conception of knowledge is as a context that is always politically contested. Drawing on the work of Foucault, the authors argue that the “knowledge as political” perspective demonstrates the simultaneous benefits and harms that can occur with the (mis)use of knowledge. For instance, knowledge can be used to create collaborative spaces of cooperation and dialogue or to create instances of discursive closure (Clair, 1999). Knowledge can, thus, be understood as something that orients interaction in organizations.

A second perspective that has emerged in the theorization of organizational knowledge is that knowledge is something that can be “done” interactively. As Canary asserts, “Developing organizational knowledge does not occur as a singular event; rather, the process occurs iteratively during many different organizational activities that involve
different goals” (2010, p. 27). In contending that knowledge is something that is done or accomplished, I mean to suggest that knowledge is something that is constitutively formed, and more importantly, maintained by adherence to particular forms of intelligibility in the workplace. Murphy and Eisenberg (2011) provide an exemplar for understanding this concept in their study of knowledge strategies employed by physicians. They argue that physicians are socialized to perform certain professional identities in line with the prevailing standards (and knowledge) of a given context. When making rounds on patients, for example, cases that are straightforward and certain are presented with authority and certainty, whereas cases with high uncertainty are regarded as works in progress. Though slight, these distinct ways of communicating shape individual physician identities and contribute to sustaining collective knowledge practices dealing with professional identity. That is, more senior physicians (who will, presumably, possess more knowledge) will discipline the ways of speaking and interacting to sustain certain conventions that are emulated by junior physicians (who are in the process of acquiring this tacit knowledge). Taylor (2005) offers a similar way of thinking about knowledge in his analysis of organizational culture and a bookstore owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or Mormon Church. His ethnographic study demonstrates, for example, how certain knowledge assumptions and meanings work to create an organizational culture that is sustained through repeated practice; the sense of alienation he reports (as a nonmember who presumably lacks the insider knowledge) shows how knowledge, though collective, is something that must be (re)performed in practice to cohere to prevailing standards and assumptions. In this sense, organizational knowledge can be understood as something that is done by repeated
acts and maintained through sustained discourses.

A third, and somewhat related, strand of inquiry about organizational knowledge concerns the process of acquiring knowledge in the workplace. The term organizational learning (Fiol & Lyles, 1985) refers, broadly, to a routine-based form of interaction wherein individual members of an organization come to understand coded meanings and values that orient behavior. McPhee, Corman, and Dooley (1999) contend that the acquisition of knowledge is a significant communicative context because knowledge serves as a structuring element that is used to maintain organizations and coordinate meanings and actions therein. That is, knowledge is something that must be learned by members of the organization before it can become useful. For example, in their study of special education policy, Canary and McPhee (2009) examine how certain processes and artifacts are used as resources to mediate policy knowledge. As they explain, instruments like policy text and metaphors are frequently used to mediate understandings of key pieces of knowledge and, consequently, shape how these issues are understood by members of an organization. These messages are transmitted both within and across systems of activity and as Canary (2010) explains, “[By] focusing on communication within and between activity systems [we] might extend not only the model of activity systems, but...also change current conceptualizations of the process of constructing knowledge” (p. 36). This study, then, aims to explore the practices and discourses that are used to constitutively construct knowledge within Rare and the ways in which these knowledge creation and acquisition processes shape meanings and activity within the organization.
Research Questions

Given the theoretical frameworks and research domains I have outlined above, the following research questions will be used to guide my analysis in this project:

- **RQ1a**: How do members negotiate Rare’s organizational identity in relation to the various systems of activity to which they belong?
  - **RQ1b**: What, if any, identity contradictions emerge in members’ narratives?
- **RQ2a**: What discourses and practices are employed by Rare to constitutively organize knowledge within the organization?
  - **RQ2b**: How do these practices shape members’ understandings of meaning within the organization?
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter discusses the research methods that were employed as part of the data gathering process for this project. Given that this study focuses on Rare as a site of inquiry, a case study approach (Stake, 1995) is warranted. Although case studies may utilize a variety of research methods to acquire data for analysis, they are notably marked by a clear interest in the processes and practices internal to a particular social system. Numerous scholars (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995) have addressed the key strengths of the case study approach noting that case studies are generally advantageous because they produce thorough, deep understandings of a particular research site or context, are less time and resource intensive than other methods such as ethnography, and are able to clearly demarcate research boundaries, problematics, and interests. Specifically, this research project is conceptualized as an instrumental case study that is attempting to generate insights that may be broadly applicable outside the organizational context of Rare. That is, while I am interested in analyzing the processes and practices that work to constitutively enable and constrain meanings within the organization and its campaigns, my goal is that this project may be able to generate practical and theoretical insights for organizations, broadly, and environmental
organizations, specifically. This chapter, then, addresses the particularities of my research design in a few key ways. First, I begin by providing a narrative about my positionality as a researcher that details my interest and commitment to this project. Because I maintained an “outsider” status (both organizationally and culturally) during the research process, I provide some articulation of the ways in which I reflexively monitored my position as researcher. Next, I outline the epistemological assumptions of the social constructivist paradigm that guides my research. Finally, I detail the specific details of the research methods utilized, including data collection, site selection, participant selection, and data analysis procedures.

Research Narrative and Positional Reflexivity

In this section I provide a brief narrative about my scholarly development and the ways I currently conceptualize my current scholarly interest in environmental organizations and Rare as an organization. I have opted to include a first-person narrative about my scholarly development in hopes of illuminating how my interests have formed, and more importantly, why my research design is appropriate given the aims of this project. I also offer some preliminary explanation of the type of positional reflexivity that is necessary for pursuing research that is international in scope and inherently linked to vast cultural difference(s).

Research Narrative

My interest in environmental communication and organizational communication is one that did not come immediately or easily. As an undergraduate student at the
University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), I was initially drawn to political science as a field of study. Since a very young age, I have had a profound interest in politics and the high-stakes processes of negotiation, deliberation, and action that have consequences for daily life. As I soon realized, however, my interest was not so much in the outcomes of the political process, but rather, the ways in which messages were developed and employed to accomplish strategic goals. I eventually found my way to the Department of Communication and focused on political rhetoric. For several years, I focused on the rhetorical construction of diverse issues such as race, gender, and sexuality because these issues spoke most clearly to my position as a gay, Latina/o, first-generation college student. I was drawn heavily, for instance, to the work of Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) whose theorization of mestiza consciousness provided a vocabulary for exploring meanings and identities in a complex, yet accessible way.

During my senior year of college, I enrolled in an environmental communication class with Dr. Stacey Sowards. Prior to this time, I had never seriously considered the environment or its relationship to communication and so, in many ways, the class was an eye-opening experience. As we worked our way through the semester, I found myself becoming increasingly frustrated with the type of destructive behaviors that are wreaking havoc on the environment. More importantly, however, I was also frustrated with the response to these problems by scholars and practitioners alike. Environmental scholars tended, in my view, to focus on inconsequential issues and produced work that was steeped in inaccessible academic jargon. Practitioners (or at least the case studies we read about them) tended to employ tactics that were limited in potential or, in some cases, exceptionally counterproductive. In many ways, I continue to share these frustrations
(though, admittedly, I realize that much of my own work is guilty of continuing the trend toward verbosity I criticize). Prior to graduating, I was offered an opportunity to travel to Indonesia with Dr. Sowards as part of a study abroad program. That trip, in many ways, changed my life.

During my time in Indonesia my interest in the environment was solidified. As part of the first group of students to participate in the UTEP-Rare partnership, I was able to witness firsthand the type of work being developed in rural communities by Rare’s Pride campaign managers. In addition to participating in a workshop in Bogor, Indonesia, we were able to visit several campaign sites to look at the strategies that were being implemented to deal with local conservation threats. I had, to that point, never really thought about my connection to the environment or the type of meaningful work that I might accomplish upon graduation. This experience has shaped my scholarly interests for the last 5 years.

While working on my master’s degree at the University of Colorado - Boulder I focused on environmental rhetoric, particularly in international contexts. Upon arriving at the University of Utah to begin my doctoral studies, I decided to shift my focus toward the intersection of environmental communication and organizational communication. This change was, admittedly, motivated partially out of self-interest (e.g., tenure-track rhetoric positions are uncommon), but also because I realized that the type of work I was most interested in had to do with organizing that was taking place on the ground. When presented with the opportunity to continue studying Rare, I knew that I would be able to continue doing work at an important intersection that, hopefully, will be able to produce some good in the world.
My continued interest in Rare and the topical domains I have outlined in this prospectus are, in a sense, a culmination of my academic journey thus far. My interest in politics (power and resistance) continues to weigh heavily on my thinking and tacitly shapes how I understand all forms of social interaction. My interest in identity (organizational identity and identification) has shifted toward more systemic domains, but continues to focus on the ways in which members negotiate understandings of self in relation to others and how that process shapes organizational meanings (organizational knowledge). I continue to be inspired by Rare and their method of community engagement; this inspiration motivates an interest in praxiological scholarship. In short, my approach and interest in this line of research are clear reflections of my life experiences and the interests that continue to drive my scholarship.

Reflexive Monitoring

Having traced my academic trajectory and the motivation behind my current scholarly interests, I believe it is important to consider how my positionality shapes my approach to this project. Qualitative scholarship demands self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher because meanings are always negotiated and mediated in some way (Tretheway, 2005). As an “outsider” in this research context, my interpretations are always already shaped and informed by discursive regimes. This is why Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) argue for the importance of reflexive monitoring when ascribing meanings or values to particular social practices. They explain,

The reflexivity of practice entails that all practices have irreducible discursive aspects, not only in the sense that all practices involve the use of language to some degree…but also in the sense that discursive constructions of practices are themselves parts of practices – that is what reflexivity means. (p. 26)
Obviously, the notion of objectivity is irrelevant in the context of qualitative inquiry. However, qualitative scholars must be reflexive, if not suspicious, of the meanings they ascribe to social practices and the ways in which scholarly positionality might impinge upon eventual interpretations.

This project, perhaps more so than other qualitative studies, required thoughtful consideration of my positionality as researcher given the international scope of my interests, but more importantly, the vast cultural differences that exist between myself and my research participants. These considerations are significant in at least three ways. First, on a pragmatic level, it is important to recognize that my lack of fluency in Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian) certainly influenced the outcomes of my analysis. Although interviews with campaign managers were translated, it is important to note how the process of translation changes the inherent meanings and context(s) of expressions articulated in a native tongue. If meanings are first translated when articulated into language, the move from Bahasa Indonesia to English constitutes a second form of translation that may further strip an expression of meaning. Some research strategies (such as member checking) may mitigate the implications of this limitation, but an inevitability of my positionality and lack of language proficiency is that some things will always be lost in translation.

Second, it is important to consider my personal identity in relation to the cultural context that I am investigating. Despite self-identifying as Latino in the United States, this identity label is of little importance in Indonesia where I was regarded as a bule (an Indonesia word used to describe a foreigner that is roughly the equivalent of “White person”). It is, thus, important to understand my identity as a “White” foreigner in
relation to those who I interviewed. D. Soyini Madison (2010) argues for the importance of this cultural sensitivity. She explains,

I was not white by phenotype, but by country…nation and global order took primacy over racial identification…Belonging may be the effect of identity, but representation became a framework for meaning…We are reminded repeatedly (and for good reason) that race is constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed depending on locale, history, and power, but immediate experience sometimes penetrates deeper. (p. 163)

Finally, it is important to be cognizant of my outsider position within the context of the organization I studied. Although I established a fair level of rapport with several of the regional Pride program managers, I was still, for all intents and purposes, an outsider to the organization. It is important, therefore, to be reflexive of the fact that my knowledge of the organization and its practices will always be partial, at best.

**Epistemological Assumptions of Social Constructivism**

Having traced the development of my research interests and some of the issues that required a considerable degree of research reflexivity, I now explicate some of the epistemological assumptions that undergird my approach to qualitative research. Generally, I believe that my work is guided by epistemological assumptions that would be considered in line with interpretivist/constructivist thinkers. I recognize that some theorists have argued for distinguishing between these perspectives as distinct frameworks for social inquiry. While I recognize the value of such critiques, I am not fully convinced that they offer any meaningful distinctions in terms of how research is conducted. To that end, I follow Creswell (2013) and Denzin and Lincoln (2013) who argue that constructivism and interpretivism are often used interchangeably as a way of referring to research invested in understanding how meanings are negotiated historically.
and socially. In what follows I briefly outline some of the assumptions of the epistemological framework and how, I believe, this way of thinking is in line with my theoretical and praxiological commitments.

The first major assumption of the social constructionist paradigm is that everyday assumptions, ideologies, and beliefs (including those about “the self”) must necessarily be placed under critical scrutiny. Burr, for example, (1995) contends that these "taken for granted" assumptions about social reality are often the places where meaningful discourse and interaction take place. Within my own line of research, there are numerous instances where this assumption is made clear. Following Giddens (1984), I believe that organizations can be conceptualized as self-sustaining systems that are perpetually created and sustained through discourse and interaction. The routinization of daily practices, thus, becomes an important occurrence for understanding how (and more importantly, why) certain practices, values, beliefs, etc. are sustained within the organization. As social systems sustain these practices and discourses, it becomes vital to interrogate the process of replication in perpetuity. In critically interrogating the "stuff of everyday life," the social constructivist researcher tends to examine the role that discourse and interaction play in shaping what is understood as normative or legitimate within a given social/cultural context.

A second assumption of the social constructionist paradigm holds that knowledge claims are sustained by social practice and language. If discourse is assumed as constitutive of reality and knowledge, the qualitative researcher must attempt to discern which discursive practices or interactions are at work in shaping what is known to be “true” within a given context. The accounts of social reality produced by interpretivist
scholars are not absolute truths, nor are they intended to serve as totalizing descriptions for a group, culture, or organization. On the contrary, interpretive research is focused on what Angrosino and Rosenberg (2013) call “the ethnography of the particular,” or observation-based scholarship that attempts to explain reality according to the lived experiences of particular people and their relationship with others. This assumption implies that “truth” claims are always contingent and informed by prevailing ideologies and discourses that may or may not be readily apparent for the researcher. Depending on the context-specific conditions of the time, certain issues/ideologies/beliefs may be of greater influence or of greater value than others, and thus, are able to more clearly spur social action. This is an important consideration for researchers because in understanding how or why certain actions come to exist as a component of social reality, necessary considerations of subjectivity, discourse, culture, context, etc. must take place.

Finally, a third and somewhat related assumption of the social constructionist perspective is that knowledge is historically and culturally specific, and thus, the way that meaning is understood must be framed contextually. Allen (2005) asserts that one advantage to this position is that it accounts for variation in meaning and value across cultures, time periods, or even sites of inquiry by placing a burden on uncovering what specific ideological structures are at work. This is an important point because all social actors (or practically, research subjects) are embedded in particular historical and social contexts that shape worldview. Similarly, as a researcher, my positionality has been shaped by numerous contexts (academic and otherwise) that inform how I understand the world and make sense of certain situations. Reflexivity and responsiveness to these assumptions allow us to understand how and why certain meanings may be more or less
meaningful and enduring. Therefore, the goal of qualitative inquiry is turned towards uncovering what specific cultural/historic/social factors are at work in shaping shared meaning in situ.

These epistemological assumptions greatly shape the way that I conceptualize not only qualitative research, but social reality as well. My intention as a qualitative scholar is to produce accounts of social interaction that are grounded in the real world experiences and discourses of those I am attempting to study and understand. My goal is that my research will be understood as “critical praxis” – an orientation that seeks to unearth the ways in which meanings are socially constructed, while simultaneously finding strategies for more equitable and democratic modes of representation. To this end, I am also hesitant to assume a radical constructivist perspective which assumes that there is no “outside” reality aside from the one that is socially constructed and negotiated. This simultaneous commitment to criticality and interpretivism is important insofar as analysis must always be attentive to explicating the functionality of social systems as well as the tensions and contradictions that they might obfuscate (Mumby, 1998). In short, my approach to qualitative research is one that focuses on how social reality is formed and maintained through discourse, but is also bound within/by material constraints and contexts.

Research Design and Methods

As noted previously, this project was approached as a bounded instrumental case study (Stake, 1995) that sought to explore the ways in which identity, power, and knowledge are constituted and maintained through practice and discourse. The primary
focus of my research was on Rare and the processes that work to structurate activity within the organization. However, given my interest in SAT and the fact that Rare’s activities are inherently connected to multiple organizations, stakeholders, and socio-cultural contexts, my focus was expanded beyond merely the activities occurring within the organization. Thus, in order to ensure a sufficient level of data triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), I acquired information from a variety of sources in an attempt to develop a complex view of the structurating processes at work in the context of this study. In what follows, I describe the particularities of my research process. Three methods – in-depth interviews, textual artifacts, and participant observation – were used in this study.

**Interviews**

The primary source of information for this study is interviews that were conducted with current and former members of Rare. As Kvale (1996) asserts, qualitative interviews can serve as an important “construction site of knowledge” (p. 2), as the researcher is able to direct conversation and questioning in productive ways. According to Patton (2002), qualitative interviews can take a variety of forms such as informal, conversational interviews and guided topical interviews. I conducted semi-structured open-ended interviews in order to acquire information about members’ experiences within the organization. By semistructured I mean that the direction of my interviews was loosely guided by a predetermined set of questions that were aimed at addressing the primary interests of this study. As Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggest, semistructured interviews are able to combine the strengths of scripted interviews
(focused questioning) and dialogic interviews (follow up questions and flexibility) in ways that are generally able to provide a satisfactory level of depth. By open ended, I mean that my questions were primarily addressed at ascertaining information that is more explanatory in nature. That is, questions were generally focused on the *how* and *why*, rather than more rigid questions that seek yes or no responses. Interviews are important in qualitative research because they generate large quantities of data, allow the researcher to ask immediate follow-up questions and clarification, and can be easily be supplemented by other research methods (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 145). Because this study was primarily interested in exploring the meanings and practices that circulate within (and at times, outside of) the organization, interviews were the primary method employed in this study. The preliminary set of interview questions is provided in Appendix A.

Participants for this dissertation were current and former members of Rare. Rather than focusing solely on campaign managers, I interviewed several members of the organization from the global offices and regional offices in Bogor, Indonesia. This project began, albeit informally, in the summer of 2013 when I participated in a workshop for Rare alumni. Although the interviews were largely informal in nature, I was able to record translated interviews with 4 former Pride campaign managers who have successfully completed the training program. Additionally, in November of 2013 I was able to visit Rare’s offices in Arlington, VA and interview 3 members of the global staff. Finally, the bulk of my interviewing took place in the summer of 2014. I interviewed 8 members of the Bogor regional staff, along with 9 members who were part of the Bogor 5 cohort and nearing the completion of their campaigns. Interviews with the
regional personnel were conducted in English. Interviews with the campaign managers were conducted in Indonesian and were translated by a third party who has proficiency in both languages. Formal interviews ranged in length from 18 minutes to 41 minutes, with an average time of 26 minutes.

Textual Data/Organizational Artifacts

A second source of data was drawn from official documents and resources that are employed by members of Rare. Organizational artifacts are extremely important in qualitative research because they assist in portraying values and meanings that may not be explicitly stated by members of the organization. As Marshall and Rossman explain, “Minutes of meetings, logs, announcements, formal policy statements, letters and so on are all useful in developing an understanding of the organization, setting, or group studied” (2011, p. 160). Documents also serve an important historical function within organizations insofar as archival data can be used to trace the historical development of meanings or practices. This is especially true for an organization like Rare that frequently changes organizational practices in order to respond to emergent circumstances or contexts. Perhaps most importantly, organizational artifacts can be used to examine the meanings, discourses, and practice that are “officially” sanctioned within organizations. Because I am primarily interested in exploring potential systemic contradictions, analyzing textual data in conjunction with data drawn from interviews and observation was a fruitful way of understanding potential communicative divergences.

Textual data for this project were drawn from a variety of sources. First, I collected a number of documents that have been publically released by the organization
in recent years. These documents include blog entries on Rare’s website, press releases, brochures, and media publications (e.g., articles about the organization that have been published by mainstream media outlets. Additionally, I acquired several hundred pages of documents that functioned as a historical record about the development of the Pride campaign curriculum. These documents, provided by Dr. Sowards, included a variety of training materials, descriptions of programs, and assessment tools that were used by the organization over the last decade. In total, over 800 pages of documents were acquired during the data collection process.

One major consideration that must be made about this textual data is that sensitivity to organizational privacy must be maintained. Although much of my data were drawn from sources that are publically accessible (such as the Rare website), some of the data acquired was not meant for public dissemination. As such, I did not code any data that contained sensitive information such as correspondence between members or documents that were marked as “for internal use only.” Approximately 300 pages were excluded in order to maintain an ethical standard of privacy protection.

Participant Observation

Finally, participant observation was used to examine interactions that occurred between members of the organization. Participant observation allows the researcher to “hear, see and begin to experience reality as the participants do” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 140). Participant observation is particularly useful for qualitative analysis, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2010), because it enables the researcher to observe and, in some cases, participate in the practices of the research site. Meaningful participant
observation requires continuous personal reflection as the researcher begins to formulate emergent analysis; the observer vantage point enables the possibility of making the strange familiar and familiar strange (Glesne, 2005). As a supplement to interviews and textual analysis, participant observation can be helpful in understanding the practices that may escape other modes of representation. That is, what is seen can be radically different from what is said or written.

For this project, participant observation was used in a few key ways. As noted previously, my participation in the Rare alumni workshop in the summer of 2013 yielded ample data. Because the vast majority of the workshop was aimed at developing an alumni network, I was able to act as an observer for several days. My observation during the workshop yielded approximately 15 pages of handwritten notes describing a number of interactions ranging from discussion about new social marketing theories to team-building exercises. Perhaps more so than the interviews that were conducted during the workshop, my observations yielded important insights about the styles of communication that are commonly used by members of the organization. Participant observation was also employed during the summer of 2014. Members of the Bogor 5 cohort were attending the final phase of the university training at this time, so I was able to observe activities and interactions over the course of roughly 5 days. Additionally, I was able to attend a public demonstration about the Pride campaigns held in Jakarta, Indonesia that brought together current and former campaign managers, staff members from implementing partners, community members, and others. In attending these activities, I documented my observations with notes and pictures, which were used to aid my analysis. Approximately 30 pages of handwritten notes and 89 pictures were produced.
Data Analysis Procedures

Collectively, these methods generated significant quantities of data that were used to understand the structuring processes at work in Rare. In order to make sense of this data, a cogent process of sorting, coding, and analysis was employed. I began by transcribing or acquiring transcripts of all interviews that were conducted. Because interviews conducted with the global office personnel and regional managers were conducted in English, I transcribed these interviews myself. Interviews with campaign managers, however, were conducted in Indonesian and required translation and transcription by an external party. Because I was not interested in analyzing microlevel forms of communication (e.g., stumbles, vocal fillers, etc.) that may be more relevant for a conversation analysis approach, transcription focused primarily on documenting spoken words and, if relevant, nonverbal cues (e.g., laughter, sighs, etc.) that impacted the content of what is being said. Minor alterations to the transcripts were made to correct for grammar and syntax errors of interview participants, but content and meanings were not altered in this process. The transcribed interviews made up roughly 68 pages of typed, single spaced text used for analysis.

Interview transcripts, scanned documents, typed notes, and photographs were uploaded into qualitative analysis coding software NVivo 10.0. Initial coding of data utilized the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978; Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) and paid particular attention to specific words, phrases, and interactions in order to develop open codes. Codes were drawn from the smallest units possible; in many cases this involved phrases and portions of sentences. The initial process of coding yielded 87 distinct codes. Because a few of the codes were extremely
similar in nature, several codes were collapsed so as to avoid repetition or significant overlap. This process resulted in 66 codes. Each of these codes were then sorted into categories that corresponded with the topical and theoretical issues germane to this dissertation. Appendix B of this dissertation provides a list of these codes sorted into categories, as well as frequency counts. After performing this initial round of coding, I went back through the data and created memos to note areas where data pointed to important theoretical and topical intersections. These memos were used to form an analytic foundation that oriented the findings discussed in the following three chapters of this dissertation.
CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

In the last several years Rare has experienced an unprecedented level of growth in terms of total operations, budget, and fulltime employees. This growth has, unsurprisingly, generated significant changes and challenges for the organization. Although Rare’s organizational form and structure remain largely unchanged in the face of these changes, its internal operations and members’ negotiation of personal-organizational identity are in a state of flux. That is, as the organization continues to grow, its leaders attempt to solidify and formalize channels of communication, organizational structures, and the ways in which distinct sectors of the organization are able to interact with one another. The implementation of rigid communication structures is typical in larger organizations; numerous studies have explored the intrinsic value of established communication channels and networks for organizations undergoing significant changes and growth (Christensen, 2014; Lewis, Schmisseur, Stephens & Weir, 2006; Tucker, Yeow, & Viki, 2013). However, Rare’s somewhat unorthodox organizational structure presents a unique opportunity for understanding how myriad elements work to organize practices and meanings within an organizational context.
Thus, this chapter aims to provide an analytic framework for understanding how social practices such as identity construction and knowledge management unfold within and across the organization. Although Rare’s organizational structure can be documented using a traditional top-down model, such a description would be wholly inadequate for explaining the complex interactions and practices that make the organization so unique. This chapter examines the various systems of activity that constitute Rare’s internal and external operations. I begin by, first, explicating the role and function of the various sectors of the organization. Next, I extend the notion of systems of activity to articulate a cogent theoretical model that accounts for variations in time, space, and influence within this organizational context. I argue that this theoretically-driven description of Rare’s structure is vital for fully understanding the issues that are of interest for this study and explored in later chapters.

**Charting Rare’s Systems of Activity**

As an international ENGO that cooperatively engages with other organizations around the world, Rare’s organizational structure is quite distinct. Unlike many environmental organization that manage their operations internally, the vast majority of conservation outreach work performed by the organization is handled by its implementing partners (IPs). Campaign managers are full time employees of these partner organizations who are given the opportunity to participate in the Pride program for 2 years. IPs are responsible for providing personnel capable of participating in the Rare training program, designing and implementing a Pride conservation campaign, and maintaining long-term success of the project itself. This decentralized approach to
conservation affords managers tremendous agency in determining the scope and purpose of campaigns, but each campaign manager is still expected to utilize a globally standardized conservation curriculum that is designed by Rare’s Global Office and The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). IPs are also responsible for engaging with local community partners, maintaining sustainable working alliances, and building employee and organizational capacity. For instance, several of Rare’s regional personnel explained in interviews that the program was less about conservation and more about building a network and capacity for ensuring long-term success and organizational outcomes.

Given the decentralized nature of Rare’s Pride program operations, a standard organizational schema that utilizes a top-down approach would be insufficient for capturing the interactions and communicative practices that take place “on the ground,” between various members of the organization, or within the organization itself. This section serves two purposes for advancing the analytic goals of this study. First, I explain the major systems of activity that influence organizational decision-making and practices in order to highlight the diffuse nature of Rare’s organizational structure. Second, in tracing the interactions that exist between these systems of activity it will become evident that hierarchical models of organizational structure are insufficient. Thus, the latter portion of this chapter provides a novel model of organizational interaction(s) that extends upon central tenets of SAT.

Rare’s Global Office

Rare’s global office is located in Arlington, Virginia and handles the vast majority of administrative tasks dealing with fundraising, organizational decision-making,
curriculum development, and strategic growth initiatives. As such, the global office is pivotal for ensuring the longevity of the organization and the success of initiatives rolled out in the various regional offices. Although the global office is home to the board of directors, CEO, CFO and other high-ranking members, it would be insufficient to describe its activities as solely administrative. As a personnel member in the Arlington office explained, “We don’t like to think of ourselves as the center or focus of Rare…we just try to make sure that everything works as planned and that our operations can be built to scale upward.” The global office, then, might be understood as the hub for vital organizational functions, but it is also intricately involved in the coordination and maintenance of project implementation efforts around the globe.

Rare’s global office is chiefly responsible for two elements of organizational practice that are of interest to this study. First, issues concerning public relations, branding, and identity are handled primarily by the global office. Over the last several years, Rare has overhauled its organizational identity extensively by implementing a variety of strategies such as codifying a new value and mission statement and changing its logo. While these may seem, at first, to be relatively superficial alterations, the changes are an important indication about the intended future direction and growth of the organization. For instance, in late 2013, Rare announced that it would merge with The Nature Conservancy, one of the world’s largest international ENGOs. Although the merger was eventually called off, the uncertainty surrounding such a massive change necessitated a recommitment to particular narratives, values, and meanings that have long persisted within the organization. At the time the merger announcement was made, Rare was soliciting feedback from its regional offices about the future direction of the
organization. As a member of the global office staff recounts, “There were teams. There was a brand team and there were ambassadors from the different regions…they went through something where they figured out the critical elements [of the re-branding strategy] and the usual back and forths.” In this sense, the global office is responsible for facilitating the development of an organizational vision that is inclusive and responsive to the needs and interests of the regional offices. This negotiation of organizational meanings is the focus of Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Additionally, the global office is primarily responsible for curricular and strategic development in collaboration with UTEP. The Pride program curriculum has changed dramatically since its inception and most of these improvements have been spearheaded by personnel in the global office. Functionally, these curricular and programmatic changes have altered the scope and target of Rare’s global operations in two key ways. First, the global office is responsible for creating a standardized curriculum that is used by regional managers to train campaign managers about social marketing, barrier removal theory, and a variety of other issues. In 2013, for instance, the global office facilitated a workshop called “Train the Trainers” that brought together managers from all of the regional offices in order to introduce the new standardized curriculum and approach that was expected to be implemented for future Pride cohorts. The development of a standardized curriculum is an essential task of the global office. Second, the global office is also responsible for developing strategic initiatives that are meant to scale the organization’s operations. The Fish Forever program, for instance, was conceptualized and developed almost entirely by the global office and represents a massive expansion of the organization’s efforts into the realm of policy engagement and environmental
lobbying. These curricular and strategic growth initiatives are conceptualized in this study as elements of the knowledge negotiation process and are the focus of Chapter 5 of this dissertation. As a central hub of organizational activity, the global office plays a vital role in maintaining the stability and coordination of Rare’s efforts in all of its regional headquarters.

University of Texas at El Paso

One of the most unique elements of Rare’s programmatic design is the alliance that has been forged with the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). UTEP is a major research university serving approximately 23,000 students on the United States-Mexico border (“2014 Facts,” n.d.). Starting in 2008 Rare initiated a strategic alliance with the Department of Communication at UTEP that continues to serve multiple purposes within the organization. Each participant in the Pride training program is eligible to receive a master’s degree from the University upon successful completion and implementation of a Pride campaign and coursework. Faculty members from the Department of Communication are assigned to each of the regional headquarters and serve as liaisons for ensuring that the Pride program maintains high achievement standards on par with a master’s-level education.

Within the context of organizational operations, Rare’s partnership with UTEP serves two major functions. First, the partnership provides an element of legitimacy to the Pride program that is used for the recruitment and retention of campaign managers. Because Pride campaigns require an extensive 2 year commitment from IPs and campaign managers, the incentive of an advanced degree has been used to acquire talent
for the organization. For instance, one regional manager explains that partnership with UTEP helps to sell the program because “the master’s degree is very much appealing for the campaign managers and the implementing partners.” In this regard, Rare is unique from other conservation organizations because it provides a tangible incentive for members who join and commit to the campaign implementation process. In addition to serving as a legitimating element for Rare, UTEP also serves an important capacity-building source for the organization and its members. Because faculty members are expected to visit the regional offices and routinely provide instruction, the UTEP partnership provides an invaluable source of expertise to the organization. Thus, in addition to establishing and maintaining baseline curricular expectations, the UTEP-Rare partnership draws on faculty strengths in order to enhance educational outcomes. In both of these capacities UTEP serves as an important system of activity for the negotiation of organizational identity and institutional knowledge.

Rare Regional Offices

Rare’s regional offices and personnel are responsible for a wide variety of operations that run the gamut from education to talent recruitment and acquisition. Currently, Rare has regional headquarters in the Philippines, Indonesia, Brazil, Micronesia, China, Mexico (Latin America), and Mozambique. Although strategic initiatives are handed down by the global office, each regional office is responsible for negotiating how such efforts can be implemented according to the distinct political, social, and economic contexts within which campaigns are implemented. This regional stratification allows Rare to be responsive to emergent localized exigencies that would
otherwise be overlooked in a traditional top-down approach to environmental organizing. The standardization of operations, then, is viewed by regional managers as an operational framework for enacting the strategic vision of the organization writ large.

Despite this variation, each regional office can be conceptualized as a distinct system of activity responsible for carrying out certain organizational directives. In particular, regional personnel are responsible for fundraising, programmatic support and instruction, and regional policy compliance. First, each regional office is responsible for securing independent funds that can be used to further the goals of the organization both regionally and internationally. As a regional manager explained:

I am obligated to raise at least 50% of the entire fund needed [for the region]. That doesn’t mean that I have to raise it in this country – I can raise it elsewhere as long as I am in charge of getting that money. This is a very thin line, actually, because it’s not really “This is raised by Arlington, this is raised by me.”

Although Rare’s global office does fund a significant portion of the regional operational expenses, each region is expected to pursue external lines of funding. This is a particularly noteworthy consideration because the expansion of regional programs is, partially, predicated upon the ability of regional staff members to pursue outside investments in the organization. Regional development of the Pride initiative(s) is, thus, contingent upon the work performed by regional personnel.

A second major duty of the regional offices involves providing instruction and support for Pride campaign managers. During the 2 year period that campaign managers receive support from the organization, regional personnel are responsible for providing educational instruction and guidance on a variety of issues such as social marketing, rhetoric, qualitative and quantitative methods, and barrier removal theory. The core curriculum that is used to train campaign managers is handed down by the global office,
but each regional headquarters is expected to find ways to translate materials in ways that are meaningful to campaign managers. For instance, a regional staff member explained that many of the ideas and strategies outlined in the official curriculum are not always culturally responsive and, thus, require some adaptation and alteration. For many campaign managers, the Pride curriculum is their first exposure to communication theory and community engagement because their degrees are in agriculture, marine science, or other science-related fields; regional managers must be responsive to these issues and provide meaningful pedagogical support when needed. In this sense, the regional office is responsible for negotiating the core ideas, concepts, and meanings that are sanctioned by the organization.

Finally, the regional office is responsible for ensuring that each Pride campaign is compliant with local, regional, and national policies. Although many of the campaign strategies enact community engagement in ways that do not directly involve policy, the regional offices are responsible for cultivating support from policymakers and government officials. One regional staff member explains:

> We need to make sure that we have the necessary support from our host government country. I need to make sure that our program is in line with theirs. I also need to make sure that the policies that they develop are supportive of our program. Some countries might prohibit the handing of rights from the state to the people...sometimes oceans are common property and are open access. My job is to make sure there is a policy set in the country that is supportive of our program.

The concern for policy compliance is especially important given that Rare’s new Fish Forever program is attempting to influence policymaking in order to support sustainable fisheries. As this emphasis on policy change becomes more central to the vision of the organization, the regional offices will surely need to negotiate their role in relation to local, regional, federal, and international ordinances.
Implementing Partners and Pride Campaign Managers

Unlike other ENGOs that utilize their own members for the majority of “on the ground” organizing, Rare’s approach to conservation intervention is predicated upon creating strategic alliances with other organizations. Each Pride campaign manager is a current employee of an existing organization and works in collaboration with Rare to create a campaign that promotes sustainability. These organizations are referred to as implementing partners (IPs). IPs are important for Rare’s strategic vision because they provide an infrastructure and support system that can be used to further advance the goals of the organization. Each IP is unique insofar as they all have their own mission, objectives, and focus. IPs are other ENGOs, national park offices, companies, or any organization that deals with the environment. Campaign managers are full time employees of these organizations who join the Pride program for 2 years of training. IP versatility allows Rare to expand its efforts by focusing on multiple campaign implementation areas. That is, rather than focusing solely on implementing Pride campaigns in national parks or through ENGOs, Rare is able to disperse its conservation strategy on numerous institutional levels.

During the Pride implementation phase, campaign managers work in collaboration with Rare and their IP to develop a strategy that develops institutional and organizational capacity. However, even this collaboration is subject to significant variation. For instance, some campaign managers explained that they were essentially given free reign with the project and had minimal involvement with IP supervisors. Others indicated that their campaign was designed to bolster existing IP operations. Regardless of the level of involvement, IPs are a crucial component of Rare’s strategic
model because they quite literally “do the work” to promote the message of sustainability crafted by the global and regional offices. IPs and campaign managers are not merely peripheral components of Rare’s organizational structure, but are, in a very real sense, the driving force behind Rare’s localized conservation success.

Local Community Partners

During the planning and implementation phases of the Pride program, campaign managers are expected to engage with local community partners in order to maximize the potential success of their conservation intervention. The Pride curriculum provides campaign managers with instruction about how to facilitate productive working relationships with community partners, but is relatively vague in terms of outlining which partners may or may not be instrumental for ensuring campaign success. This variability is significant because it provides campaign managers with the ability to engage in community-driven coalition building in order to find solutions to problems that may be endemic to particular regions. Community partners are viewed as important stakeholders in the Pride campaign process and are expected to be consulted throughout the design and implementation phases of the campaign.

Given the extreme variability and flexibility that is required of campaign managers in forging these relationships, the term “local community partner” is somewhat of a misnomer. I do not mean to suggest that campaign managers must develop connections with organizations or institutions. Rather, I use the term loosely to describe any number of coalitional possibilities that might be utilized to maximize the efficacy of the environmental intervention strategy. For instance, some campaign managers
explained that it was important to get local law enforcement and park officials involved in their campaigns because policy enforcement was a major problem being addressed. Other campaign managers explained that it was strategic to take their message to local schools to get young children involved in the conservation process. Some campaign managers even spoke to the wives of fishermen about the importance of “no take zones” in hopes that the campaign message would be spread informally. Regardless of strategy or whether a formal “partner” actually exists, the term is used here to denote a strategic engagement with the local community that is used to leverage particular campaign outcomes. Each Pride campaign is designed to be responsive to local problems and needs. Thus, community partners are conceptualized here as a relatively nebulous system of activity that encompasses local exigencies.

**Connecting Rare’s Systems of Activity**

Having outlined the major systems of activity that are salient for explicating the communicative processes involved in structurating activities for Rare, it is abundantly clear the organization is reliant on a diffuse style of organizing in order to maximize conservation outcomes. Figure 3.1 provides a straightforward organizational chart that demonstrates the connections that exist between the various systems of activity I have outlined above. Although such a model might be productive for a basic explanation of organization processes, it is insufficient for articulating a nuanced account of the ways in which meanings and practices are negotiated by members of the organization. In the following section, I extend the concept of systems of activity to provide a more theoretically-driven account of Rare’s organizational processes. Because of the diffuse
nature of Rare’s operations and the fact that the organization must navigate the complex obstacles imposed by working asynchronously in a global context (distanciation), such an analytic move is certainly warranted.

Expanding Systems of Activity: Modalities and Variation

To this point, I have described the bulk of Rare’s operations that are central to this study in a way that suggests a relatively linear organizational structure; directives are developed and distributed by the global office and implemented to campaign managers by regional personnel. However, such a linear characterization fails to fully articulate the important negotiation of meanings and practices that occurs across and between all levels of the organization. Moreover, a linear organizational model fails to account for temporality and spatiality – two components that are essential for Rare’s continued operational success. In this section, I outline an alternative conceptualization of Rare’s organization structure that accounts for the flexibility and permeability of the organization’s communicative operations. This model serves as a valuable theoretical heuristic for unpacking the issues pertaining to organizational identity, knowledge construction, and power that are explored in later chapters of this dissertation.

Theoretic Imperative

Organizational structure and its influence on the constraint and enablement of social activities has been the focus of much scholarly focus. As Canary (2010) explains, scholarly focus has shifted from top-down approaches and, later, bottom-up approaches to insist upon the importance of considering institutional, contextual, and individual
factors in the examination of organizational practices and discourses. SAT (Canary, 2010) provides an interpretive schema for analyzing how activity systems and the social contexts that surround them work to shape and sustain organizational life. Rather than focusing on singular activity systems, it is vital to consider the interconnections that exist between and across systems in order to understand how meanings are mediated and reproduced through social practice. As Canary (2010) explains, “Intersections between activity systems cannot adequately be theorized by relying solely on the mediation of individual activity system elements…Examining ways that activity system intersections produce, reproduce, and transform structure” (p. 36) presents a necessary level of nuance for addressing contemporary organizational practices. Following SAT’s insistence on examining the intersections of activity systems, I argue that it is vital to more thoroughly theorize how certain systems may wax or wane influence according to the particularities of a given social-organization milieu. While Canary’s (2010) explanation of intersecting activity systems is vital for my conceptualization of Rare as a distinct site of social inquiry, the remainder of this chapter will focus on extending key tenets of SAT in order to more thoroughly theorize organizational practice(s) as ongoing, contradictory, and permanently in flux.

In approaching a more holistic view of activity systems and system interactions, it is vital to conceptualize system elements as active sites of movement, power, and resistance. Organizational practices and meaning may become regimented, but the constitutive elements of activity systems are constantly (re)negotiated (Canary, 2010; Giddens, 1984). To this end, I find it productive to conceptualize activity systems not merely as “containers” of discourse, practice, and meaning, but as modalities that may
exert influence at different moments across time and space. I do not mean to suggest, that either Canary (2010) or Giddens (1984) appropriates the container metaphor; it is abundantly clear that both authors assume a more complex, constitutive view of organizations and communication. Rather, I use the notion of “contained” activity to trouble the notion that activity systems are typically fixed and static. Following Brouwer and Asen (2001), I find it productive to theorize activity systems as public modalities that “entail a focus on multiplicity, movement, and activity, and the mutual implication of theory and practice” (p. 3). Emphasizing the notion of activity systems as modalities, allows for a more thorough interrogation of the subjective process by which organizational meanings are negotiated and draws attention the liminal space(s) activity systems might occupy at any given moment.

In what follows I briefly outline this alternative conceptualization of organizational structure by noting the characteristics of various systems of activity. Following the terminological distinctions made by Canary (2010), I term these activity systems primary, secondary, and tertiary as a way of differentiating influence within a given organizational context. As a theoretical caveat, it is worth noting that these categorizations are not intended to be understood as absolute or fixed; a system of activity may, for instance, move from becoming a secondary tier to a primary tier depending on particular social circumstances, scholarly focus, or other factors. I, thus, use Rare as an exemplar for explicating how these categorizations might be employed given the current status of the organization. Figure 3.2 provides an illustration of activity systems grouped according to their status as primary, secondary, or tertiary.
Primary Systems of Activity

Primary systems of activity are those that are most directly responsible for ensuring organizational outcomes, determining organizational directives, decision-making, and maintaining channels of communication for members and other parties. Primary activity systems are afforded the greatest amount of power and agency within the organizational context and are able to make determinations about rules and resources (Giddens, 1984) that members of the organization are expected to uphold. Although the distribution of power is centralized toward primary systems of activity, hierarchical privileging may still occur as is typical in many, if not all, bureaucratic organizations. That is, members of these activity systems who serve in more senior positions are presumably able to exercise more influence within the organization. Similarly, hierarchical ordering of activity systems may still take place according to the importance that is placed on structure and content of particular discourses and practices. For instance, a CEO may introduce a new policy for the organization, but agents with considerable influence may be able to make determinations about how such a policy might be enforced for members under the direct purview of her authority. Thus, an implicit assumption in the primary activity system categorization is that negotiation of meaning(s) is anticipated, and perhaps even required of members. Unlike a standard top-down model of organizing, the primary activity system categorization necessitates that organizational contradictions are inherent, and thus, directs focus to the ways in which these differences are reconciled by members, branches of the organization, or other parties that might fall into this category.

In this framework, Rare’s global office and Rare’s regional offices serve as the
primary activity systems because they greatly influence the direction and outcomes of the organization. Rare’s global office, which is tasked with establishing operating procedures for the organization as a whole, wields considerable influence in dictating policy and practices. Yet, given the considerable geographic distance between the Arlington, VA office and the regional headquarters, a similar (albeit lesser) degree of legitimacy and power is afforded to the regional offices. Because the regional office personnel are responsible for translating organizational directives such as curricular changes or alterations to the organization’s mission, the distribution of power occurs in ways that are atypical of hierarchical organizational models. An active and continuous meaning negotiation process between the global office and the regional offices is, therefore, vital for maintaining continuity and stability of the organization. In taking Rare as an object of analysis, the global and regional offices are clearly primary systems of activity given the significant influence they yield in day-to-day operations.

Secondary Systems of Activity

Secondary systems of activity are those which may influence organizational outcomes, albeit in ways that are indirect. Unlike primary activity systems, which are afforded the largest share of power and influence in the organizational context, secondary activity systems have limited domains of influence. This is not to suggest that secondary activity systems are comparatively powerless. On the contrary, because many contemporary organizations rely on collaboration between and across distinct activity systems, secondary systems are typically crucial to an organization’s continued success and proliferation. Responsive organizations may draw heavily on secondary activity
systems to redirect actions, change strategies, or make crucial determinations about practices and procedures. This influence, however, may be bound by temporal limitations because secondary activity systems are not chiefly or directly concerned with organizational outcomes writ large. For example, a corporation (primary activity system) may have a collaborative working relationship with a consulting firm (secondary activity system) on a particular issue. The consulting firm may be able to indirectly influence organizational procedures (through consultation, by leveraging contractual obligations, etc.), but this influence is generally limited and punctuated over periods of time. Thus, the secondary activity system categorization can be used to demarcate systems with indirect influence in the organizational context.

UTEP and the Pride campaign managers can be considered secondary activity systems in this schema given the limited, yet important, influence they wield within the organizational context. First, although the partnership with UTEP is a major incentive for campaign managers, the faculty and administration at the University have relatively limited influence in the operations of the organization. Certainly, issues pertaining to accreditation, curriculum, and academic rigor would fall within the purview of UTEP as a system of activity. However, UTEP has extremely limited influence in other areas of the organization such as establishing policy, fundraising, or altering organizational goals. Additionally, because the UTEP-Rare partnership only deals with one aspect of the organization’s programmatic goals, UTEP’s involvement is temporally punctuated, rather than omnipresent.

Similarly, the Pride campaign managers can be conceptualized as a distinct secondary activity system. Although each Pride cohort does considerable work to
promote Rare’s mission, campaign managers have relatively little influence in the
decision-making process of the organization. However, given the recursive nature of
organizations, incremental changes to the primary activity system(s) are still possible.
For instance, campaign managers are often encouraged to give feedback about the Pride
curriculum to regional personnel. Although these suggestions are mediated through and
across multiple channels of the organization, indirect changes to the curriculum may
occur as a result of this feedback. As I explain in Chapter 5, this iterative, recursive
process is an important element of constructing knowledge within the organization.

Tertiary Systems of Activity

Finally, tertiary systems of activity are those that are involved in the
organizational context, but have an extremely low level of power in managing outcomes
or influencing decision-making capabilities. Typically, tertiary activity systems are
linked to the organizational context by virtue of a connection to a secondary activity
system. Members of tertiary activity systems may be the target audience for
organizational activities, but their influence is rarely an element in the constitutive
meaning-making process. For example, a corporation (primary activity system) may
have a tacit relationship with a local community (tertiary activity system) due to
proximity, shared resources, or other considerations. While complaints or concerns about
the corporation may emerge from the community, they are typically mediated indirectly
through secondary activity systems (such as a citizen lobbying group). Tertiary activity
systems are, therefore, never directly engaged with primary activity systems. It is worth
noting, however, that even at the tertiary level these activity systems do exert some
influence in the organizational context. After all, as Cheney and Christensen (2001) remind, contemporary organizations must be continuously mindful of outside perceptions and attitudes in order to preserve organizational stability.

In this schema, the IPs and local community partners are clearly tertiary activity systems. Although IPs are responsible for supporting campaign managers (financially and institutionally) during their time in the Pride training program, they do not directly influence any organizational outcomes that are not directly within their purview. Thus, a national park leader may not support or allow a certain action to be taken by a campaign manager, but this influence is contained to the domain of the national park itself. Similarly, although campaign managers are expected to engage with local community members and tailor their campaigns for a target audience, their activities within the organizational context are still exceptionally limited. Despite this limited influence, intersections with tertiary activity systems are still an important component of Rare’s methodology. Several of the regional personnel, for instance, explained that the Pride program would become useless if there wasn’t a “buy-in” from members of the community or IPs. Tertiary activity systems are far removed from the decision making process, but their influence is still considered in real and meaningful ways.

Concluding Remarks

The distinct system of activity levels outlined above represent an important departure from hierarchical organizational structure models. As an international ENGO that has experienced exponential growth over the last several years, Rare faces numerous challenges that require the negotiation of meanings across multiple sites of activity and
action. To explain the emergent tensions and contradictions the organization is currently experiencing as merely a “lack of communication from above” would be wholly insufficient. Instead, by situating the distinct activity systems according to variable influence within the organization context, my hope is that such a framework might prove fruitful in elucidating the challenges that are currently unfolding for the organization. I take this categorization as my starting point for making sense of these tensions. In the following chapter, I focus on my first research question and trace the organizational contradictions that are emerging for Rare and its members.
Figure 3.1: An Illustration of Rare’s Organizational Structure
Figure 3.2. Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Organizational Arrangement
The exponential growth that Rare has experienced in the last decade has resulted in many significant changes to the organization’s identity. Leaders of the organization have been keenly aware of this growth and, as a result, have attempted to create an atmosphere wherein dynamic changes to the organization’s identity are acceptable and even encouraged. This is not entirely surprising; Rare’s personnel generally view the organization as an organic and responsive one. The changes to the organization’s identity detailed in this chapter have been largely heralded as positive changes by members of the organization. Yet, despite the generally positive reception, the implementation of a new strategic vision and its subsequent implications for organizational practice have created numerous disjunctures for members as these changes become formalized within Rare’s operating procedures.

In order to explore these disjunctures and tensions, it is vital to return to the research question(s) pertaining to organizational identity:

- **RQ1a**: How do members negotiate Rare’s organizational identity in relation to the various systems of activity to which they belong?
- **RQ1b**: What, if any, identity contradictions emerge in members’ narratives?

This chapter focuses on the various contradictions that exist for members of the organization who are attempting to make sense of the shifting identity. I argue that while these changes have had an overall positive impact on the organization, several major discrepancies continue to exist that disconnect organizational discourses and practices, particularly between different activity systems. I begin by tracing two major changes to the organization’s identity in recent years. Next, I analyze major identity contradictions that have emerged as a result of these changes. Specifically, I focus on two emergent tensions germane to organizational identity: (1) structure and coordination, and (2) conflict concerning external perceptions of Rare’s identity. Each of these issues present unique challenges for the organization and its members during this period of rapid expansion and transition.

**Rare’s Shifting Organizational Identity**

For roughly the last 4 years, Rare has implemented several measures that are intended to rebrand the organization and refocus its strategic vision for environmental conservation. These efforts have been largely praised by members of the organization, but the implications of these changes remain somewhat unknown. Following Cheney and Christensen (2001), I understand these rebranding efforts to be major components of organizational identity insofar as public relations and public identity are conceptualized as merely one facet of an organization’s identity. That is, while the rebranding efforts have mostly been focused on how the organization is perceived *externally*, the changes
have also altered how members relate to the organization. Thus, it is vital to begin by tracing the major changes that the organization has implemented over the last several years.

Values Codification

Beginning in 2010, Rare began a process of codifying its organizational values that was intended to encapsulate the positive work and contributions of members from around the world. As Ed Soule, the chair of Rare’s board of trustees explains:

When I became the chair of Rare’s board of trustees in June 2010, my mandate was something akin to “Don’t mess it up!” Rare was thriving…which gave me the luxury of focusing on things that would position Rare as an enduring institution of global significance. In my experience, such organizations are erected on solid foundations of strong cultures and clearly defined values…That is why I urged Rare’s leaders to formalize the defining values of the organization. (2013, para. 4)

The codification of values, then, can be understood as a move to formalize and cement the meanings that were deemed most impactful for day-to-day operations and interactions between members. Previously, Rare did not have a formal values or mission statement and, instead, relied on its motto, “Inspiring Conservation,” as the guiding principle of all efforts. By shifting to a more expansive values statement that clearly outlined the principles that were important for the organization, the goal was to answer two key questions: “What really matters around here? And, what defines exemplary performance?” (Soule, 2013, para. 7).

In attempting to articulate a cogent set of organizational values, leadership of the organization sought input from not only the global offices, but from regional personnel as well. This is particularly noteworthy because, while the implementation of the new values statement has occurred in a relatively top-down fashion, the ideas contained within
it were created democratically. One staff member from the global offices explained that, “There were teams. There was a brand team and there were ambassadors from different regions. I don’t know the process exactly, but they went through something they figured out the critical elements and had the usual back and forth.” Unlike many organizations that name character attributes such as honesty, integrity, and determination as core values, Rare sought to create a list of values that exhibited their unique approach to conservation. One regional personnel member who was a global value ambassador explained why this work was so important to the operations of the organization:

When I joined Rare in 2011, there wasn’t such a thing as “Rare’s values.” We believed in certain things. We shared certain values, but it was never formalized. Until about 2 years when we started to formalize and stipulate the values into a set of things. I was part of the leadership team that worked on the creation of the values. I was struck by the fact that our leaders at Rare, we actually came in thinking that we don’t want to create something that needs to be there in the first place like being hardworking, not discriminating, poor treatment…the usual things. It should be there regardless in the way you work. But what actually defines us needs to be unique. We even created our own word because we couldn’t find an English word – solutionology – so the mindset of striving for solutions. These are the defining and distinct values that I wouldn’t see in any other organization.

The systematic process of articulating these values and their centrality in the organization is important given the unique type(s) of work carried out by members of the organization. The values statement serves not only as a symbolic resource that members can use to align their behaviors, but also as a form of marketing that exhibits the dynamic, community-engaged approach to conservation for which the organization is well known. Thus, in adopting values such as “Commitment to Accountability, Mindset of Solutionology, and Spirit of Celebration” the statement serves as a mediating resource that helps members “to fulfill Rare’s mission” in such a way that “Rare’s values determine its overall performance” (Soule, 2013, para. 8).
Upward Scaling

In addition to creating a set of formalized values, leaders of Rare have also sought to realign the strategic focus of the organization by placing an emphasis on upward scaling of operations. The Pride campaign model remains the signature project of the organization, but several initiatives have been rolled out in an attempt to maximize target audiences and increase the overall scope of the organization’s efforts. Given the analytic aim of this chapter, I focus on the most significant of these initiatives, Fish Forever, in order to highlight how Rare’s organizational identity is being impacted as a result of these changes. Other strategies implemented by the organization such as thematic cohorts and regional expansion are certainly important, but are relatively minor alterations to organizational practices when compared to the massive changes necessitated by the scope of the Fish Forever program.

The Fish Forever program is currently being developed and implemented in Belize, Brazil, Indonesia, Mozambique, and the Philippines. Unlike Pride campaigns, which usually focus on small scale initiatives at the community level, Fish Forever is conceptualized as a concerted effort aimed at creating substantive policy changes related to sustainable fishing and coastal fisheries. The program is part of a collaboration with the Environmental Defense Fund and the Sustainable Fisheries Group at the University of California, Santa Barbara that aims to enact long-term changes on a global level. Ted Waitt, chairman of the Waitt Foundation (a funding partner for the initiative) describes the program as, “Big and audacious – just the kind of thing we need in ocean conservation” (“Fish Forever,” n.d.). Importantly, the Fish Forever program is an attempt to build capacity and develop action networks that can achieve tangible results in a
variety of ways such as creating local enforcement systems, negotiating fishery policies, and finding market-based solutions. This is, I argue, a significant departure from Rare’s standard organizational focus insofar as the initiative is intended to scale conservation outreach to new and unprecedented levels.

In attempting to scale operations upward, Rare is engaging in a process of strategic realignment that is, in some ways, at odds with the localized approach to conservation that has come to be synonymous with the organization’s identity. I do not mean to suggest that Rare is abandoning its model of community engagement. Rather, the Fish Forever program represents an important opportunity for assessing how or whether the organization will be able to maintain its core identity in the face of such radical expansion. The move from localization of efforts to the development of global networks, for instance, is a change that is unprecedented for the organization. As the Fish Forever website explains:

Fish Forever’s founding partners are engaging a vast network of local, regional, national and international partners to provide support and ensure that Fish Forever is adopted and adapted locally and recognized globally. These partners bring a diverse range of experience and expertise that includes working directly with local communities to implement Fish Forever, building technical capacity, creating new public and private financing opportunities, and influencing regional, national, and international policies. Building consensus and coalitions is crucial to achieving Fish Forever’s goals. (“The Solution,” n.d.)

The program’s model is predicated on the ability of partners to develop localized strategies that can be scaled upwards into domains such as market regulations and policy implementation. Certainly, Rare has vast experience with creating local solutions, but this program represents an initial foray into domains that are unfamiliar to members of the organization. Unfortunately, because the program is still being developed, this dissertation does not trace the implications of the Fish Forever on Rare in any long-term
sense. However, as I explain later in this chapter and in Chapter 5, the initial implementation of the Fish Forever program is creating several systemic contradictions for members who are attempting to make sense of these radical organizational changes.

Emergent Identity Tensions

Having traced a few of the major changes to Rare’s organizational identity in the last several years, I now turn my focus to articulate some of the contradictions that have emerged for members as a result of these changes. As Canary (2010) explains, contradictions are important sites for investigating oppositional tensions within organizational contexts and can be potentially productive for changing or managing organizational outcomes. Thus, in tracing these contradictions, I do not mean to suggest that these are organizational failings. Rather, I envision each contradiction as a site of potential for reconciling disconnects that might exist between discourse and practice. Data analysis for this project yielded two fields of tension that deal with (1) structure and coordination, and (2) conflicts concerning external perceptions of Rare’s identity.

Structure and Coordination

The exponential growth of Rare, coupled with the codification of organizational values, has created significant alterations in day-to-day practices for members. Although some degree of adaptation is expected during moments of organizational change, Rare’s members are attempting to make sense of the rapid changes occurring throughout the organization. This organizational sense making process reveals several contradictions within and across activity systems that are somewhat problematic for members and the
continued operations of the organization. I delineate these contradictions as distinct concerns about (1) communication structure, and (2) values coordination.

Communication Structure

First, members of Rare are attempting to make sense of the rapid growth of the organization and its consequent imposition of structural constraints for styles of communication. Long-time members of the organization note a degree of formalization that is emerging in the communication that is deemed acceptable. That is, when the organization was much smaller, a more free-flowing, casual style of communication was expected of members. As the organization has continued to grow, however, organizational bureaucracy and structural constraints are beginning to impinge on members’ ability to freely engage with one another, particularly when communication must take place across activity systems. One long-time member of the global offices describes the importance of having an active communication and support network within the organization:

I think more than anything – I think a lot of people who have been here for a while and achieved success – one thing is really developing a network internally. I feel that in times where you need to get work done, if you don’t have a really strong relationship with your colleagues in other offices, with your peers, with your counterparts across around the world, then you’re going to struggle. I was one of like 35 people and had Brett and Dale the CEO and CFO walking past my desk every day and seeing me do the work. Just having those conversations helps me even now.

The informal communication structure of the organization is seen by many of the global and regional personnel as something that has been quite beneficial for their continued success on the job. Access to pertinent information, questions about unofficial protocol, and the ability to sustain and coordinate working relations were mentioned by several
participants as keys to maintaining healthy and robust communication in the workplace. However, such an organic approach to communication is only feasible when operations are relatively limited.

As Rare continues to grow, a hierarchical communication structure has emerged that is beginning to limit the ability of members to freely communicate with one another. I do not mean to suggest that these changes are wholly negative. On the contrary, many members recognize that there are many pros and cons to bureaucratized communication. Members are attempting to delineate a proper balance between newly imposed structures and the previous informality of communication amongst members. For example, a regional personnel member explains that the more structured environment has made the working environment more productive:

> In a way it’s easier. In a way, the finance…in terms of grants, we have more restricted funding right now and the finance people are very diligent in…being strict on donor requirements. They remind us constantly what we need to do with reports, due dates, and all that stuff. It’s really great. It’s a headache at first, but it’s good for the long term. When the report is due, everything is smooth. But it’s also more work, definitely. I see the pros and cons, but really there are a lot more pros.

Another regional staff member explains that the growth of the organization has made the imposition of structure inevitable. Despite the formalization, members are actively attempting to respond to changes in communication protocol:

> Compared to 5 years ago, yeah, it is changing because we are getting so many people. Five years ago when it was only 50 people, I knew all the faces and voices when we did conference calls. We would follow up with e-mails. When we had conferences we would share our achievements and the lessons we learned. Now because there are too many people, we are still learning how to embrace the change.

As Rare continues to grow its communication will inevitably become more formalized and bureaucratic in nature. Several scholars (McPhee & Poole, 2001; Wereder &
Holtzhausen, 2011) note that larger organizations impose structured communication forms and systems in order to streamline communication, reduce message uncertainty, and coordinate activity between and among members. The tensions discussed by members of the organization indicate that a secondary contradiction (Canary, 2010) is taking place as members attempt to adapt to emergent organizational circumstances. This contradiction is evinced in the tension articulated by members as a new mediating resource (bureaucratized communication) disrupts the more traditional, informal styles of communication that were previously routinized in organizational practice. In order to reconcile this tension, members are having to adapt by following a formal upward communication protocol. Moreover, this shift in identity from a loosely organized workplace to a more bureaucratic system is reminiscent of the tension that Giddens (1984) describes as an inherent part of the duality of structure. That is, growing organizations that begin to impose more formal rules and forms of control may create tension as members begin to feel that their agency is constrained or threatened. As Rare begins to impose more structuring elements (through rules, communication protocols, and other methods), members of the organization will necessarily negotiate their own agency in relation to systemic constraints. Although no members interviewed for this project expressed outright negativity towards the more structured workplace environment, several indicated that there are major concerns about whether these elements will continue to impinge on agency in the future. One member of the global offices explains:

Working in a small organization offers opportunities to have a lot of contact with different people. That’s usually not the dynamic in larger organizations. One [concern] is the loss of contact with different stakeholders and also the degree to which it gets more hierarchical and the steps it takes to get from one person to
another. That might mean more red tape or bureaucratization or standards of protocol…I hope we avoid that.

The emergent tension between organizational structure and members’ ability to actively communicate with one another presents a major and recent change for Rare. As the organization continues to develop, this secondary level contradiction between previous communication styles and practices and the newly introduced communication protocol and expectation (mediating resource) will become increasingly important given the centrality of communication processes for both internal operations and coordination of organizational identity.

**Values Coordination**

Rare’s codification of organizational values represents an important moment of change for the organization and its operations. By outlining five values that all members should strive to uphold, the organization is implicitly framing expectations for practices, meanings, and outcomes. Despite only being formally adopted in the last 2 years, most members of the organization interviewed for this project recognized the importance of the values statement and mentioned its centrality in thinking about workplace interactions and strategic organizational outcomes. Indeed, in an attempt to encourage members to actively uphold key values (or, at the very least, appropriate the value terminology in describing actions), the organization has created an incentive system that awards members who actively promote Rare’s values in everyday workplace settings. The honor, which has formally been named the Evan Award, drew 167 nominations in its first year (Soule, 2013, para. 7) to recognize achievements by individuals who were exemplars for the Rare values system. By utilizing institutional resources such as incentives and
emphasizing the centrality of the values statement in formal organizational communications, Rare is actively attempting to convey the importance of these tenets for the identity of the organization.

The importance placed on the codified organizational values has, unsurprisingly, led many members of the organization to wholeheartedly endorse the meanings espoused in the value tenets. By formulating a values statement with input from members at all levels of the organization, Rare has provided an important mediating resource for members attempting to articulate the meaningfulness of their work. One member of the global office explains jokingly that values have become so ingrained in daily practice that membership in the organization is akin to being a member of a cult:

We are dedicated to the mission, but – it’s not a job or a career…for a lot of people it’s a lifestyle. It’s about adopting all of our practices in our life both personally and professionally. It’s that embodiment. Our talent department did a lot of research on surfacing our values and incorporating them daily, monthly, quarterly, yearly…that’s what really drives us. We really live this work…For the more recent staff, it’s a bit of a shock. A colleague who just joined said it is drastically different and it took her a while to adjust. And she jokes now that she “drank the Kool-Aid.” They [the talent department] do a really good job identifying personalities that work here…and those that don’t, just don’t work out.

This comment highlights the degree to which members of the organization identify with Rare’s values. For many, the goals and values of the organization are not merely something to be upheld only in the workplace, but are something that should be embodied in everyday practice. Several members of the organization, for example, explained that their work in the organization was just a small part of a duty or obligation they felt to the greater good and global community. Rare’s ability to tap into these sentiments and reflect them in a codified values statement serves two purposes within the organization. First, it provides a vernacular or linguistic mediating resource to articulate
their experiences in a way that can be generalized and connected to organizational practice. Second, and more importantly, it expands the scope and meaning of the values statement from merely an organizational artifact to something that can be actively embodied and performed by members.

Despite being a powerful resource for Rare, the newly adopted values statement is not without its limitations. Although expansive and meant to encompass a variety of ideal characteristics, several members of the organization noted that they did not believe the statement accounted for all of the values that were fully engaging with Rare’s unique culture and identity. For example, when asked about meaningful values in the organization, several members mentioned the five core values, but also signaled that there were deeper meanings and values that were not accounted for. One regional staff member explains that the idea of family is central to the organization, but not necessarily evinced the values statement:

In Indonesia, we’re kind of big, but we are also kind of small. In each activity we meet the same people. To be honest, most of our time is spent with people at Rare instead of our family (laughs)…We help others. Basically, it’s like a family. I have been working for Rare for a long time now and I have spent my birthday with Rare…seven times? They are like my second family. So I think that kind of explains it.

In addition to family, members also mentioned caring for nature, being honest and open with others, and being dedicated to conservation as important values that they sought to uphold through their work. Although no values statement can ever be all encompassing or responsive to each member of the organization, the frequency with which these alternate values were mentioned suggests that the organization’s efforts to codify key values may be perceived as somewhat limiting by members of the organization. This incongruity can, therefore, be understood as a secondary contradiction insofar as a new
element in the activity system (the values statement) is creating tension that will
necessitate a transformation of practices or system elements (Canary, 2010, p. 187). The
alternate values espoused by Rare’s members are not overtly at odds with the official
values statement, but do pose a potential site of conflict in terms of stabilizing and
unifying meanings and discourses circulating within the organization. The increasing
emphasis on structure and formalization also creates a structural contradiction insofar as
overarching perspectives toward membership in the organization begin to shift. In
expressing their concern that Rare is becoming less like a family and more like a formal
organization, members are highlighting an important disjuncture concerning the
normative perspectives they hold concerning relationships with other members and the
organization itself. Put differently, the values being employed by members are divergent
from the institutionally legitimized values and, consequently, may lead to impactful
discrepancies between discourse and practice.

A second, and arguably more problematic, identity contradiction relating to values
concerns the degree to which key organizational values are espoused by members within
and across different activity systems. During the interview process it became abundantly
clear that full time employees of Rare (global office and regional personnel) were quite
aware of the codified values and their importance for developing a unified identity for the
organization. With the exception of a single regional staff member, all personnel
interviewed for this study mentioned, without prompting, the formalization of values as
an important movement for the organization. The value messaging appears to have
clearly saturated the primary activity systems. However, talk about formalized values is
entirely absent for members of secondary and tertiary activity systems. This is somewhat
surprising given the important role that campaign managers (secondary activity system) play in the coordination, development, and implementation of Rare’s strategic vision through Pride campaigns. No current campaign managers or Pride alumni mentioned the five values and, instead, tended to describe their conceptualization of important values in terms of practicality and their own experiences. The family metaphor once again emerged as an important value for many of the campaign managers interviewed for this project. For instance, several campaign managers indicated that the connections they developed to other members of the organization were the most meaningful for describing their experience. One Pride alumnus details the importance of these connections:

I think a lot about how [Rare] links all of us as a big family. We now have four cohorts. Five is still going on now. Now we are a big family as the alumni of the Pride campaign. We are still connected and it gives us more strength because if we have a program that we don’t have any capacity to do something – we just contact other alumni who have the capacity to help. It’s about connections and the links. We support each other. So we know “Oh, he’s good at this one. He’s good at this one.”

The discrepancy in how values are talked about within the organizational context is significant for understanding Rare’s identity for several reasons. First, in framing key values for the organization’s future, Rare’s messaging appears focused on the transmission and reinforcement of messaging solely to primary activity systems. As a result, these meanings have not permeated to secondary or tertiary activity systems and may effectually limit the scope or impact of the values statement. Although it is unlikely that the value premises will ever be consequential for tertiary activity systems (implementing partners and local communities), it is surprising that the terminology employed in official organizational discourses has not been adopted by members belonging to secondary activity systems, especially campaign managers. This discrepancy, then, can be thought of as a tertiary contradiction wherein new objects are
introduced to an activity system and require organizational transformation to be reconciled (Canary, 2010, p. 188). In this sense, campaign managers do not appear to have the linguistic mediating resources necessary to fully engage with the Rare’s rebranded identity; the values they describe may share commonalities with the official values statement, but they are unable to articulate those meanings using the same type of discourses or meaning. As I note in Chapter 6, rethinking how values terminology might be introduced to secondary, or even tertiary, activity system members could be highly consequential for establishing a coherent, meaningful, and long lasting organizational identity.

External Perceptions and Organizational Identity

In addition to grappling with a shifting internal identity, Rare has also attempted to reconcile changing external perceptions concerning the strategic focus and future of the organization. Considering both the internal and external dynamics of an organization’s identity is important because, as Cheney and Christensen (2001) explain, these domains are mutually implicative; internal identity informs external perceptions and external perceptions shape internal activity. Thus, it is important to consider how the recent growth of Rare has prompted perceptual changes to the organization’s brand and strategic vision. Two major concerns emerge as external identity tensions for Rare: increasing uncertainty and a perceived shift away from localization.
Increasing Uncertainty

The strategic rebranding that Rare has undergone in recent years has created a few unexpected challenges for communicating a consistent message about the organization and the work that it aims to accomplish. In addition to a new values statement, Rare has also adopted a new logo and motto that are meant to encapsulate the totality of the organization’s efforts to promote conservation and sustainability on multiple fronts. For example, the logo, which contains images of a human face, a leaf, a fish, and a water droplet, is meant to convey the idea that Rare’s campaigns focus on people, forests, marine ecosystems, and water conservation and preservation. Similarly, the new motto – “Rare inspires change so people and nature thrive” – is meant to demonstrate the human-centered approach to conservation that is a cornerstone of the Pride approach. Although these changes may appear relatively inconsequential on a surface level, such a dramatic rebranding effort poses significant challenges for maintaining consistent perceptions about the organization. Scholars such as Feldman (1969) and Hatch and Schultz (2003) caution that even minor rebranding can be extremely problematic for organizations and corporations because audiences may not draw a connection between current and past branding efforts. Establishing and maintaining consistent external communication is, thus, vital. As a result of these rebranding efforts, Rare’s regional personnel are facing a heightened level of uncertainty from IPs concerning the stability and consistency of the organization. One regional staff member explains:

[With] the rebranding…I tried to introduce our new brand to our partners. It’s basically an additional job for me. We need to explain why we changed our brand and the timing of the branding, which was not a big launch – it was a soft launch – and the occasion was at the same time with the plan to merge with TNC (The Nature Conservancy). So that was…yeah. That was a pain. A lot of people
asked whether the rebranding was connected with the merging plan or something like that, but it wasn’t. We tried not to connect anything with the new brand.

As the rebranding efforts were being implemented, Rare was in the process of negotiating a merger with The Nature Conservancy. Although the deal eventually fell through for undisclosed reasons, the premature announcement of the merger and the rebranding efforts created uncertainty for IPs who were unsure whether such a strategic realignment would drastically alter the organization’s focus. Because the new branding created an identity tension between Rare and its partners, this change can be conceptualized as a secondary contradiction. That is, the rebranding prompted a transformation of system elements and practices in order reconcile tensions that emerged as a result of identity uncertainty.

Aside from the very practical concerns about how to market the organization, a major amount of uncertainty persists concerning institution “buy-in” from implementing partners who are unsure about the goals, focus, and objectives of Rare. This uncertainty can partly be attributed to the fact that Rare’s approach to conservation is so novel; the focus on partnership, collaboration, and community-based intervention is quite unfamiliar to most conservation organizations. However, a more significant level of uncertainty arises from the persistent tension concerning how to frame the incentives or benefits of partnering with Rare. Although Rare is well regarded in many regions, the organization is still somewhat of a minor player in the world of conservation and does not have the name recognition or organizational reputation of larger groups like the Environmental Defense Fund, the World Wildlife Fund, or the Nature Conservancy. The persistence of this uncertainty is thus, a major source of tension that the organization must continuously grapple with in order to maintain its operations. One regional staff member explained
that “selling the organization” is one of the most frequent obstacles that must be addressed for promoting the organization:

Well, the first obstacle is maybe the…it’s how you sell the program. Defining or explaining the program to others – that it is not just an NGO where we come to a site and do things and teach them things – it’s not something like that. Though people have a real reluctance at first, when we show them this is what we’re trained to do…basically, at the end, they have to buy-in to the program. That’s the biggest challenge -- getting people to have a buy-in.

In order to reconcile these tensions, regional personnel go to great lengths to promote the organization by promoting the incentives for partnership. The development of the master’s degree program with UTEP, for instance, was mentioned by several regional staff members as a real turning point for the organization because the Pride program was able to be marketed with a more tangible result or product. As Rare continues to grow, it will be vital to maintain direct and consistent external messaging about the organization and its successes.

Localization and Scale

Rare’s approach to conservation is, arguably, so successful because the organization has found a niche that is centered on social marketing and community engagement. Whereas many larger conservation organizations focus more heavily on conservation biology and scientific approaches to sustainability, Rare’s focus on human connections and capacity building is quite unique. Indeed, several of the global office and regional personnel remarked that it was the unique approach to conservation that drew them to Rare in the first place. As a regional program manager explains, “I think a lot of Rare people have a personal connection to the organization and that’s why we…in a way, it has a very positive impact on what we’re doing and how we are connected and
really dedicated to our work.” The personal connection that members work to develop with each other and with local communities is significant because it serves a platform for establishing a unique type of organizational identification. Rather than being seen as “another environmental NGO,” Rare focuses on providing a human face to its operations that is responsive to the needs of local communities. This personal connection, I argue, fosters a strong sense of external identification in communities where campaigns have been implemented.

However, the organization’s strategic realignment has prompted some concern about whether Rare will be able to maintain its niche as operations begin to scale upward. When explaining potential obstacles that the organization will face in coming years, every regional staff member interviewed for this project indicated that they were concerned about losing the human connection that has been instrumental to Rare’s success. For instance, one regional personnel remarked that, “Rare is at a big intersection right now. Fortunately, some of the staff are trying to remind the organization that we need to stick to our niche…otherwise we’ll change into just another organization doing the same old thing.” Another reaffirmed the idea that, “Conservation is about people. No matter how good the policy is, it’s still the people who are implementing it or who will create an impact. I hope these big initiatives, the big ambitious work of Rare…won’t make us forget the niche.” As the organization begins to scale its programs upward and introduces new initiatives like Fish Forever, uncertainty about the focus of the organization will likely become a major tension that needs to be addressed. These tensions can be thought of as tertiary contradictions insofar as they require a major shift in practice(s) to accommodate the demands of the Fish Forever initiative. The
organization’s previous focus on small scale operations will likely no longer be possible
given that upward scaling of operations is a key strategic priority. Despite the fact that
these interviews took place before the implementation of Fish Forever, many regional
staff members expressed concern about being able to balance the large scale scope of the
program with the type of engagement that has been used in the past. This tertiary
contradiction has created a meaningful level of uncertainty for members insofar as a
tension is emerging between localization and scale. Although this contradiction has
significant implications for Rare’s identity, I explore this tension in greater detail in
Chapter 5 by tracing the interconnection(s) between identity and knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

Rare’s organizational identity has undergone tremendous changes in the last
several years as a result of massive growth and concerted efforts by leaders of the
organization to formalize and codify important symbolic resources such as the
organization’s values statement. These changes have been widely accepted by members,
albeit with some hesitation and a tacit acceptance of organizational uncertainty. Each of
the systemic contradictions pertaining to organizational identity are, I argue, important
places to interrogate the nexus of discourse and practice for members of Rare. Although
reaction to some of these changes might be due to their rapid implementation, it is likely
that these tensions will continue to emerge as sites of contestation and negotiation in the
future. As I explain in Chapter 6, these identity contradictions are sites of productive
possibility that can be used to bolster the organization’s operations at the local, regional,
and international level. To that end, the discussion section of this dissertation outlines a
few practical suggestions that might be considered by Rare’s leadership. In the next chapter I turn my focus to explore emergent tensions concerning the construction and negotiation of organizational knowledge. Much like the tensions pertaining to organizational identity, the rapid implementation of new protocol has resulted in several knowledge contradictions that members must attempt to reconcile.
CHAPTER 5

ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Contemporary organizations must prioritize how knowledge is constructed, negotiated, and transmitted to members in order to deal with emergent circumstances and tensions (Barley, Leonardi & Bailey, 2012). This dynamic process of knowledge negotiation has been the focus of much scholarly attention (Canary & McPhee, 2011; McPhee, Coorman & Dooley, 1999; Murphy & Eisenberg, 2011) largely because the transmission and interpretation of information is critical to organizational functionality. As an organization that models its structure and internal functions on responsiveness and adaptation, Rare serves as an exemplar for interrogating the contentious processes that unfold when discourses, meanings, values, and practices collide in an attempt to reconcile discrepancies in the coordination of knowledge. Additionally, Rare is an interesting site of inquiry for exploring knowledge processes because so many of its operations are predicated upon the dissemination of practical skills that can be used to guide and orient practices. For example, the Pride curriculum that is used to teach campaign managers about social marketing and barrier removal strategies may appear, at surface level, to be a relatively straightforward instructional tool that guides members to cultivate certain skills. However, this curriculum belies a much more complex reality insofar as the
information contained within the training documents is constantly negotiated across systems of activity, between members of the organization, and in the ways that theoretical insights inform on-the-ground practice. All of this is meant to suggest that there are numerous, often overlapping and conflictual, orientations toward knowledge that must be constantly interrogated, interpreted, and negotiated by members of Rare.

This chapter, then, focuses on some of the tensions that have emerged for Rare in its process of managing and negotiating organizational knowledge in recent years. In framing the internal dynamics of Rare, I do not mean to suggest that the organization is wholly unique in its knowledge negotiation practices. However, the rapid pace that is common in the organization, as well as its global scope, provide a particularly interesting vantage point for assessing how knowledge functions in contemporary, globalized organizations. To that end, it is important to reconsider the research question(s) pertaining to organizational knowledge:

- **RQ2a**: What discourses and practices are employed by Rare to constitutively organize knowledge within the organization?
- **RQ2b**: How do these practices shape members’ understandings of meaning within the organization?

In answering these questions, this chapter explores three major tensions concerning how practices and discourses constitutively organize knowledge (and vice versa) within the organization and, consequently, shape members’ perception(s) of the organization. The first two major tensions – curricular uncertainty and an orientation toward scientism – are closely connected and deal heavily with the practices of the organization to create, shape, and sustain knowledge across activity systems. The third
tension – localization and distanciation – deals more closely with how knowledge shapes members’ understanding of the organization and, thus, is closely interconnected with concerns for organizational identity. In each case, knowledge contradictions are understood as sites wherein power and resistance are constantly in play and provide unique opportunities for productive possibility and change.

Curricular Uncertainty

Perhaps more so than any other resource used by Rare’s members, the Pride training curriculum has undergone significant revisions and adaptations over the last decade. The curriculum still maintains its focus on achieving community driven results that are responsive to problems endemic to particular regions, but the focus and style continues to change with each Pride cohort. In referring to the Pride curriculum, I want to emphasize that I am not merely referring to a single document or set of lesson plans (as might be the case when speaking of curriculum in a higher education setting). The Pride curriculum encompasses a variety of materials, exercises, lessons, activities, and instructional support methods that are aimed at equipping campaign managers with the necessary skills to be successful in the field. Although my analysis in this section will point to specific excerpts from documents or reference different tools used by regional personnel for instruction, it must be emphasized that the training program is quite expansive and outside the purview and scope of a single chapter. Thus, in exploring how the curriculum has been the subject of constant negotiation and revision, it is important to keep in mind that I focus on the concerns, issues, or materials that are most salient for the analytic interests of this study.
Like virtually all other aspects of Rare’s operating procedures, the Pride curriculum has undergone significant changes that have been intended to improve organizational outcomes. Drawing on comments made by regional personnel, I demarcate three iterations in the curriculum’s development to demonstrate how the approach to transmitting conservation knowledge has shifted in recent years. The first iteration of the Pride curriculum is referred to as Pride 1.0 and was relatively limited in regards to building the long-term capacity of IPs and campaign managers. One regional staff member explains:

With Bogor 1 [the name of the first Indonesian Pride cohort] we called the curriculum Pride 1.0. It was the semitraditional campaign. We had traditional campaigns where, basically, we would train partners for 10 days or 2 weeks with the social marketing approach and then send them back to the field. The Pride 1.0 that was attached to Kent University in the UK. The curriculum at the time was not intentionally designed for adult learning. It was a very university-based approach...so there were many theoretical concepts...and not many classroom activities...very typical of a university setting. (laughs). Anyway, we had this Pride 1.0 for Bogor 1 and Bogor 2.

The initial Pride curriculum was largely focused on social marketing theory and skills that could easily be emulated in the field. The instructional approach for Pride 1.0 was extremely vague and laid out abstract theoretical concepts without fully explaining how they might be implemented in practice. For instance, a document titled, “Pride Reader: Volume 1, General Information” (n.d.) explains the process of identifying community barriers by noting, “Community-based social marketing is devoted to identifying barriers to desired behaviors before developing an influence strategy. Rare’s participatory planning process and use of Concept Models does this, as does its ground-truthing surveys and market segmentation process” (para. 1). This highly abstract explanation is typical of the language that was used to teach campaign managers about social marketing strategy. The terminological complexity of these documents served as a major
impediment for transmitting conservation theory to campaign managers because most had no prior experience with communication, social marketing, or other theoretical concepts laid out in the curriculum. Campaigns, then, became largely focused on emulation without a real emphasis on adaptation to particular social, political, or economic contexts. As one regional staff member explained, “A lot of people thought campaigns were just…make a mascot…talk to people…and then you are done.”

Recognizing the shortcomings of the Pride 1.0 curriculum, Rare introduced an updated program that is informally referred to as Pride 2.0. Rather than focusing on abstract concepts, Pride 2.0 sought to provide campaign managers with applied, hands-on skills that could be translated from classroom settings into local communities. A regional program manager describes Pride 2.0 by noting:

We changed the program from a year program to a 2 year program. We realized that, to change people, you will need more than 1 year. To plan, you will need more than 2 weeks. So we changed the program. Then we had a formal 2 year program that we called the Pride Program 2.0. Pride 2.0 was completely different from Pride 1.0. It was intentionally designed for adult learning programs. Pride 2.0 is more of a skill-oriented program. We reduced the theoretical classes, we put in more hands-on skills like facilitation, public negotiation, those kind of things. It’s a more practical program. They don’t have to understand all the theory.

Pride 2.0 has been used for the Bogor 3, 4, and 5 cohorts with slight modifications occurring with each cycle as a result of feedback from UTEP faculty. The materials used to educate campaign managers became much more focused on skills and classroom activities to facilitate learning about conservation methodologies. For example, one workbook, “Building Conservation Constituencies: A Course in Social Marketing Conservation,” provides managers with a model campaign for “Serena Island” that documents how barriers and strategies were identified and formulated in a step-by-step process. Underneath each example passage, campaign managers are provided with blank
space and instructions like, “Reflect on your site and the Provisional Top Ranked Threat you identified in Worksheet 10. Do a 1st draft of Theory Change” (“Building Conservation Constituencies,” 2008, p. 33). Each of the activities in the workbook is intended to walk campaign managers through the development of a campaign in a relatively straightforward, yet theoretically informed, process.

The first two iterations of the Pride curriculum are noteworthy because they demonstrate how important organizational knowledge construction processes were modified to meet the emergent needs of campaign managers. Recognizing that highly abstract terminology was ineffective, Rare revised its curriculum to focus on hands-on instruction that would be practical for campaign managers with little to no communication background. Moreover, regional managers recognized that some of the learning objectives would need to be modified to meet the particular cultural needs specific to Indonesia and adapted the curriculum accordingly. One regional manager provides a rather vivid description of this instructional change, noting:

Basically, with Pride 1.0 we provided them with theory. If you go to the jungle and if you encounter a tiger…it is basically telling them how to encounter the tiger. But with Pride 2.0 it’s like providing them with a knife. But if you want to fight with the beast, this is the knife…we teach them how to use the knife.

The transition from Pride 1.0 to Pride 2.0, then, might be conceptualized as a response to a secondary knowledge contradiction insofar as the training protocol required a necessary transformation to respond to the exigencies of the Pride curriculum. In recognizing the limitations of the Pride 1.0 curriculum, Rare drastically altered its knowledge construction process to achieve more desirable outcomes. In other words, the introduction of the Pride 2.0 curriculum was a direct response to the secondary contradiction between existing knowledge processes (Pride 1.0) and the existing
knowledge of the community. Although it is somewhat unclear how this new material was conceptualized and created, several regional personnel members noted that Rare’s global office constantly seeks feedback about the curriculum to find new methods, ideas, and procedures that might increase the pedagogical outcomes of the training materials. The changing focus of Pride is representative of an orientation towards knowledge that is highly responsive to emergent needs and tensions of the rapidly evolving organization.

Despite the tremendous changes to the Pride curriculum over that last decade, many regional managers believe that the protocol might not be able to handle the tremendous programmatic shifts called for by the Fish Forever initiative. Whereas Pride 1.0 and Pride 2.0 were understood as conceptually similar, but divergent in practice, the new, expansive focus of Fish Forever is seen as a major obstacle for regional personnel. One manager articulated his concern for the next stage of evolution for the Pride curriculum:

Now, we are changing again. We don’t call it Pride 2.something, but somehow we changed the curriculum because we have a very specific program called Fish Forever. It’s a very specific program. The concept is very complex. Basically, we dismantle this concept and try to make every piece of this concept practical for our partners. Now we will have new protocol. With Fish Forever it is even more complex. With the existing Pride campaigns, we don’t really touch policies. We don’t really touch markets. With Fish Forever we are also trying to touch the policies, the markets…how can we use people to influence political leaders? Something like that. Now we try to embrace all the problems at a particular site. That makes the program more complicated now. Before, we didn’t really go into the big jungle…just the small forest there. But now we’re going into the big jungle.

This trepidation is not uncommon. Several members from the global offices and regional offices noted that they were unsure how the program would be implemented and whether the organization would have the necessary resources to provide the type of training for such an expansive program. Many, for example, noted that this would really be an
exercise in “learning as you go” because there are no precedents or models to build on. The upward scaling of Rare’s initiatives through the Fish Forever program is important because it signals an important departure from the standard approaches to knowledge transmission within the organization. Whereas regional personnel were quite familiar with the contents of the training materials and how they could feasibly be implemented by campaign managers, the new materials are understood as extremely foreign and exceptionally complex. This level of uncertainty is likely to shape the outcome of the initial Fish Forever cohort if only because there are no precedents that can be followed for instructional purposes.

Thus, I understand the next iteration of the Pride curriculum as tertiary contradiction insofar as regional managers are currently negotiating precisely how such a program can be implemented given their own training and expertise. This contradiction signals a meaningful site of tension between the primary level activity systems (global offices and regional offices) because the progressive nature of Fish Forever is, in a very real sense, creating conditions of uncertainty and apprehension for regional office staff members. Because the first Fish Forever cohort was launched at the conclusion of my data collection process, it remains unclear whether or how the organization will be able to reconcile these tensions. However, as I note in the conclusion of this dissertation, following the progression of this program and its subsequent implications on knowledge negotiation is a fruitful avenue for future research.
Orientation Toward Scientism

Throughout its history, Rare has consistently emphasized the importance of people and communities to instigate meaningful change on environmental issues. This approach has, obviously, yielded tremendous success and has distinguished Rare as an innovative ENGO. Despite this emphasis on people and community-based interventions, Rare has made several significant moves in recent years that have been intended to raise the profile and perceived legitimacy of the organization. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in the organization’s recent emphasis on quantifiable results and scientific framing. In discussing the perceived legitimacy of Rare, I do not mean to suggest that the organization is facing an identity crisis concerning its initiatives or methods. Rather, the analysis in this section is intended to demonstrate how Rare has employed particular rhetorical strategies that have the intended effect of bolstering its credibility through a variety of methods. Whether this move is intentional on behalf of the organization’s leaders remains unclear; however, data gathered for this project suggest a focus on quantifiable success metrics, standardization of high-end products, and a focus on publicly legitimized results presentations. I contend that each of these rhetorical maneuvers works to legitimize particular forms of knowledge in conjunction with the people-centered approach that is commonly articulated in officially sanctioned organizational discourses. To that end, each of these instances – which I term a move toward scientism – can be thought of as primary level contradictions insofar as the conflicting discourses are inherent in the negotiation of which type(s) of knowledge are legitimized within and by the organization.

First, in the past 3 to 4 years, Rare has emphasized quantitative metrics as an
indication of Pride campaign success. Early organizational documents (from Pride 1.0, for example) tended to focus on the narrative history of Rare and went to great lengths to document how the organization evolved into its current form. For example, narratives about Paul Butler, the originator of the Pride campaign model, were a part of virtually every promotional document created by the organization. One early promotional handbook from 2008 describes the start of the Pride program:

The pride program was officially born when the organization asked Butler to join its staff and begin replicating his experience in other Caribbean islands like Saint Vincent and Dominica. Butler wrote a manual to share his methods, condensing 10 years of experience into a one-year action plan, and began the process of identifying entrepreneurial conservation leaders in other islands whom he could mentor through the process. (“About Rare,” 2008, p. 33)

Similar narratives that describe Butler as a “charismatic leader” and “environmental innovator” are part of many of the documents used to promote the organization from the period spanning 2004-2010. The narrative about Butler and the St. Lucia parrot are, in many ways, used to create an organizational mythos that ties current practices to a long and successful history. These early documents also go to great lengths to provide details about campaign successes with narratives from various sites around the globe.

However, documents from the organization began to change their focus in about 2010 to emphasize quantitative outcomes, rather than personal success stories. The Rare website, for example, no longer provides the Butler narrative and, instead, emphasizes the need for conservation intervention by citing numerous studies and success rates from previous campaigns. While the focus on human-centered intervention strategies remains a fixture of the website and other promotional materials, there is a very clear move toward documenting success through quantitative measures. Surprisingly, even the recently implemented organizational value statement is nowhere to be found on Rare’s
main website. The “About” and “Approach” sections of the website are focused almost exclusively on success indicators, but tend to shy away from narratives. This trend, I argue, is a move that privileges scientism insofar as statistics and other quantitative metrics are the dominating frame by which the organization and its initiatives are conveyed to various audiences and potential donors.

Second, Rare has made a concerted effort to create high quality, standardized products for public consumption that are meant to represent the high caliber of Pride campaigns. Whereas older campaign materials may have been sourced locally and had varying degrees of quality, more recent materials have quality control standards to ensure that products are appear professionally designed. One regional staff member explained that, “There were a lot of differences in materials in Bogor 2 and 3. Some of the mascots and posters were very nice and others…(laughs) they were okay.” The move to standardize materials is, on the one hand, an effort to ensure quality control standards for the organization. On the other, I argue, these measures are meant to publicly demonstrate the work of Rare as a competitive ENGO. Even internal training materials have seen major improvements in terms of quality. Training documents from the 2008-2010, for example, are relatively informal; different fonts (such as comic sans) are used through the documents, images are rarely utilized, and packets were loosely bound. More recent training materials, such as the “Rare Social Marketing Academy Train-the-Trainer” (2013) packet are clearly created by a professional printing press and include standardized tables and charts, full color inserts, and a clearly designed layout. Although these shifts towards professionalization and standardization may seem relatively minor, I argue that they are important insofar as they represent an attempt to frame materials as
legitimate, professionally-created organizational artifacts. Once again, this recent trend is meant to bolster the legitimacy of the organization and its operations.

Finally, Rare is attempting to raise the profile of its operations by emphasizing outcomes in public outlets. Although many of the previous “success stories” were frequently shared amongst members on websites such as RarePlanet (a companion social network site for campaign managers), the organization has recently made a move to public convey their successes in a variety of ways. In the summer of 2014, for example, the Bogor 5 cohort participated in a public demonstration of the Pride campaigns in Jakarta, Indonesia. One regional manager explained that the purpose of the event was both to celebrate the completion of the campaigns, but also to show personnel from IPs and the wider public the type of work that was being conducted by Pride campaign managers. The event was, in a very real sense, intended to publicize the organization and included a public gallery of campaign materials, performances by local artists, full catering, and a roundtable discussion with regional conservation leaders.

Events that publicly convey campaign strategies and successes can be understood as another rhetorical strategy that is employed to bolster the perceived legitimacy of the organization. While these staged events may fall within the purview of external organizational identity strategies (via public relations), they also work to convey particular knowledge frames to the wider public. Collectively, each of these efforts can be understood as active attempts to promote the institutional legitimacy of the organization, and by consequence, privilege measurable, scientific forms of knowing. This move toward increasing the institutional legitimacy of the organization presents a clash of signification structures that is manifesting in whether scientific discourses ought
to be privileged over narrative discourses as Rare attempts to widen its appeal to broader audiences.

**Localization and Distanciation**

The Fish Forever program represents a tremendous shift that is attempting to scale Rare’s operations beyond community level organizing. With an emphasis on enacting local, regional, national, and international solutions to the problem of overfishing, the program’s ambitious scope certainly serves as a source of concern for many of Rare’s members. These concerns are manifest in both how the organization is perceived externally and how the Pride curriculum might be adapted to meet the needs of the program. In this final section I explore the interconnections between organizational identity and knowledge negotiation. The introduction of the Fish Forever initiative serves as an exemplar for interrogating these connections for several reasons. First, because the program is a radical programmatic development for Rare, its implications will clearly reverberate throughout numerous organizational domains (chief among them, as I have argued, organizational identity and knowledge). Second, and more importantly, Fish Forever provides a unique opportunity to understand how conflicting discourses can manifest not only between different activity systems, but across time and space as well. As I argued in Chapter 3, conceptualizing activity systems as public modalities allows for the opportunity to explore exigent temporal and spatial demands and the ways in which organizations (collectively) or activity systems (independently) might attempt to reconcile competing tensions. Understood at the level of time-space distanciation (Giddens, 1989), emergent tensions concerning the development and implementation of
the Fish Forever initiative indicate that two competing orientations toward knowledge dominate current discourses within the organizational context. I argue that these tensions are significant to explore because they constitutively organize activity and meaning in different ways according to the particularities of the respective activity systems.

The primary site of tension concerning the implementation of Fish Forever can be readily observed between discourses circulating in the primary activity systems (global offices and regional offices). With the goal of maximizing capacity and building a communication infrastructure that can be used for several years, the global office is primarily concerned with privileging knowledge claims that are oriented toward long-term, large scale programmatic decisions. On the Fish Forever website, for example, the program is described as an “innovative approach [that] is designed to work across different cultures, geographies and political systems around the world, to the benefit of millions of people and building an international movement to reform nearshore fisheries” (“The Solution,” n.d.). Furthermore, the program aims to build on the strategies of the Pride program in ways that emphasize long-term orientations toward time. The website continues:

*Over the next 10 years Fish Forever will demonstrate productive, sustainable and profitable nearshore fisheries in the developing tropics.* This includes: 20% of relevant sites in each of the five Fish Forever countries are in the process of adopting systems that include exclusive access areas combined with fish recovery zones. On average, 20% of those exclusive access areas will be fully protected by fish recovery zones. Achieving these goals will lead Fish Forever to a tipping point that will catalyze widespread adoption. (“The Solution,” n.d., emphasis added)

The framing of the initiative and its potential is significant insofar as it represents a discursive shift away from the localized concerns that are centralized in the current Pride curriculum. One global office member expands by noting, “We’ve never done anything
like Fish Forever, so it will be interesting to see how things go. We’re shifting our scale to plan 5, 10, or 15 years down the road and it’s important for how we’re thinking things through.” This long-term temporal orientation privileges particular practices within the organization and, consequently, shifts the tone and focus of the Pride program in significant ways.

Tensions have emerged as a result of this move toward upward scaling for members of the regional personnel activity system. As I have noted previously, not only does the audaciousness of the program represent a challenge for curricular development and communicating external identity, it also presents a major challenge for maintaining a ground-level approach to conservation intervention. One regional staff member echoed this tension explaining how changing behaviors needs to be focused on localization and immediacy:

Changing behaviors is very complex. They [campaign managers] have to understand the concept of changing because it requires people – okay, tomorrow I will not use a bomb for fishing – but there are so many layers of decision making that the target audience has to make. And it is very complex. The concept of conservation and community is also very complex. It is very easy to save the tiger if there is no community. But talking about the community right now, it is very complex. In Sumatra, if you tell people to save the tiger, they will say “Okay, now you are asking me to protect this animal that comes to our village and kills our cattle. How are we going to protect our food?” It is very challenging.

Regional personnel recognize the difficulty of communicating messages about conservation and sustainability to target audiences that are dealing with immediate material concerns such as meeting basic subsistence needs. To paraphrase a conversation that occurred informally with a campaign manager, it is very difficult to get people to think about conservation a year from now, when they are struggling to feed their family tomorrow. Thus, in communicating their apprehension about losing the niche focus of the Pride campaign, members of the regional staff activity system are implicitly
advancing a countervailing discourse that privileges localization and immediacy, rather than upward scaling and long-term planning. This prioritization has distinct implications for understanding which knowledge claims “count” within an organizational context, but also for understanding how organizational identity is instantiated by virtue of the decision-making process. These distinct time-space orientations are not inconsequential; activities and practices are structurated according to the symbolic and discursive resources that are legitimized and privileged within an organizational context.

The emergent tension between these differing time-space orientations presents a unique primary knowledge contradiction insofar as competing meanings and priorities must be actively negotiated in continuing the development and implementation of the Fish Forever initiative. Several regional personnel members remarked that they were worried that Rare might be becoming too large; these concerns, I argue, are largely the result of a discursive tension that is occurring due to differing knowledge practices being prioritized in distinct activity systems. Within a singular network of activity, however, these concerns must be reconciled. As I discuss in the following chapter, extending the concept of modalities within the domain of time and space (and activity systems) may yield meaningful insights for understanding globalized organizations and the conflicts they face in the contemporary era.

Concluding Remarks

The creation, negotiation, and dissemination of knowledge and information remains one of the most complex and hotly contested topics in contemporary organizational communication research. This chapter demonstrates some of the
complexities faced by organizations in an increasingly globalized era. Due to the expansive nature of Rare’s operations across time and space, the coordination of knowledge processes is vital for maintaining organizational stability and the success of initiatives. However, as the contradictions outlined in this chapter indicate, even highly responsive and reflexive organizations must deal with conflictual discourses, meanings, and practices that shape attitudes and practices. Theorizing knowledge from a constitutive perspective highlights the ways in which organizations might draw upon knowledge claims as important resources for structurating organizational outcomes (Giddens, 1989). Thus, while the tensions explored in this chapter might conceivably be observed in similar organizational contexts, it is vital to consider how such theoretical insights can inform future practice. Knowledge contradictions can be exceptionally detrimental to organizations that are incapable or unwilling to progressively adapt to changing circumstances and consequences. From a practical standpoint, then, it becomes vital to interrogate what strategies might be employed to minimize the implications of knowledge conflicts. This assumption serves as the foundation for the practical suggestions offered for Rare in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

If, as the epigraph of this dissertation suggests, dead power is everywhere, so too are the ideologies, discourses, and practices that have enabled the precarious state of our current environmental reality. In attempting to characterize the analytic claims advanced in the preceding three chapters, I believe a strong undercurrent focused on productive possibility is evinced throughout my analysis. Although contradictions are often viewed as instances of organizational failure or communication breakdown, I contend that they are, first and foremost, sites of radical potential. This dissertation is predicated upon a critical orientation toward qualitative research that reflects my epistemological and ethical commitment to perpetual processes of critique and self-reflexivity. I am, however, quite disillusioned by the state of much contemporary critical scholarship that seeks to interrogate the problematic political or social dimensions of particular contexts without providing substantive alternatives. Critique solely for the sake of critique is, in my view, counterproductive. In placing this line of research in conversation with existing organizational communication and environmental communication scholarship, my aim in this chapter is to focus on the notion of productive possibility. To that end, I draw on the contradictions discussed throughout this dissertation as starting points for assessing the
ways in which this project might inform future communication theory, research, and practice. I begin by situating these findings within the broader field of organizational communication theory. Next, I consider some theoretical maneuvers that might extend current theorization about responsive conservation organizing and organizations. Finally, I offer practical suggestions for environmental practitioners and Rare that I hope may serve as the foundation of a continued dialogue about critical praxis and intervention strategies.

Organizational Communication Theory

The analysis in the preceding chapters has demonstrated the complex web of interactions that work to shape and sustain organization practices for Rare. The tensions and contradictions that exist within and across activity systems demonstrate the need for theorization that more fully accounts for the complexities and nuances of contemporary organizations. In this section, I situate the findings of this research within the broader context of organizational communication theory. Specifically, I explain how this study extends current theorization concerning activity systems, organizational identity and knowledge negotiation, and time-space distanciation.

Activity Systems

One of the greatest strengths of SAT is the explanatory force enabled by conceptualizing organizations as comprised of multiple systems of activity. As Canary (2010) explains, complex “organizations cannot be viewed adequately as single activity systems; rather, organizations should be seen as networks of overlapping, loosely
connected activity systems that create ‘activity networks.’” For organizations such as Rare that attempt to coordinate communication, meaning, and activities across multiple, disparate activity systems, it is vital to examine how discourses are enabled and constrained when activity systems collide. As I explained in Chapter 3, however, not all activity systems are equal. Indeed, in extending the notion of activity systems, I have demonstrated the need to account for varying degrees of power and influence within organizational contexts. Such an approach offers many advantages for conceptualizing chains of signification within activity networks. For example, although tertiary activity systems never directly engage with primary activity systems, their level of influence in shaping organizational discourses and practices is relatively low. This does not, however, suggest that tertiary activity systems are completely powerless. Important messages, values, or practices occurring within tertiary activity systems may be mediated through secondary activity systems, thereby shaping eventual organizational outcomes in some ways. This process of activity system mediation demonstrates how power, and therefore signification, is mediated across activity systems in diffuse, sometimes indirect, ways. By tracing discourses and practices across these activity systems, it becomes possible to identify how identities, priorities, and influence can be altered through the coordination of activity.

In delineating the central characteristics of primary, secondary, and tertiary activity systems, my analysis also demonstrates the salience of SAT for making sense of collective action(s) within organizational contexts. According to Hatch (2013), a major challenge of theorizing contemporary organizations concerns the need to clearly demarcate which actors form the immediate organizational context. In her view,
theoretical perspectives such as stakeholder theory are useful insofar as they enable researchers to focus on actors that may be “vital to an organization’s survival or success.” Although I believe frameworks such as stakeholder theory have their utility in describing networked organizational environments, they are somewhat limiting in their ability to examine how disparate activity systems or actors may effectually alter organizational outcomes. Activity networks may contain activity systems that have no immediate “stake” in the organizational context, but are still able to exert some degree of influence. For instance, local communities (tertiary activity systems) would likely not be represented in a stakeholder conceptualization of Rare because the organization’s activities do not directly focus on community needs and interests. However, community needs are mediated upwards across activity systems in such a way that particular communal exigencies may shape future organizational operations. The curricular shift from Pride 1.0 to 2.0, for example, demonstrates how such a mediated coordination of activity might occur. Although Rare did not seek direct input from community members, the limited ability of the Pride 1.0 curriculum to affect community change eventually resulted in a transformation of the curriculum to be more inclusive of community needs and interests. Thus, an activity systems approach widens the scope of ascertaining how meanings and discourses are negotiated within organizational contexts in meaningful and productive ways.

Organizational Identity & Knowledge Negotiation

My analysis throughout this dissertation has focused on two distinct concepts: organizational identity and organizational knowledge. In tracing the identity and
knowledge contradictions that have emerged for members of Rare during a period of rapid organizational growth and transformation, I have attempted to demonstrate how these topical domains are exceptionally significant concerns in organizational contexts. Although much of my analysis has treated these concepts as distinct, in this section I want to suggest that identity and knowledge are inextricably linked as concerns that manifest through the intersection of activity systems and the coordination of activity within organizations. I contend that, while identity and knowledge are distinct concepts, an important, reciprocal interrelationship exists between the two. That is, organizational identity is shaped by the negotiation of knowledge and vice versa.

Existing scholarship on both identity and knowledge tends to underplay the dynamic, contentious, and active process by which meanings are negotiated. According to Scott, Corman, and Cheney (1998) theories of organizational identity too often conceptualize individuals as passive recipients of identity, rather than engaged in an ongoing, dynamic process of identity negotiation. Similarly, Canary and McPhee (2011) contend that flat, transmission-based theories of knowledge are quite pervasive, albeit becoming less frequent due to the rise of communicative approaches to knowledge negotiation. The analysis in this dissertation demonstrates that both identity and knowledge are domains fraught with significant conflict and subject to continuous negotiation. This negotiation, however, ought to be addressed holistically so as to trace the mutually implicative relationship that exists between identity and knowledge. The development of the Fish Forever program, for example, provides an exemplary site for interrogating how these ideas are interrelated. In attempting to scale operations upward, the initiative is fundamentally changing Rare’s identity by expanding the scope of the
Pride program. This change in identity, consequently, is dramatically altering how knowledge is constructed and negotiated within the organization insofar as the emergent tertiary knowledge contradiction necessitates a transformation of practice via new curricular strategies and other means. Certainly, these concepts could be addressed independently. However, I argue that a focus on the interconnections between the two yields a more nuanced account of how meanings are negotiated within the organization.

Additionally, conceptualizing identity and knowledge as interrelated sheds light on how processes of negotiation cut across and between distinct activity systems. Following Cheney and Christensen (2001) who contend that organizational identity is constituted internally and externally, I argue organizational knowledge is also negotiated by structurating processes that incorporate internal and external tensions and meanings. Rather than conceptualizing knowledge solely as the purview of an organization, it is important to understand how forces outside the primary activity system can shape knowledge and meaning within the organization. Rare’s changing curriculum, for example, evinces how external influences (existing in tertiary-level activity systems) can work to shape primary activity system processes. In other words, “what we know about how Pride works” is informed and shaped, at least partially, as a response to tensions and contradictions expressed outside the primary activity system. This broadened view of organizational knowledge negotiation, when considered in light of identity negotiation processes, provides meaningful interpretive ammunition for examining the complexities and nuances of these system elements.
Time-Space Distanciation

In contemporary, globalized organizations, the coordination of activities, practices, and meanings is vital for maintaining organizational stability (Stohl, 2005). However, this coordination is particularly difficult given that many organizations are decentralized and must communicate asynchronously. Distanciation (Giddens, 1984), a process whereby activities become regularized across time and space, can serve as an important heuristic for examining coordination that occurs through the enablement and constraint of social practices. Rules and resources employed by organizations, for example, work to structurate activity by creating standardization in practices that can be upheld similarly across time and space. Mechanisms for sustaining distanciation are exceptionally varied in type, scope, and influence. Canary (2010), for example, asserts that “Public policies constitute one type of distanciating mechanism because they are developed within a particular sociohistorical context, yet they influence practices over a wide stretch of territory and time” (p. 24). Although distanciating mechanisms are commonly thought of as clearly institutionalized organizational features, I posit that these mechanisms are often subject to negotiation and mediation within activity systems. For example, the contradiction concerning the development and implementation of a codified values statement, demonstrates how an institutionalized resource meant to standardize practice can spur tension and conflict amongst members. The implementation of the values statement certainly worked to distanciate meanings within the organization insofar as a set of commonly held values were used to establish standards of practice within the organization. However, in articulating important meanings beyond those detailed in the values statement, members of Rare tacitly negotiate the degree to which a distanciating
mechanism may constrain particular practices or discourses. Values such as “Courage to Take Risks” or “Mindset of Solutionology” may be legitimized by the organization, but other values such as family and sense of community can also serve to distanciate within particular (albeit much less widespread) contexts.

Distanciating mechanisms are also never universal. Although organizations or social systems may rely heavily on the imposition of rules and regulations to routinize behavior across time and space, these mechanisms are still subject to variation and negotiation. As I explained in Chapter 5, for example, the contradiction between the move toward upward scaling of operations and the concern for maintaining an emphasis on localization indicates the fluidity of distanciating mechanisms. Although Rare’s organizational focus may be shifting towards maximizing scale, the need to maintain an interest in localization demonstrates how different types of distanciating mechanisms may be shaped by the discourses most salient within an activity system.

Scholars such as Bakhtin (1981) and Jack (2006) utilize the term “chronotope” to explain how distanciation may be shaped by the dominance or influence of particular discursive formations. Jack (2006), for instance, explains that a “deep time” chronotope produces a type of distanciation concerned with long-term outcomes, whereas a “short time” chronotope produces a type of distanciation more centrally focused on immediacy and urgency. Chronotopes are useful in theorizing how particular discourses can shape distanciating mechanisms in varied ways. The Fish Forever program, for example, is a clear demonstration of two competing chronotopes that must be reconciled by members of Rare. The emphasis on long-term planning (deep time) distanciates activity in ways that are radically different from previous organizational practices that emphasized
localization (short time). By conceptualizing distanciating mechanisms as subject to negotiation and mediation, it becomes possible to understand how activities might be coordinated differently across time and space depending on the prevalence or influence of particular discursive formations.

**Communicating Conservation Theory**

In a recent special edition of *Management Communication Quarterly* focused on sustainable communication, Mitra and Buzzanell (2015) contend that organizational communication scholars should focus on the “polysemous term sustainability in the context of organizing, and how communicative practices enable (and restrain) sustainable organizing in different contexts” (p. 130). In providing an operational framework for exploring the connection between sustainability and communication they note that “research should examine the sociohistorical structuration of sustainability policy in different contexts, given the ongoing shifts in the meaning of sustainable organizing” (2015, p. 132). Given that organizational communication scholars are uniquely situated to explore the individual and collective processes involved in communicating conservation, it is vital to begin by exploring the constitutive elements of environmental organizing.

Throughout this dissertation I have drawn heavily on the theoretical work of Giddens (1984) in order to make sense of how meanings and discourses work to shape organizational practices and outcomes. Although Giddens’ work is particularly insightful for examining elements of organizing within bounded systems of activity, his theoretical framework is somewhat limited in its ability to explore the dynamic, emergent tensions
that arise in many complex, contemporary organizations. My focus on organizational contradictions (Canary, 2010) has been used as a vehicle for explaining how disjunctions within organizations present unique opportunities for discerning the role of discourse and practice in organization contexts. However, Giddens (1984; 1991) continuously emphasizes that his framework is best suited for understanding social systems that exist in states of relative harmony and stability; he does not fully account for radical changes or contradictions that might occur within these systems. Even in his most recent work on climate change, Giddens (2011) argues that the consequences of rising temperatures and melting ice caps could radically transform the functionality of social institutions. Despite this observation, he maintains that political institutions will eventually acquiesce to the changes and find some measure of balance and harmony. I consider this limitation of structuration theory to be extremely significant insofar as radical perturbations or contradictions within the dominant social order are commonplace occurrences in contemporary organizations, especially those focused on conservation and sustainability.

In considering the consequences of this theoretical shortcoming, I offer initial theoretical formulations that might be helpful as a supplement or response to structuration theory’s limitations. In particular, I find that the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) offers an inventive way of thinking through evolving and adaptive organizational contexts. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), meanings and values that exist within social systems do not exist a priori; they are negotiated and legitimized by a variety of cultural, semiotic, and sociocultural forces (in a way that is reminiscent of the duality of structure). These meanings become routinized through repetition and are, hence, perpetuated within the dominant social order. Unlike Giddens, however, Deleuze
and Guattari understand the imposition of these assemblages of meaning to be problematic because they impinge on individuals and social systems in ways that generally create problematic hierarchical privileging of social meaning. Put differently, routinization tends to be conducive to the formation of contradictions within social or organizational contexts. To counter these prevailing forces, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that we ought to consider the radical potentiality of deterritorialization – a way of tactically creating transformative engagements within the social milieu.

By disentangling the calcified social norms that govern human activity, individuals and social institutions shift focus from disruption as something that is always, already harmful, to a site where transformative potential can exist. Obviously, as Deleuze and Guattari note, deterritorialization always runs the risk of being re-appropriated within social systems through a process termed re-territorialization, but it is the potential of continuous transformation that ought to be emphasized. This conception of social reality and transformation may seem antithetical to structuration theory at surface level. However, I believe that shifting the way we conceptualize contradictions (from negative to potentially positive or liberatory) can afford a novel way of rethinking some facets of Giddens’ work.

By problematizing and extending Giddens’ (1984) theoretical framework, a few implications about environmental organizing are made possible. First, environmental organizations should be thought of as organic entities that are responsive to political, social, economic, and environmental exigencies that shape the scope and focus of organizational practices. Although all organizations are, in a sense, organic and responsive, environmental organizations and environmental organizing are uniquely
positioned for such responsiveness given that interrelationships between nonhuman
dnature and cultural institutions must be centralized both in theory and practice. For
example, in his seminal essay on the nature-culture dualism, Rogers (1998) emphasizes
the need for theorization that enables “ways of listening to non-dominant voices and
nonhuman agents,” that deconstructs “common sense binaries,” and that reconstructs
“recursive, interdependent, and fluid” relationships with the natural world. Deleuze and
Guattari’s (1987) notion of deterritorialization offers one way of imagining how such
theorization might be instigated. By viewing resistance as a practice that must be
performed ad infinitum, interventions can be conceived more fully at the level of context
and contingency.

This proclivity toward perpetual resistance, which Deleuze and Guattari refer to
as “nomadology,” (1987, p. 85) seeks to destabilize static territorializations by tracing
new lines of flight that decenter power relations and institutionalized practices. Thus, as
Fox (2002) explains, “nomadology must be thought of not as an outcome but as a
process, as a line of flight which continually resists the sedentary, the single fixed
perspective. As such, a commitment to deterritorialization and the nomad is intrinsically
political, always on the side of freedom, experimentation, and becoming” (p. 355). “One
size fits all” approaches to environmental engagement are, at best, ineffective, and, at
worst, dangerously counterproductive. By recognizing the ebb and flow of meanings and
discourses in each social context, interventions must be staged in ways that allow “us to
creatively respond to situations in all their complexity rather than assimilating them to
past situations” (Lorraine, 2011, p. 86). In (re)mapping the complex constellation of
human-nature relations, deterritorialization necessitates a radical interrogation of the
assumptions, beliefs, and values predicated upon anthropocentric worldviews. In *The Companion Species Manifesto*, Haraway (2003) urges a similar move away from the rigidity of anthropocentric logic by advancing the concept of the “natureculture.”

According to Haraway, “naturecultures” reject the fixed meanings of scientific discourse and focus on the diverse “multiplicity of meanings and possibility” enacted as “situated knowledges” at the margin of social reality (2003, pp. 9-11). Just as there are multiple contexts and cultures constantly at work in social formations, so too are there multiple naturecultures that orient our engagement with the natural world. In turning to this concept, I want to suggest that territorializations informed by a radical environmental ethic must be cognizant of the potential for reifying the dominant ideological and discursive regimes that drive critical impulsivity. Resistance and transformation, in other words, are always a state of *becoming*.

Finally, I want to suggest that Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical corpus and its emphasis on potentiality has important implications for the way conversations about environmental engagement might unfold. Images of environmental disasters have become increasingly commonplace in the public consciousness. Unfortunately, in conveying the bleak reality of the status quo, coverage of these events also tends to instill a sense of hopelessness in which environmental calamity is understood as an inevitability. Emphasizing potentiality, I believe, could help to (re)focus the dialogue about environmental engagement in ways that invite human subjects to more fully consider the productive possibility of *becoming* with/in the world. That is, although dystopian futures may characterize the status quo, immanence enables imaginative potentiality for future intervention and response. In reconceptualizing our relationship
with nature, spaces of transformative possibility are enabled in such a way that potentiality, contingency, and fluidity become central. Sowards (2006) articulates the notion of “perpetual potential” as an alternative to dystopian, apocalyptic appeals in explaining how hopeful solutions and an emphasis on the potentiality of the future might characterize alternative environmental interventions. While transformative possibility might be enacted in varying degrees and in a variety of ways, immanent reflexivity lifts the constraints of the status quo by calling into question the ontological assumptions that undergird and reify destructive environmental practices. The fundamental question, then, is “not how to connect with the world around us; it is rather the kind of connections we want to foster and sustain” (Lorraine, 2011, p. 12).

Rare’s approach to conservation is, in my view, an ideal site for interrogating how such an abstract theoretical concept might be employed in practice. Because so many of the organization’s directives are focused on capitalizing on potential, possibility, and fluidity, the organization serves as a unique exemplar for what an organic, responsive organization might resemble. Understood from this perspective, the contradictions that have emerged throughout my analysis in this dissertation are moments of disruption that can be used to radically rethink discourse and practice. In assuming this transformational perspective toward environmental organizing, the following section explores how such insights might be reflected in and through contemporary organizational communication theory and practice.
Environmental Public Participation

In addition to serving as an exemplar for a radically responsive organization, the analysis in this dissertation also raises important questions about public participation and environmental engagement. As Cox (2007) notes, environmental communication ought to be driven by scholarship and theorization that works to connect academics, practitioners, and local communities in ways that meaningfully improve environmental conditions globally. Rare’s approach to conservation is a clear departure from other mid or large size ENGOs (Bryant, 2002; Dreiling et al., 2008) which typically use a “one size fits all” approach to conservation messaging and is, thus, providing new ways of thinking about how organizations might meaningfully engage with the public. In utilizing social marketing techniques that are aimed at particular communities, the organization demonstrates the importance of responsiveness and situates local concerns as a focal point for engagement. That is, campaigns are focused on the needs of constituents in local communities, rather than the desires of the organization. By focusing on capacity building within these local communities, the outreach efforts shift from advocacy to empowerment, and thus, facilitate a more sustained form of environmental engagement.

Additionally, this type of localized conservation contributes to understandings of public participation by demonstrating the need to involve communities and the environment as distinct stakeholders in the decision-making process. Callister (2013) and Peterson, Peterson, and Peterson (2007), for instance, contend that many public participation models and theories are limited because they fail to account for the complex interconnections that exist between communities and the environment. That is, the needs of the community are typically foregrounded while the environment is relegated to the
margin as a nonstakeholder. In offering the concept of “land community participation,” Callister (2013) suggests that public participation models should consider the importance of human interests and the environment. This nonanthropocentric approach to public participation necessitates more critical intervention strategies which, I argue, are exhibited in Rare’s Pride curriculum. Because the organization is fundamentally invested in “inspiring change so people and nature thrive,” its approach is rooted in finding creative solutions that do not merely view nature as a resource or tool. This is an important insight because as Rogers (1998) asserts, “When theorists encourage us to take into account not simply “ideas”...but the material conditions and consequences of those ideas, the nonhuman material conditions making up our lifeworld are consistently ignored” (p. 259). By shifting to an organizational model that simultaneously privileges localized concerns of communities and the environment, Rare is facilitating a “land community participation” model (Callister, 2013) that provokes new, meaningful relationships and orientations toward the natural world.

Finally, in thinking through the ways in which nature might meaningfully be thought of as a stakeholder, this dissertation raises important questions about how environmental organizations conceptualize their relationship with nature. Although my analysis conceptualized activity systems as inherently anthropocentric (that is, nature was not viewed as a distinct activity system in the organizational context), this analysis raises the unique possibility that nature might be thought of as its own activity system. Contemporary organizational communication theories generally diminish this possibility because as Salvador and Clarke (2011) explain:

While constitutive theories of discourse hold an undeniable value for communication scholars, they also reinforce the longstanding, Western, binary
separation between humans and nature. In short, where traditional Western philosophy (Platonic-Cartesian) holds that nature in and of itself has no value beyond that assigned by humans, constitutive theories of discourse hold that nature has no meaning, no reality, beyond that assigned through symbols. (p. 244)

However, Rare’s focus on building both human and environmental capacity provides a unique vantage point for theorizing organizational dynamics working in concert with, rather than in opposition to, environmental concerns. Put differently, the environment might be thought of as a distinct activity system or stakeholder that can influence organizational decision making and outcomes. Although this concept does seem somewhat radical, I contend that it has the potential to dramatically transform how organizational and environmental scholars think about the role of representation, language, and participation in engagement strategies. For instance, environmentalists in Ecuador recently filed a lawsuit on behalf of Pachamama, or Mother Earth, that brought charges against BP for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill (Shiva et al., 2010). The lawsuit was upheld by the Constitutional Court of Ecuador and symbolically legitimized the importance of nature as a distinct entity. As environmental organizations begin to think about inclusive, meaningful conservation strategies, it may be necessary to bridge the nature-culture dualism and consider the environment as more than just a passive, non-human resource. Nature, after all, if a fundamental part of the lifeworld that we all inhabit (Killingsworth, 2007).

Practical Suggestions

This dissertation has been guided by an orientation that I refer to as critical praxis. In tracing some of the problematic contradictions that exist in the organizational practices and discourses of Rare, my goal has been to highlight a few possible domains where
strategic interventions might be able to improve organizational outcomes. As part of this commitment to praxis, I believe it is fundamental that I provide some form of introspective analysis that directly speaks to my target audience(s) by providing practical suggestions to improve organizational conditions. Thus, in concluding this chapter I hope to provide a few insightful suggestions that may be applied to environmental organizations, broadly, and Rare, specifically. These suggestions should not be viewed as a panacea or even a simply remedy for instances of paradox and contradiction, but instead, should be understood as generative starting points for thinking through the complexities of organizational discourses and practice. My hope is that these suggestions might provide Rare and other environmental practitioners with a few ideas that can spur productive future decision making.

Suggestions for Environmental Organizations

As I have maintained throughout this dissertation, the ground-level work that is being performed by Rare has yielded tremendously successful results and should be viewed as an exemplar of environmental engagement. I do not mean to suggest that the organization is not without its faults, but its ability to consistently and successfully engage local communities on complex issues such as conservation and sustainability should be applauded. In analyzing the organizational context of Rare, there are several dominant traits, characteristics, and practices that I believe can be generalized and translated to other ENGOs.

First, Rare’s model of communication adaptation is novel within the realm of environmental organizing and conservation biology. Larger ENGOs such as the
Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) are generally focused on scientific interventions that do not carefully consider the social, economic, and political contexts that matter in local communities. This is, I argue, an extremely problematic oversight. While conducting research for this dissertation, I spoke with members of several larger ENGOs about the strategies that were being developed and implemented by Rare; in almost every case, the community-driven approach to conservation was praised as innovative, meaningful, and productive. Although it may seem simplistic and self-evident to suggest that environmental organizations should be attentive to their target audience(s), community engagement is rarely done in practice. Thus, environmental practitioners should explore models of community engagement and organizing such as Rare’s that seek to build capacity and empower local communities to create long-lasting change within their own communities. Certainly, this perspective has been adopted by many environmental justice oriented organizations. However, I believe that the strategies employed by Rare in engaging local communities can be more greatly appropriated and translated to different organizational and strategic contexts. An initial and quite simple suggestion, then, is for environmental practitioners to actually engage with local communities.

Additionally, Rare’s model of internal organizing has many strengths insofar as the organization strives to be responsive to internal pressures, tensions, and problems that emerge in various activity systems. As my analysis in this dissertation has demonstrated, this reflexivity is by no means perfect. Yet, the constant self-monitoring that the organization practices is an important step in refining the development, negotiation, and dissemination of important messages concerning organization practice. In practice this
may be a more difficult task for larger, more bureaucratic organizations. After all, one of the secondary contradictions that members of Rare are now attempting to deal with is the increasingly pervasive influence of organizational structures that are altering previous styles of communication within the organization. Furthermore, as Giddens (1989) contends, because organizations are perpetually made and remade by virtue of routinization, responding to emergent contextual issues may be quite troublesome. Despite this concern, I believe that an important implication that can be gleaned from this analysis concerns the importance of understanding organizations as dynamic, organic entities that are capable of change. In turning toward organization self-reflexivity, environmental practitioners and activists may greatly benefit from introspective analysis. Again, this suggestion may seem quite simple, but this type of reflexive monitoring is rarely exercised in larger international ENGOs.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Rare’s human-centered approach to environmental engagement serves as an innovative model for understanding how niche organizations can provoke widespread, meaningful change in communities. I do not mean to suggest that all organizations should focus on instilling a sense of pride in local communities or using mascots to sell conservation messages. Rather, in developing and cultivating a niche model for environmental engagement, organizations may be able to create innovative strategies that rely on a variety of methods to prompt change on social, community, or political levels. A third and final suggestion is to think creatively about what strategies are currently underutilized in environmental organizing and capitalize on them in order to diversify outreach efforts. Ten organizations using the same strategies and targeting the same audiences will likely have far less impactful results than 10
organizations that employ diverse, innovative approaches to encourage conservation interventions.

Suggestions for Rare

In utilizing a case study approach for this dissertation, the insights and analysis in the preceding chapters have illuminated several tensions and contradictions within and across Rare’s activity systems. Using these contradictions as a starting point, I believe there are important issues and tensions that could be more fully explored in order to increase organizational outcomes or, at the very least, minimize potential sites of conflict within the organization.

First, the development of a codified set of values within the organization is an important and meaningful practice that is meant to spur identification with the organization. However, as my analysis in Chapter 4 indicates, the articulation and reinforcement of these values is generally limited to Rare’s global and regional staff members. Campaign managers do not appear to have exposure to these core values or simply do not draw upon this linguistic resource in making sense of their position within the organizational structure. By extending the value terminology to campaign managers, Rare likely will be able to foster more meaningful, long-lasting relationships with campaign managers and across cohorts. For instance, despite not being a part of the formal value statement, the family metaphor is used extensively by members of the organization because it is able to describe practices in a vocabulary that is accessible and familiar. Although values like “mindset of solutionology” may be somewhat abstract outside Rare’s organizational context, the language used in the value statement could
become an important linguistic resource utilized across different activity systems to foster deeper organizational identification. Thus, I believe Rare should consider more frequently invoking the organization’s core values in its communication with campaign managers in order to connect them with the dominant mediating resources utilized by fulltime staff members.

Second, although the Fish Forever initiative is currently being implemented in several regions, Rare should be cautious about the rapid expansion necessitated by the program. Because the initiative is a major source of uncertainty and apprehension for Rare personnel, the possibility of conflictual meanings, discourses, and practices will inevitably be amplified as the program continues to be implemented. Obviously, Rare is firmly committed to scaling its operations upward and in meaningful directions – that is not the focus of my suggestion. Instead, I believe that the organization should be careful to balance scaling of operations with the strategies and practices that have made the organization so successful in the past. Many members of the organization who were interviewed for this project expressed concern that the rapid growth of the organization was creating a communication climate driven by structure and protocol. This is somewhat disheartening given the close identification that many members, particularly those who have been with the organization for several years, exhibit toward Rare. In order to avoid alienating members, Rare should be cautiously attentive and continue to engage in a process of critical self-reflexivity as operations begin to scale upward. In many ways, additional structure is an inevitability in a larger organization; however, when this structure risks removing the human element of the organization that is, arguably, the impetus for many members’ engagement and commitment to Rare’s goals,
it can become a major liability.

Finally, Rare’s rebranding efforts present a unique opportunity for widening the organization’s potential scope and audience. As I argued in Chapter 5, the move toward scientism and external legitimacy is likely an attempt to amplify the credibility of the organization and demonstrate the quantifiable success of the Pride program. Although these efforts present an internal knowledge contradiction for the organization, they also have the potential to reach new audiences, draw in financial support from donor bases, and spread awareness about the provocative potential of the Pride program. However, assessments of external identity (and the discursive strategies that are employed to convey that identity) should be approached with caution. Rare’s emphasis on quantitative measurements is important in conveying the success rates of the organization, especially in comparison to other ENGOs. However, in rapidly introducing a new organizational identity, Rare potentially runs the risk of moving away from powerful narratives that have fueled the organization in the past. Thus, in considering external identity strategies, the organization should consider striking a balance between scientific measures and a more narrativized approach to communication in order to widen its appeal across multiple audiences. The current website, for instance, does not clearly identify important organizational values despite the considerable resources and efforts the organization has invested in codifying a value statement. By centralizing a people-centered approach to conservation in conjunction with scientific measures of legitimacy, the organization will likely be able to expand its appeal in new, meaningful ways.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The widespread destruction of the environment continues. Despite recent efforts to raise awareness about a slew of environmental problems brought on by rapid industrialization, population growth, and neoliberal ideology, the planet continues its perilous journey towards catastrophe. Environmental activist Bill McKibben (2012) explains that the rhetoric of the modern environmental movement is woefully unequipped to instigate the widespread changes needed to address complex problems such as climate change. If our current intervention strategies are insufficient, what tools might be drawn from the repertoire that can enable productive change? As I have maintained throughout this dissertation, environmental organizations remain crucial, and perhaps even necessary, components of any action directed at slowing the widespread degradation of the natural world. Although the analysis in this essay has pointed to some potential sources of conflict that exist as part of the organizational dynamics of Rare, I maintain a positive outlook about the important work that the organization facilitates around the globe. A brief view of the organization’s previous campaign successes (Hayden & Deng, 2013) demonstrates a remarkable move toward localized intervention strategies that have an enduring impact. Perhaps more so than larger ENGOs Rare’s adaptive model is able
to facilitate the type of meaningful engagement that is needed to slow the deleterious encroachment of industrial forces on the natural world. When faced with such seemingly insurmountable obstacles, organizational strategies like those used by Rare open up, at the very least, the possibility for radical engagement in day-to-day practice. The internal tensions of the organization and their enduring success point to the fact that environmental and organizational communication scholars ought to continue pursue lines of inquiry that grapple with these complex issues. Thus, in concluding this manuscript, I wish to point to a few limitations of my analysis, as well as several possibilities for future research.

**Study Limitations**

Research for this project spanned several years and drew on numerous interviews, observations, and organizational artifacts. Despite a high level of saturation in data, there are several limitations that need to be recognized. First, the vast majority of my research in this project was focused on campaign managers and regional personnel in Indonesia. Although this research yielded important insights about the internal operations of Rare as an organization, my focus on only one regional site is somewhat limiting. Rare currently has regional offices in Indonesia, Mexico, China, the Philippines, Micronesia, and Mozambique; my analysis is exclusively based on observations and interactions with members in Indonesia. It is likely that each of the regional centers has a distinct organizational subculture that could reinforce or contradict the insights provided in my analysis. Thus, while I sought to fully immerse myself in the research context in Indonesia, my findings are limited to a rather specific subset of the organization.
Additionally, this project is limited by the punctuated nature of my research involvement. The vast majority of my research was conducted in the summers of 2013 and 2014. During each visit I was able to engage with alumni of the Pride program as well as current campaign members. However, my time and involvement with the organization was limited due to logistics involved in scheduling and planning each trip to Indonesia. Spending a more extended period of time “in the field” may have yielded deeper analysis akin the type of insights typical of ethnographic research. Yet, such an approach to this project would have been highly challenging due to my lack of familiarity with the language, resource limitations, and other logistical concerns. A “deeper” involvement with the organization over several months or years may have been beneficial for more fully interrogating issues pertaining to organizational culture and practice, but were not feasible given the aforementioned logistical constraints. An ethnographic analysis of the organization would certainly be insightful, but my inability to engage in this type of research should be recognized as a research limitation.

Finally, the analysis that has been presented in this manuscript is specific to Rare, an organization which I have argued has an exceptionally unique structure and style of engaging publics. The uniqueness of the organization, then, limits the potential transferability of insights and conclusions. Although I believe many of the practical suggestions provided in the discussion chapter of this manuscript could easily apply to other ENGOs, readers should be cautious about generalizing insights that may not necessarily apply to their organizational context.
Future Research

Despite the limitations of this study, I believe there are several directions that future environmental and organizational communication scholars might follow in addressing some of the concerns and questions that I have raised. First, this analysis is limited to a fairly specific timeframe that focuses on a period of expansive growth for Rare as an organization. The recent development and launch of the Fish Forever program is, unfortunately, not fully addressed in this analysis. Because this program represents a major departure from Rare’s previous projects and an initial foray into the realm of policymaking and influence, future research should focus on the challenges and opportunities that such an endeavor raises. Numerous scholars (Buzzanell & Liu, 2005; Canary, 2010; Spillane, et al., 2002) have noted the need for more scholarship on how policies are constitutively developed and implemented – continued research on the Fish Forever program could prove fruitful for exploring the role of ENGOs in this process.

Second, future research should provide cross-comparative analysis of different ENGOs that employ distinct strategies of public engagement. Rare’s localized approach to conservation intervention represents merely one strategy that is used by environmental activists to provoke public participation. A cross-comparative analysis of the strategies employed by larger organizations such as Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Federation, or the Environmental Defense Fund could prove useful in determining what type of intervention strategies are effective at higher levels of scale. Similarly, comparative analysis with smaller environmental justice oriented organizations could demonstrate what type of strategies are useful for grassroots styles of engagement. In either case, cross-comparative organizational analyses are certainly warranted.
This research project was conceptualized as a case study of a particular organizational context. Although there were components of participatory engagement in the research design, these elements were not central to my inquiry. Studies focused on environmental engagement are especially rife with potential for participatory action styles of research. Scholars such as Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) and Sagor (2005) contend that participatory action scholarship is important in organizational contexts where researchers can collaboratively question practices, make changes, and assess the effects of those changes. Rare is an organization that appears particularly attuned to the possibility of changing and transforming its practices; a participatory style of scholarly engagement could certainly prove useful in promoting a cycle of research, reflection, and action that could spur the further development of Rare’s conservation strategies.

Additionally, this project reinforces the need for scholarship that is focused on bridging the gap between scholars and practitioners. As Cox (2007) contends, environmental communication ought to be conceptualized as a “crisis discipline” that focuses on practical and productive collaborations between the public, researchers, and activists. Similarly, Peterson, Peterson, and Peterson (2007) call for research that focuses on and promotes democratic participation on issues concerning the environment. My analysis of Rare is an attempt at responding to these calls insofar as I have attempted to demonstrate the salience of localized engagement strategies in the global environmental conservation movement. Unfortunately, studies focusing on public engagement within the subfields of both environmental and organizational communication remain far too uncommon. Future scholarship should continue to explore organizational contexts that could meaningfully transform and improve the lives and livelihoods of people around the
globe. By bridging the gaps that currently exist between scholars, practitioners, activists, and citizens, more meaningful forms of environmental engagement might be possible.

Finally, this project offers a few exciting directions for extending SAT that could prove fruitful for organizational and environmental communication scholars alike. In conceptualizing activity systems as public modalities I have attempted to demonstrate the fluidity of organizational contexts and the ways in which discourse and practice work to shape the influence of activity features. The characteristics of primary, secondary, and tertiary activity systems outlined in Chapter 3 could serve as a starting point for fully theorizing how particular segments of organizational contexts are privileged in the perpetuation of particular meanings or discourses. This contribution is meaningful for organizations like Rare that utilize diffuse organizational structures or that require the coordination of activity across systems that vary in type, size, and focus. As I argued in Chapter 6, this model might offer an alternative way of think through traditional organizational communication perspectives like stakeholder theory and enable a more holistic, dynamic approach to the analysis of contemporary organizations.

This theoretical contribution could also serve as the foundation for new methodological approaches to the study of organizations. For example, LeGreco’s (2009) concept of discourse tracing, which examines prominent macro-, meso-, and micro-level discourses within social systems, offers one way of studying the relative effects and influences of discursive systems in organizational contexts. Because discourses may be more or less salient or influential in different activity systems, it becomes important to accurately assess the way meanings persist in different organizational contexts. A similar approach might be applied to primary, secondary, and
tertiary activity systems to examine where meaningful contradictions, similarities, divergences, and paradoxes are emerging within organizational milieus. This project, then, offers numerous topical and theoretical directions for future organizational communication scholarship
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

General Questions

1.) How did you get involved with Rare?
2.) (For Regional Managers:) What is your role in the organization?
   a. What are your primary responsibilities and duties?
3.) What is your primary organization? What kind of work does that organization do?
4.) Tell me about the campaign you are designing.
   a. What do you think will be the most significant barriers to implementation?
   b. What sort of social and/or cultural issues do you think are most important for the way you’re designing the campaign?
   c. What is the primary goal of the campaign?

Identity Questions

1.) How would you characterize your experience(s) with Rare so far?
2.) What do you think are the major differences between your primary organization and Rare?
   a. What are the major similarities between your primary organization and Rare?
3.) How would you describe the “culture” of Rare?
   a. How, if at all, do you think that culture is different than your primary organization?
4.) What do you think are Rare’s core values?
   a. Do you think these values are shared or exercised by members? If so, how?
5.) How do you think Rare and/or the Pride campaign is being received in your community?
6.) (For Regional Managers:) How has Rare changed since you’ve been affiliated with the organization?
Knowledge Questions

1.) What have you learned about environmental campaigns and organizing since joining Rare?
   a. What has been the most surprising thing you have learned?
   b. What has been the most important thing you have learned?
2.) Describe your experience with the Rare Pride training curriculum.
3.) How, if at all, has the Pride curriculum changed the way you do your conservation work?
4.) (For Regional Managers:) In what ways has the Pride curriculum changed since you have been affiliated with the organization?
   a. What, if any, impact has that had on the development of campaigns?
5.) (For Regional Managers:) What, if anything, do you think are the most difficult concepts, ideas, or skills for campaign managers to learn?
   a. Do you think there are some issues, ideas, or skills that can’t be taught formally? If so, what do you think those are?
APPENDIX B

DATA ANALYSIS CODES

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# Identity and Knowledge Contradictions

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| Communication Structure | Secondary          | New Element<br>
Rare is imposing strict communication protocol that is removing the perceived familial nature of the organization. |
| Values Coordination  | Secondary Tertiary | New Element<br>
Members of Rare do not believe the new values statement is totally encompassing. Only full time employees are utilizing the values statement; campaign managers are still not utilizing the values statement as a linguistic resource. |
| Increasing Uncertainty | Secondary          | New Element<br>
The rebranding elements introduced by the organization are creating a sense of uncertainty in how to handle external communication and marketing. Members must negotiate how to sell the organization to external stakeholders. |
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<td>Tertiary Structural</td>
<td>Object Orientation Members vs. Autonomy Members are worried that the niche mission is being lost with Fish Forever.</td>
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<td>Curricular Uncertainty</td>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>Object Orientation Members of Rare are uncertain how the Fish Forever training protocol will be implemented.</td>
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<td>Localization and Distanciation</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Nature of Object As the organization scales its efforts, tensions have emerged about whether to legitimize knowledge focused on local concerns or solutions that can be scaled into long-term planning and coordination.</td>
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REFERENCES


Cox, R. (2007). Nature’s “crisis disciplines”: Does environmental communication have


